



**SMOKY LAKE COUNTY & TOWN OF SMOKY LAKE
JOINT COUNCIL MEETING & PUBLIC HEARING**



Minutes of the **Smoky Lake County** and **Town of Smoky Lake** Joint Council Meeting of Friday, **June 26, 2020** at 10:00 a.m. held virtually online through Electronic Communication Technology: Zoom Meeting.

The meeting was called to Order by the Smoky Lake County Reeve Craig Lukinuk in the presence of the following persons:

| <u>Division</u> | <u>Name</u> | <u>ATTENDANCE</u> <u>Friday, June 26, 2020</u> |
|---------------------|-------------------------------|---|
| 1 | Dan Gawalko | Virtually Present |
| 2 | Johnny Cherniwchan | Virtually Present |
| 3 | Craig Lukinuk | Virtually Present |
| 4 | Lorne Halisky | Virtually Present |
| 5 | Randy Orichowski | Virtually Present |
| C.A.O. | Cory Ollikka | Virtually Present |
| Assistant C.A.O. | Lydia Cielin | Virtually Present |
| Finance Manager | Brenda Adamson | Virtually Present |
| Recording Secretary | Patti Priest | Virtually Present |
| P&D Manager | Jordan Ruegg | Virtually Present |
| P&D Assist. Manager | Kyle Schole | Virtually Present |
| CEDO | Michelle Wright | Virtually Present |
| Town of Smoky Lake | Hank Holowaychuk – Mayor | Virtually Present |
| Town of Smoky Lake | Melody Morton – Councillor | Virtually Present |
| Town of Smoky Lake | Dan Kotylak – Councillor | Virtually Present |
| Town of Smoky Lake | Ross Whitelaw – Deputy Mayor | Virtually Present |
| Town of Smoky Lake | Terry Makowichuk – Councillor | Virtually Present |
| Town of Smoky Lake | Adam Kozakiewicz - C.A.O. | Virtually Present |
| Town of Smoky Lake | Crystal Letwin – Fin.Leg.Srv. | Virtually Present |
| Vision XS Ltd. | Tony Sefton | Virtually Present |

9 Members of the Public were in virtual attendance for a total of 30 virtual meeting participants.

2. AGENDA:

J194-20: Gawalko

That the **Smoky Lake County** and **Town of Smoky Lake** Joint Council Meeting Agenda for Friday, June 26, 2020 be adopted, as presented.

Town of Smoky Lake: motion moved by Holowaychuk.

Carried Unanimously.

3. MINUTES:

Minutes – May 29, 2020

J195-20: Orichowski

That the **Smoky Lake County** and **Town of Smoky Lake** Joint Council Meeting Minutes of **May 29, 2020** be adopted, as presented.

Town of Smoky Lake: motion moved by Morton.

Carried.

Action List – May 29, 2020

J196-20: Halisky

That the **Smoky Lake County** and **Town of Smoky Lake** Joint Council Meeting Action List from **May 29, 2020** be adopted, as presented.

Town of Smoky Lake: motion moved by Holowaychuk.

Carried.

Meeting Recessed, time 10:11 a.m.

16 additional Members of the Public virtually joined the meeting for a total of 46 virtual participants by 10:17 a.m.

VIRTUAL PUBLIC HEARING:

Victoria District Economic Development Strategy - Proposed Bylaws: Smoky Lake County Bylaw No. 1372-20 & Town of Smoky Lake Bylaw No. 006-2020

1.0 Opening

The Virtual Public Hearing was **called to order at 10:18 a.m.** by the Smoky Lake County Reeve, Craig Lukinuk in the presence of Council members, Chief Administrative Officer, Assistant Chief Administrative Officer, GIS/Communication Director, Planning and Development Manager, Recording Secretary and **46 members of the public.**

Confirmation was provided by the Chief Administrative Officers of Smoky Lake County and Town of Smoky Lake that the Public Hearing was advertised, and notice was provided in accordance with the applicable legislation.

The purpose of the hearing was summarized:

To obtain public input towards Council's consideration of adopting proposed County Bylaw No. 1372-20 & proposed Town Bylaw No. 006-2020: Victoria District Economic Development Strategy.

Over the last year and some months, we have been working in partnership with our consultant Vision, the Experience Specialists (Vision XS) to develop this Strategy, which aims to leverage the Victoria District for cultural and heritage tourism, growing the Smoky Lake region's visitor economy, thereby contributing to creating jobs, stabilizing population and service levels, etc.

