



THE CORPORATION OF THE CITY OF VERNON

MINUTES OF THE TOURISM COMMISSION MEETING HELD WEDNESDAY, MAY 18, 2022 OKANAGAN LAKE ROOM - 8:00 AM

PRESENT: Bobby Bissessar, Accommodation Provider
Clara Snedden, Accommodation Provider
Claus Larsen, Accommodation Provider (Chair)
Clinton Bialas, Restaurant
Councillor Durning (Appointed Member)
Dauna Kennedy, Arts & Culture
Gale Woodhouse, Arts & Culture
Janine Collard, Attractions
Kat Boloten, Accommodation Provider
Mike Van Horne, Golf
Peter Kaz, Marketing & Events, Downtown Vernon Association
Richard Rolke, Greater Vernon Chamber of Commerce
Troy Hudson, Ski
Vicki Proulx, Events

NON-VOTING: Mayor Cumming

ABSENT: Ian Jenkins, Silver Star Mountain Resort (Non-Voting)
Brett Woods, Biking

DELEGATION Josh Welter, Executive Director, Sport & Culture Society of the North Okanagan (SCSNO)

STAFF: Hannah Lucich, Tourism Coordinator
John Perrott, Manager, Economic Development & Tourism
Torrie Silverthorn, Manager, Tourism
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 D. Kennedy, and seconded by R. Rolke:

THAT the agenda for the Wednesday, May 18, 2022, Tourism Commission meeting be adopted.

CARRIED

Before the motion was put, the Chair advised that page three, bullet point three, of the April 20, 2022, Tourism Commission, unadopted minutes, required the following text amendment: "*The Regional District of North Okanagan is conducting an economic study on the impact of arts and culture, and the Greater Vernon Chamber of Commerce facilitated a meeting between its members and study organizers.*"

**ADOPTION OF
MINUTES**

Moved by T. Hudson, and seconded by Councillor Durning:

THAT the minutes of the Tourism Commission meeting held Wednesday, April 20, 2022, be adopted, as amended.

CARRIED

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

MARKETING UPDATE

H. Lucich, Tourism Coordinator, presented the following overview:

- **Sponsored Content** - The Tourism Team recently launched a contest via an online publication called ***Vancouver is Awesome***. Additionally, staff have added a Tourism Vernon campaign to the *Vancouver is Awesome* "CURATED" section of their webpage using the hashtag: #ExploreVernon.
- **Digital Media** - In terms of digital media, Facebook advertisements designed to target baby boomers (ages 55+) have been running. Staff have created a "Local Expert" Content series, and a blog was written by a company called Grace & Flow. Additionally, staff have been running targeted Instagram advertisements promoting Vernon.
- **Golf Contest Winner** - The Tourism Team wrapped up a successful golf contest campaign; whereby 6,000 new subscribers were added to the golf-specific e-newsletter database. Staff noted that another positive outcome of the contest is that the Tourism Team has received phone calls from people interested in planning a golf trip to Vernon.

- Staff shared that the grand prize winner of the 2022 Vernon Golf Vacation Contest is from Edmonton and they have already booked their travel plans for September 2022, with plans to golf at all four golf resorts and stay at Predator Ridge. Tourism staff will work to capture images of contest winner enjoying their trip and will post some of the golf vacation experience on digital media.
- **Stakeholder Traffic** - Have received 11,000 clicks through to stakeholder websites via TourismVernon.com; staff further noted that organic web searches of “Vernon”, and related keywords, is up by 50 percent.
- **Click Through Rate Analytics** - There has been a large uptick on link clicks from Facebook and Instagram. Staff have been running social media advertisements targeting mountain bikers and had a targeted spring YouTube video that performed well.

In terms of target audience, the Rogers campaign video indicated that the 45+ age demographic were the most engaged with the spring video.

- **Social Influencers** - Travel blog readers are interested in authentic local experiences. Staff have Matt and Karla lined up from ***Must Do Canada*** in coming weeks; and they have a full itinerary planned to take in all that the City of Vernon has to offer. Additional coverage in terms of positive mention will come from Allan Melbourne, Publisher, On the Links, Alberta. Additional campaigns will feature local experts in biking, hiking and will showcase fall family activities.

SPORT & EVENTS UPDATE

J. Welter, Executive Director, Sport & Culture Society of the North Okanagan (SCSNO) presented the following overview:

- **2022 BC Winter Games Update** – The new date is set to coincide with Spring Break in March 2023; however, the games will be branded as the 2022 Games because the event was “postponed” and **not** cancelled.
 - The Greater Vernon 2022 BC Winter Games Society announced new leadership. Nicky Dunlop, Executive Director, PovNet Society, is the new president of the Greater Vernon 2022 BC Winter Games Society and Cindy Masters, Executive Director, Okanagan Village Housing Society, is the host society’s vice president. The two will be carrying on the good work of Val Trevis and Teresa Durning who completed

their roles after providing exceptional leadership in these positions for the past 18 months.

