



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE

MINUTES

Friday, March 3, 2023

Committee Room 2

City Hall

PRESENT

Councillor Ruby Campbell

Councillor Paul Minhas

Monita Cheng*

Mark Evans*

Jolene Foreman

Jorden Foss

Imran Gill*

Vera Kobalia*

Bart Slotman

Paige Strand*

Catherine Williams*

Chair

Council Representative

Community Representative from Commercial Area

Sectoral Representative from Local Business

Community

Sectoral Representative from Local Business

Community

Sectoral Representative from Local Business

Community

Sectoral Representative from Local Business

Community

Community Representative from Commercial Area

Representative, Uptown Business Association

Community Representative from Commercial Area

Sectoral Representative from Local Business

Community

REGRETS

Paul Romein

Sectoral Representative from Local Business

Community

GUEST

Councillor Daniel Fontaine

Angie Whitfield

City Councillor

New Westminster Chamber of Commerce

STAFF PRESENT

Jen Arbo

Carolyn Armanini

Blair Fryer

Economic Development Coordinator

Economic Development, Senior Planner

Senior Manager, Communications and Economic

Development

Jennifer Miller
Meredith Seeton
Katie Stobbart

Manger, Public Engagement
Policy Planner
Committee Clerk

*Denotes electronic attendance

1. CALL TO ORDER AND LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Councillor Ruby Campbell opened the meeting at 9:03 a.m. and recognized with respect that New Westminster is on the unceded and unsurrendered land of the Halkomelem speaking peoples. She acknowledged that colonialism has made invisible their histories and connections to the land. She recognized that, as a City, we are learning and building relationships with the people whose lands we are on.

2. INTRODUCTIONS AND ICEBREAKERS

The committee began with a round of introductions.

3. CHANGES TO THE AGENDA

Addition of two items (see new business)

4. ADOPTION OF MINUTES FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS

4.1 Minutes of December 2, 2023

MOVED and SECONDED

THAT the Minutes of the December 2, 2023 Economic Development Advisory Committee meeting be adopted.

Carried.

All members present voted in favour of the motion.

5. REPORTS AND PRESENTATIONS

5.1 Election of Alternate Chair

Councillor Campbell explained that the committee structure has not yet been determined as the strategic planning process is still in progress, and recommended the committee wait until the new committee is formed to elect an alternate chair.

5.2 "Be Heard" Public Engagement Tool

Jennifer Miller provided an overview of the Be Heard New West website, noting the following:

- Be Heard launched in late 2020, and an online community has been steadily growing in this space;
- The purpose of this presentation is to help ensure people in the community know about this tool, and members are encouraged to share the information around; and
- Staff engage businesses in other ways, as Be Heard is for projects that are open to the full community for input.

In response to questions from the committee, Ms. Miller advised:

- If there is a project of interest that is not on Be Heard, people can check the Projects on the Go section of the City's website, or email engage@newwestcity.ca;
- Participants in Be Heard need not prove they are from New West, though they are asked for their postal code and to indicate their connections to the city when signing up; and
- In addition to Be Heard, the City connects with people via pop-up and other non-virtual engagement opportunities.

The Committee had the following comments:

- Facebook groups for New West residents are a good place to share this information, as well as physical billboards, for instance in residential buildings; and
- Committee members can act as ambassadors and help post information in the community under the advice of staff. Anything on Be Heard is public and can be freely shared.

5.3 Draft Retail Strategy (Phase 2)

Procedural Note: Paige Strand left the meeting at 9:50 a.m.

Carolyn and Blair provided a presentation titled “New Westminster Retail Strategy.”

In response to questions from the committee, Mr. Fryer and Ms. Armanini advised:

- The City has conducted a hotel feasibility study which showed the city could benefit from additional places for people to stay;
- Where the Sushi Well and thrift store were in Uptown, there will be a residential tower with approx. five units of at-grade commercial; and
- It is important to have a range of commercial spaces, including affordable spaces.

The Committee had the following comments:

- There is a lot of usable space at the smart centre in Queensborough, but transportation there is a challenge; and
- While the population is growing, with the shift to online shopping there may be less need for brick and mortar as in the past.

Procedural Note: Vera Kobalia left the meeting at 10:20 a.m.

6. UNFINISHED BUSINESS FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS

There were no items.

7. STANDING REPORTS AND UPDATES

There were no items.

8. NEW BUSINESS

8.1 On Table – Improving our Economy by Better Connecting Douglas College Students, Faculty, and Staff with our Business Districts

Councillor Campbell provided the motion approved by Council on February 27, 2023 with the same title. Councillor Minhas gave an overview of the motion’s intent, to think innovatively about how to encourage students to engage with and potentially stay in the community.

In discussion, the Committee noted that there are challenges with Douglas College being a commuter campus, and that there is a business internship program and cooperative education program.

Councillor Minhas and Catherine Williams will meet to further discuss the opportunities for students to engage with local businesses.

8.2 On Table – Vacant Property Tax on Commercial Properties

Councillor Campbell provided the motion approved by Council on February 27, 2023 with the same title, and gave a brief overview of the motion.

In response to questions from the Committee, Councillor Campbell advised that if the legislation passes, there will be guiding principles (e.g. the length of vacancy, whether it interrupts the flow of eyes on the street, if it has received numerous violations of being unsightly or unsafe).

9. END OF MEETING

The meeting ended at 10:59 a.m.

10. UPCOMING MEETINGS

The next meeting date is to be determined.