



THE CORPORATION OF THE CITY OF VERNON

**MINUTES OF THE  
TOURISM COMMISSION MEETING  
HELD WEDNESDAY, APRIL 21, 2021  
VIA ZOOM**

**PRESENT: VOTING:**

Claus Larsen, Accommodation Provider, Chair  
Richard Rolke, Greater Vernon Chamber of Commerce  
Dauna Kennedy, Arts & Culture, Vice Chair  
David Gibbs, Accommodation Provider  
Brett Woods, Biking  
Michael Van Horne, Golf  
Susan Lehman, Downtown Vernon Association  
Mike Fotheringham, Okanagan Indian Band  
Troy Hudson, Ski  
Councillor Kari Gares (Appointed Member)  
Mayor Victor Cumming (Alternate Member)  
Kevin O'Brien, Attractions  
Gale Woodhouse, Arts & Culture  
Clinton Bialas, Restaurant

**NON-VOTING:**

Ian Jenkins, Silver Star Mountain Resort

**ABSENT:** Matt Scheibenpflug, Accommodation Provider  
Ricardo Smith, Sports and Events  
Janna Maderyc, Accommodation Provider

**STAFF:** Kevin Poole, Staff Liaison, Manager, Economic Development & Tourism  
Torrie Silverthorn, Tourism Coordinator  
Karen Savill, Administrative Assistant, Economic Development and Tourism  
Jade Adams-Longworth, Records/Committee Clerk

**ORDER**

The meeting was called to order at 8:06 a.m.

**ADOPTION OF  
AGENDA**

Moved by Richard Rolke, seconded by Dauna Kennedy:

THAT the agenda for Wednesday, April 21, 2021 Tourism Commission meeting be adopted as amended to:

- **ADD ITEM – UNFINISHED BUSINESS** – Memo – Visitor Servicing

**CARRIED.**

**ADOPTION OF  
MINUTES**

Moved by Dauna Kennedy, seconded by Troy Hudson.

THAT the minutes of the Regular Tourism Commission meeting held Wednesday March 17, 2021 be adopted.

**CARRIED.**

*Kevin Poole, Manager, Tourism and Economic Development joined the meeting at 8:08 am*

**UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

**MARKETING  
UPDATE**

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

- Last meeting touched on the Consortium Project with Lake Country and Kelowna in based on the top up funding from Destination BC for promotion of the Rail Trail.
- Good news from the Golf and Mountain Biking sector pool projects, both received additional top up funding for promotional marketing.
- The BC Golf Marketing Alliance, will be moving forward with the Golf Consortium (that includes Predator Ridge, The Rise, Vernon Golf and Country Club and Spallumcheen Golf & Country Club).
- Looking at future travel very gently, but planning to hit the Golf Market as soon as the PHO's restrictions allow for it.
- There is lots of discussion of how to use the promotional dollars with Kelowna and Penticton in regards to the Okanagan Single Track Project.
- With the funding, the subject of marketing the trails and tracks responsibly is proving to be a common theme. Not only in respect to COVID, but for sustainable long-term use. Advertising and educating not only the locals but the tourists we are welcoming as well.

- Due to some promotional avenues still being closed, the local market is currently the main focus.
- Highlights from the local promos are the partnership with the Greater Vernon Chamber of Commerce, Mission Possible and the Staycation Give Away, and the Support Local Initiative. There has been wonderful participation with these programs.
- Looking forward to working with the Downtown Vernon Association with a similar initiative, trying to figure out what that will look like with the local businesses.
- General aspects for moving forward for when things do start to open up, it will be a slow and steady approach with one step at a time.
- All of the DMO's are going to be talking to the same audiences, it will be highly competitive when looking at the markets (in the Lower Mainland, the Island, Alberta, etc.). While 2021 is a year to keep going with the regular initiatives, it is also a time to get creative and target within our established markets.
- Want to explore the current sectors and explore the niche markets for the audiences and determine how else can we hone in and highly engage the little pockets and capitalize on them.
- The Commission discussed how 2021 is the year to pivot, so while utilizing the Strategic Plan in place, how can we adapt the strategies to accommodate for the current trends in the Tourism industry. The Commission agreed that the group should meet again to look at what else can be done within the marketing plan to make it more appropriate to the industries current climate.