- The event is expected to attract up to 1,800 participants in 17 sports competitions, and will now be held March 23 to 26, 2023 individuals to the area. It is anticipated that the economic impact to the community will be \$2M.
- **Sovereign2SilverStar (S2S) Ski Marathon (Apr 2-3, 2022) –** The first ever S2S was an overwhelming success; planning has begun for next year, the event will be the first two weeks of April 2023. The event is projected to grow exponentially with at least a thousand participants in attendance next year. It was noted that both national teams will be returning, and the full squads will be in attendance.
- **Tourism Vernon Events / Community Events Calendar 2022 Summer Lineup** - There are over 200 sporting events that will be in place within the City of Vernon during summer 2022 and listed on the Tourism Vernon Events & City of Vernon Community Events Calendars.

This summer will feature numerous cultural events, that will include downtown street closures, Polson Park Friday night market, Neil Diamond Tribute Evenings, Culture Days and Funtastic Slo-Pitch Tournament on Canada Day weekend (June 30 – July 3, 2022).

- **Relationship Building / Hosting Opportunities** - SCSNO has been developing relationships at a National Level and has responded to expressions of interest demonstration the viability of hosting key events within Vernon in several areas including (but not limited to):
 - Hockey Canada;
 - Curling Canada;
 - Trail Running Association of Canada; and
 - Track and Field.

Questions / comments from members of the Commission were as follows:

- All members of the Commission are encouraged to tap into their circles to generate volunteers in support of upcoming events.
- It was noted that the S2S event volunteers were very well trained, prepared, the event was well organized.

**FIVE-YEAR
STRATEGIC
BUSINESS PLAN**

T. Silverthorn, Manager, Tourism, presented an overview of the Five-Year Strategic Business Plan; a broad overview is as follows:

Key Learnings

- **Sustainability** - We want sustainability to be part of everything that we do. There will be a shift from destination marketing to ***destination stewardship***. What that means is looking at the whole health of our community. It is reducing waste, managing trails, and supporting the long-term growth using a sustainability lens in everything that we do.
- **Indigenous Tourism** – The City of Vernon has been working in partnership with OKIB. There is a spot reserved for OKIB representation as a member of the Tourism Commission when they have the capacity available on their team to assign a new representative to attend. Staff noted that the Vernon museum has been working on curating an OKIB artifact display.
- **Who Are We?** - *Tourism in Vernon exists to open your soul.* We are going take the programming we have been doing well to the next level. Being a small centre and welcoming is an asset. We are eager to share our laidback lifestyle and lived experiences with visitors. Locals are viewed as our untapped resources and will be tapped into as community ambassadors.
- **Places & Opportunities to Gather for Both visitors and Locals is Important** - This includes festivals, industry-only events and après event activities.
 - **Mission** - to *refresh* the mind, body, and soul of the active explorer in the Okanagan.
 - **Vision** – Vernon is the 365-day adventure capital of the Okanagan.
 - **Our Goals:**
 - Increased year-round visitation;
 - Increased visitor satisfaction;
 - Increased stakeholder engagement; and
 - Increased community support for tourism.

Three (3) Main Target Demographics / Markets (either AB or BC Based) as follows:

1. **Active Explorers** – Ages 35-55 travelling as a family, mostly western Canada based.
2. **Near Retirement** – Ages 55+, travelling as couples or multigeneration, coming from AB and Lower Mainland,
3. **Specific Sports** – Ages 16 - 45, including families, strong international appeal with majority are western Canada based.

Staff noted that in summary, the City of Vernon is considered a “short haul” destination, it can be driven or a quick flight. Medium and long-haul Canadian visitors. American and other international visitors

Six (6) Key Strategy Pillars – To effectively capture the target demographics and drive sustainable visitation:

1. **Lead with the Brand** - Tourism needs to establish own voice / messaging. Need to figure out what it looks like and what it looks like to the consumer. Looking to take a deep dive to speak with the target market.
2. **Establish Partnerships** - Lot of work is needed to get us to the next level on a Provincial Level. Will explore non-conventional partnerships with non-tourism businesses to support visitation (such as Kal Tire, etc.). The aim is to “Face South” in terms of economic impact and dollars spent there are more tourism dollars generated in targeting the south.
3. **Activate Local Pride** - Engage, train and market trained locals. Will be managed through the new Visitor Services Coordinator position that will come on line soon. The intent is to find passionate locals who are eager to showcase the community.
4. **Focus Marketing on Key Audiences** - Taking what we have been doing to the next level; involves highly visual content. Seeding inspiration online, and guide casual web searches to our destination. Will diversify the type of online content we are currently generating, and use more efficient, and highly targeted marketing.

