



THE CORPORATION OF THE CITY OF VERNON

MINUTES OF THE TOURISM COMMISSION MEETING HELD WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 15, 2021 OKANAGAN LAKE ROOM - 8:00 AM

PRESENT: Claus Larsen, Accommodation Provider (Chair)
Councillor Gares, City of Vernon (Appointed Member)
Gale Woodhouse, Arts & Culture
Michael Van Horne, Golf
Brett Woods, Biking
Troy Hudson, Ski
Ricardo Smith, Sports & Events
Kevin O'Brien, Attractions
Dauna Kennedy, Arts & Culture

NON-VOTING: Mayor Cumming (Alternate)
Ian Jenkins, Silver Star Mountain Resort (Non-Voting)
Councillor Teresa Durning, City of Vernon (Appointed for 2022)

ABSENT: Clinton Bialas, Restaurant
Bobby Bissessar, Accommodation Provider
Richard Rolke, Greater Vernon Chamber of Commerce
Michael Fotheringham, Okanagan Indian Band

STAFF: Hannah Lucich, Tourism Coordinator
Karen Savill, Administrative Assistant
John Perrott, Manager, Economic Development & Tourism
Torrie Silverthorn, Manager, Tourism
Tracy Mueller, Committee Clerk

ORDER The meeting was called to order at 8:02 AM

**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.*

Before the start of the meeting, the Chair and members of the Commission extended sincere gratitude to Councillor Gares for her support, guidance, and encouragement over what has been an extremely difficult and challenging time.

Councillor Teresa Durning was welcomed as the newest member of Council; staff noted that she was recently appointed to the Tourism Commission as part of her new portfolio and will officially begin serving on the Commission in January 2022.

ADOPTION OF AGENDA

Moved by Kevin O'Brien seconded by Mike Van Horne:

THAT the agenda for Wednesday, December 15, 2021, Tourism Commission meeting be adopted.

CARRIED.

ADOPTION OF MINUTES

Moved by Dauna Kennedy, seconded by Troy Hudson:

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

CARRIED.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

NEW BUSINESS

2022 TACTICAL MARKETING PLAN UPDATE

- Staff noted they conducted a preliminary meeting of the Marketing Committee; some of the key items discussed were as follows:
 - **2022 Tour Operator Event** - Merits of a hosting a Tour Operator event in the Lower Mainland.
 - **International Marketing Campaign** - The Committee will keep a close eye on opportunities; staff clarified this particular initiative will be dependent on what flights are coming in from the Kelowna International airport.
 - **2022 Tactical Plan** - The Committee will work on creating a Tactical Plan in 2022.
 - **Next Meeting** - The next meeting of the Marketing Committee will be held in early January 2022.

MRDT RENEWAL UPDATE

- Municipal and Regional District Tax (MRDT) expires in January 21, 2023. Staff noted that the MRDT program was introduced to raise revenue for local tourism marketing, programs, and projects.
- Staff have requirements to meet to get the hotel tax renewal; one of the requirements is the renewal of the 5-year Strategic Plan. Staff noted that it is an interesting year because the City of Vernon is also at the end of the 5-year Business Strategy.
- Part of the process will involve speaking with the hoteliers, the plan will be launched on January 25, 2022.

- The plan will include invitations for members of the community to participate in two (2) public engagement as follows:
 - **Zoom Meeting Session** - There will be a large public engagement session conducted on Zoom and it will be a three-hour session.
 - **Tourism Engagement Session** - There will also be a special three-hour Tourism Engagement session. The date will be February 2, 2022, from 9 - 12 Noon in order to receive public input on the proposed 5-Year Plan. The meeting will be scheduled in person on the Council Chamber.
- The engagement pieces will shed light on the strengths of the program and areas for improvement.
- Staff, in response to a question from the Commission advised that the current plan expires on January 1, 2022. Staff further clarified that the new plan should be ready to present in April.
- Mayor and Council will be invited to the two (2) Public Information sessions in January.

**COMMISSION
MEMBER
APPOINTMENT
UPDATE**

- Staff noted that Council appointments have been completed and that the letters of gratitude and appointment renewals will be sent out from Legislative Services.
- There were a lot of reapplications for the Commission, there was healthy competition for new spots and there will be a couple of new faces in 2022.
- Staff sincerely thanked Councillor Gares for her guidance, advocacy and public support of the Commission's goals and objectives during her appointed term as a member.

**COMMUNITY HOLIDAY
EVENT UPDATE**

- Staff provided a verbal update regarding the City of Vernon events calendar: <https://calendar.tourismvernon.com/>
- The tourism website events calendar visitor activity, month-over-month is up 28%.
- Staff noted that a lot of people are planning for their holidays while visiting friends, family and visiting SilverStar Mountain Resort. There has been a lot of good engagement with the site.
- All members of the Commission were invited to advise staff of their upcoming events and activities and have them posted on the calendar.

**LETTERS OF
SUPPORT / GRANT
FUNDING**

- The Province published their list of all the organizations that were awarded grant funding.
- In Vernon there were 10 tourism organizations that received grants; of those 10, the Tourism Commission provided letters for the following:
 1. Freaky Creeky;
 2. BC Winter Games;
 3. Okanagan Military Tattoo;
 4. Okanagan Rail Ride;
 5. Vernon Winter Carnival;
 6. Women's Bombshell Enduro; and
 7. Kal Classic Stand Up Paddle (SUP) Festival.
- Staff noted this is just one example of where the Commission has made a direct impact within our local community.

