



THE CORPORATION OF THE CITY OF VERNON

**MINUTES OF THE
TOURISM COMMISSION MEETING
HELD WEDNESDAY, JUNE 16, 2021
VIA ZOOM**

PRESENT: VOTING:

Claus Larsen, Accommodation Provider, Chair
Dauna Kennedy, Arts & Culture, Vice Chair
Richard Rolke, Greater Vernon Chamber of Commerce
Michael Van Horne, Golf
Susan Lehman, Downtown Vernon Association
Mike Fotheringham, Okanagan Indian Band
Troy Hudson, Ski
Gale Woodhouse, Arts & Culture
Clinton Bialas, Restaurant
Samantha Jones, Sparkling Hills Resort
Mayor Victor Cumming (Alternate Member)

NON-VOTING:

Ian Jenkins, Silver Star Mountain Resort

ABSENT: David Gibbs, Accommodation Provider
Brett Woods, Biking
Councillor Kari Gares (Appointed Member)
Kevin O'Brien, Attractions
Ricardo Smith, Sports and Events

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

ORDER

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

**LAND
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

As Chair of the City of Vernon's Tourism Commission, and in the spirit of this gathering, I recognize the City of Vernon is located in the traditional territory of the Syilx people of the Okanagan Nation.

ADOPTION OF AGENDA

Moved by Gale Woodhouse, seconded by Dauna Kennedy:

THAT the agenda for Wednesday, June 16, 2021 Tourism Commission meeting be adopted:

CARRIED.

ADOPTION OF MINUTES

Moved by Troy Hudson, seconded by Richard Rolke:

THAT the minutes of the Regular Tourism Commission meeting held Wednesday May 19, 2021 be adopted.

CARRIED.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

STAFFING UPDATE

The Manager, Tourism provided a staffing update for the position, Manager, Economic Development and Tourism.

- The Committee welcomed and congratulated Jon Perrott to the team.

Ian Jenkins joined the meeting at 8:04 a.m.

DOWNTOWN STREET CLOSURE

Susan Lehman from the Downtown Vernon Association opened a discussion on the Downtown Street Closure, and how to aid the local businesses. The following points were discussed:

- City Council has approved the closure of the 2900 Block of 30th Avenue/Main Street for a trial period for this summer season.
- One of the challenges is that there are roughly 11 ½ weeks to program this space.
- Looking for interest in the program schedule, the space.
- The goal is to have the space being occupied and for it to be busy.
- The harder times to fill have been over the long weekends and on Sundays and Mondays.
- The street will be closed 24 hours a day for the whole duration of the trial. Businesses typically run 6:00 am until 12:00am. But that will also be dependent on the liquor licences.
- Would like to tap into Public Art Opportunities and to run some of the design ideas past Arts and Culture Sector.
- Tourism Vernon will support by:
 - Additional Marketing.
 - Placing the Mobile Visitor Servicing Team on 30th Avenue to engage the people on the street.
 - Giveaways with Downtown Dollars, and increasing online engagement with ambassadors.

- Advertise with a boost in the digital campaigning, a possibility of dedicating a whole blog post, and additional advertising on the website – once we have the imagery for it.

NEW BUSINESS

NEW COMMISSION MEMBER

The Manager, Tourism provided a brief introduction for the new Tourism Commission Member representing Sparkling Hill Resort. The following points were noted:

- The Commission welcomed Samantha Jones, Director of Marketing and Sales.

MARKETING UPDATE

The Manager, Tourism provided a Marketing Update. The following was noted:

- We have finally been able to pick up the marketing with the PHO restrictions lifting.
- Rogers Media – A robust campaign that contains a digital, radio, and TV campaigns. Starting slowly with the BC audience, and move more nationally as restrictions lift.
 - The digital campaign starts today, with the TV and radio to follow shortly.
 - Part of the Rogers campaign is putting us on City TV and on NHL.com, which should be implemented on July 1st.
- Castanet – Our support local campaign is going to continue. Targeting local audiences will be key in helping us throughout this recovery.
- Glacier Media – A Vancouver based media company, some paid sponsored content will be targeting the lower mainland.
- All of the marketing campaigns are currently on a dial switch, as things open up then the campaigns will ramp up as the restrictions allow.
- Digital Campaigns
 - Facebook, Instagram have been performing well.
 - Just added a YouTube channel, which has allowed for great feedback to come in from the locals
 - Website traffic is up, due to the
- The Visitor Guides are here and are getting distributed.
- Visitor serving is going well – really pleased with their progress, and our summer students are becoming fantastic ambassadors.
 - There have been a lot of conversations with locals.
 - Kekuli Bay Campground – has been one of the best

feedback spots. Planning on doing more campgrounds.

- Roughly 30-40 calls and emails a week, have been coming in. Eager to see those numbers go up.
- Ready for Vernon to level up and want to seize the opportunities associate with that.

SUB COMMITTEE VOLUNTEERS

The Manager, Tourism brought forward that the Co-op Marketing Sub Committee is looking for volunteers for the second intake of applications for review. The following points were noted:

- The deadline for any applications will be July 2, 2021.
- We will be in touch with the Sub Committee after then.
 - Dauna Kennedy, Claus Larsen and Micheal Van Horne all volunteered for the Sub Committee.

ROUND TABLE DISCUSSION

UPCOMING SUMMER SEASON

The Manager, Tourism asked the Commission the following two questions for the Committees consideration:

1. What is your confident level like for the tourist season ahead?
2. Is your organization interested in welcoming out of province visitors this summer?