If the proposed Strategy is adopted, there will be further steps for

implementation required, which shall also be subject to public engagement, input, and participation.

4 additional Members of the Public virtually joined the meeting for a total of 50 virtual participants by 10:28 a.m.

2.0 Staff Presentation

Smoky Lake County Planning and Development Manager, Jordan Ruegg, provided the following BACKGROUND information:

- In the 2018 – 2020 Smoky Lake County Strategic Plan, County Council identified a series of priorities, including an Economic Development Plan leveraging the Victoria District as a tourism asset. The Strategy is to be completed by Q3 of 2020.
 - As a side-trip from the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) conference in **May 2019**, several members of County Council and administration toured Île d'Orléans in Quebec, studying potential ways how heritage and historic assets can be leveraged to drive tourism and sustainable economic development.
 - **NOTE:** although this site-visit highlighted *some* similarities between Île d'Orléans and the Victoria District, and inspiration for cultural and heritage focused tourism, it should be noted that the Proposed Victoria District Economic Development Strategy has been created primarily with a local focus in mind.
- Following the visit to Île d'Orléans, attendees and County Council participated in a Scoping Workshop in **August 2019**, facilitated by Community Design Strategies (CDS) Inc. to begin the work of defining the project parameters.
 - CDS was also the consultant retained to complete both the Smoky Lake Regional Heritage Management Plan and Regional Heritage Inventory in 2012.
- An Ad hoc Committee was struck by County Council in **September 2019** to further refine the project scope and visioning, as well as to begin work on the Strategy in earnest, comprised of:
 - Smoky Lake County Regional Heritage Board (Noreen Easterbrook),
 - Métis Crossing (Juanita Marois),
 - Victoria Home Guard Historical Society (Elaine Breadon-Peiche),
 - Victoria Settlement (Suzanna Wagner),
 - Smoky Lake County Administration (Jordan Ruegg & Kyle Schole),
 - Community Economic Development Officer (Michelle Wright), and
 - County Council (Craig Lukinuk and Lorne Halisky, with Johnny Cherniwchan as alternate).
- County Council approved the selection of Vision XS 'the experience specialists' Ltd. in **December 2019** as the project consultant to assist in the competition of the Strategy.

- Vision XS Ltd. has also been retained by Metis Crossing for assistance in its business and strategic planning and was therefore already familiar with the Smoky Lake region.
- During the months of December 2019 through **February 2020**, Administration conducted a thorough investigation and research into local economic, employment, demographic, and financial situation, as well as various tourism indicators across the region.
 - Being data-driven, the proposed Victoria District Economic Development Strategy provides insight to what infrastructures are in under/over-supply, as well as identifies required strategic initiatives in order for the existing visitor economy to responsibly thrive and grow.
 - The proposed Strategy differs from other initiatives of this sort in that it provides for the support of product development rather than simply a marketing campaign of existing products.
 - Tony Sefton, CEO and Founder of Vision XS Ltd., traveled to the Smoky Lake region in February to conduct site visits, gather additional information / research, and conduct preliminary consultation.
 - Consultation meetings occurred with potential developers / operators, engineering, Travel Alberta, Alberta Economic Development Trade and Tourism (EDTT), the Smoky Lake Chamber of Commerce, and Go East of Edmonton DMO, municipal departments, and Town/County Councils, among others.
 - Both the Villages of Waskatenau and Vilna were invited to participate but did not attend.
- Vision XS Ltd. completed its initial detailed report for the Strategy in **March 2020**.
 - It is abundantly clear that in order for any Strategy to be successful, partnerships and coordination should be sought where possible, especially between the Town and County.
- Through the Province, a potential investor into a municipally controlled corporation was identified as being a potential vehicle for advancing and implementing the Strategy.
 - Both Councils (first the County, followed by the Town) were briefed individually, and at the **April 29, 2020** Joint Council Meeting, County Council adopted a Motion to proceed with adopting the Strategy on the basis of an Investor Partnership Model, subject to Public Participation.
- At the **May 29, 2020** Joint Council Meeting, Town, and County Councils:
 - accepted the March 2020 Strategy Report prepared by Vision XS,
 - gave First Reading to Proposed County Bylaw 1372-20 & Proposed Town Bylaw 006-2020: Victoria District Economic Development Strategy.
- A Public Participation Plan was also accepted at the May 29, 2020 Meeting of Joint Council, and a Joint Virtual Public Hearing has also been scheduled for 10:15 a.m. on June 26, 2020 to obtain public input on the proposed Bylaws in accordance with Section 230 of the Municipal Government Act.
 - Public Notice has been advertised for two weeks consecutively on social media and in newsprint in the Smoky Lake Signal and the Redwater Review on **June 16 and 23, 2020**.

