



THE CORPORATION OF THE CITY OF VERNON

MINUTES OF THE TOURISM COMMISSION MEETING HELD WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 19, 2022 OKANAGAN LAKE ROOM - 8:00 AM

PRESENT: Claus Larsen, Accommodation Provider (Chair)
Councillor Teresa Durning, City of Vernon (Appointed Member)
Gale Woodhouse, Arts & Culture
Brett Woods, Biking
Troy Hudson, Ski
Dauna Kennedy, Arts & Culture
Clinton Bialas, Restaurant
Bobby Bissessar, Accommodation Provider
Richard Rolke, Greater Vernon Chamber of Commerce
Janine Collard, Attractions
Clara Snedden, Accommodation Provider

NON-VOTING: Mayor Cumming (Alternate)

ABSENT: Ian Jenkins, Silver Star Mountain Resort (Non-Voting)
Michael Van Horne, Golf
Vicki Proulx, Sports & Events

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

ORDER The meeting was called to order at 8:00 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.*

**ADOPTION OF
AGENDA** Moved by R. Rolke, seconded by D. Kennedy:

THAT the agenda for Wednesday, January 19, 2022, Tourism Commission meeting be adopted.

CARRIED

**ADOPTION OF
MINUTES**

Moved by R. Rolke, seconded by D. Kennedy:

THAT the minutes of the Tourism Commission meeting held Wednesday, December 15, 2021, be adopted.

CARRIED

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

There were no items to discuss.

NEW BUSINESS

INTRODUCTIONS

Staff welcomed Commission members to the inaugural meeting of 2022, all members took part in a brief round-table introduction for the benefit of the new incumbents.

The Chair provided the group with a broad overview of the history of the Tourism Commission and noted that since inception there has been an amazing transformation in terms of strategically positioning Vernon as a Tourist Destination and showcasing the various activities the City has to offer.

The Chair further noted that to continue the forward trajectory, it is vitally important that the Municipal and Regional District Tax (MRDT) program be championed by all Commission members and that members of the community fully understand and appreciate the value of participation.

Before the motion was put, staff called for nominations or expressions of interest regarding the 2022 Chair and Vice Chair position.

**ELECTIONS &
APPOINTMENTS**

Commissioner C. Larsen volunteered to continue serving as Chairperson for the 2022 Term.

Moved by C. Bialas seconded by R. Rolke:

THAT C. Larsen be re-appointed to serve as Chairperson for the 2022 term.

CARRIED

VICE CHAIR

Commissioner D. Kennedy volunteered to continue serving as the Vice Chairperson for the 2022 Term.

Moved by C. Bialas, seconded by R. Rolke:

THAT D. Kennedy be re-appointed to serve as the Vice-Chairperson for the 2022 term.

CARRIED

Commissioner B. Bissessar joined the meeting at 8:13 AM

**2022 COMMISSION
ORIENTATION**

Appointments, Roles & Responsibilities:

- Mayor and Council appoint everyone on the Commission to represent the various facets of Tourism within Vernon. Commission members are asked to view any content or proposed programming with an objective lens based on what is best for the community.
- Councilor Durning is the Council representative and will be an advocate as a member of Council.
- Commission work is based on the Tourism Commission Terms of Reference, the 5-Year Plan and dealings are guided by the City of Vernon Oath of Confidentiality.

Tourism Department Structure & 5-Year Strategy:

- Destination Marketing Organization (DMO) - Tourism Vernon is a destination marketing organization. The focus is marketing Vernon as a destination. Guidelines followed are based on those set out by the Province of British Columbia through Destination British Columbia.
- Tourism is a department within the City of Vernon responsible to Mayor and Council. The Tourism Commission is accountable to Destination British Columbia to meet the designated requirements.
- Next 5 Years - as a (DMO) as part of Vernon's requirements there needs to be a 5-year strategy that is submitted to the province to collect MRDT.

- Staff clarified that the strategy is important as it lays out key elements of focus and helps set the Workplan targets, goals, and objectives for the Commission.
- John Perrott, is the Manager, Economic Development and Tourism. Torrie Silverthorn is the Manager, Tourism, and they are backed by Hannah Lucich, Tourism Coordinator and Karen Savill, Administrative Assistant.

In February, there will be a facilitated offsite workshop for members of the Commission designed to take a deep dive into the 5-year plan and determine the direction the organization will be taking.

2022 TACTICAL MARKETING PLAN

Staff noted that the Marketing Plan is vetted through a sub-committee prior to coming to the Commission; high level details of the plan are as follows:

2022 Tactical Plan - Executive Summary:

- Keeping community safe and adhering to public health orders will always be a priority.
- The 2022 plan lays out goals, strategies and tactics for vacationers seeking domestic holidays.
- Ontario Market and media agencies have been contacted to see how much we can tap into.
- Summer and winter are Vernon's top seasons. To extend economic impact Tourism Vernon will continue to promote the shoulder seasons.
- Group Travel will be slower to recover, therefore, capturing the free and independent traveler, (FIT = flexible independent traveler) is a priority. We had a record-breaking year for Airbnb's in 2021.
- The aim is assisting locals in creating an exceptional vacation experience for their friends and family who visit Vernon.
- Digital campaigns allow the Tourism Vernon to pivot based on the current health orders and will be used increasingly as we move forward.
- Tourism Vernon will see two (2) new members added to staff which include a Visitor Servicing and Digital Content role.

