



Corporation of the Village of Cumberland

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Economic Development Steering Committee Minutes

March 20, 2018, 6:00 pm
Council Chambers

Members Present:

Kaelin Chambers, Alternate Chair
Shayla Hall
Toby Reid
Darren Adam
Evan Loveless
Gwyn Sproule, Alternate Councillor

Staff & Guests:

Sundance Topham, CAO
Paul Siggers, EcoPlan

Regrets: Jan Neuspiel, Chair; Tina Willard-Stephan; Nick Ward, Jesse Ketler, Councillor.

Mr. Chambers called the meeting to order at 6:10pm.

1. Approval of Agenda

1.1 Reid/Sroule

THAT the Committee approve the agenda of March 20, 2018.

Carried Unanimously

2. Adoption of Minutes

2.1 Reid/Sroule

THAT the Committee approve the minutes of February 6, 2018.

Carried Unanimously

3. New Business

3.1 Project update

The consultant reviewed the work done since the February 6th meeting with a focus on final survey distribution and the Community Planning Forum. A correction was provided by the consultant about survey reach - at the February 6th meeting it was thought that 330 online surveys had been completed with the survey to remain open for another 12 days. This was an error, with the count at the time closer to 200. The final count of completed surveys was 320.

The Steering Committee shared impressions from the Community Forum event. While the Community Forum had a lower turn out than expected (25 people), it was felt that the quality of discussion was high and that good ideas were put forward by attending community members.

The ThoughtExchange station (an online brainstorming tool) did not receive much attention at the event, but was kept open for one week after the event; 22

people made use of ThoughtExchange, sharing over 100 ideas and approximately 240 ratings.

3.2 Foundations

The consultant reviewed some common economic development activities that any local government can consider in trying to create a more business-friendly competitive environment. These common actions are not often suggested by community members, but can nonetheless be simple effective actions. The list of these initiatives was treated as a “checklist” to discuss the kinds of things that might already be happening in Cumberland or could be considered as part of final strategies.

The discussion of these options was had in the context of a brief review findings from the business portion of the survey, which had suggested the Village is seen in a fairly good light by local business. Further, the most common challenges faced by business are finding the right labour, lack of village promotion, and finding the right space/land.

When reviewing the checklist against these findings, onerous government processes and fees came up as a topic of conversation. While some felt these (specifically parking-in-lieu taxes and heritage permitting) were an obstacle to new business attraction and growth, it was also suggested that these policies were in fact intended to support a vital downtown and might be preferable to what other jurisdictions in the Comox Valley require.

3.3 Strategic options evaluation and development

The Committee moved through a structured process to think through the potential strategies circulated ahead of the meeting. The group began by conducting a preliminary prioritization of strategies by scoring each strategy against the economic development objectives developed earlier in the project as well as some additional feasibility criteria (Champion/political will, Ease of implementation, and cost). The scores were collected into a single consequence table to give a first impression on the impact of the different strategies (in terms of objectives) and challenges to implementation (feasibility criteria).

The group used this to separate out strategies that were clear winners from those that could quickly be eliminated. It further helped the group to identify strategies that could be included as part of others, or areas where there was some disagreement or divergence in opinions. The highest prioritized strategy areas were:

- Investment attraction
- Downtown revitalization
- Development of the Bevan Road Industrial Area
- Expansion of arts & culture as an economic driver

Secondary priority areas were:

- Diversify attractions and quality of life
- Better promote and package Cumberland's attractions to expand tourism

Eliminated Strategies were:

- Developing a collaborative Trail Management Strategy
- Expand accommodation opportunities (this was not eliminated entirely, but collapsed under *Investment Attraction*)

It was also felt that some of the other strategies may still have strong actions that could be incorporated or included in other ways.

With a short-list of prioritized strategies, the group began development of a timeline for potential actions. The focus here was specific things the Village could do in support of the strategies. In sequencing actions along a five-year timeline, Committee members were asked to consider urgency (i.e. if there any reasons an action had to happen at a certain time) and complexity (if this action would take time to implement, or could be accomplished in a short period). Through the sequencing process, Committee members were able to further refine, combine, and highlight preferred actions.

While the work was not completed for all strategy areas, the input from these discussions will contribute to development of a more refined set of options. It was decided that the consultant would take this input and develop a more refined description of the strategies for Steering Committee review before development of the complete draft.

3.4 Implementation

During discussion of specific actions, the group commented upon the role of the Economic Coordinator who will be hired as part of implementation and the skills/roles that this coordinator will need. Key skills/roles identified were to coordinate with and support local business and non-profit organizations, and write grant applications.

3.5 Monitoring

The group had a brief discussion about types of monitoring and mechanisms for reporting. It was decided that the coordinator would report on status more frequently to the EDSSC (i.e. at quarterly meetings) and that a yearly update could go out to the community (e.g., a newsletter).

3.7 Further communications/consultation

A final newsletter will be posted online at the end of April to advise the community of when the strategy will be presented to Council.

3.8 Next Steps

The consultant gave an overview of the process for drafting the strategy and review. The review process was altered to provide a preliminary review of prioritized strategies and actions ahead of the anticipated April 11th circulation of a more complete draft of the Economic Development Strategy. A simple process evaluation was also discussed, which will be an anonymous survey of EDSSC members on the experience of being on the committee and recommendations for how a future committee might be run. The updated next steps are:

- Draft and Review process:
 - Refined strategies sent out for review – March 29th
 - SC comments back to consultant – April 5th
 - First full draft sent out for review – April 11th
 - Review back from SC - April 23rd
 - Final Strategy due - May 7th
- Process evaluation – March 29th
- Next Newsletter – Late April
- Final Council Presentation - May 14th

4. Delegations

None

5. Unfinished Business

None

6. Correspondence

None

7. Reports

7.1 Community Forum Event Report

7.2 Strategic Opportunities Overview

8. Upcoming meetings

No more scheduled meetings.

9. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 9:15pm.

Certified Correct:

Chair

Deputy Corporate Officer