- Public Notice has also been posted on the Smoky Lake Regional website since **June 9, 2020**.

▪ **NOTE:** The Proposed Bylaws aim to jointly adopt the *concept* of the Victoria District Economic Development Strategy. This means that if the Strategy is adopted, future implementation bylaws may be separately brought forward for consideration and must be subject to public participation.

3.0 Public Presentations Via Written Submissions

The following Public Presentations Via Written Submissions were received and read into the record:

06/09/2020

Response to the Victoria District Economic Development Strategy

Appendix "A" to SMOKY LAKE COUNTY BYLAW 1372-20

TOWN OF SMOKY LAKE BYLAW 006-2020 (proposed)

Erya Inc. is a burgeoning development company, with a focus on creating combined commercial and residential spaces that are specific to the community. We are particularly concerned with our commercial properties in Waskatenau, as this Economic Development Strategy will have a direct impact on our plans with our current properties, as well as any others that we develop in the area.

Objectives of this plan are as follows, and are supported by Erya Inc.

1. Arrest the declining population to protect municipal core services including hospitals and schools
2. See property values gradually return to a positive-growth pattern
3. Reduce the unemployment in the area
4. Facilitate career opportunities for young people so they do not have to leave the area
5. Ensure wealth generation is shared around the region

Any reasonable resident or area business owner would wholeheartedly agree with these guiding principles.

Response:

This plan is focused heavily on attracting international and 'premium' style tourism in a new age when international travel is grounded, and even provincial tourism is likely to take several years to rebound. The future economic impacts of COVID-19 cannot be ignored, and I do not believe that such a singular focus on serving the tourism market will benefit Smoky Lake County or the communities within. I am convinced that the natural and cultural assets are an important part of what draws both residents and visitors to the area, and feel that drawing back this plan, and redirecting services, goods and marketing to appeal to local, provincial and national markets would have a greater impact, and serve to benefit the local community more effectively. Private investors in a p3 model will require that a current strategic plan include a COVID-19 response, and while it is apparent that there was much discussion and planning around the proposed ideas, it's also apparent that the discussion concluded before these new circumstances were in play and that no attention was given to the matter in the context of this strategy.

There does not seem to be much reference to staff accommodations, however the first guiding principle is to arrest declining populations... a plan as ambitious as this should also consider that hiring workers from outside the municipality will only drive revenue out of the municipal area. Serious consideration should be given to whether there is enough existing bed space to accommodate a growth in work force, not only in customer traffic. If there are not enough affordable staff accommodations, this will also drive business overhead higher, and lead to labour shortages. There must be an appropriate balance between ensuring affordable housing for workers vs. converting spaces for tourism. Smoky Lake County is relatively isolated from the larger cities, and it is less likely that workers will come from larger centres without available housing as well as community supports for workers and their families. Without healthy growth in that area, other industries cannot be sustained. I acknowledge the need to balance supply and demand, and request that this sector also be seriously considered as part of that planning process.

We are genuinely concerned with the intent to implement a 6% 'levy' on tourism related activities. There are numerous questions that this raises:

This planned surcharge would not be considered a levy but rather a sales tax in its current format.