**VISITOR  
SERVICING**

The Manager, Economic Development and Tourism provided a memorandum for review on the Visitor Servicing. The following points were noted:

- Past discussions have led to us not opening the Visitor Center for the upcoming summer, leaning into the piloting the Mobile Visitor Servicing for the summer and reporting back on how things went.
- Currently we are in the process to hire the summer students for the Mobile Visitor Servicing. This has had great support from Destination BC.
- The original plan was to use this summer to test this pilot program, to weigh the pros and cons and figure out what the next steps would be for Visitor Servicing.
- In the creation of a plan for the old Civic Site, a discussion

has come up surrounding what the Park Plan is and what buildings this will include.

- There has been significant discussion on what should be included and how much space needs to be allotted for certain items like visitor parking, or for a Sani-dump. Both of which will take up a substantial portion of the site.
- Additional pressures are on the Building side include the possibility for a space for an Emergency Operations Center.
- The biggest challenge is how to move forward with the park plan without knowing what the plan for the future (of the Visitor Servicing Center) is.
- While continually looking at different options, and moving forward with going mobile and investing in online servicing, the suggest is to close the Visitor Center permanently.
- The moving forward plan is to evolve additional opportunities to go mobile and meet our visitors of where they are (with kiosks, pop-ups and mobile servicing stations), and to grow and shift as needed.

The Commission noted the above and the following feedback was given:

- Tourism Commission in the past has donated \$200,000 to help with the feasibility of making the Civic Site a park.
- A Visitor Information Center is not the way of a future.
- Another location if possible would be ideal for a future Sani-dump.

Moved by David Gibbs, seconded by Dauna Kennedy.

THAT the Tourism Commission recommends that Council permanently close the Vernon Visitor Information Centre as outlined in the memorandum titled "Visitor Servicing" and dated April 14, 2021 respectfully submitted by the Manager, Economic Development and Tourism.

**CARRIED.**

*Susan Lehman left the meeting at 8:30 a.m.*

**NEW BUSINESS:**

**ROUND TABLE  
DISCUSSION**

**Greater Vernon Chamber of Commerce**

- Chamber is extremely busy with Mission Possible while continually trying to support locals and having fun with it.

**Arts & Culture Sector**

**Vernon Public Art Gallery**

- Still in the middle of the Okanagan Print Triennial, but very excited about the turnout and the worldwide recognition that has been occurring.
- The participating artist talks (occurring weekly), have been gathering a great response due to the caliber of the artist being hosted
- Overall have been thrilled that this event has been recognized worldwide.
- Otherwise carrying on with the different restrictions, and hoping they will be gone soon.

**Ski Sector**

**Sovereign Lake Nordic**

- Overall ending a successful season, this is the second-best year that we've had.
- Glad to have focused 100 percent on community and it showed in our membership increases.
- Next year we're looking at hiring four new program positions. Putting more in programming into masters and youth programs, based on last years numbers of 280 people in the programs.
- Full steam ahead for next year. Already have 6 races planned at the end of November with interest from three All American Clubs coming up (as long as restrictions allow for it)

**Attractions**

**Kalavida Surf Shop**

- Winding up for the upcoming season, until the latest PHO restrictions came into play.
- General frustration about the Province not putting the stronger restrictions in place earlier, and now the majority of BC is no longer wanting to abide by the please be good sentiment due to COVID burnout.
- Now we're not allowed to take bookings from people that aren't within our region and the difficult, frustrating part is that those individuals are already here.
- When they choose to drag this out, it is a slow death for people and businesses while putting us in an awkward position.

**Accommodation Providers**

**Prestige Hotel**

- Agree with the frustrations of the new PHO restrictions. However, if people are going to be coming, then reservations will be made.