TERM WRAP UP

- The Commission thanked Mayor Cumming and noted that his contribution and leadership is appreciated in terms of advocacy at the Council table.
- It was discussed that it has been one of the most challenging terms ever due to COVID-19 and weather events and the trickle-down impacts both have had on the tourism sector.
- Staff noted that it has been an honour to share in the opportunities and collectively navigate the challenges that have presented over the past year.
- Everyone on the Commission is optimistic regarding the direction that Vernon is heading. There are some very unique things happening within the community and some amazingly creative ideas that would have not, under normal circumstances, been even thought of that are now coming forward because businesses have been forced to pivot.
- Staff thanked all members of the Commission for the tremendous impact they have had in making Vernon a better place to live, work and play.

**ROUNDTABLE
DISCUSSION - WRAP
UP THOUGHTS**

Staff posed the following two (2) questions to members of the Commission for their consideration and comment:

- 1. What is everyone most proud of accomplishing as a member of the Commission?**
- 2. What do you hope to see happen for Tourism in Vernon moving forward?**

A summary of feedback received from members of the Commission is as follows:

What is everyone most proud of accomplishing as a member of the Commission?

- With COVID-19 the group as a whole has done a very good job with maintaining positive messaging.
- Very proud of our Council leadership, the members of the Commission and how resilient staff is.
- The group has always felt very supportive even during challenging times.
- Working as a member of the Commission has been a real joy. This group has come together with open minds and smiles on their faces even during adversity. Many businesses have pivoted more than once and reached beyond what they anticipated to secure what little market share was left among the changing rules that everyone has had to deal with. A lot of the adaptations are going to stick and we will be able to forge new foundations.
- COVID-19 does not necessarily have the same negative connotations anymore. As a group we have realized that we can do a lot more with what we have. This Commission has done an exceptional job in creating a new fresh vision. Job well done to the Commission and the Community as a whole - we have all rallied together and not just stayed in our own individual silos.
- It has been gratifying to see the group continue to function and keep inspiring each other. Arts and Culture is very high on inspiration and creativity. Grateful that there is still enthusiasm for people visiting our community.

- It has been deeply moving to see the level of commitment for the individuals who are members of the Commission in guiding the City toward a global tourism market.

The Chair thanked everyone for all the great work that has been done thus far and acknowledged the dedication of all serving members of the Commission.

Mayor Cumming left the meeting at 8:27 AM

What do you hope to see happen for Tourism in Vernon moving forward?

- Looking forward to continuing as a part of this group.
- Looking forward to more partnerships and initiatives; out of crisis came creativity and success.
- Bringing back events to the City of Vernon and hosting exceptional events. We are on the cusp of great things and the last two weekends showcased that Vernon can be an international industry in the tourism sector.
- There is a ton of opportunity for continued collaboration and building success.
- It has been a great opportunity and sometimes we sell ourselves short sometimes of what a great place Vernon is.

Mayor Cumming rejoined the meeting at 8:37 AM

- Golf, stand up paddle board, summer biking, the Cultural component has really come on and there has been a significant difference in the quality of product that we have been providing and what is available in terms of supply.
- These kinds of things were very in the infancy a few years ago, a difference in the quality and breath of the product. It was good before, it is wider broader and overlap things going on.

The Mayor thanked everyone on the Commission for their collaborative approach and contributions toward enhancing tourism in the City of Vernon.

**HOTEL MRDT
COLLECTION
TRACKING MONTHLY**

- Staff provided the Commission with a brief overview of statistics as follows:
 - The last strategic plan did its job and catapulted the City into the spotlight as a tourist destination.
 - The first year MRDT was enacted was in 2011, at that time the fund was just under \$400K.
 - When tourist travel to Vernon has been at its peak (during non COVID-19) we have seen over \$1M in revenue.
 - When COVID-19 occurred, the revenue dropped but given the challenging circumstances it has been an astounding year as we have realized \$376K in revenue.
 - Staff shared that from 2016 - 2020, for every month of MRDT collection, the City has been above the targets set out within the 5-year goals.
- Staff will be providing additional insights and statistics for Commission review in early 2022.
- A member of the Commission noted that some other communities have encountered reluctance when they go to conduct their renewal programs. It was discussed that the members of the Commission will assist in continuing to foster education and advocacy and speak with their colleagues and contacts within the industry to focus on the positive benefits of contributing to the MRDT.
- Staff clarified that Education is key and that capacity has also been a challenge. With new team members coming online within the Tourism and Economic Development Department education can be rolled into the communication plan.
- Staff further noted that the Tourism Industry Conference will be managed a bit differently in 2022, with the focus on gathering partnerships, and creating a focal point for industry education, establishing ambassadors as well as evolving and growing both the local expertise and expanding social networks.
- There will be detailed plan with steps and milestones. Staff noted that July 1, 2022 is the date that everything that needs to be finalized and put forward to the Province.

TOURISM COMMISSION MINUTES

DECEMBER 15, 2021

**COVID-19 PASSPORT
REMINDER**

- Staff noted that Kim Flick, Director, Community Infrastructure and Development, will be attending the January Tourism Commission meeting for the purpose of checking COVID-19 passports before the start of the meeting as per the City of Vernon Policy.
- If members have concerns please reach out to the staff liaisons.

**DATE AND TIME OF
NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting of the Tourism Commission is scheduled for **Wednesday, January 19, 2022** at 8:00 AM.

ADJOURNMENT

Moved by Dauna Kennedy, seconded by Brett Woods:

THAT the Tourism Commission meeting of December 15, 2021 be adjourned.

CARRIED.

The Tourism Commission meeting adjourned at **8:52 AM**

CERTIFIED CORRECT:


Chair