



CORPORATION OF THE CITY OF VERNON

TOURISM COMMISSION MEETING WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 19, 2022, AT 8:00 AM OKANAGAN ROOM (COUNCIL CHAMBER) CITY HALL

A G E N D A

1) **CALL TO ORDER**

2) **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.

3) **ADOPTION OF AGENDA**

4) **ADOPTION OF MINUTES**

a) September 21, 2022 (attached)

5) **UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

6) **DELEGATION PRESENTATION**

Gale Woodhouse

7) **NEW BUSINESS**

1. Introduce new staff member Erin Gorman
2. Request for Letter of Support:
 - o Vernon Pickleball Association
3. Indigenous Tourism Update
4. Manager's Update

8) **NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting of the Tourism Commission is scheduled for **Wednesday, November 16, 2022**, in the **Okanagan Room (Council Chamber) City Hall**.

9) **ADJOURNMENT**



THE CORPORATION OF THE CITY OF VERNON

MINUTES OF THE TOURISM COMMISSION MEETING HELD WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 21, 2022 COUNCIL CHAMBERS (OKANAGAN ROOM) CITY HALL

PRESENT: Brett Woods, Biking
Clara Snedden, Accommodation Provider
Claus Larsen, Accommodation Provider (Acting Chair)
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

NON-VOTING:

Ian Jenkins, SilverStar Mountain Resort

GUESTS:

Cassandra Zerebeski, Director, Destination Silverstar
Josh Welter, Executive Director, SCSNO

ABSENT: Kat Boloten, Accommodation Provider
Clinton Bialas, Restaurant
Bobby Bissessar, Accommodation Provider

STAFF: Hannah Lucich, Tourism Coordinator
Jennifer Pounder, Committee Clerk
John Perrott, Manager, Economic Development & Tourism
Torrie Silverthorn, Manager, Tourism
Karen Savill, Visitor Services Coordinator

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**ADOPTION OF THE
AGENDA**

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

THAT the agenda of the Wednesday, June 15, 2022 meeting for Tourism Commission be adopted:

CARRIED

**ADOPTION OF THE
MINUTES**

Moved by **T. Hudson**, seconded by **M. van Horne**:

THAT the minutes for the Wednesday, July 20, 2022 meeting of Tourism Commission be adopted.

CARRIED

NEW BUSINESS:**QUARTERLY
MARKETING UPDATE**

H. Lucich, Tourism Coordinator, was present and gave the following market update:

- On Facebook and Instagram we are running ads in BC and AB with a focus on the lower mainland, Calgary and Edmonton. These ads are targeting our three main markets, active explorers, near retirees and sports specific.
- The ads are landing on our latest blog with top 8 reasons to visit Vernon this fall.
- With our funding from the 2022-23 DBC Co- Op Marketing program with Seekers Media, we have two campaigns in market on Facebook and YouTube with the Picture Perfect Picnic spots and a Carefree Fall Getaway.
- Seekers ran a contest to give away 2 round trip flights from Cascadia Air and while it just ended last week, the contest reached over 20,000 people. The writer Steve MacNaull, who is a well known travel writer had garnered more exposure for the article and it is in the Winnipeg Free Press, Calgary Herald and Vancouver Sun.
- We are also running the carefree fall getaway video on our YouTube channel
- Vancouver is Awesome – our hub on their site is filling up now. We also had one of the editors visit Vernon back in July and wrote an awesome article on best places to eat in Vernon and

also did a round up of summer activities at SilverStar and including a trip to Davison Orchards, Splashdown water park, and Okanagan Science Centre.

- Remy Metailler – legendary mountain biker known for his crazy POV shots came out to ride Big Ed and Kal Park trails in July with local rider, Matt MacDuff. We are super excited with how the video turned out and Remy really enjoyed riding in Vernon for the first time. The YouTube video has 98,000 views and some positive feedback and interest in the comments section. This was a partnership with mountain biking BC and a great example of reaching that sports specific target market through influencer content creators.
- In partnership with TOTA - we also had an active explorers' family from Fernie, BC come out in July and they produced the most adorable video of their little girl and her commentary while they biked the rail trail, visited Splashdown, Allan Brooks, and all the great family friendly spots in Vernon. They even discovered their favorite vegan café here in Vernon which was the Roxy Café. The two reels on Instagram have over 110,000 views – their audience is from all over BC, AB and the US – they focus on outdoor family adventures and their audience is mostly families with young children.
- From our strategic partnerships fund, Sparkling Hill worked with Tourism Vernon to create this amazing video showcasing all of the fun things to do in Vernon when staying at Sparkling Hill. This is a wonderful example of strategic partnership marketing and how we like to see our accommodation partners marketing the community.
- We continue to have seasonal Television ads running with Rogers Media and our Public Service Announcement style ads running nationwide.
- We have a fall/winter ad in the upcoming issue of NW Travel & Lifestyle which focuses on the traveller market in the Pacific Northwest of the states. We are also working with Destination Silver Star on a winter ad in Kootenay Mountain Culture magazine.

