



THE CORPORATION OF THE CITY OF VERNON

MINUTES OF

THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE

HELD THURSDAY, APRIL 16, 2020

OKANAGAN LAKE ROOM

PRESENT: **VOTING:**

Mayor Victor Cumming, Chair (Appointed Member)
Leigha Horsfield, Community Futures (via phone)
Susan Lehman, Downtown Vernon Association (via phone)
Annette Sharkey, Social Planning of North Okanagan (via phone)
Jenna Stasuk, Accelerate Okanagan (via phone)
Tannis Nelson, Regional District of North Okanagan (via phone)
Richard Toperczer, Province of B.C. – Regional Ec. Dev. (via phone)
Dione Chambers, Greater Vernon Chamber of Commerce
Bud Mortenson, Director, UBCO (via phone)

ABSENT: Jane Lister, Okanagan College
Councillor Brian Quiring (Appointed Member)

STAFF: Kevin Poole, Manager, Economic Development & Tourism (via phone)
Roy Nuriel, Economic Development Planner
Janice Nicol, Legislative Committee Clerk

ORDER The Chair called the meeting to order at 9:02 a.m.

ADOPTION OF AGENDA Moved by Annette Sharkey; seconded by Dione Chambers;

THAT the agenda for the Thursday, April 16, 2020 meeting of the Economic Development Advisory Committee be adopted.

CARRIED.

ADOPTION OF MINUTES Moved by Annette Sharkey, seconded by Jenna Stasuk:

THAT the minutes for the December 19, 2019 meeting of the Economic Development Advisory Committee.

CARRIED.

NEW BUSINESS:

UPDATE ON THE INNOVATION CENTRE Leigha Horsfield provided an update on the Innovate North Okanagan Centre. The following points were noted:

- Many of the Economic Development Advisory Committee members have been involved since the inception of this project when the City of Vernon and Community Futures funded a feasibility study
- Following this study, feasibility and viability study was undertaken through many stakeholder sessions
- There has been a community need for many years and the right team that included many community organizations have moved the Innovation Centre forward
- Provides a great economic opportunity, two sub-committees have formed – one specifically for the Innovation Centre and one for the Hub
- Funding from the 'Rural Opportunities Fund' came through on March 2, 2020 and provides an 18-month runway for the project
- Subcontracted the running of the Centre to Accelerate Okanagan, they are developing a marketing plan and will take over project, it will eventually become another Accelerate Okanagan location
- Location decided on after a very inclusive process, will be located in the former Naked Pig Restaurant
- The proposed floor plan was reviewed. Renovations have slowed right now, hoping for end of June opening but not confirmed
- Sponsorship planning being undertaken and a name is being worked on. In conjunction, the 'spokes' within the community being solidified
- There may be an opportunity to utilize the downstairs 10,000 sq. ft area, would be perfect for Phase 2
- Bud Mortensen looking at programming opportunities with UBC-O and will connect with Leigha Horsfield
- Thank you to Leigha for taking on this process, for all of the work and ensuring process was so inclusive
- Uptake for this facility has been modeled out with very conservative numbers, other Innovation Centres have typically run out of room within 18 months.

REVIEW OF INPUT FROM COMMUNITY FUTURES REGIONAL ROUNDTABLES

Roy Nuriel and Leigha Horsfield provided a review of the Community Futures Regional Roundtables that are occurring. The following points were noted:

- There have been four weeks of virtual roundtable meetings, which are open to all businesses
- Purpose of the roundtables is to hear how businesses are being affected by COVID-19 and the challenges
- Connection can be made as there are many groups that can provide support

- Many businesses participated in March meeting
- Main challenge experienced was difficulty accessing information
- Roundtables opened up to employees, more roundtables were held, same concerns and challenges and issues – it was decided to hold one regional weekly roundtable to answer questions and provide support for businesses
- Based on info from roundtables, businesses are confused and intimidated with applying for government funding. In response, Community Futures (CF) is offering business coaches who are sitting down one on one to determine what can be accessed and how to access
- Roundtables have been extremely helpful, now bringing in experts - labour lawyers, insurance experts, Interior Health, Worksafe BC, etc.
- Chamber of Commerce will begin a webinar series on Tuesdays. Chamber will connect with CF to ensure no duplication
- Suggestion to have measurements of uptake of series by CF and Chamber – to ensure you are catching everyone and adjust accordingly to measure the reach of this.

