



Economic Development Advisory Committee (EDAC)

Friday, April 9, 2021 – 9:00 a.m.

Meeting held electronically under Ministerial Order No. M192/2020 and the current Order of the Provincial Health Officer - *Gatherings and Events*

MINUTES

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Councillor Mary Trentadue	- Chair, City Council Member
Councillor Chinu Das	- City Council Representative
Artemisa Bega	- Sectoral Representative from Local Business Community
Bob Crockett	- Sectoral Representative from Local Business Community
Mark Evans	- Sectoral Representative from Local Business Community
Jolene Foreman	- Community Representative from Commercial Area
Jorden Foss	- Community Representative from Commercial Area
Kendra Johnston	- Representative Downtown New Westminister Business Improvement Association
Vera Kobalia	- Sectoral Representative from Local Business Community
Bart Slotman	- Representative, Uptown Business Association
Rnold Smith	- Representative, New Westminister Chamber of Commerce

MEMBER REGRETS:

Alejandro Diaz	- Community Representative from Commercial Area
Paul Romein	- Sectoral Representative from Local Business Community
Catherine Williams	- Sectoral Representative from Local Business Community

STAFF PRESENT:

Jen Arbo	- Economic Development Coordinator
Carolyn Armanini	- Planner, Economic Development
Todd Ayotte	- Manager, Community Arts & Theatre
Blair Fryer	- Manager, Communications & Economic Development
Lynn Roxburgh	- Senior Policy Planner
Patrick Shannon	- Manager, Purchasing
Harji Varn	- Director of Finance
Nicole Ludwig	- Assistant City Clerk
Heather Corbett	- Committee Clerk

The meeting was called to order at 9:01 a.m. The Chair acknowledged that the meeting was being held on unceded Indigenous territory.

1.0 ADDITIONS / DELETIONS TO THE AGENDA

MOVED and SECONDED

THAT the agenda of the April 9, 2021 Economic Development Advisory Committee be adopted.

CARRIED.

All members present voted in favour of the motion.

2.0 ADOPTION OF MINUTES

2.1 Adoption of the Minutes of February 5, 2021

MOVED AND SECONDED

THAT the Minutes of the February 5, 2021 Economic Development Advisory Committee meeting be adopted.

CARRIED.

All members of the Committee present voted in favor of the motion.

3.0 PRESENTATIONS

3.1 CNW Procurement Policy Review

Patrick Shannon, Manager, Purchasing, provided a PowerPoint Presentation highlighting the following information:

- Proposed changes to the procurement policy to enhance how the City awards contracts to procure goods and services, while evaluating the social and sustainable benefits and aligning with the City's values and 7 Bold Steps; and,
- Benefits of social and sustainable procurement, including use of local suppliers, supplier diversity, and community involvement.

In response to questions from the Committee, Mr. Shannon provided the following information:

- Tracking the City's use of diverse suppliers would be a component of the new procurement policy, and would likely be a manual process, with reporting on an annual basis;
- Under the City's current policy, when a contract is under a certain threshold, procurement does not need to be involved in the supplier selection; however, the policy review presents an opportunity for procurement staff to remind all City departments that, where applicable, there is a preference to support local businesses;

- To effect change in the short term, the existing policy is in place and the Economic Development department will have conversations with different divisions to draw attention to the policy and the use of local businesses;
- With regard to a recent arts contract that was outsourced by the Parks & Recreation department, the contract has been paused for further discussion;
- The percentage of contracts that are currently being given to local businesses is not currently tracked; however, a report could be pulled from the business licence database to cross-check with the contracts issued;
- A primary aim of the new procurement policy would be to increase the percentage of contracts going to local businesses, and would be achieved through increased communication to the local business community, and updating the current ‘buy local’ clause to ensure it is impactful;
- Through the new business licence process, staff are investigating how to incorporate business owners’ qualifications and interests for potential tenders into the business licence database, which could, in turn, be used for communicating opportunities; and,
- When suppliers are on equal footing in terms of qualifications, the revised procurement policy would allow for factors other than price to be reviewed when awarding a contract.

