



THE CORPORATION OF THE CITY OF VERNON

MINUTES OF THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE HELD FRIDAY, JUNE 24, 2022 AT 8 AM OKANAGAN LAKE ROOM (COUNCIL CHAMBER) CITY HALL

PRESENT: Mayor Cumming, Chair
Jessica Wicks, Accelerate Okanagan Rep
Leigha Horsfield, Community Futures North Okanagan
Dan Proulx, Greater Vernon Chamber of Commerce
Colin Wilson, Executive Director, UBCO
Richard Toperczer, Province of BC Reg. Ec. Dev. Branch Rep
Jane Lister, Okanagan College Rep
Laura Frank, RDNO Representative

ABSENT: Annette Sharkey, Social Planning Council of North Okanagan Rep.
Councillor Mund (Council Appointed)
Peter Kaz, Downtown Vernon Association

STAFF: Kim Flick, Director, Community Infrastructure & Development
John Perrott, Manager, Economic Development
Tracy Mueller, Committee Clerk

ORDER The meeting was called to order at **8:04 AM**

**LAND
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT** *As Chair of the City of Vernon's Economic Development Advisory Committee, and in the spirit of this gathering, I recognize the City of Vernon is located in the traditional territory of the Syilx people of the Okanagan Nation.*

Before the start of the meeting the Chair called for round table introductions. R. Toperczer advised the group that this would be his last meeting as he is transitioning to a new position of District Manager.

**ADOPTION OF THE
AGENDA** Moved by **C. Wilson**, and seconded by **L. Frank**:

THAT the agenda of the Economic Development Advisory Committee meeting of June 24, 2022 be adopted:

CARRIED

**ADOPTION OF THE
MINUTES**

Moved by L. Horsfield, and seconded by D. Proulx:

THAT the minutes of the Economic Development meeting of January 20, 2022 be adopted as presented.

CARRIED

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

There were no items to discuss.

NEW BUSINESS:

**ROUND TABLE
INTRODUCTIONS**

J. Perrott, Manager, Economic Development requested each member to provide a brief round table introduction.

- This item was handled earlier in the meeting.

**COMMITTEE
ORIENTATION**

K. Flick, Director, Community Infrastructure & Development, was in attendance to provide members of the Committee with an overview regarding the Terms of Reference, Bullying and Harassment Policy and Council Procedure Bylaw.

The following comments were made:

- The Council Procedure Bylaw is a document to determine the decision-making processes. The Committee Clerk ensures that all legislative rules are followed, which includes ensuring that quorum is achieved and good process is followed.
- The conduct of Committee members outside the room is important. The recommendations that come out of the group go forward to Council for ratification.
- The Bullying and Harassment Policy clearly outlines the expectations for all staff and committee, commission, and board volunteers, in terms of respectful workplace policy and code of conduct.
- It is important to stop bullying and harassment and it is the responsibility of Management to make sure that all employee rights are met. Although this is an annually occurring refresher, there is always room for everyone to grow and broaden their understanding and make sure that we remain respectful in our dealings with others.

Before the informal discussion, **J. Perrott, Manager, Tourism & Economic Development** provided a PowerPoint presentation overview for the benefit of the new members outlining the role of Tourism and Economic Department in the City of Vernon as follows:

- Tourism Vernon is a Municipal Hotel Tax funded program. Program funding is received through an online accommodation platform; the budget is \$1.2M.
- The Visitor Servicing piece is active and we are growing on events and meetings in the shoulder season time.
- Municipal and Regional District Tax (MRDT) financing is on a 5-year term with the Province of BC; over the past six months Vernon's Tourism Manager is leading the charge to get the next 5-year Tourism Strategy developed and approved.
- In terms of advertising, the key message is that Vernon is growing beyond simply destination marketing organization to expand further into "destination" management.
- At a high level the most significant piece is destination attraction, thought of broadly, there are opportunities to further leverage overnight stays into investment and talent attraction within the community.
- There are not many communities that are fortunate enough to have a dedicated Economic Development Planner. Roy Nuriel is the Economic Development Planner, for the City of Vernon, his skill set is to put a lens on the impacts of the business for development projects. Roy works with multi-family housing and working with local developers and K Flick, Director, Community Infrastructure and Business License Application Reviews and Issuances are part of the process.
- In terms of collaboration, Roy is often the first point of contact with any project in the community, he is currently working on the Port Okanagan project that is proposed for Lakeshore.
- One of the roles of Economic Development involves community data collection; the team provides valuable information to is entrepreneurs which assists them as a tool toward the development of their business plans.

- Vernon is a pilot community for two programs: 1) PNP Entrepreneur Immigration Pilot and 2) Rural Northern Immigration Pilot Program (Community Futures).
- There are several families who are looking to add and contribute to the community. Economic development provides insight and support. Currently there are 213 recommendations as part of the Rural Northern Immigration Pilot.
- Business retention support entrepreneurs, addressing operational challenges, a big part of the role of Economic Development is to assist with leveraging partnerships. Staff discuss land use considerations, and building code considerations with new business owners.
- Do a lot of community presentations to raise awareness and get out for onsite business visits. Attending onsite meetings gets a chance to get out and meet the business owners.
- Film Inquiries & Community - the City does not have a formal process about what that process currently looks like. Economic Development staff is usually the first point of contact.
- Attended tradeshow on behalf of the City and foster relationships and promote opportunities and support for local realtors and provide third party information to assist.
- Trying to reach out more with commercial real estate agents we think about inbound attraction for investment. Part of the economic development strategy is helping realtors understand what is available in the community.
- Special Projects - Cascadia Airways were looking at bringing passenger traffic to Vernon, how can this be promoted, and addressed from a practical standpoint.
- Downtown block closure crosses transportation, operations, and a number of departments at the City. Staff are looking ahead to find out how the budget can be improved.