- We have been working hard on building our video and photo asset library to better align with our target audiences to produce successful marketing campaigns with specific content to resonate with that group. Also, with the return of events to our community, we have been building back up showcasing all of the fun events happening in Vernon.

ROUND TABLE DISCUSSION

Commission members were requested to provide a brief update on how the 2022 summer compared to pre-pandemic summers, and how fall is pacing for bookings:

P. Kaz - Summer was great. Busy downtown. There were a few stores that closed down near the end of summer and new tenants were in the space within a month. We had a lot of out of town visitors asking about available business spaces. The number of visitors from last summer to this summer was a 180 degree turn. Fall this year is looking great. There are already a lot of events planned.

B. Woods – We generally quite down in the hot months. Getting busier now that its cooling down. We had approximately 170 delegates from around the province at our Mountain Bike Tourism Symposium, which will now be an annual event. There were over 400 riders from 27 different countries. It was said we have the best trails in the world.

V. Proulx - I attended a lot of community events and parades and noticed that each one had high attendance numbers. There were a lot of people new to the area asking questions. We will be shifting our marketing to explaining what the festival is. We are starting to get busy. Deadline for events is October 31, 2022.

M. Van Horne - Golf continues to grow post pandemic. We are noticing more boys and girls trips since labor day. Nice to see them as we haven't seen many in the past couple of years. Bigger events are starting to take place. All golf courses right now are fairly busy.

Mayor Cumming - Last week was the Union of BC Municipalities (UBCM). Once a year all the politicians in the province come together for 5 days. In the last 4 or 5 years great connections were made. Fire management for the Aberdeen plateau was a hot topic. It is a high risk area and you will see in the next 3 or 4 years big fire breaks will be completed. Vernon water is the third largest water purveyor in the province.

T. Hudson - We had a really good season last year. We are in the middle of strategic planning process and we are looking at moving into a more year-round tourist destination. Early season bookings for super camps are over $\frac{3}{4}$ sold out already. Less smoke over the summer resulted in a lot more mountain bikers attending. 4 major events happening this year will be bringing over 4000 athletes. We have 85% staffing levels. Amazing race Canada started planning in 2018. We spent 22 hours creating video content for the 6 minute video campaign. The day of the shoot the weather was amazing. We have received an incredible amount of feedback.

G. Woodhouse - Vernon Performing Arts Center numbers are going back up to pre-pandemic numbers. The climate looks good. We have been meeting with RDNO about the economic impact, and so far the numbers are improving. The Vernon Community Arts Centre had quite the summer. Registrations have gone through the roof. Our big event is the Culture Days Event on September 23, 2022. Supported by the province, there are 25 activity tents, 40 artisan market, and a full day of performances aimed towards families. Gale noted difficulties dealing with City of Vernon staff on event planning for culture days and other community events. Compared to several other communities Gale has worked in, Vernon has been the most difficult City to work with. Planning events in public parks and city facilities is always a challenge and there are always slow or delayed responses from staff.

G. Woodhouse will meet with other organizations planning community events to gather input and information before the next Tourism Commission meeting. She will compile findings and present as a delegation at the October meeting, at the request of the Chair.

C. Snedden - We have had great summer at the Vernon Lodge and the Prestige Hotel. We are on par with 2019 numbers. The fall is starting to book up, including reservations for corporate events, including Christmas parties. We are still doing a lot of renovations including kitchen renovations, but we are remaining open during construction.

D. Kennedy - The gallery is filling up with staff again. It was a tough couple of years, but we are getting close to pre-pandemic numbers.

J. Collard - This summer was fantastic. We are pretty close to 2018 numbers. Great to see return of some great community events. OCC and VJH foundation events raised more money than they ever have before. We hosted the Vancouver Symphony Orchestra for a performance in July, 2022, which is bringing a lot of exposure. 250 group events were held this year. We have hosted 12 weddings this

year already. Pre pandemic numbers were around 20. Off season we are hosting a market with 50 vendors at end of November.

R. Rolke - Our members had an extremely busy summer. One challenge we were hearing was labor shortage, which was impacting businesses. In terms of the chamber, we had a very busy summer. We partnered with tourism on Mission Impossible and it was a great success. Fall is looking to be busy. Platinum jubilee pins and medallions were issued marking the Queen's 70 years on the throne. I was recognized for mental health advocacy, business, social and volunteer service.

I. Jenkins - We had the busiest summer we have ever had at SilverStar. It was driven by groups and events. Really good summer. Due to the low amount of funding from the government, we need to pound the pavement to get sponsors. Winter bookings are strong and we are Fully staffed.

Councillor Durning - The UBCM was an amazing first experience for me. Over lunch I was graced with the presence of five ministers. I advocated for Vernon. Culture days, your struggle is not lost on me. We see your struggle. I have tried to help to no avail.