**NORTH OKANAGAN
TOGETHER HUB**

The North Okanagan Together Hub (#NOKTogether), hosted by Community Futures, provides help to businesses as they navigate COVID-19. The following points were noted:

- The Hub was developed in discussions with the City of Vernon and the Downtown Vernon Association (DVA) to ensure businesses are not confused as to where to go to get information
- Worked with stakeholders to provide a central location for information, which is updated regularly
- Partners were pulled together in short time, was challenging but successful,
- Grateful to Beach Radio for getting the word out that site exists
- Website lists all businesses that are open
- The Hub has been very important to partners and will be a great channel for communication in terms of recovery
- Amazing how fast site came together, great job by the DVA and Chamber for their work – this site provides a central resource of all initiatives, training, information, workshops, etc. and speaks to the level of trust and collaboration that exists in this community
- Suggestion to track analytics on visits to site and questions that are asked.

RECOVERY PLANNING Kevin Poole led a discussion on plans for recovery following the pandemic. The following points were noted:

- Accommodators will continue to be impacted as this works through
- It will be important to not duplicate and to, will be a need for individual meetings
- The pandemic is difficult for municipalities as well
- Other jurisdictions have Economic Recovery Committee, need to have something similar in our community
- Staff have been brainstorming, may need to encourage more sidewalk cafes, etc.
- Vision North Okanagan (VNO) – consists of a group of individual who have economic development in their job title – meet regularly to share and collaborate
- A sub-committee of VNO should be formed to focus on recovery and develop a strategy – need to make a public statement advising of who is around the table and what is being done
- Suggestion to have a community specific sub-committee – with an action based group
- On a regional setting Central Okanagan Regional District has taken a pivotal role, is there something that might be actionable for our region with the Regional District of the North Okanagan?
- It is hoped that businesses will be slowly able to open in the next few weeks, something more formalized can be developed
- Response being fine-tuned based on what businesses need, next will be recovery planning. Chamber has seat on Premier's Task Force – how is it best to understand and communicate the needs of business?
- Sectoral recovery process beginning – how best to assist different sectors with provincial funds – need both localized and regionalized
- Businesses are working on individual plans but need to see what is being done for community and region
- There are formal and informal systems already working, would be helpful to add more to those already working on recovery rather start over
- Sub-committee needs to be determined, each sector will have its own challenges
- The Manager, Economic Development and Tourism, Dione Chambers and Leigha Horsfield to formulate recovery and publicize. Leigha to set up call to get process going.

INFORMATION ITEMS:

Review of Bulling and Harassment – Committees members to confirm, via email, that they have received and reviewed the policy.

OKCreate

Tannis Nelson shared news regarding a new website that was created in a 30 day turn-around in partnership with the Regional District of North Okanagan, Greater Vernon Museum and Archives and other local, non-for-profit groups. It is a curated website to host online content (much of it locally produced), including how-to videos, virtual local gallery tours, live stream videos, photography and more. The purpose is to encourage the community to stay engaged and active, as well as to support local, cultural not-for-profit organizations in staying connected and relevant. www.okcreatonline.com

Social Planning Council

Annette Sharkey advised that the pandemic has hit the social service sector very hard with food availability a major concern with the closure of Upper Room Mission. Turning Points and Gateway Shelters have merged into one location. Thanks to City of Vernon for providing the curling rink, we were one of the first communities in the Province to respond. Thank you to local churches for filling the food gaps – providing many pop-up programs that provide two meals a day. Many community organizations have received funding – thanks to the United Way and the Community Foundation. Thank you to Annette for a great response and for working with all organizations.

Provincial News

Maintaining services to clients has been challenging for the Province, trying to maintain cash flow for the forest sector and community response to economic emergency. Province is looking at how we emerge from pandemic – important to be slow and measured.

City of Vernon

Business continuity is being maintained for citizen – all development and City services (with the exception of Recreation Services) still in place to support as needed.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting is scheduled for June 11, 2020.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting of the Economic Development Advisory Committee adjourned at 10:38 a.m.

CERTIFIED CORRECT:



A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Victor J. Cummings", is written over a horizontal line.