



THE CORPORATION OF THE CITY OF VERNON

MINUTES OF THE TOURISM COMMISSION MEETING HELD WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 16, 2022 OKANAGAN ROOM (COUNCIL CHAMBER) CITY HALL

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

GUESTS:

Bradley Callihoo, Okanagan Indian Band
Josh Welter, Executive Director, SCSNO

ABSENT: Brett Woods, Biking
Ian Jenkins, Silverstar Mountain Resort
Kat Boloten, Accommodation Provider

STAFF: Erin Gorman, Administrative Assistant
Hanna Lucich, Tourism Coordinator
Jennifer Pounder, Committee Clerk
Karen Savill, Visitor Services Coordinator
Roy Nuriel, Planner, Economic Development
Torrie Silverthorn, Manager, Tourism

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 THE AGENDA

Moved by **R. Rolke**, seconded by **Councillor Durning**:

THAT the agenda of the November 16, 2022 meeting for the Tourism Commission be adopted:

CARRIED

ADOPTION OF THE MINUTES

Moved by **Councillor Durning**, seconded by **V. Proulx**:

THAT the minutes for the October 19, 2022 meeting of the Tourism Commission be adopted.

CARRIED

MANAGER UPDATE

- Marketing Plan update will be at December, 2022 meeting.
- Congratulations to T. Hudson and Sovereign Lake Nordic Centre for winning the Tourism Excellence award at the Greater Vernon Chamber of Commerce Business Excellence Awards.

Tourism Data, Trends and Insights:

- Marketing Plan will be discussed at the December, 2022 Tourism Commission meeting.
- 2021 MRDT Net Collection: \$918,000.00
Est. Hotel Revenue: \$3,290,000.00
- 2022 MRDT Net Collection: \$692,000.00 (Jan-July)
Projected total: \$1,100,000.00 Approximately
Est. Hotel Revenue: \$22,800,000.00 (Jan-July)
Projected total: \$39,000,000.00 Approximately

Best years to date:

MRDT Net: \$1,1022,956.79 (2019)

Est. Hotel Revenues: \$36,898,688.50 (2017)

- **Staycays are here to stay:** Around 90% of consumers say they plan to take a domestic vacation in the next 12 months.
- **Millennials are driving demand for pet-friendly vacations:** 1 in 10 millennials say they plan to travel with their pets.

- **Gen Zs are going it alone:** After 2 years of restrictions, over one third of Gen Z say they plan to travel by themselves.
- **Millennials are splashing the cash:** 17% say they look for options toward the top range, or reach for the top-range option, which is the highest of all generations. They are also the most likely to say they're taking a domestic vacation as a luxury/treat for themselves or others. Millennials are a key segment to win over.
- **Wellness travel is levelling up:** Booking.com notes that 31% of Canadians are interested in incorporating plant-based psychedelics like ayahuasca, or mushrooms into their travel experience.
- **Covid fears are waning:** Confidence in travel is slowly building with Covid concerns no longer a top priority. When asked which factors were most important when choosing a destination, Covid-19 status/restrictions were outranked across all generations by factors such as fun/excitement, sights/attractions and cost/value for money.
- **Gen Zs are being seriously #influenced:** 60% of Gen z say social media influences their decision about where to go on vacation. This is a clear indication to brands that ads and influencers are a particularly effective way to engage with Gen Zs and promote their travel offering.
- **Baby boomers are craving familiarity:** Unlike Gen Z, baby boomers are less concerned with finding trendy or insta-worthy hotspots, and more about visiting destinations they know and trust. This group is much more likely than other generations to rely on their own past experiences.
- **Sustainability is high on the agenda for millennials:** Of all groups, millennials care most about the carbon footprint of their travel, with 37% saying they're very/extremely concerned. Gen Zs aren't far behind, but only 18% of baby boomers say the same.
- **Prioritizing travel spend:** 63% of people will keep a close eye on deal and hacks, 53% are happy to travel off-season or via longer routes and 61% of people intend on planning their vacations further in advance, so expect to see fewer last-minute travellers in 2023.

- **Booking flexibility is non-negotiable:** 38% of consumers agree that free cancellation/rebooking is the most important factor of booking a trip.

B. Bissessar, Accommodation Provider, shared with the Commission that he is working with the Central Okanagan Hospice Association on a project called “Swinging with the Stars”. There are approximately eight teams that will be performing and fundraising. He has a goal in place to raise \$100,000.00 by February, 2023. The launch event will be at Summerhill Winery in Kelowna, BC on November 26, 2022, and the big event will be at the Delta Grand Hotel in Kelowna, BC on February 25, 2023.

R. Nuriel, Planner, Economic Development, was in attendance and gave an overview of the Waterfront Neighborhood Centre Plan and the Port Okanagan Project. He also provided an overview of the Short-Term Rental process and the proposed amendments to C10A zoning district.