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Mayor Cumming commented that the Cultural Center process will be underway this fall. Significant fundraising has been done with the Federal Government.

MANAGER'S UPDATE **T. Silverthorn, Manager, Tourism**, provided the following overview:

- J. Perrott and I presented at Chamber of Commerce annual general meeting.
- She recognized the Tourism team. K, Savill has hit the ground running. H. Lucich is doing great. They take the initiative and run with it.

- MRDT renewal update: We have secured hoteliers support. Recently updated Council. Next week our application will go to cabinet. Hoping for an update sometime in October.
- We have been purchasing data and partnering with Telus to collect data. 75% of visitors from 2019, 2020 and 2021 are coming from BC. 19% from Alberta, 1.5% from Saskatchewan. 32% of visitors are in the 50-60 year age range, and 19% are in the range of 35-41 years.
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NEXT MEETING

The next meeting for the Tourism Commission is set for **Wednesday, October 19, 2022, at 8:00 AM.**

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting of the Tourism Commission was adjourned at **9:10 a.m.** by call of the chair.

CERTIFIED CORRECT:

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ADJOURNMENT

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CERTIFIED CORRECT:

_____ Chair

Working with the City of Vernon on events and festivals – Presented by Gale Woodhouse with the permission of the Arts Council of the North Okanagan

This paper was compiled following many concerns shared by not-for-profit organizations involved in event planning in the City of Vernon.

Main challenges

Event application permit

- Not enough information provided in the initial event application form resulting in many follow up requests for more information
- The city administration process is **very** slow to respond to emails requesting confirmation of bookings
- Event planners' expectation is that they will receive negative responses to requests for accommodation
- Long delays in issuing permits and confirming application requests – the permits must be approved by many departments before issuing
- Last minute requests for changes by the city are very difficult to accommodate once contracts with presenters are signed
- Little to no flexibility to adapt within this outdated and unresponsive process

Communication

- Communication between event organizers and City administration is very poor across the board
- It is unclear who is responsible for what and what
- Little or no response to emails
- There is no one contact person available after hours if issues occur (and most events run after hours)– electricity not being turned on, gates not opened etc. resulting in delayed concerts, late set up
- Communication between administration and staff needs to be improved – city landscapers and all their large equipment were on site at Culture Days set up and stated that City administration never tell them what is going on.
- Requests for accommodation, which are permitted in bylaws e.g., extending hours of an event, opening park gates to allow for set up and take down, are frequently refused
- Inequity - most not for profit arts and culture organizers spoken with are aware that some groups have an easier pathway through the process whilst other groups have obstacle after obstacle thrown at them e.g. some users have access to keys for gates some do not
- When asked for explanations one event organizer was told by city staff that events were. “Too much trouble”
- There is a culture of obstruction not cooperation

Working with the City of Vernon on events and festivals – Presented by Gale Woodhouse with the permission of the Arts Council of the North Okanagan

- Unwillingness to problem solve and find solutions to ensure the success of events
-

NB On the day of the event almost all event organizers expressed appreciation for the support of front-line staff working for bylaw and the RCMP. Both organizations were supportive and accommodating both before and on the day of the event.

Quotes

“We get the feeling we are too much trouble, and we are in the way’ – Youth sport group at Kal Tire Place

“It’s really a lot of work to try and do events at Kal Tire Place, it should not be this hard” Festival organizer.

“It is just not worth dealing with the City of Vernon, they will only cause us grief.” – Community event planner

“It is disheartening, when we put all this effort into planning a community event that the city does not support us” – Community arts festival organizer

“There is a perception in the community that City administration are using bylaws, policies and procedures as tools to obstruct organizers and stop events happening”

Cultural organizations do not trust that they have the support of the city when organizing future events and some are choosing to look outside of the city to avoid the challenges.

Policies and procedures of the City of Vernon relating to arts and culture activities are prohibitive and not in tune with the strategic planning goals of the Greater Vernon Cultural Master Plan, Vernon Tourism and local arts and culture organizations and many of the challenges we face as a community could be resolved by addressing the outstanding actions addressed in the Greater Vernon Cultural Master Plan.

Working with the City of Vernon on events and festivals – Presented by Gale Woodhouse with the permission of the Arts Council of the North Okanagan

Short term recommendations

- Establish a clear and identifiable communication network when working with event organizers
- Consider appointing a “conciierge” to help event planners navigate the planning process

For the long-term recommendations

Follow up on the action item identified in the Greater Vernon Cultural Plan action items A3F.

Support and encourage special events

F1. Ensure local policies encourage and support special events. When it comes to planning special events, many local policies and bylaws can come into effect, which may not have been developed considering the implications on cultural activities. A review and audit of existing policies, along with future consultation with cultural activity providers during the development of new policies, can help ensure that the local policies achieve their objective while ensuring that they are not prohibitive to cultural activity.

Public Art Policy - Examine the recently adopted RDNO Public Art Policy and adapt it to meet the needs of the City of Vernon.