



THE CORPORATION OF THE CITY OF VERNON

**MINUTES OF THE  
TOURISM COMMISSION MEETING  
HELD WEDNESDAY, JULY 21, 2021  
OKANAGAN LAKE ROOM**

**PRESENT: VOTING:**

Claus Larsen, Accommodation Provider, Chair  
Richard Rolke, Greater Vernon Chamber of Commerce  
Susan Lehman, Downtown Vernon Association  
Gale Woodhouse, Arts & Culture  
Clinton Bialas, Restaurant  
Samantha Jones, Sparkling Hills Resort  
Mayor Victor Cumming (Alternate Member)  
Brett Woods, Biking  
Councillor Kari Gares (Appointed Member)  
Kevin O'Brien, Attractions

**NON-VOTING:** Ian Jenkins, Silver Star Mountain Resort

**ABSENT:** David Gibbs, Accommodation Provider  
Dauna Kennedy, Arts & Culture, Vice Chair  
Michael Van Horne, Golf  
Mike Fotheringham, Okanagan Indian Band  
Troy Hudson, Ski  
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  
Dana Martin, Counter Clerk

**ORDER** The meeting was called to order at 8:00 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 Richard Rolke seconded by Kevin O'Brien:

THAT the agenda for Wednesday, July 21, 2021 Tourism Commission meeting be adopted:

**CARRIED.**

**ADOPTION OF  
MINUTES**

Moved by Richard Rolke, seconded by Gale Woodhouse:

THAT the minutes of the Regular Tourism Commission meeting held Wednesday June 16, 2021 be adopted.

**CARRIED.**

**UNFINISHED BUSINESS:**

**MARKETING  
UPDATE**

The Manager, Tourism provided a marketing update. The following points were noted:

- Welcome to Samantha Jones of Sparkling Hill as this is the first time joining us in person
- Round the room introductions
- Many good conversations with John re where Tourism can go Agreed that it is time to kick it up a notch
- Plan for Torrie to do a marketing presentation every month
- We're open! Currently in phase 3 of BC's restart plan. The US may be able to travel to Canada in August and international travel will return soon
- Marketing Projects at a Glance:
- 2900 Plaza is in progress and Tourism Vernon is supporting marketing efforts with a shop local campaign with Castanet. The mobile visitor services team has a spinning wheel at their pop-up booth and is handing out DVA dollars for prizing.
- Also coming up is the #ExploreVernon campaign with Seekers Media, featuring the Kal Crystal Waters Trail, Okanagan Rail Trail, Kalamalka Indigenous Gardens and SilverStar Mountain Resort
- Full page ad in BC Magazine, Road Trips Guide
- Viewed "Activate Your Staycation", a YouTube video that has generated over 30,000 views. Received great feedback. Working on a longer version with revised messaging to be shown on City TV and NHL.com.
- Social & Digital Audiences – Everything is "up". We are setting new benchmarks. Website referrals are at almost 7,000. For the first time ever the Hotels Page made the

Top Performing Pages. Events Calendar is at number three. We have a sustained growth on Instagram. E-Newsletters is low but you should see it go up. Facebook is averaging 1,000-2,000 views per post and 6,000 views on Instagram.

- Visitor Servicing – We are fortunate to have Morgan and Paige. Overall our numbers are down. Our goal is to have 3,000 quality interactions by the end of August. We are missing big events such as the normal Sunshine Festival and Funtastic. The beaches are the hot spots. Our locations are a work-in-progress. We're capturing people we would not have captured before.
- Staff shortages are a concern with every one of our stake holders.
- Events Calendar is a good source of information for anyone asking what's happening in Vernon.
- Provincial Visitations – Real decline back East. Alberta was down 26% and BC was only down 15% through 2020.
- Room Revenues – August is our peak season. We are doing okay and anticipating a healthy September. Trying to generate our shoulder season traffic.
- MRDT is performing better than expected. Let's do our best to extend the shoulder season.
- Forecasting is important now because we start planning next year's budget in August. We will be bringing ideas to the group. If a rental is over 30 days MRDT is not collected.
- Predator Ridge is expecting more room revenue in four months (June-Sept) than the rest of the year. Expects the MRDT to be healthy this year
- We want to be thoughtful on how we spend the money. We want to attract people who will love Vernon.
- Good time to review our website
- \$100,000 set aside to make sure we're working with partners (Co-op program). Let's make sure our campaigns are aligned with what we want to do.
- Hotel Tax Renewal – Done every five years. Expires in 2022. Provincial Government needs everything submitted six months in advance.