Mayor Cumming left the meeting at 8:30 a.m.

The following comments / questions were posed by members of the Commission:

- The Commission asked if there is anything in the housing plan that would assist employers with providing employees with housing. Staff confirmed that employee housing is an action item included in the Housing Action Plan (HAP) endorsed by Council on September 26, 2022. .

Mayor Cumming joined the meeting at 8:42 a.m.

- Staff further confirmed that it is included in the Housing Action Plan to provide homeowners with free plans for carriage houses.
- The Commission inquired about public transportation and if it will be adequate for the Port Okanagan Project. Staff confirmed that they work with BC Transit to ensure sufficient service to the new area. Staff also noted that the Transportation department reviews all new projects to ensure needs are met.

NEW BUSINESS

**ROUND TABLE
UPDATES**

Commission members provided a brief update regarding their current programming, challenges, and promotions as follows:

- M. Van Horne – Slow season. Nothing to report.
- G. Woodhouse – Vernon Community Arts Centre is having its event 'Artsolutely' from December 1 to 24, 2022. 38 Artists will have products on display. The Tourism Commission is invited to a preview on November 30, 2022 from 6-8:30 p.m.
- C. Snedden – Everything is going well and renovations are continuing at the Vernon Lodge. The ballroom is projected to be ready next summer.
- B. Bissessar – Right now is our slow season. We have had a record-breaking year.
- D. Kennedy – Good things are happening in the cultural world. Working on finalizing branding. In terms of the cultural project, designs are complete and we are close to having an architect in place.
- T. Hudson – We opened with a bang. Over one meter of snow in two days. We are hosting four provincial camps, one national team camp and three courses this weekend. We are always looking for volunteers. We had an awards ceremony at The Vernon Lodge this past Saturday. Really fantastic. A lot of amazing momentum. All of the US teams are arriving this week. A lot of early people this year.
- J. Collard – Sales-wise we already have 80 groups and 17 weddings booked for next summer. For events, we are doing a Winter Market next Friday (November 25, 2022) and have already sold 300 tickets. January 22, 2023 we are having a wine pairing event.
- P. Kaz. – We have had four new business open in just over a month and a half in downtown Vernon. The Downtown Treat trail brought in 4,000 people in the first two hours. The Kal participated in the NOLCS Golden Burger Challenge and placed in the top. The Towne Theatre had its best grossing weekend in October with a local film. Excited about Christmas coming to downtown Vernon. Free parking downtown on Saturdays starts November 26, 2022. Working on the Winter Carnival.

- V. Proulx – Things are really busy right now. All of our events are finalized for the Winter Carnival. Over 130 events happening over 10 days in February. We are working on our Carnival of Lights event, which is a new version of the light up. The light up will occur on November 26, 2022. Over 30 vendors are registered for 5-8:00 p.m. Concert with the Recklaws at the Winter Carnival and tickets go on sale Friday.
- C. Bialas – We have been sold out for Christmas parties since the end of September. It has been an amazing year. Returning to normal.
- Councillor Durning – This past Monday all Councillors were assigned to their Committee's or Commission's, and I was assigned to the Tourism Commission, Transportation Advisory Committee, Arts Council of North Okanagan, Vernon Winter Carnival Society, Historical O'Keefe Ranch and the Greater Vernon BC Games Liaison. I look forward to transitioning into these roles.
- Mayor Cumming – Great to see everyone. Regarding the Cultural Centre, we are going through the stages internally. There are currently eight architect firms that want to design the building. We have already narrowed it down to two and we are in contract negotiations with one of them. We are excited as this is an amazing project.
- J. Welter – My focus has switched to next summer already. Tae Kwon Do Nationals are coming to Vernon in May, 2023. We are currently looking for hotels for over 500 people. The same with the Pickleball group as these we will be on back-to-back weekends. May is going to be an extremely busy time for us. I spent last week at the Sport Tourism Conference in Edmonton. It was -18c and a blizzard. 3500 registered guests went down to 1500. Two key-note speakers and a lot of eastern Canada could not make it.

Before his update, Richard was thanked by the Tourism Commission for his efforts in putting on the Greater Vernon Chamber of Commerce Business Excellence Awards.

- R. Rolke – It was a great Awards event. We had 300 plus registrations. Given what we have been through for the last couple of years, that is a fairly large crowd. Last month 12 or 13 new members signed up at GVCOC.

- C. Larsen – I have been out of commission for a few weeks. I would like to thank everybody for the support. The Marketing sub-Committee will be meeting on November 29 at 8:30 a.m.


NEXT MEETING

The next meeting for the Tourism Commission is set for December 21, 2022 at 8:00 a.m.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting of the Tourism Commission adjourned at 9:11 a.m. by call of the Chair.

CERTIFIED CORRECT:



_____ Chair