

Economic Development Advisory Committee

**Friday, March 22, 2013 – 8:30 am
EOC 2, City Hall**

MINUTES

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Councillor Bill Harper - Chair, City Council
Dana Woods - Community Member
Reg Nordman - Community Member
Marie Szklarz - Community Member
Patrick O'Shaughnessy - Community Member
Chuck Stewart - Community Member
David Moulton - Community Member
Andy Bradshaw - Downtown Business Improvement Association

MEMBER REGRETS:

Frank Gregus - New Westminister Chamber of Commerce

STAFF:

Blair Fryer - Manager, Communications and Economic Development
Andréa Parkerson - Economic Development Coordinator/Recording Clerk
Stephanie Lam - Committee Clerk, Legislative Services

The meeting was called to order at 8:40 am.

1.0 OATHS AND SWEARING-IN

1.1 Oaths and swearing in conducted by Stephanie Lam.

All members present took the oath and were sworn in.

Those who were not present are to confirm reception of orientation materials and contact legislative services regarding the oath.

All members to complete permission form and submit to the Committee Clerk.

Procedural note: Stephanie Lam exited the meeting at 9:02am.

1.2 Introductions

Each member introduced themselves and gave a brief history of how they came to be on the Economic Development Advisory Committee.

2.0 REVIEW OF EDAC WORK IN 2012 AND TERMS OF REFERENCE

2.1 Review of EDAC work in 2012 - Blair Fryer

Councillor Harper explained that the Economic Development Office (EDO) is being reviewed by Council and a decision will be made within a year with respect to the resourcing and focus of the Economic Development Office.

Members of the committee suggested that Ted Arbuthno, owner of the Queensborough liquor store, Drinks, and Hops, be invited to fill the current vacancy on the Committee. This vacancy calls for a member of the Queensborough Business Community.

Blair Fryer, Manager of Communications and Economic Development reviewed the Economic Development Interim Work Plan that was presented to Council on January 28, 2013 (Doc#366888), and provided an update regarding the progress of the EDO since the departure of the previous Economic Development Manager.

Mr. Fryer reported the following points:

- A review of the EDO was conducted in January-February of 2013 to determine the status of past work plan goals and initiatives.
- In March 2013, the EDO attended the BC Real Estate Convention and had a booth display.
- The website (www.investnewwest.ca) was originally built without a content management system. This is now being addressed and the project is currently with the City's IT department.
- The EDO has been promoting and advertising in local media.
- Asia-Pacific relations will be addressed in future meetings.
- The EDO has identified key partners within city staff and is opening up the lines of communication to enable strategic actions.
- Intelligent City has been recognized as a high priority and is now a standalone committee. Reg Nordman is the EDAC representative on the Intelligent City Advisory Committee.
- Quarterly updates will be sent electronically to the attendees of the 2012 Economic Forum.
- Meetings with local business groups and businesses have taken place to find out what the business community needs from the EDO.

Referring to the report members commented that a Downtown Retail Action Plan had been created. It was noted that although there was research done with a focus group, the Downtown BIA were not given the results of that research. If those results are available, the Downtown BIA has requested permission to view the information.

Members discussed metrics, which was one of the common problems in the past years, as there was very little tracking done. Key performance indicator tracking

was seen by members as very positive, encouraging investigation to discover the best metrics to accurately reflect the economic development growth in New Westminster. Members also agreed that it is important to define a baseline for each of the metrics, and to be able to track the links between the efforts that the City is exerting, and the influence it is having on growth.

Members highlighted difficulties in doing business in New Westminster, such as the ease of doing business with the City, the cost of owning a business in New West which includes water, electricity, and land taxes. Councillor Harper mentioned that rental buildings pay less tax and New Westminster is 48% rental stock. Councillor Harper reported that the City is reviewing the tax structure and looking to become more business friendly.

The Committee discussed the “Intelligent City Project” and agreed that it is a high priority initiative as it will add value to both businesses and the community in New Westminster.

Procedural note: Members unanimously agreed to extend the meeting by 30minutes to 10:30am.

Andréa Parkerson briefly reviewed the post-forum report and the forum feedback analysis. Overall the forum was successful and Ms Parkerson advised that the process was worth the time and effort. The A/V and seating were recognized as the major problems at the 2012 forum; however it was noted that these problems are easily solved and with proper planning will not be repeated at the 2014 forum.

Members of the Committee discussed the results and requested that attendees of the 2012 forum be acknowledged in their feedback and that that the message be communicated that their concerns have been addressed. Members also suggested that a question be added to future surveys to find out what cities attendees are coming from.

Blair Fryer provided an update of the meetings resulting from the survey feedback, noting that one in particular had a substantial impact, as the attendees concerns affecting lending and financing for projects in Queensborough. Although not many meeting or direct leads came out of the 2012 forum, members agreed that it was successful in creating a positive buzz about New Westminster. Councillor Harper added that not all feedback came through the surveys; Mayor and Council also received direct feedback from attendees, which was overall positive.

It was announced that “Intelligent City” is the theme of the 2014 Economic Forum which will be held in the Anvil Centre in Fall 2014.

3.0 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT GOALS

3.1 Additional Goals

Members suggested that a review of the past goals and timelines is an efficient means to find additional goals for 2013. The Asia-Pacific initiatives will be incorporated into this committee's scope, including China House.

4.0 KEY ACTIVITY TIMELINE

No items.

5.0 INVEST NEW WEST WEBSITE

5.1 Current Status – Blair Fryer

Mr. Fryer highlighted the key points of the current status of the website (www.investnewwest.ca):

- It is a work in progress;
- It will be improved both in content and efficiency;
- The website will have a cms added (WordPress).

Dana Woods suggested that the EDO investigate Intellegia, a website that has a ranking of Economic Development websites from various cities in Canada. The strengths and weaknesses revealed there can help guide the future of the New Westminster website.

6.0 FUTURE MEETING SCHEDULE

6.1. Ideal scheduling

The future meeting schedule was discussed, and the Committee agreed that Friday mornings from 8:00am-10:00am, once every two months was ideal.

6.2 Next meeting date

8:00am, Friday, May 31, 2013 – EOC 2, City Hall

7.0 OTHER BUSINESS

7.1 Requested agenda items for the next meeting

- Heating, municipal utilities & green energy
- Asia-Pacific initiative
- Federal funds and local planning, budget and infrastructure
- Resourcing the EDO

8.0 INTELLIGENT CITY

There was no update.

9.0 ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 10:30am.

Councillor Bill Harper
Chair

Andréa Parkerson
Committee Clerk