- **How does Smoky Lake (or the Company) plan on implementing a local sales tax without collecting revenue and income tax information from either the province or the individual businesses?** This is considered private information, and it is irregular for a municipality to have access to it. There is no accommodation in the Municipal Government Act allowing municipalities to collect this information in order to implement local sales taxes, business taxes or special levies (that I am aware of.) These are all based on property values, square footage or other property-based assessment tools typically, which would be easier if all businesses in the municipality were serving a single industry and concentrated in a smaller district (such as Whistler - as per your comparable example.) As a developer, a property-based levy would induce Erya Inc. to develop so that it would not apply by ensuring that businesses on our properties would not be tourism oriented, to avoid reporting hassles and extra cost as a property owner.
- **How does this extra taxation incentivize entrepreneurs to establish tourism related businesses?** This would not be any easy sell to customers, especially since it is so irregular in the province. A large quantity of travellers use the area's highways, and this local taxation would drive that existing customer base to spend their money in neighboring municipalities, where they won't have to pay additional sales taxes on their truck-stop meal or campsite fees.
- **How will this levy be enforced, and who will enforce it?** There are also restrictions as per the FOIP Act regarding access to income tax/revenue information. Asking businesses to provide this excessive access to their private information comes with major ramifications: there will likely be numerous businesses that are unwilling to comply and would litigate the matter - a legal battle on privacy grounds would not be beneficial to the municipality or the taxpayers within.
- **How will exemptions be applied to rental tenants, temporary residents, younger family members or long-term (non-paying) guests of households?** Most of the data that municipalities work with concerns property owners, and not other types of residents such as those listed above. How will this plan ensure that all eligible members have quick, easy access to their exemptions without other tenant data? I feel that this will cause undue inconvenience for area residents, and result in higher costs for incoming temporary or seasonal workers.
- **How will participation for hotel/accommodations businesses be ensured in an era of online booking agencies, and how will reporting accuracy be ensured without accessing private information?** This is an issue province wide, and forcing providers to implement extra taxation for their accommodations (over and above the provincial 4% hotel tax) - as well as requiring additional commissions and a percentage of business revenue will only drive them further to other, cheaper booking and marketing options... which are plentiful, and harder to track and control. This extra taxation will also make it difficult for providers to compete with neighboring/competing markets, which customers can easily access (unlike Whistler.)
- **Where does the taxation end?** In the Project Brief portion of this plan, it is stated that around 50% of the SLTC investments will be made toward infrastructure - however, it is apparent in the Organisational and Investment Chart that numerous additional levies and fees are planned to raise those funds in addition to a 6% 'Tourism Activity' levy.
- **What infrastructure investments are planned for the funds raised specifically by a Tourism Levy?** This is not made clear in this plan; however, 'infrastructure' seems to be a major reason for raising this tax and should be substantiated.

Additionally, I have questions regarding the option of using private investment and a joint public/private corporation as a critical part of this plan - this is again, not a typical arrangement for municipal government. As I understand it, p3's are used primarily for specific projects (usually infrastructure) rather than for this sort of ongoing corporate model. I have not been successful in finding any examples of any municipalities in Alberta that do so. If the municipality elects to go this route, they will be building a framework from scratch and would then assume a great deal of liability/risk - this would need to be handled very carefully to remain above reproach, avoid legal jeopardy and not put tax payers at risk.

- **How will this new corporation ensure full transparency and accountability, while continuing an ongoing business partnership with private investors?** This would be a publicly funded corporation regardless of any private investment and would be subject to that regulatory framework. Any publicly held asset is subject to public oversight, and no part of this corporation would be exempt.
- **How will FOIP access and other public rights be ensured?**