The following feedback was given:

Ski Sector

Sovereign Lake Nordic Club

- Very optimistic about the upcoming season. Already getting lots of out of town and out of region inquiries, including other countries.
- Sold a quarter of the seasons passes so far, there has been a quite a demand already.
- Sovereign Lake Nordic Club just won BC Parks Community Partner of the Year Award.
- Have been getting a lot of positive comments and feedback from the industry.
- Very keen to see things move forward and get back to normal for the fall.
- Have 9 events already planned for the fall, including the Canada Cup.

Greater Vernon Chamber of Commerce

- Cautiously optimistic, everything depends on the case counts that are coming in.
- One concern is the pent-up demand and how many people are

we going to see, and how fast are we going to see them. Are the businesses going to be able to keep up with that demand?

Downtown Vernon Association

- The confidence level is fairly high and there is a want to encourage people to come and enjoy the Okanagan – but we will remain within the public health orders.
- All the organizations can do is set the stage for the people to come.

Okanagan Indian Band

- Looking forward to more outdoor events and gatherings.
- OKIB Member, Shane Miller received an award for Tourism Business of the Year for his Food Truck that specializes in bannock.
- The reconstruction of the new OKIB Cultural Arbor in Komasket Park is set to be underway.

City of Vernon

- City parks, and boat launches have seen an increase in the numbers of people using them in the last couple of weeks.
- Excited about the visitors coming – trying to just make sure everyone is safe.
- Optimistic and hoping for more good news come July.

Accommodation Provider

Sparkling Hill Resort

- There has been rapid pickup and uptake in our bookings, the tourism season for summer is looking fantastic.
- Winter is typically slower. Currently looking into ways to drive up more business overseas if the restrictions allow for it.
- Cautiously optimistic – will follow the Public Health Orders as they come in.
- Currently are running a vaccination drive up here for the families, residents and staff that live and work up in the Predator Ridge and Sparkling Hills area.
- Yes, very open to welcoming visitors from any area.

Restaurant Sector

Marten Brew Pub

- Very optimistic and a little excited.
- People are seeing that it is returning to normal, less scared to

get out there and live life again.

- Reservations are coming up in numbers – smaller parties than before – but it is returning.
- Surprised by the number of out of province reservations and bookings.
- Excited for the 30th Avenue Street Closure, want to thank for everyone's support and hope that it will be a building block and a step forward for following years.

Arts and Culture Sector

Vernon Public Art Gallery

- Excited and positive about the summer coming, and moving forward with live events.
- Only unsure about the size and scope of events can be due to uncertainty of PHO restrictions.
- Midsummers Eve will be the first event on July 21, 2021.
- Planning on wrapping up the summer with Riot on the Roof (at the Parkade).
- Welcoming all visitors, not just out of region visitors. People are anxious to get back to socializing, just going to keep an eye on the set capacities.

Mike Fotheringham left the meeting at 8:38 a.m.

- Will be launching the Funding and Capitol Campaign for the new facility in the fall.

Arts and Culture Sector

Arts Council of the North Okanagan

- Cautiously optimistic for this season, very optimistic for the winter and next year.
- No big events planned as of yet – larger events normally take around 12 months to plan. Focusing on smaller events and places. Still waiting on PHO's to shift a little bit.
- The hard part is that people are anxious to get to the larger events. But sticking with the limit of under 50 to reduce the chance of having to cancel the events.
- Looking into the next year for the bigger events and major planning.
- The North Okanagan and the Thompson Okanagan are working on coming together.
- The Art Center is looking at gearing towards asking, "What is our tourism focus?" and "How do we get there?"
- The focus is right now is on Community Development in the

Art Council.

- Excited about new beginnings.

Silver Star Mountain Resort

- Overall holding tight and things are looking optimistic. In general, there is a lot of pent up demand for most attractions and services.
- Trying to stem business from that demand and not sell out of passes, and in the process of getting rid of parking restrictions for the upcoming season.
- Currently the season passes are now on sale, the bike park is opening next Friday (June 18, 2021), and the trails have been very busy.
- Just received a \$200,000 Infrastructure Grant to build more signature trails, walking trails and a pump track down in the village.
- Occupancy is looking okay in the summer, trying to encourage “Stay and Play.” If there is any overflow, please encourage people to come on up.
- With travelers and tourists, the approach is the same as in the winter. There are no intentions of blocking people, and reservations and bookings can be made as long as they fall within the PHO.
- Are ready for Local, Regional and National travel to fully come. International travel is more questionable for next Ski and Board season.

Golf Sector

The Rise

- Very confident in the tourist season ahead. It has been busy with phone calls and emails coming in.
- As time as been passing, and PHO restrictions are lifting there has been more interest from the Lower Mainland, East Kootenays and other Provinces. Only hope is that they are doing their part to keep everyone safe.
- Keen for things to open up more, so that more people can travel.

Accommodation Provider

Predator Ridge

- The tourism season has started already, the summer season is booking up fast.
- A challenging part of re-opening is that a lot of people have left

the industry, leaving staffing to be our challenge.

- As people are allowed to travel more, it will continually get busier.
- There has been no proactive advertising, but that hasn't stopped people from coming.

Tourism Vernon

- While there were challenges that everyone has faced – some communities have faced more and harder ones.
- People closed when they needed to and have been working hard to reopen.
- The majority of businesses and stakeholders in this meeting is saying that they are ready to greet tourists when the restrictions are lifted – Well done.

INFORMATION ITEMS:

**DATE AND TIME OF
NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting of the Tourism Commission is scheduled for **Wednesday, July 21, 2021** at 8:00 a.m. via Zoom.

The Tourism Commission meeting adjourned at 8:53 a.m.

CERTIFIED CORRECT:

Claus Larsen

Chair