



Town of Sidney - Economic Advisory Committee MINUTES

Thursday, March 10, 2022 – 10:30 a.m. via Zoom

*EAC Meetings are video recorded and posted on the Town's website at:
http://www.sidney.ca/Business/Economic_Advisory_Committee.htm*

Present: David Calveley (Vice Chair), Councillor Peter Wainwright, Bert Chen, Alyssa Gerwing, Kerry Hittinger, Rod Hunchak, Deanna Mathewson, Natalie Bobrowich

Regrets: Brad Edgett, Al Smith

Guest: Morgan Shaw – Executive Director, Sidney BIA

Staff: Randy Humble – CAO, Andrew Hicik – Director of Corporate Services, Anna Morton – Recording Clerk

1. Call to Order

The Vice Chair called the meeting to order at 10:32 a.m.

2. Review and approval of Agenda

Moved by D. Mathewson, seconded by A. Gerwing, that the Agenda be adopted as presented.

CARRIED

3. Review and approval of the January 13, 2022 Minutes

Moved by R. Hunchak, seconded by D. Mathewson, that the minutes be received and approved.

CARRIED

4. Introduction of BIA Business Development Manager

N. Brobowich introduced herself as the new Business Development Manager with the Sidney BIA. She comes from Beacon Community Services, has a background in hospitality and recreation, and has owned her own business in the past. She is just completing her first full week in the role and is currently focused on outreach.

5. Discussion of vacancies and election of Chair

Councillor Wainwright noted that the town has advertised twice for committee appointments and has not received any further applicants for the EAC. There are currently eight of a potential 12 voting members and no further advertising will be done.

The election of the Chair was tabled at the January 13th EAC meeting as there were no volunteers for the position and in anticipation of more members joining.

Discussion regarding the potential election of a new Chair was moved to the end of the meeting.

6. Referrals from Council

a. SBIA's Business Development Report

A. Gerwing thought the report was excellent and asked for clarification about the active participation mentioned on page 2 of the report. M. Shaw noted that it was largely corresponding to find out what was being done to mitigate COVID, as well as information seeking and sharing.

K. Hittinger suggested that more focus on resources for home-based businesses would have been beneficial. She has heard an increased desire for shared resources, office spaces, and networking events focused on home-based businesses in the community.

D. Mathewson thought the questions asked by Council during the January 10th meeting were very thorough and that S. Toogood answered them well.

R. Hunchak questioned whether the Peninsula Chamber of Commerce had been actively involved and noted that he found the resources in the report valuable.

M. Shaw indicated that one of the biggest challenges faced by the BIA is ensuring information is provided to those that need it.

D. Calveley found the report remarkably comprehensive and suggested that it be shared with Lions Gate Consulting. He noted that it would be good to see more specific focused information in future and that, while the report was very long, it was beneficial.

B. Chen joined the meeting at 10:55 a.m.

K. Hittinger agreed that it would be good to have key learnings on future reports.

B. Chen felt the report looked good and noted the heavy emphasis on tracking tourism.

Moved by B. Chen, seconded by K. Hittinger, that the Report be received for information.

CARRIED

b. Report on SIPP Municipal Partners Meeting

Moved by A. Gerwing, seconded by D. Mathewson, that the Report be received for information.

CARRIED

7. Economic Development Strategy

R. Humble provided an update on the Economic Development Strategy. The Current Situation Assessment is nearly complete. The community and business surveys closed on February 28th and the responses were impressive, with 272 community and 116 business surveys received. He recognized the BIA as a major contributor to the survey's success.

The Current Situation Report will come out March 18th and will form the base for upcoming focus group sessions. The sessions will take place at the end of March/early April and have four or five businesses per sector group. The final report will be finalized in early April, followed by planning workshops to develop key potential strategies, which the EAC will be involved in. The Strategy is on schedule to be completed for June.

Some EAC members may be involved in the focus groups.

8. Council Liaison Report

The draft OCP bylaw is currently out for public review and the six-week engagement period closes April 11th. There will be a couple open house opportunities and an online questionnaire. Councillor Wainwright suggested that members encourage the community to take part in the engagement process.

9. Roundtable Discussion

R. Hunchak – Victoria Airport Authority: Things seem to be improving and they anticipate that April will be a good month. Air Canada is saying they don't have any empty seats this week. Lynx Air, a low-cost carrier operating out of Calgary, will be starting twice a week service on May 12th between Calgary and Victoria for \$39 one way, and adding another flight in June.

It has been the busiest two years for interest in development opportunities on airport properties.

A. Gerwing – SEAG: The Sidney Museum has been busy. The Lego exhibit is on until the end of the month, and the next exhibit is the Suitcase Project, an art installation about Japanese internment. They have Spring Break programming coming up, but are unsure about capacity limits. The Multipurpose Room project is nearly complete and the space will be available to rent to community groups. The floor renovation is finally finished.

B. Chen – resident at large: He can see new developments going in on either side of Beacon, the vacancy rates for retail spaces going down, and mixed-use developments are finding tenants for their ground floors. Several of larger developments on the corridor will be completed in the next few months. His neighbours are getting into the charter boat business and are doing well. There is an uptick in tourism and the hospitality industry. One of the big challenges is capacity constraints based on infrastructure.

K. Hittinger – home-based business: A number of clients in the tourism industry are shifting to plan in-person events. Many home-based businesses are looking for shared spaces and to get out more; there is a greater demand to network and be more involved in community.

D. Mathewson – hospitality/tourism: They implemented vaccine passports on February 15th and the response has been largely positive. They felt it was the right move when dealing with young children, grandparents, and some high-risk individuals. The February numbers were closer to February 2019 than 2020 or 2021 and they are now open six days a week for first time in over two years. Family day was as busy as they could comfortably deal with. The news about the Anacortes Ferry cancellation is disappointing. They are still having challenges looking for summer staff and filling vacancies but it is no worse than in previous years. A number of third-party ticket sellers are looking to help them sell tickets in the U.S. and Eastern Canada.

They are unsure how updated public health orders may impact mask and vaccine policies.

D. Calveley – resident at large: He attended the in-person Sidney Breakfast Club and noted it was very nice to be back at the Dakota Café and to take time to network with people. He noted that there is a great deal of survey fatigue and that it would be beneficial to have timelines available for survey results. Many businesses are struggling to find staff. There is significant interest in the OCP review.

A. Hicik – Town of Sidney: The annual budget was recently approved with a slightly higher than usual tax increase of 3.76%, but it looks to be lower than the average in CRD. The BIA is up for renewal, with the renewal process starting in the April. It is expected to take about eight weeks and will be a status quo renewal.

5. Discussion of vacancies and election of Chair

The Committee will continue without a Chair for the time being.

10. Adjournment

Moved by A. Gerwing, seconded by D. Mathewson, that the meeting be adjourned at 11:56 a.m.

Chair

Date