*Kevin O'Brien left the meeting at 8:33 am*

- Former Visitor Information Centre is being used for emergency services, storage for Tourism and also a community space. BC Games will be utilizing the space

- from August 15, 2021 to March 31, 2022.
- Tourism Vernon's mobile team are going to campsites, Kal Park, beaches. Challenge is determining which are the best days to go. Richard Rolke suggested trying the Cousins' Bay parking lot. Also suggested the Walmart parking lot, Swan Lake Market, the mall and Superstore.
  - We are training staff to set up engagement points. The suggestion was made to provide a vehicle. Perhaps a VW van painted in Vernon's blue. Suggestion was also made to set up a booth and hand out free reusable bags. We are currently handing out bubbles and they are popular with the kids.
  - Tourism Kelowna is largely retail focused with very few brochures at their Visitor Centre.
  - There are tons of questions about the smoke but no one is canceling. People are shifting their dates but not dropping off. It is not anticipated that the State of Emergency will have much of an impact.
  - It was suggested to identify options for indoor activities to plan for air quality concerns.
  - Webcams are helpful as people want to be able to see what is happening. The webcams at Sparkling Hill and SilverStar Mountain Resort are getting a lot of traffic.
  - Predator Ridge has not seen a decrease in outdoor activities on smoky days
  - John Perrott asked if anyone is seeing a gap in visitors?
  - Clinton Bialas – a lot of restaurants are reducing hours. Trying to hire. There is fatigue. Still getting a pile of people from Manitoba and Vancouver. More customers booking for work meetings than weddings and birthday parties. Marten Brewing is currently paying Line Cooks \$23/hr, up from \$17/hr but they need to absorb these costs. Marten Brewing would be breaking records if they had enough staff. No one is applying. It's not a matter of paying more.
  - The Bulldog is closed Monday and Tuesday. They tried to do seven days a week but we just don't have enough people.
  - Pallino's has finished their reservation but is still operating for take out only as they can't find enough food and beverage staff.

### **NEW BUSINESS**

#### **GREATER VERNON MUSEUM & ARCHIVES**

The Greater Vernon Museum & Archives have requested a letter of support from the Tourism Commission for their grant application to the Canada Healthy Communities Initiative

**REQUEST FOR  
LETTER OF  
SUPPORT**

Program for their Mobile Okanagan Virtual Explorer (MOVE) Project. The Manager, Tourism provided the following related information:

- The Greater Vernon Museum & Archives are applying for grant funding and have requested a letter of support. It is a QR Code Project at historical and culturally significant places in the area to enhance the visitor's (and local's) experience. They are working to develop a mini-website. We would receive regular updates.

MOVED by Richard Rolke, Seconded by Claus Larsen

THAT the Tourism Commission directs staff to draft a letter of support.

**CARRIED.**

**Co-op Marketing  
Recommendations**

The Co-op Marketing Sub-Committee met on Tuesday July 13, 2021 to review the applications for intake period #2. The Manager, Tourism provided the following points:

- The program was undersubscribed
- We did two intake periods
- It is a 50/50 marketing funding program
- The sub-committee would like to recommend giving everyone their full ask with the exception of the Vernon Proms Classical Music Festival as they submitted a request for funding for advertising expenses incurred in 2020. These expenses do not qualify under the policy and guidelines of the program.
- SilverStar Mountain Resort's application is for a spectator event – Crankworx
- Davison Orchard's application has a campaign to run in the Orchard Park Shopping Centre including the Vernon Tourism logo.
- Okanagan Spirits Craft Distillery's application is for the Vancouver Christmas Market. This event sees thousands of people annually. They will include Tourism Vernon's logo in their marketing and they will hand out Vernon Visitor Guides.

The recommendations are as follows:

Allan Brooks Nature Centre - \$1,000

Davison Orchards - \$6,775  
Okanagan Military Tattoo - \$3,710  
Okanagan Spirits Craft Distillery - \$10,000  
SilverStar Mountain Resort - \$5,000  
Sovereign Lake Nordic Club - \$2,500  
Vernon Proms Classical Music Festival - \$2,750  
Vernon Winter Carnival - \$3,000

Total \$34,735

MOVED by Richard Rolke, Seconded by Claus Larsen

THAT the Tourism Commission supports the funding allocation for Tourism Vernon's Co-op Marketing Program for intake number two, as recommended.

**CARRIED.**

**INFORMATION ITEMS:**

- Mayor Cumming asked that Tourism Commission members provide a one-liner to give Tourism Vernon feedback on the impact to their businesses related to the Provincial announcement of the State of Emergency
- Torrie reminded the group that budget season is coming and suggested we meet in August to discuss
- Councilor Gares suggested that Zoom be made available for August so that those we are out of town may attend. It was decided that we would first determine if there would be a quorum with those who are able to attend in person.

**DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING** The next meeting of the Tourism Commission is scheduled for **Wednesday, August 18, 2021** at 8:00 a.m.

The Tourism Commission meeting adjourned at 9:04 a.m.

**CERTIFIED CORRECT:**

*Claus Larsen*

Chair