- Having a new website will allow Vernon Tourism control of the content and enhanced Visitor servicing as people visit the website.
- In 2021 our Community saw some of the largest MRDT collection records during the pandemic.

Sub Committee Feedback:

- The subcommittee suggested adding a piece to speak to adaptability and the ability to be nimble. Staff noted that a change will be made in that regard before the plan goes forward.

Target Markets:

- The Marketing Committee suggested that we should continue reaching out to the Lower Mainland and include Northern BC.
- It was also discussed that the Quebec Winter Market would be a great opportunity to explore as traffic has been realized at the ski hills.

2022 Marketing Goals Objectives:

- Every campaign, every piece that is addressed with visitor servicing will circle back to the goals and objectives.
- Staff noted that something that is new is inspiring local and regional citizens. We need to do a better job in creating ambassadors of our locals.
- During the pandemic people really got out and supported locals.

Sectors of Focus:

- Visitor Servicing Role will help support outreach in the community.
- Revenue generating markets, from those several different sectors have come about such as hiking, biking, trails, golf, ski, arts and culture and sports.

Marketing Tactics:

- Digital Marketing is important, the new website will be a large undertaking.
- Staff noted that they are working on the development of photo and video assets and copyrighting to market our destination; however, it will take time and money to build a library.

- E-Newsletters and subscribers, Vernon currently has 6,000 and newsletters work. It is important that we keep focusing on growing the database.

Small Accommodators and Co-Op Marketing:

- Making sure that smaller businesses are made aware that programs exist that will assist them in marketing their business.

Visitor Servicing:

- Still reached several thousand people last year. Hoping to have a role created within the next month.
- The plan is to maintain the digital outreach program.
- Monitoring the online chats and being proactive in social media.
- We want to implement and capture what is going on live in Vernon.

Budget:

- A few items to draw attention to are that the budget is through until the end of October.
- Staff are still expecting that November and December MRDT will be added to the budget.
- It should be determined what the best practice is for the funds in Contingent Reserve.

Questions / Comments from the Commission were as follows:

- Is it worth to get involved in the Biosphere Commitment Program from a Destination Stewardship perspective? The resources available to businesses are all free, it would be a great resource and we could be a catalyst to help our partners engage in sustainable tourism.
 - Staff noted that they are currently looking into the program and shared that Planet Bee Honey Farm has been a Biosphere Committee Company since 2018 and that they present to customers regarding the importance of honeybees and our ecosystem.
- It was further discussed that the Biosphere program can further drive strategic planning and the goals are sustainable and dovetail into the City's Climate Action Plan. Committee member I. Jenkins volunteered to be part of a sustainable sub-committee.

- Staff noted that in terms of sustainability and marketing practices, there is less emphasis in showcasing motor boats on the lake and more photos of kayaks, the aim is to do more work on encouraging more thoughtful behaviours and sustainable pursuits from our tourists.
- Based on the feedback received from members of the Commission, staff noted they would further modify the plan to include wording to encapsulate the importance of adaptability being nimble, marketing to Quebec and the Biosphere Program.

Moved by C. Bialas, seconded by R. Rolke:

THAT the Tourism Commission adopt the 2022 Tactical Marketing Plan as amended.

CARRIED

Staff advised that they will circulate the revised edited version to the Commission. The plan would then be submitted to Destination BC and Council for consideration.

**CO-OPERATIVE
MARKETING
PROGRAM**

The 2022 Co-op Marketing Program is an application-based program that provides marketing and promotional support to eligible tourism businesses and organizations in Greater Vernon. The program offers matching funds (up to 50%) for marketing campaigns. The application process is to have new members complete their contract and email it to K. Savill, Administrative Assistant, Economic Development and Tourism.

Staff noted that there will be two intake periods March and June. Funds are allocated on a matching basis, up to 50% for cash contributions (including tax) and up to 25% for in-kind contributions. The maximum allocation per business will be \$10,000 to ensure as many businesses as possible can utilize the program. Funds will be reimbursed after the marketing campaign or event has occurred.

The intent is to work closely with small accommodators to assist in education for digital marketing.

Staff requested volunteers to form a subcommittee to adjudicate the proposals received. Commission members R. Rolke and B. Woods volunteered.

JANUARY 19, 2022

**VERNON VISITOR
GUIDE ADVERTISING
SALES**

Staff reached out to 220 businesses in the community regarding the Visitor Guide Ad Sales Program.

The deadline to apply for advertising in the 2022 Vernon Visitor Guide is February 15, 2022.

The Tourism Team is working with a design firm to create the advertisement.

**5-YEAR STRATEGY
WORKSHOP**

Staff advised that there will be a half day workshop held on Wednesday, February 16, 2022 facilitated by Stormy Lake Consulting to review the 5-year strategy. This in-person engagement session is open to all members of the Commission and will take place offsite. An invitation will be sent out in the coming weeks.

**DATE AND TIME OF
NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting of the Tourism Commission is scheduled for **March 16, 2022** at 8:00 AM.

ADJOURNMENT

Moved by T. Hudson, seconded by D. Kennedy:

THAT the Tourism Commission meeting of January 19, 2022 be adjourned.

CARRIED.

The Tourism Commission meeting adjourned at **9:08 AM**

CERTIFIED CORRECT:



Chair