



THE CORPORATION OF THE CITY OF VERNON

TOURISM COMMISSION

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 16, 2020

OKANAGAN LAKE ROOM – 8:00 a.m.

A G E N D A

1. ADOPTION OF AGENDA

2. ADOPTION OF MINUTES

a) August 19, 2020 (attached)

3. UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

a) Round Table Discussion:

i. Update on current Business Levels / fall occupancy?

ii. Has out of province tourism slowed for your business?

b) Update on letter of recommendation to Greater Vernon Cultural Centre Implementation Team

4. NEW BUSINESS:

5. INFORMATION ITEMS

6. RESOLUTION TO CLOSE MEETING

BE IT RESOLVED that the meeting be closed to the public in accordance with Section 90(1) of the Community Charter as follows:

k) negotiations and related discussions respecting the proposed provision of a municipal service that are at their preliminary stages and that, in the view of the Council, could reasonably be expected to harm the interests of the municipality if they were held in public.

7. ADJOURN TO REGULAR MEETING

8. NEXT MEETING:

The next meeting of the Tourism Commission is tentatively scheduled for Wednesday, October 21, 2020.

9. ADJOURNMENT



THE CORPORATION OF THE CITY OF VERNON

**MINUTES OF
TOURISM COMMISSION MEETING
HELD WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 19, 2020
OKANAGAN LAKE ROOM**

PRESENT: VOTING:

Claus Larsen, Accommodation Provider, Chair
David Gibbs, Accommodation Provider
Gale Woodhouse, Arts & Culture
Richard Rolke, Greater Vernon Chamber of Commerce
Susan Lehman, Downtown Vernon Association
Councillor Akbal Mund
Michael Van Horne, Golf
Kevin O'Brien, Attractions (8:04 a.m.)
Janna Maderyc, Accommodation Provider
Clinton Bialas, Restaurant
Dauna Kennedy, Arts & Culture, Vice-Chair (8:02 a.m.)
Matt Scheibenpflug, Accommodation Provider
Troy Hudson, Ski

ABSENT: Mike Fotheringham, Okanagan Indian Band
Brett Woods, Biking
Richardo Smith, Sports and Events
Ian Jenkins, Silver Star Mountain Resort

STAFF: Kevin Poole, Staff Liaison, Manager, Economic Development & Tourism
Torrie Silverthorn, Tourism Coordinator
Karen Savill, Admin. Asst., Economic Development & Tourism
Janice Nicol, Legislative Committee Clerk

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

ADOPTION OF AGENDA Moved by Richard Rolke; seconded by Matt Scheibenpflug;

THAT the agenda for Wednesday, August 19, 2020 Tourism Commission adopted.

CARRIED.

TOURISM COMMISSION MINUTES – AUGUST 19, 2020

ADOPTION OF MINUTES

Moved by Susan Lehman, seconded by Troy Hudson;

THAT the minutes of the Tourism Commission meeting held Wednesday, June 17, 2020 be adopted.

CARRIED.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

ROUND TABLE DISCUSSION

What is your organizations' current sentiment toward out-of-province visitors? Where are your visiting customers from: local, out-of-province, elsewhere?

Arts and Culture

Vernon Art Gallery

- Have been open though the summer though modified to comply with physical distancing
- Number of visitors is down but small groups still attending
- No classes or events being held, virtual programming underway
- Overall, visitors have been polite
- Cultural project is proceeding, great deal of work being done
- Applying for grants prior to deadline of early October
- Looking for letters of support

Vernon Community Arts Centre

- Looking toward a healthy future
- Programs are filled but at 50% capacity
- Happy to break even for next year and half, hosting no events
- Many visitors to the website
- Locals interested in fall registration
- Looking at how to promote/support events for economic development online
- Concern for small businesses, the number of visitors on beach is not reflected in visitors to small businesses
- Looking at hosting outdoor events
- Thank you to the many organizations that are trying to help out during COVID.

Predator Ridge Golf & Resort

- Have had a great July, down 1% from last year
- September looking like it will be up 12% as those that usually go south stay more local
- Short staffed, existing staff are tired
- Guests are predominantly from B.C. and Alberta, some from Saskatchewan and Ontario

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- Real estate is very busy, everything is selling mostly to those from B.C. and Alberta
- Winter will be focused on activities – offering a whole community experience: skiing at Silver Star and Sovereign Lake, cooking classes, golf simulators, etc.
- Restrictions are difficult – large group gatherings in hotel rooms a problem, every room now marked with maximum capacity
- Golf – very busy, tee times totally booked
- Each golf cart is disinfected, there are marshals on course to maintain physical distancing
- Some patrons have been challenging, rude behavior. Also experiencing additional garbage on-site
- Offering room service for restaurant food
- Expect increased activity to last into late October.