- How will this new company ensure that there is ongoing public access, engagement and a voice on matters pertaining to economic development in the region, when the entire portfolio has moved to this new corporation?
- The Victoria District Economic Development Strategy is relying on an unnamed private investor – the public has the right to know and understand the entity that will control 49% of the corporation, as well as 49% of the entire economic development portfolio for the municipality. How and when will the public get this information, and will that specific aspect be subject to public input?
- The unnamed private investor will retain a 49% share in this corporation, while the three public entities each share 51%. This gives an effective majority to a single private entity regarding public moneys, expenditures and operations.
- What type of shares will these be?
- How much capital is this private investor putting into the corporation, and how much public funds will be invested in this scheme?
- What percentage of the Municipal Economic Development portfolio will be controlled by this corporation? This is an important question to address, as there does not appear to be any other industries or markets addressed in this plan - which hinges wholly on an unreliable and severely depressed tourism industry. Are there other municipal resources being planned for or directed to non-tourism related businesses or industries?
- What other options were presented to, researched or considered by Council? Considering that this strategy was developed over the course of a year or more, were other fundraising or development strategies considered during this period? It concerns me that there are no other options presented – the public has been presented with this corporation/private investment as being the *only* feasible option.
- What control/oversight will the public have over the 'sub-companies' within the corporation's umbrella?
- What level of control will the corporation expect to have over the 'sub-companies' within the corporation, or in private businesses that public moneys have been invested into?
- How does the 'planning system' intend to exercise a 'degree of control' over the types of businesses, goods and services offered in the area? Does the corporation plan to exercise this control, or demand that the municipality do so? This part of the strategy is not clearly defined, and aside from usual restrictions a municipality will not be able to force specific types of businesses to form or operate under such extraordinary regulations/demands. There are several neighboring municipalities that would not do so, and they would become more attractive places to operate businesses from. Further, this 'system' would disincentivize tourism operators, as their businesses would be targeted for extra permitting, regulatory and financial burdens over any other types of businesses.
- How does the municipality/corporation intend to operate a central booking agency that will be competitive with online providers, and provide value to the businesses that are forced (or strongly required) to use/pay for it? Whistler was given as an example of how this is done... additionally, there are central booking departments for most major hotel chains. These central booking agencies are becoming less useful as online booking is streamlined. As well, customers are still able to contact the individual hotels directly- this often results in lower pricing, upgrades and special requests being met. Additionally, Air BnB continues to offer lower pricing and a wider array of options, as well as being a simple and easy platform for marketing and booking.
- This strategy states that the 'costs to create the Corporation are borne by the Corporation', but this corporation will use a great deal of public funds according to the rest of the strategy. How will this be reconciled?
- What other area historic sites/monuments will be included for refurbishment, restoration or improvements as part of this plan? Considering the emphasis on the municipality's historic assets, I am interested to know of other sites that will be protected under this strategy. The Victoria Settlement and Metis Crossing sites are certainly a jewel in the crown, but the strategy should include other assets in the plan.
- What improvements are planned for the Smoky Lake 'Ring'? It seems to be (mostly) existing and/or on/near existing established road networks. What is the estimated cost of this project?
- What natural assets are being promoted, improved, protected or designated in this strategy (aside from the river?) The strategy is correct in identifying the municipality's natural beauty and outdoor recreation opportunities but has not specified plans to utilize or invest in those assets. Many of these assets are already existing and providing destinations for campers and day-trippers. If there is not a comprehensive plan to address these assets, the municipality is in danger of losing their existing tourism market while reaching for a 'premier' market that does not yet exist and cannot yet be accommodated.

In summary, I believe that this plan has successfully identified many of the strengths and opportunities within the region but has neglected entire sectors in having a singular focus on travel and tourism. I feel that the planned structure of the public/private corporation could be legally tenuous, as well as would be implementing a local sales tax.

One of the additional assets that is not being considered is the 'travel' portion of the travel and tourism markets. There are several major transportation routes funneling into the district, with large volumes of traffic flowing between Fort McMurray, Lac La Biche, Lloydminster and major centres. The

region is well-located between major centres along these transportation corridors and have many potential repeat customers passing through. One weakness is the lack of 'curb appeal' along the region's provincial and secondary highways – there is very little impactful promotion or advertising of area hot spots along these routes, and very little incentive for potential area providers to switch gears and operate a tourism based business in a region where there is still considerable risk and less reward in this type of business model. A focus on attracting those types of businesses will be key.

Another significant drawback to area businesses is that there is a limited labour pool, and staff shortages are common. In many parts of the region, there is little affordable accommodations for staff, forcing businesses to hire from outside the region at a higher rate to balance staff commuting costs. This is not feasible for many small business operators. Any increase in commercial activity will need to be balanced with a corresponding increase in affordable housing.

Main Points:

- I do not support the forming of a corporation, nor do I support a public-private partnership that would entail the ongoing management of public portfolios.
- I do not support an industry specific and area-wide local sales tax.
- I support the promotion of the region's historic, natural and tangible assets.
- I support the County's eagerness to improve the local economy and provide opportunities for the region's residents.

Suggestions:

