

ADMINISTRATION UPDATES

APRIL 8, 2024 REGULAR COUNCIL MEETING

PLANNING AND COMMUNITY SERVICES

BC Transit Funding

At the September 25, 2023 [Committee of the Whole](#), Council endorsed the BC Transit MOU for three transit expansion initiatives. On March 16, 2024, BC Transit notified the City of Vernon that the new Route 10 Middleton Mountain was not funded, due to no available new fleet. Likewise, additional service on Sundays and statutory holidays for HandyDART was denied due to no new fleet. Consistent statutory holiday service on Routes 1 to 9 was approved.

Despite BC Transit denying the funding for Middleton Mountain, Administration has completed designs for the bus stop improvements, which will be constructed in 2024. Administration will return with a new transit MOU for BC Transit's 2025-2026 fiscal year in the fall, including another request for the new Middleton Mountain route.

Short Term Rentals

On March 27, 2024, the [Province provided](#) clarification regarding short-term rentals operating in strata hotels and motels. Initially, when the Short-Term Rental Accommodations Act (Bill 35) was introduced in fall 2023, strata hotels and motels were exempted. However, in anticipation of the upcoming tourist seasons, the Province is now providing details about these exemptions. The anticipated regulations, expected in April 2024 pending government approval, will include criteria for exemptions from the principal-residence requirement for certain strata-titled hotels and motels, thereby allowing them to continue operating.

The exemptions are expected to apply to existing strata hotels and motels if they meet certain criteria, such as having a staffed front desk, housekeeping services, and a dedicated platform for short-term rentals. Additionally, exemptions may apply if certain legal-use restrictions prevent multiple strata lots from being used as principal residences.

For newly constructed strata hotels and motels, they must meet the above criteria and legal-use restrictions to be exempt from the principal-residence requirement.

Strata hotels serve as the predominant type of short-term rental units in Vernon's tourist housing areas (Resort/Tourist Commercial and Residential zones). These exemptions are crucial to enable specific existing strata hotels to maintain their operations and provide tourist accommodations without facing adverse effects on their business models due to the implementation of new regulations.

2024 Tree Voucher Program

Each year, the City offers a \$25 voucher towards the purchase of a tree planted on private residential property. This program will open for the spring 2024 intake just prior to Earth Day (April 22).

Tourism Information Kiosks Update

The City of Vernon received funding from the Province of British Columbia under the Community Economic Recovery Infrastructure Program to construct three information kiosks that feature timber construction and solar powered back lighting. These kiosks were developed to support Tourism Vernon's Visitor Service strategy with more in-community information to help direct visitors to explore the community. The kiosks are located at Marshall Field (6891 Okanagan Landing Road), the downtown BC Hydro Fast Charging Station / Transit Loop (3001 31st Avenue), and near the Flo Electric Charging Station in Civic Memorial Park (3805 31st Street).

Spring 2024 information panels were recently installed and provide information on nearby attractions and commercial centers, community maps, and QR code links to the Tourism Vernon website. The information panels are expected to be updated semi-annually by Tourism Vernon.



Kiosk Location: BC Hydro Fast Charging Station – 3001 31st Avenue

RECREATION SERVICES

Special Events Application Process

Both the Recreation Master Plan and the Parks and Recreation Services Fee Assessment called for the hiring of a Special Event Coordinator in order to support the community in hosting successful events in the City of Vernon.

In January of this year, the Recreation Events Coordinator began their position with the City. The goal of this position is to have effective liaising with user groups and facility renters for the provision and coordination of outstanding events through Recreation Services, with improved user experience, economic development, and tourism in mind.

Most Special Events held in City of Vernon facilities (indoor and outdoor) involve the cooperation between many departments to help with the success of these events. Having an updated process and one point person, will allow an ease of process for both the applicant and staff.

The Recreation Events Coordinator has spent the first two months in their position putting effective requirements and procedures in place to ensure the goal of this position is met.

In addition, Recreation Services will be relaunching the events page on the website to be more user friendly and encompass more aspects of the event application process up front. Applicants can more readily see the requirements of hosting events through the application process which will allow staff to better liaise with these groups leading to better outcomes for all.

OPERATION SERVICES

Deer Park ([Project 2019-22](#))

The contractor will be on site to address deficiencies related to the tennis court and playground area in April and May 2024. Work will take place when ambient temperatures allow for the placement of asphalt and application of the tennis court surface coating.

32nd Avenue and 38th Street Reconstruction ([Project 2023-05](#))

Construction is scheduled to begin in April on 32nd Avenue and 38th Street with road closure and detours in effect. The target completion date for construction is fall 2024. Letters to nearby residents have been distributed along with a media release outlining the traffic management plan and detour routes.

Becker Bike Park Phase 2 ([Project Number 2024-01](#))

Site preparation work continued on the Becker Bike Park Phase 2 project. Construction of a permanent access road and multi-use gravel trail to the south was completed. Work is underway for bulk earth moving to prepare the site for construction of the bike park amenities.

FIRE RESCUE SERVICES

New Fire Engine/Rescue

In 2023, Council approved the purchase of a new fire engine. In completing the project, staff encountered several challenges some of which included supply shortages, unanticipated cost escalation and long build timelines. On March 19, 2024 the City received the apparatus and it will be “pushed” into service on April 15, 2024 after being fully equipped. This addition to the fleet is an important milestone for the City as it provides a Fire Underwriters Survey (FUS) recognized apparatus for each of the City’s three (3) fire stations. Fire apparatus typically are recognized by FUS for front line service for up to 15 years. In some cases this recognition can be extended for an additional 5 years. Often apparatus stay in service for longer periods to provide extra capacity within the fleet. The fire engine being replaced has served the community since 1986.



CORPORATE ADMINISTRATION

Strengthening Communities – Phase 1

At their Committee of the Whole meeting of March 25, 2024, Council requested an update on the Strengthening Communities Phase 1 Grant. The City received \$1,246,373 from UBCM for the program. Administration requested an extension to ensure the grant funding was fully utilized. UBCM has approved an extension until July 31, 2024. Administration will provide Council with an update once the final reporting is completed.

FINANCIAL SERVICES

Projected Interest vs. Actual Interest Income

At their Regular meeting of March 25, 2024, Council inquired regarding the difference between the projected interest income and the actual interest income received. The below table provides a breakdown of the information requested:

2023 net results for Return on Short Term Investments:		
Total Actual Revenue:		\$6,959,289
Less:	Allocation to DCC's	\$810,955
	Allocation to PAW's (prepaid taxes)	\$169,108
	Allocation to Security Deposits	\$342,057
	Allocation to Statutory Reserves	\$649,634
	Allocation to CWB Gas Tax Reserve	\$465,488
	Allocation to Cemetery Fund	\$820
	Allocation to Sewer Fund	\$739,687
Total Allocations as per legislation and policy		\$3,177,749
Net Return on Short Term Investments		\$3,781,540
2023 Budget estimate - Return on Short Term Investments		\$2,287,452
Difference between 2023 Budget and Actuals allocated to 2023 Unexpended Uncommitted Balance		\$1,494,088
2024 Budget estimate - Return on Short Term Investments (Net of allocations similar to above)		\$4,100,000