J. Perrott thanked the members of the Committee for their collaborative approach.

**INFORMAL GROUP
DISCUSSION**

J. Perrott, Manager, Manager, Economic Development & Tourism, hosted a round table discussion and requested each Committee member to provide feedback regarding four key questions as follows:

1. Areas of Concern; i.e., what keeps you up at night?

- Thinking about attraction and retention. How can people be kept at a macro level and micro level.
- Highly skilled people come to the community to be educated at UBCO and they need places to stay and live in order to build and grow their families and give back to the community.
- Affordable housing / zoning and working to creatively make housing affordability attainable. Currently there are 96 international students coming to Vernon and there are no places for them to stay.
- People are not coming to Vernon to work academically because housing is not available. Rental housing stock is not available or affordable for professionals and students.
- Rising interest rates and inflation will be a negative impact on businesses and citizens. The short term it will be additional costs, and in the short term we are in a tricky spot.
- RDNO approached all municipalities were canvassed to create a regional land bank. The concept that could have potential is that BC Housing could be approached to develop a strategy.
- Streamlining the development approval process and amending bylaws can be done locally. Workforce development, working with all levels to come up with creative ways to engage the workforce as possible. There are only so many people who are available to engage. If there are any strides to be made it will be in housing, if we have housing, we can attract the labour. If all communities adopted the recommendations that were in the RDNO Strategy would drive more people into our community.

- Make it easier for employers to develop workforce housing. There is more opportunity to have more discussions in this area and build upon it.
- The Okanagan Indian Band (OKIB) should be engaged in the conversations as they have youth employment opportunities that could benefit.
- Housing for remote workers who have recently moved to the region, people are living in long-term rentals or a hotel.
- Staff are relocating or moving to other communities. There is more than housing; child care is another issue for the labour force. After school care, summer camps and other solutions to assist people in the workforce and provide them with supports for their families.
- Creative solutions in housing would assist business owners, especially since we are running out of land. Business owners can build housing and childcare solutions for their staff.
- Resident retention is pivoting, they are dialing down the resident attraction, and are looking at retention. If there is a way to shift focus at the City to feature some of the items it would be worth considering.
- The Chair noted that in terms of the City providing land for partnered housing projects there will be some announcements in the next few months. Council has been working on this since January.
- Biggest concern is carrying capacity. There are 1,000 people per year coming to Vernon using services, trails, land, amenities, washrooms, parking. Would like to see push for funding for immigration programming.
- The housing portion could be addressed. Vernon building permit values are on track to hitting \$100 Million. The new housing options will target the affordable piece.
- The biggest issue that they are facing in Coldstream, the cost for bringing the places up to the standard of the housing building code would be challenging. When Suites are accepted within the Zone.

- There is a narrative in the community that not enough is being done; however, there is an opportunity to be ahead of the narrative. In 2017 there were 404 social housing, when the new units are on there will be 900+.

2. Is there an Economic Opportunity that is perhaps overlooked in Vernon?

- How do we look strategically at the longer term with respect to workforce development and housing as a long-term opportunity?
- Identifying the labour market gaps and focusing on the in-demand jobs and what livability into the focus on housing stock. Look at the middle market wage base for people and develop housing accordingly.
- Regional Partnerships are important as well. There are tremendous opportunities for future collaboration.

3. Issues / Opportunities that Economic Development & Tourism Department should consider exploring directly or indirectly through partnerships?

- Moving from destination marketing to management is a good approach.
- How does the Community collaborate with OKIB to share the story through an indigenous lens and to step up the relationship? It was discussed that partnerships could become part of the destination management piece to incorporate local indigenous stories and experiences.

4. What Should be Addressed in 2023?

- A member of the Committee suggested that it would be a potential for the City to buy and develop land and purchase it to a point where it would be ready for developers.
- Along similar lines, it was noted that both the City of Nelson / Kelowna have approved pre-packed building plans for affordable units. Applicants can pick from Options A, B or C and obtain a fast-tracked building permit.

- Opportunity to build upon local processes. As an example, there was a situation (due to supply chain issues) where large quantities of milk had to be dumped. If it could be processed locally there are opportunities to localize processing. A consultant was hired out of Nanaimo and will be approaching some of the larger scale dairy processors in the Country.
- Manufacturing will carry Vernon into the next wave, significant value-added manufacturing will happen in agriculture, steel, specialty manufacturing and electronic manufacturing. As the global supply chains and specific manufacturing shifts.
- The City of Vernon has waived Development Cost Charges (DCC's) on Social Housing which has assisted in furthering projects.

The Chair thanked everyone for attending the meeting and for their valuable feedback.

NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Economic Development Advisory Committee will be at the call of the Chair.

MOTION TO ADJOURN Moved by **J. Lister**, seconded by **R. Toperczer**:


THAT the Economic Development meeting of the June 24, 2022, be adjourned.

CARRIED.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting Economic Development Advisory Committee meeting of June 24, 2022, adjourned at **9:33 AM**.

CERTIFIED CORRECT:


Chairperson