As a business it is not our job to police people, we will educate them throughout the process.

- Still working on renovations, and it being quieter has helped move those along.
- Extended the patio into the parking lot, which has kept a little bit of life on the property.

### **Restaurant Sector**

#### **Marten Brew Pub**

- The industry right now is very dependent on the weather due to the PHO restrictions.
- General consensus is whether or not this 5-week period is going to turn into 7-8 weeks.
- Is Council looking at shutting down 30<sup>th</sup> Avenue? Multiple business could use the space to extend their patios.
- If Council is not going to endorse closing 30<sup>th</sup> Avenue, some businesses would like more transparency to why it wouldn't work.

### **Arts & Culture Sector**

#### **Arts Council of the North Okanagan**

- Hired Rodney Goodchild to be the Manager of the Community Arts Center, very excited to be working with him.
- Looking for more opportunities with working with Tourism, and believe that Vernon can and will become an Arts & Culture destination.
- Recognition that changing protocols and business structure is important even when we are launching programs online, and that will lead to the changes within the City and its culture. People will still need time to let the changes sink in.
- The Arts and Culture Sector is still not completely open (performance areas are still struggling), but still very grateful and thankful to the BC Arts Council and the Community Foundation of the North Okanagan for support they have given us to make it through this year. All of the non-profit associations have been able to stay afloat.
- The Arts Center is doing surprisingly well and is thriving with more classes, and hoping to launch more of a tourism base next summer.
- Business as usual, until we can transition back to normal.

*Kevin O'Brien left the meeting at 8:49 a.m.*

#### **Okanagan Indian Band**

- Extremely busy with a New Chief in Council and five new Councillors.

- Would love to see a music festival take place in Vernon in the future.

**Golf Sector**

**The Rise**

- Nothing has changed too much, things are busy and continuing to go really well.
- The new restrictions have been bringing cancellations from those coming from Alberta.
- Plan is to keep the people who are coming safe and happy with the focus on enjoyment. “Let’s play some golf.”

**Accommodation Provider**

**Predator Ridge**

- Continuing with the practices, including cancelling those for the short term.
- Having to be more aware that 50 percent of our residents have red Alberta plates and they live here and pay taxes here.
- The provincial camp grounds are full and it is appalling. At Ellison, there are lots of campsites with 30+ people. When the BC Government can’t enforce or control the parks under their jurisdiction, it is aggravating that the local businesses have to and are bearing the brunt of it.
- Once the restrictions lift, it may be slow in some sectors, but it will be 100 percent in others.

*Mike Fotheringham left the meeting at 8:56 a.m.*

**Biking Sector**

**Dialed Rides**

- It’s been a whirlwind of activity lately, getting things ready for the season while intergrading the new President and Vice-President.
- Still looking for our conduit to sustainable funding.
- The trail maintenance crew is officially out there preparing the trails for the upcoming season.
- The Parks (including Ellison) are quite full – however we have to be careful in the messaging sent to the government, and how vocal we are, otherwise the fear is that they may shut down the parks (as a whole).
- There are three organized youth mountain bike skills programs going on downtown currently. Canadian Medical Outdoor come to town and host a Wilderness First Aid Training Course.

*Troy Hudson left the meeting at 8:58 a.m.*

*Ian Jenkins left the meeting at 8:59 a.m.*

**TOURISM COMMISSION MINUTES**

**APRIL 21, 2021**

- The ‘Vernon Women’s Enduro,’ has been cancelled for September, but the plan is to move forward with the Biking Symposium and showcase what our community has in regards to the Parks and Trails (i.e. Kalamalka Park and the Crown Land above).

**INFORMATION ITEMS:**

**DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING** The next meeting of the Tourism Commission is scheduled for **Wednesday, May 19, 2021** at 8:00 a.m. via Zoom.

The Tourism Commission meeting adjourned at 9:11 a.m.

**CERTIFIED CORRECT:**

*Claus Larsen*  
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Chair