Committee members made the following comments:

- It would be important to take every opportunity to remind City staff of the value of using community suppliers and driving a circular economy;
- The Business Improvement Associations (BIAs) in the City could support local suppliers in submitting successful proposals if given the resources and information from the City;
- As local suppliers may not have as much experience as larger businesses to bid on City contracts, it may be valuable to give weight to being local in order to allow them to gain the required experience;
- There are technology-based solutions for dealing with social, environmental and value-based sourcing, and ensuring that decision-making processes are ethical;
- Many of the technology-based supply chain solutions, such as BlockChain, can track information the whole way through the process, which may be easier than tracking manually;
- It may be helpful for the City to provide local businesses with a list of the diversity-based associations that the City may prioritize, to increase their qualifications for consideration;
- Many of the local arts-based businesses have struggled during the pandemic, and would appreciate the chance to compete or apply for contracts; therefore, it may show a sign of good intent to ensure that they are given equal opportunity to bid for smaller, relevant City contracts;

- The Invest New West Newsletter is an excellent space for all City opportunities to be advertised;
- In reviewing the City's procurement practice, it would be worthwhile to review those of other cities and to strive to set the bar high in terms of supporting local; and,
- It would be worthwhile to offer collateral or education programs to local businesses on how to put together proposals to meet the City's requirements.

Councillor Trentadue noted that this discussion would also take place at the Culture and Economic Development Task Force, and it would be worthwhile for procurement staff to return to the Committee when further updates on the policy are made to gather further feedback.

4.0 UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Procedural Note: Item 4.1 was discussed after Item 5.1.

4.1 Retail Strategy Update

Carolyn Armanini, Economic Development Planner, and Lynn Roxburgh, Senior Policy Planner, provided a PowerPoint presentation and a status update on the City's planned Retail Strategy, including the following information:

- A Request for Proposal (RFP) for a Consultant to carry out the retail strategy work is currently out for tender;
- Pre-engagement interviews and information gathering are currently occurring to identify missing voices, identify barriers that would prevent participation, and to help inform and map out the process; and,
- Overview of the four phases of the work plan and next steps.

In response to questions from the Committee, Ms. Armanini and Ms. Roxburgh provided the following information:

- The retail strategy would encompass all commercial areas in the City, including Sixth, Columbia, East Columbia, Twelfth and Twentieth Streets, as well as other areas in the City that are not as retail focused, and home-based businesses; and,
- The initial ten interviews proposed are intended to identify how best to reach businesses with language and cultural barriers, and inform the development of the broader strategy or consultation.

Committee members made the following comments:

- Home based businesses or local suppliers who are residents may be missing voices, and should be contacted for participation;
- Barriers to participation may include: lack of awareness of how to join the conversation, length of time being a business in the City, and lack of opportunity for engagement due to the pandemic, among others; and,
- It may help to inform the strategy by connecting with property developers who have potential retail space coming online in the coming years.

Committee members were asked to participate in a stakeholder mapping exercise and provide ideas on the types of categories of businesses that the City should engage with. The following image was generated:



5.0 NEW BUSINESS

Procedural Note: Item 5.1 was discussed after Item 3.1 and before Item 4.1.

5.1 Commercial Taxes

Blair Fryer, Manager, Communications & Economic Development, introduced the subject of commercial business taxation for general discussion by the Committee, and acknowledged the impacts of the pandemic on affordability, the economy, and on taxpayers in the City.

Mr. Fryer introduced Harji Varn, Director of Finance, who noted that she is participating in tax reform work that is happening at both the regional and municipal levels, alongside BC Assessment, and will be engaging with the Committee in future in order to understand how the decisions made at various levels of government affect local businesses.