5. **Incubate Products and Experiences** - Be a catalyst and bring programs and resources to the local community to develop new products and experiences. Develop an "*Experience Incubator*," pilot projects and unique programming that will elevate the community overall.

Staff noted that the plan is more focused, targets and deeply community focused. The City of Vernon has done a significant amount of work toward developing the Climate Action Plan; the groundwork is laid out with specific steps to be followed that dovetail with the Tourism Strategy.

Within the Strategy, the sustainability approach uses the major heading of "Regenerative" followed by the three (3) main themes as follows:

1. Nature;
2. Tourism; and
3. Relationships

Questions / comments from members of the Commission were as follows:

- In terms of the geography segments and statistics, what we see now within the City is not what we will see in 2 years -- is the Strategy considered a living document that will evolve as the travel / tourism market recovers?
 - In response staff noted that amendments can be made to the plan and change and adapt.
 - The data collected in producing the plan before the Commission is well thought out. Compared to 2019 and 2021, and did see a lot of similarities in the visitations.
 - Staff further clarified that we still have one-year plans that will come out to make fine tuning adjustments. The new structure of the Commission allows to adjust quickly.
- The Strategy provides a clear direction and mandate. The first two years are ambitious but achievable based on capacity and current resources. The plan puts work on members of the Commission as well as staff.
- In terms of the relationship with OKIB, the City meets with the band every month. All the key items that are going on with the City and the OKIB are reviewed.

- With the BC games, there was an outreach relationship with the OKIB individuals. As a tourism operator, there was a fundraiser to go back to OKIB, as a way that they can receive support, build capacity and fellowship.
- In terms of seasonal tourism, Vernon is at capacity in the summer. The impression is that the summer does not need help. The role is to direct people in how to best enjoy Vernon in the summer. Use marketing dollars for the shoulder season / winter.
- It was discussed that we need to foster relationships with members of the community regarding the busy months ahead to ensure that the Tourism months do not leave bad or negative impressions on local citizens and instead they are excited about programming and act as ambassadors and participate in activities that are being offered.
- In terms of next steps, staff are seeking endorsement from the Commission by way of a motion. The motion from the Commission will go to Council with the 5-Year Plan.
- Following Council's endorsement, a separate presentation will be done for the Regional District where staff will seek a letter of support regarding collecting the hotel tax and then it needs to go to the Province. This will all occur over the next five weeks.
- Staff noted that subsequent meetings will be held with the accommodation providers, with requests for support and endorsement in the form of sign-off.

Moved by D. Kennedy, and seconded by G. Woodhouse:

THAT Tourism Commission unanimously supports the 5-Year Tourism Strategy, as presented, and recommends that staff forward the 5-Year Tourism Strategy to Council for review and endorsement.

CARRIED

NEW BUSINESS

**LETTERS OF
SUPPORT**

The Commission reviewed requests received for three (3) letters of support; the motion was divided:

1) Trails Capital of BC Designation – Ribbons of Green Trails Society

Before the motion was put, staff clarified that the applicant was advised that the City of and the Commission cannot oversee the trademarking; and that the purpose of the letter of support is to start the initiative; however, it is incumbent on the applicant to carry out the necessary application process.

Moved by R. Rolke, and seconded by B. Bissessar:

THAT the Tourism Commission provide a letter of support for **Trails Capital of BC Designation – Ribbons of Green Trails Society**.

CARRIED

2) Tourism Events Program Funding – Vernon Winter Carnival

Before the motion was put, it was clarified that the Vernon Winter Carnival Society is seeking a grant to facilitate tourism and marketing coordination. The Society will be seeking grant in the amount of \$30,000 with the intent of facilitating marketing for both national and regional tourism.

Moved by B. Bissessar, and seconded by R. Rolke:

THAT the Tourism Commission provide a letter of support for the **Tourism Events Program Funding – Vernon Winter Carnival**

CARRIED

3) 2022 Canadian Mountain & Trail Running Championships – Sports & Cultural Society of the North Okanagan

Before the motion was put, it was clarified that the event will be held in Kal Park in September 2022, will bring the best runners to the City of Vernon to compete qualify in the world championships.

Are in the final stages of hosting the event with the ground work completed, a letter of support from the Commission will assist in securing the event for the City of Vernon.

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

THAT the Tourism Commission provide a letter of support for the **2022 Canadian Mountain & Trail Running Championships – Sports & Cultural Society of the North Okanagan**

CARRIED

**DATE AND TIME OF
NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting of the Tourism Commission is scheduled for **Wednesday, June 15, 2022, at 8:00 AM at City Hall.**

ADJOURNMENT

The Tourism Commission meeting of **May 18, 2022**, was adjourned at the call of the Chair **at 9:02 AM.**

CERTIFIED CORRECT:



Chairperson