Downtown Vernon Association (DVA)

- Received many calls from concerned Alberta guests as media have focused on negative events
- Customers and restaurants adapting very well, offering delivery for some items
- Retail sector is suffering along with those offering personal services
- No changes are anticipated for fall
- Concerned about tourism impact overall and the increased poor behavior and litter, demanding, new attitude from customers that is difficult to deal with
- Have seen a huge increase in local customers
- Any business needing support for staff training, 'go2HR' is highly recommended
- Thank you for the generous grant, it has made a huge difference.

Hotels

Prestige and Vernon Lodge

- Number of customers increases each week, many last-minute or same day bookings
- July down 35% over last year, August shaping up to be down 15%
- Staff starting to get tired due to shortages
- Have seen an increase in Alberta guests for August.

Sandman

- Average stay is three to five days
- Many guests from Alberta, some from Ontario and Saskatchewan

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- Staff have dealt with many aggravated guests.

Chamber of Commerce

- Receiving regular calls from people wanting to visit, wondering if businesses are open
- Out of Province folks are concerned, wondering if they should be fearful
- Message is asking any visitors and residents to follow protocols, that we are in this together.

Golf

The Rise

- High temperatures causing a slow down
- Season is still strong, forecast is good
- Many golfers are locals but still seeing guests from Alberta
- Golf Club Members have homes in B.C. and Alberta so are visiting
- 'Green Club' is for locals, last year 115 memberships sold, this year over 500
- Positive year so far.

Kalavida Surf Shop/Rail Trail Café

- Sold out of paddleboards in a single day
- Kal Beach is overrun with tourists and parking lot with cars
- Kindness has been lost, fun has been stripped away
- Staff are tired due to impatience of customers

Rail Trail Café/Store

- Kal Store – impatience with parking
- Most guests from Alberta but are embarrassed to admit place of residence
- Uptake in rude and resigned behavior
- Business is good but staff are tired
- Have had to refund to some rude customers

Sovereign Lake Cross Country

- Ended Winter/Spring 2020 season 6% above
- 40,000 day tickets already sold for Fall
- Prepared for fall with five possible business models
- 20 to 30% increase for Fall season passes
- 196 registered in programs compared to 35 last year
- Need to set limits, online day ticket sales only for contact tracing purposes
- For September – can only book 15 days out with 10% retainer for locals
- Have made adaptations, office turned into outdoor sales window

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- Fall work parties starting with volunteer opportunities
- Four races scheduled for this year, unsure if they will go ahead
- COVID plans on website
- Successful group camp held, stayed in family 'bubble'
- Upgrades have been made to Lodge
- Concerns about rentals – School District programs in question
- First time partnering with Okanagan Indian Band
- Launching lodge fundraising campaign to build new facility
- Season pass sales have been to locals

Sparkling Hill

- Influx of visitors from Alberta although lower than previous years
- Many from west coast and island
- Do not have major concerns with COVID, for the most part, guests are being respectful
- Steams and sauna still not open
- Average is two night stay.

Restaurants

Martens Brew Pub

- Temperatures have increased resulting in more eating out
- Biggest challenge is educating guests on groups
- Visitors from Kamloops and Prince George, some from Alberta but most from northern B.C.
- Some last minute weddings.

Moved by Susan Lehman; seconded by Richard Rolke;

THAT a letter be sent, on behalf of the Tourism Commission, to the Greater Vernon Cultural Centre Implementation Team, supporting grant funding requests.

CARRIED.

Claus Larsen left the meeting at 8:41 p.m.

NEW BUSINESS:

INFORMATION ITEMS:

RECOVERY MARKETING STRATEGY – UPDATE

The following update was provided:

- There are funds left for a fall and winter tourism push, although visitor numbers are down, more of a quality experience is gained

TOURISM COMMISSION MINUTES – AUGUST 19, 2020

- E-newsletters and social media currently breaking records. Numbers of those engaged are down, may from Alberta and the Lower Mainland
- TV commercial running in Alberta and Saskatchewan, message is 'few faces, open spaces'. May need to pull for fall if necessary
- Tourism fielding many calls from Albertans worried about isolated incidences reported in the media
- Co-op program funds resulting in some new programs beings initiated, overall positive
- Possibility of reallocating Visitor Servicing funds (from the Recovery Marketing Plan) to fall marketing.

DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Tourism Commission is scheduled for **Wednesday, September 16, 2020** at 8:00 a.m. in the Okanagan Lake Room.

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

CERTIFIED CORRECT:

Chair