



THE CORPORATION OF THE CITY OF VERNON

**MINUTES OF THE
SPECIAL TOURISM COMMISSION MEETING**

HELD TUESDAY, MAY 4, 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
Mike Fotheringham, Okanagan Indian Band
Councillor Kari Gares (Appointed Member)
Gale Woodhouse, Arts & Culture
Clinton Bialas, Restaurant
Ricardo Smith, Sports and Events
Troy Hudson, Ski

NON-VOTING:

ABSENT: Matt Scheibenpflug, Accommodation Provider
Janna Maderyc, Accommodation Provider
Susan Lehman, Downtown Vernon Association
Ian Jenkins, Silver Star Mountain Resort
Mayor Victor Cumming (Alternate Member)
Kevin O'Brien, Attractions

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

ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 10:02 a.m.

SPECIAL TOURISM COMMISSION MINUTES

MAY 4, 2021

ADOPTION OF AGENDA

Moved by Troy Hudson, seconded by Gale Woodhouse:

THAT the agenda for Tuesday, May 4, 2021 Special Tourism Commission meeting be adopted as amended.

- **ADD** – Staffing Update

CARRIED.

ADOPTION OF MINUTES

Moved by Gale Woodhouse, seconded by Troy Hudson:

THAT the minutes of the Regular Tourism Commission meeting held Wednesday April 21, 2021 be adopted.

CARRIED.

NEW BUSINESS

STAFFING UPDATE

The Manager, Economic Development and Tourism gave the Committee a brief update on the hiring of new staff:

- The new Manager of Tourism is Torrie Silverthorn, congratulations to her on her new position.
- The candidates have been narrowed down for the Manager of Economic Development and Tourism, and the City is looking to have someone in that roll for May 31, 2021.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

30th AVENUE ROAD CLOSURE

The Manager, Economic Development and Tourism provided an update on the possible 30th Avenue Road Closure. The following points were noted:

- At the April 20, 2021, Council meeting there was a motion on whether or not to close 30th Avenue between 29th Street and 31st Street. The road closure would be in effect on Thursday mornings at 9 a.m. until Monday mornings. This would begin the 13th of May and end the 6th of September.
- Council asked Staff to come back with a report on costs.
- The intent was to help the Downtown businesses due to COVID restrictions and capacity issues, for those businesses who don't have room for an outdoor facility
- Councillors have been canvassing the downtown and asking the business owners for feedback.

Greater Vernon Chamber of Commerce

- Some businesses will be apprehensive, and some of the community and businesses will not like the decreased parking.
- Primarily the restaurants need to try something different and new. The current sidewalk patios have been bringing a vitality like never before.
- Would like to try to use this as an opportunity to branch into a new way of doing business.
- Mixed views, but generally in favour.

Arts & Culture Sector

Arts Council of the North Okanagan

- Challenging times brings opportunities to change the culture.
- This would be an adaptation and change that other businesses and other Downtowns have tried it before, quite successfully.
- The culture has shifted anyway – lets jump on board and provide the support to those business that are fearful. The community, and people in general will adapt and they can reach out for the support that is needed.
- Let's liven up the business practices, it's time to trial it out.

Ski Sector

Sovereign Lake Nordic Club

- Some businesses are worried, so why not help and assist when possible. Since there have been less expenses in the last year, if the ability is there to give it back to those little businesses then let's do it.

Michael Van Horne entered the meeting at 10:12 a.m.

- Wholeheartedly support it, has the potential to build a stronger business community.

Biking Sector

Dialed Rides

- In full support of this initiative, this could change the face of the Downtown.

Restaurant Sector

Marten Brew Pub

- Want to look at our focus, and if it is just short term or long-term – potential of only looking at the one year may be shortsighted.

- Biggest issues surrounding the closure appear to be timing and parking. However, removing the parking may increase foot traffic as people will have to walk past other businesses.
- In support, believe it would be a great opportunity.
- Belief that all businesses will benefit from this closure.

Accommodation Provider

Prestige Hotels

- In support but still thinking about the retailers and the concerns that they have.

Biking Sector

Sun Country Cycle

- This is a great idea, lots of Cities and Towns have been very successful with this (i.e. Banff).
- People spend more money when they are walking around, than when they are going somewhere specific to pick something up and then leave.
- Parking shouldn't be a big issue, people don't get to park in front of their favourite store in the mall. They park, get out and walk to it and through it, that isn't any more convenient. It will just be a culture shift.

Okanagan Indian Band

- When looking at the ethics of bike lanes vs parking, you can see a correlation between business sales rising when people can walk and bike.
- This isn't a risky endeavor, this has been done before and been extremely successful. Helping the downtown is key. This can be done well and if it leads to a more vibrant downtown that would be great.

Arts & Culture Sector

Vernon Public Art Gallery

- Once piece missing from this is the citizens and the tourists – the real stakeholders of the community.
- There is a need to create the space where people can go to feel safe and socialize – this may be the way to do it. Having a place to walk, shop and eat outdoors in a safe way is key. It will create the social atmosphere that everyone is missing right now.
- Changing the culture is a scary thing, especially in scary times, people are scared to add to the fear and the unknown. Its why support is needed throughout this culture change.

Golf Sector

The Rise

- Helping the downtown is key, and so is supporting the retailers.
- If we close it down temporarily or long term – it will increase foot traffic because people will need to get around down there.
- It is not a big inconvenience to take another route to get across town.

Accommodation Provider

Predator Ridge

- In agreeance with the other committee members.
- There are concerns, most of which are coming from the retail side. Should find a way to help them out.
- Other town's downtown spaces can be 'the place to go' to shop, eat and socialize – they are full of life. People need a reason to go downtown, to create that foot traffic.
- In full favour of this initiative, and think this could be very beneficial from a tourism perspective. Let's create a something that people come to Vernon for.

Arts & Culture

Arts Council of the North Okanagan

- Four months is a short period in the terms of a Pilot Project.
- Let's market Downtown Vernon as a walkable City and destination. This is a real opportunity throw everything at it and promote it to create a culture shift.
- No fears about this being very successful for Vernon, but there has to be a lot of support thrown at it.
- If there is a task force, the Arts Council would be happy to participate.

Greater Vernon Chamber of Commerce

- Concerns that if the two blocks are closed – the traffic pattern change has to be clearly advertised as well.

City of Vernon

- Clarification was given on Tourism's funding and that it has a clear framework for how it's allocated (for promotional and marketing purposes), and strict guidelines when dealing with funding from the Province. Tourism would not be able to help with any costs in relation to infrastructure (i.e. tables, chairs, benches, tents).

SPECIAL TOURISM COMMISSION MINUTES

MAY 4, 2021

- Agreed it could help bring a liveliness back to the downtown core, but proper planning is needed.
- Where it has succeeded in other communities like Calgary and Kelowna, both were well planned projects that had a significant amount of long-term planning, and consultations in place.
- Clear communication and marketing around the closures and its hours will aid in the success of the initiative.
- Tourism Vernon could support the initiative by marketing the downtown closure as a new attraction.

Moved by Ricardo Smith, seconded by Gale Woodhouse.

THAT the Tourism Commission would like to notify Council that they are supportive of the proposed 30th Avenue street closure.

AND FURTHER that if approved, the Tourism Commission could support the initiative through their marketing efforts.

CARRIED.

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 10:29 a.m.

CERTIFIED CORRECT:

Claus Larsen

Chair