



THE CORPORATION OF THE CITY OF VERNON

MINUTES

TOURISM COMMISSION MEETING

HELD WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 17, 2021

VIA ZOOM

PRESENT: VOTING:

Claus Larsen, Accommodation Provider
Richard Rolke, Greater Vernon Chamber of Commerce
Kevin O'Brien, Attractions
Dauna Kennedy, Arts & Culture
Councillor Kari Gares (Appointed Member)
Gale Woodhouse, Arts & Culture
David Gibbs, Accommodation Provider
Ricardo Smith, Sports and Events
Mayor Victor Cumming (Alternate Member)

NON-VOTING: Ian Jenkins, Silver Star Mountain Resort

ABSENT: Brett Woods, Biking
Janna Maderyc, Accommodation Provider,
Michael Van Horne, Golf
Susan Lehman, Downtown Vernon Association
Matt Scheibenpflug, Accommodation Provider
Mike Fotheringham, Okanagan Indian Band
Clinton Bialas, Restaurant
Troy Hudson, Ski

STAFF: Kevin Poole, Staff Liaison, Manager, Economic Development & Tourism
Torrie Silverthorn, Tourism Coordinator
Karen Savill, Administrative Assistant, Economic Development and Tourism
Dana Martin, Counter Clerk, Building & Licensing

ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 8:02 a.m.

TOURISM COMMISSION MINUTES – FEBRUARY 17, 2021

ADOPTION OF AGENDA

Moved by Richard Rolke, seconded by Gale Woodhouse:

THAT the agenda for Wednesday, February 17, 2021 Tourism Commission meeting be adopted.

CARRIED.

ADOPTION OF MINUTES

Moved by Dauna Kennedy, seconded by Gale Woodhouse:

THAT the minutes of the Tourism Commission meeting held Wednesday, January 20, 2021 be adopted.

CARRIED.

UNFINISHED BUISNESS

STAKEHOLDER VIRTUAL OPEN HOUSE UPDATE

The Tourism Coordinator gave an update on the Stakeholder Virtual Conference. The following points were provided:

- Virtual Conference is happening tomorrow. You can still sign up this morning.
- Those who have registered should have a link in their inbox and the link is available on our Facebook page.
- Mayor Cumming has done a video and there are great presentations lined up by Destination British Columbia and the Thompson Okanagan Tourism Association
- 90 registrants for the virtual conference

MARKETING UPDATE

The Tourism Coordinator provided an update on marketing initiatives. The following points were provided:

- The 2020 website report is back
- Website traffic is down 30%
- Normally we have 200,000 - 400,000 visitors. We were in the 160,000 range in 2020.
- People are still very much engaged
- Referrals to stakeholder websites were up by 10% and saw over 53,000 referrals from TourismVernon.com through to our partner and stakeholder websites
- Some of the list of 25 referrals included: Silver Star, Davison Orchards, Allan Brooks Nature Centre, Predator Ridge, Planet Bee, Okanagan Spirits, Ribbons of Green, Sovereign Lake, O'Keefe Ranch, Sparkling Hill, Splashdown, Bright Angel U-pick

TOURISM COMMISSION MINUTES – FEBRUARY 17, 2021

Farm, Cedar Falls campground

- Saw over 600 referrals per stakeholder from our website
- January report for digital and social websites show traffic is down but engagement is up by 30%
- Social channels continue to grow
- Promoting locally while preparing for the Provincial go-ahead (eg. Castanet Family Winter Activity List and a staycation promotion)
- Preparing for a digital push
- Website is going through a full audit
- Preparing a digital trail map for TourismVernon.com is underway
- Regional campaign with Csek Media

NEW BUSINESS:

ROUND TABLE DISCUSSION

David Gibbs, Accommodation Provider

- We are at 9-10% occupancy, down 75% from last year.

Ian Jenkins, Silver Star Mountain Resort

- Family day weekend was slow
- No bookings outside our area since early December
- Being aggressive with pricing
- Will close for the season on Easter Monday
- Locals offer is 35% off, peppered with “Star Deals”

Kevin O’Brien, Attractions

- Leased the café and store to Gum Tree Catering so it’s quiet
- Rail Trail parking lot is at over-capacity every day with users on the Rail Trail and skating on Kal Lake
- Getting calls for bookings for summer for bikes and paddleboards
- Additional signage is required re parking. Hopeful that the District of Coldstream will assist

Dauna Kennedy, Arts & Culture

- Okanagan Print Triennial (OPT) coming up in March
- Economic Impact Study being done for the Cultural Centre
- Time line on the study is unclear at this time but anticipate a fast rollout, soonest would be summer

Gale Woodhouse, Arts & Culture

- Going through a hiring process
- Concentrating on becoming more engaged with the community
- Working with RDNO, focusing on trails and parks

TOURISM COMMISSION MINUTES – FEBRUARY 17, 2021

- Going virtual
- Telus did some filming and it included the Arts Council. It'll be released on their network and across Canada. She will send the link as soon as it's available

Ricardo Smith, Sports and Events

- Business is strange. Getting hands on inventory is difficult. Rental bikes in particular, ordered in May and expected in October
- No shortage of Alberta traffic
- Supply chain has been maxed and shipping has been bottlenecked

Richard Rolke, Greater Vernon Chamber of Commerce

- Some business owners are doing extremely well, others are being challenged
- Access to labor is an on-going challenge
- Virtual events coming up – Town Halls with elected officials. Let Richard know if you'd like to register for this
- Webinars for their members coming up on a variety of topics

Mayor Victor Cumming

- The City has been experiencing constant demand in regards to development
- There is significant pressure to get the larger projects through
- Thinks we will see a significant vaccination rollout soon in Vernon. Suspects it will be a three to four-month rollout
- Will be important to get the message out quick to expediate the rollout

Kevin Poole, Staff Liaison

- Has accepted the position of Director of Community Safety, Lands, and Administration
- Will move to new position once his current position is filled
- They have done interviews for the Tourism Manager position and the Tourism Commission Chair will assist in the second round of interviews

Councillor Kari Gares

- The finance sector has seen significant growth. There is a housing crunch
- Has been a 38% increase with the majority of the increase being in the last quarter of 2020

TOURISM COMMISSION MINUTES – FEBRUARY 17, 2021

- Has redeveloped online modules so that customers can have access without having to leave their homes
- Is developing new software so that consumers can have more immediate access
- Is reaching out to developers and builders regarding the housing crunch to receive their insight
- There will be a panel of four women at an event on Women's International Day

Claus Larsen, Accommodation Provider

- Predator Ridge is seeing a lot of people wanting to stay for 1-3 nights. They are not accepting short term bookings currently
- They have nothing left to sell as far as real estate
- They have a deal with a developer to develop a 52-unit rental property
- No heli-skiing this year

INFORMATION ITEMS:

CO-OPERATIVE MARKETING PROGRAM 2021

Once applicant members in conflict of interest had been excused from the meeting, quorum would not have been reached. It was recommended that a special meeting and vote be held.

Moved by Kevin O'Brien, seconded by Richard Rolke:

THAT a special meeting and vote be held regarding the Co-operative Marketing Program 2021.

CARRIED.

DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Tourism Commission is scheduled for **Wednesday, March 17, 2021** at 8:00 a.m. via Zoom.

The Tourism Commission meeting adjourned at 8:43 a.m.

CERTIFIED CORRECT:

Claus Larsen

Chair