In response to questions from the Committee, Ms. Varn provided the following information:

- The work that the City is undertaking with other levels of government looks to gain a greater understanding of the impact of BC Assessment's decisions and land valuations, analysis of the current state, and what is in and out of control of the City in terms of taxes;
- Other organizations and the Committee can support the City's work in the following ways:
 - Encourage businesses to take part in budget discussions;
 - Be responsive and help inform the City on how businesses are being impacted by taxes and how taxes are shifting; and,
 - Be aware of issues and lend voices to support the municipality's position, particularly on issues such as the split tax.

Committee members made the following comments:

- The City should be applauded for engaging in this type of work and carrying on the work which was started in 2012-2013 when municipalities were compared to each other; and,
- It would be important for the City to clearly communicate what it is advocating for so that business groups are aligned and clear about what they are supporting.

6.0 REPORTS

6.1 Standing Reports

a) Downtown New Westminster Business Improvement Association (BIA)

Kendra Johnston, Representative, Downtown New Westminster Business Improvement Association, provided the following report:

- The BIA is seeing an increase in fear and anxiety from businesses, and less hope, which sometimes comes across as anger, and sometimes as a lack of engagement;
- The latest COVID-19 supports introduced by the government have been regarded as small in comparison to the amount of work that it takes to apply for them, and small businesses often do not have the capacity to put in the work required;
- Small Business BC has a 1-800 line for any businesses needing help navigating the government processes;
- The BIA has been lending out many tents recently, and has been working with Tourism New West and other agencies, on the Rediscover New West campaign; and,

- The BIA is working on plans to support and activate outdoor public spaces for the summer.

Committee members noted that there has been a slight reduction in support lately, perhaps as a result of fatigue from supporting local businesses, and reiterated that the government grants are not going to be helping businesses very much. It was also noted that the recent communication from Invest New West has been helpful.

b) Uptown Business Association

Bart Slotman, Representative, Uptown Business Association, provided the following report:

- The Uptown is relatively stable due to larger entities in the major centres;
- It is important for the community to be cognizant that wage and rent subsidies are going to end soon and a shift is likely in the business landscape;
- Upwards of 30% of businesses may fail in the next year and this will have effects on the retail and office space landscape, and the local economy of the City;
- The City may need to be prepared to support businesses through land use planning; and,
- The UBA is encouraging its members to make use of short-term initiatives, such as street patios.

In response to a question from the Committee, Lynn Roxburgh, Senior Policy Planner, noted that the outcomes of the retail strategy work (as noted in Item 4.1) would likely present an opportunity to inform future Official Community Plan (OCP) processes and to plan for the City's streetscapes and retail landscape.

c) New Westminster Chamber of Commerce

Rnold Smith, Representative, New Westminster Chamber of Commerce, provided the following report:

- Some Residents' Associations (RAs) have been experiencing challenges in terms of lack of finances to engage with their communities, and there may be an opportunity for the RAs and BIAs to work together to spread relevant information;
- A recent Chamber Network call had members expressing anger at the recent COVID-19 restrictions on businesses, noting that more collaboration, more notice and more supports from the government would have been appreciated;
- The Chamber is producing the Platinum Awards, which have a public voting process this year, and will culminate in a Virtual Gala on April 29th;

- The Chamber is also working on making digital marketing supports available to members to help with measures such as building online presence, lead capture and Google supports.

Nicole Ludwig, Assistant City Clerk, noted that all RAs have been communicated with in regards to the City grant that is available to them, and they have until the end of the year to apply.

6.1 Economic Development Workplan 2021 Status

The updated Economic Development workplan was appended to the agenda for the Committee's reference.

7.0 CORRESPONDENCE

8.0 NEXT MEETING

The next EDAC meeting will take place on Friday, June 11, 2021 at 9:00 a.m., location to be confirmed.

9.0 ADJOURNMENT

ON MOTION, the meeting was adjourned at 10:30 a.m.

Certified Correct,

ORIGINAL SIGNED
Councillor Mary Trentadue
Chair

ORIGINAL SIGNED
Heather Corbett
Committee Clerk