



Town of Sidney - Economic Advisory Committee MINUTES

Friday, July 10, 2020 – 10:30 am via Zoom

Present: David Calveley (Acting Chair), Annilee Armstrong, Frank Austin, Stasia Hartley, Rod Hunchak, Deanna Mathewson, Doug Walker, Denny Warner and Councillor C. Rintoul

Regrets: Brad Edgett, Barbara Cina, Alyssa Gerwing, and Jennifer Michell

Staff: Andrew Hicik, Director of Corporate Services

Meeting called to order at 10:32 am by Acting Chair, David Calveley.

1. Review and approval of the Agenda

Moved by D. Warner, seconded by D. Mathewson, that the Agenda be approved with the addition of new item 2 - resignation from B. Cina.

CARRIED

2. Receipt of Resignation

D. Calveley acknowledged receipt of the letter of resignation from B. Cina, which included a recommendation that the Town ensure property tax savings are passed on to tenants.

3. Review and Approval of the June 19, 2020 Minutes.

Moved by S. Hartley, seconded by D. Walker, that the Minutes of the June 19, 2020 Economic Advisory Committee Meeting be approved as distributed.

CARRIED

4. Review of recommendations to Council regarding actions and initiatives to support economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.

a. Increase internet capacity. Can the Town advocate on behalf of the business community as businesses switch to online models?

There was discussion regarding the need for increased internet capacity throughout the community (via fiber optic network), particularly as there has been a higher demand for use of electronic communication during the pandemic, and with more organizations conducting business on-line.

D. Warner noted that this is a huge issue for businesses in West Sidney (as per the EOC's business survey).

It was noted that cell coverage is also an issue.

Moved by D. Mathewson, seconded by D. Walker, that the Committee recommend to Council that the Town set as a priority advocating on behalf of businesses for increased/improved Internet and cell capacity.

CARRIED

b. Keep costs down and limit demands on companies during recovery

There was discussion regarding the need for the Town to do what they can to keep costs and property taxes down so as to not add extra financial burden on businesses.

Moved by F. Austin, seconded by D. Walker, that the Committee recommend to Council that the Town keep costs down and limit demands on businesses during recovery.

CARRIED

c. Encourage people to follow the requirements of the EOC and PHO but there is no need to go beyond; this is negatively affecting businesses unnecessarily.

D. Walker noted that it is important for the Town to be exemplary in this area, i.e. that the Town clearly look at all of the services in their mandate and be able to say they are doing all the services they can within the recommendations from the EOC and PHO.

D. Warner advised that businesses in West Sidney have two main concerns - access to PPE and their supply change. She noted that the retail and tourism businesses want to be open but have safety concerns (e.g. “unauthorized” US visitors). She also noted that not all businesses are following the same safety protocols, and that perhaps some guidelines could be put in place and shared with the business community so that business can all follow similar kinds of protocols.

R. Hunchak suggested a branding program “Safe Sidney” that would ensure businesses are following appropriate safety requirements, and additionally would instill confidence for customers to feel safe. It was noted this would be an initiative for the SBIA to consider.

A. Hicik clarified the Town’s role is not to be a health authority, and we do not have resources to take on new services while also keeping costs down.

D. Calveley suggested this topic be forwarded to the Recovery Task Force.

D. Walker stated the importance of the entire business community contributing to recovery, not just some.

Moved by D. Walker, seconded by S. Hartley, that the Committee recommend to Council that the Town encourage business owners follow the requirements of the PHO, but there is no need to go beyond in withholding services; this is negatively affecting businesses unnecessarily.

MOTION DEFEATED

Moved by D. Warner, seconded by D. Walker, that the Committee recommend to Council that the Chamber explore, with SBIA, the feasibility of creating a Safe Sidney marketing campaign.

CARRIED

- d. Reach out to long-term care providers to find out what their needs are. Extend Permissive Tax Exemption for property taxes for one more year (from 3 years to 4 or 5 years) for care services.**

S. Hartley requested clarification with respect to whether the permissive tax exemption to Resthaven Lodge could also be extended to all long-term care providers.

A. Hicik advised it can only apply to non-profit organizations, and for providers to apply directly to the Town.

- e. Ease some restrictions and streamline processes to make it easier for events to be organized within the bounds of safety measures.**

This recommendation was not discussed.

- f. The BIA campaign is excellent and we suggest, that Council support it in whatever necessary form, and that it be extended to cover retail and service businesses on the west side or in the Harbour Road area. This should also be provided as feedback to the Recovery Task Force.**

It was noted that the matter be postponed until the SBIA is present in order to provide further details on the campaign.

5. Council referral regarding Summary of EOC Business Survey Responses.

Referred to EAC for information. No comments made at this time.

D. Calveley noted the need to measure recovery and that pedestrian counters might be seen as one way to measure. He asked for ideas on other measures?

- D. Mathewson advised she would reach out to other tourism-based facilities for person counts.
- D. Warner noted it would be beneficial to go back to the businesses that were surveyed by the EOC to see what has changed. She noted businesses do seem to be much more optimistic and feel supported by locals.

Councillor C. Rintoul noted that it is staff's intent to re-survey and provide metrics.

Councillor C. Rintoul suggested future consideration of working with marinas to encourage transient moorage, and to enable more opportunities for visits to Sidney.

6. Adjournment

(Next meeting to be at call of the Chair, and set meeting dates to be reviewed at a future meeting).

Meeting adjourned at 11:58 am.

Acting Chair, David Calveley

Date