- Form an industry specific, self supporting Co-Operative with voting shares for member business operators as well as public members. This would allow all stakeholders a democratic voice, as well as allow for more public oversight where public funds are contributed. It would also allow for private investment in the Co-Operative or individual businesses, and a local industry that is operating toward a common goal. It could benefit individual business by providing group insurance coverage (accessed via a Chamber Plan or similar) and provide cost effective, effective collective marketing power for that specific market. Other incentives can be co-ordinated within the Co-Op as well: in ski towns it is customary to give front-line workers (front desk, cashiers, servers, etc.) free tours, passes, rental equipment, etc. ... this incentivizes that worker to recommend your service to their customers. Within the local market, customers will always accept a word-of-mouth recommendation over the guidebooks, and that recommendation will be more likely if the worker has experienced the goods and services. This cross-promotion is much less costly than traditional marketing tools such as magazine, internet or television advertising, and has a much higher return for participating businesses.
- Raise *project-specific* revenue/funds using p3 agreements as an addition to local improvement levies, provincial/federal grants, property tax rate hikes, and other available resources. Utilize the existing/reinstated provincial framework as a guide.
- Additional revenue could be generated from the formation of a municipal public utility company – there is a significant need for improved broadband networks, and the municipality could place themselves to meet that demand and generate revenue simultaneously. This could also be an effective use of the p3 model.
- Be proactive on requiring the province to maintain area provincial highways in order to effect safe and easy transportation on these routes – this benefits existing travel markets and is crucial to improvements in other areas of the local economy ... for example, even international travellers coming for a premium destination experience will expect to get from the airport to their hotel safely and comfortably. These routes are a major asset to the region and should be consistently maintained and under municipal review.
- Other additional revenue could be generated through effective taxation/public ownership/management of other non-tourism assets, such as aggregate operations, campgrounds, historic/sightseeing areas, recreation areas, highway accommodations, housing units, attractions and more.
- Incentivize small business start-ups in a variety of industries/markets to encourage a diverse population base, and an authentic community. This will also benefit other industries and help to provide a more diverse workforce in the region. It would also balance some of the risk of depending on a single industry/market and give added benefit to residents by allowing better access to goods and services.
- Encourage and support individual community efforts to create home-based markets using online social networking platforms, providing and improving public spaces for farmer's markets/artisanal markets, 'tool-kits' for home-based businesses to help them navigate the local market as well as local community regulations, and encouraging non-traditional business formats to thrive (such as young entrepreneurs, day-homes, home-based esthetics, artisans, home bakers/canners, direct sales, etc.)
- Encourage acreage/farm-based alternative businesses using tax incentives, effective P&D, and other regional and community-based grassroots support. -This could help business owners mitigate staffing issues, transportation/logistics and costs related to remote locations, and be an incentive for property investors/home buyers.
- Promote and encourage diverse attractions and activities – no tourism centre relies on a single or seasonal market. Get weird, crazy, artistic, musical and fun... allow and encourage vendors/operators to as well. People are looking for something 'new', and while many enjoying the traditional dogsledding and such, they would also enjoy coming for new and

- different experiences... not all need to be historical or culturally based as long as there is healthy participation from those sectors as well.
- Once public health concerns abate, host large festivals and events. Every theme may not be everyone's cup of tea, but many of these festivals command audiences in the thousands who would all need to camp or stay in hotels/hostels, eat local food and partake in local attractions. Permit fees and other additional revenue could also be generated, as well as additional markets for local artisans and vendors. These one-off events would also be an excellent marketing tool for area attractions, as they will encourage return visitors and sightseers.
 - Utilize online platforms more effectively for outreach, marketing and communications, and ensure that current online pages and platforms are/continue to be user-friendly and contain plentiful accurate data. Establish and moderate community social network pages to encourage local markets/commerce and engagement.
 - Streamline and modernize where possible and cost-effective.
 - Encourage and create a framework for (reasonable) alternative land uses using ample community engagement and participation, considering local and regional interests, and with careful consideration to the core principles of the proposed strategy – this-* - would encourage private investment in the area, and cause Smoky Lake region to stand out among competing municipalities. It would also encourage diversity in commercial and residential sectors.

From: Jason Boykiw [REDACTED]
Sent: June 22, 2020 8:15 AM
To: Kyle Schole
Subject: A written submission from Home Guard Board Member Don Klem.

Hi Kyle. Here is a written submission from Don. Also where does one find the dial in numbers for the June 26 meeting?

Jason

Sent from my iPhone

Begin forwarded message:

From: Noreen & Don [REDACTED]
Date: June 15, 2020 at 3:55:56 PM MDT
To: Jason Boykiw [REDACTED]
Subject: Summary

Hi Jason,

Hope the bee season is going well for you. I wasn't planning to be deeply involved with this, but did look at the documents briefly. So the following is very cursory and the comments are random. You can bring these up at the meeting if you'd like.

- We must applaud the County and Town for taking this initiative as it's been years of many attempts for economic stimuli and this holds some promise. But, we should not be distracted from other economic development opportunities, such as agri-business. Generally, the biggest challenge will be dealing with the "chicken/egg" dilemma – it takes considerable time to gain a reputation for tourism, so how much to invest before payback.
- The Trail as part of the Ring needs further consideration. Mix of regular traffic with off-highway transportation could be a challenge. The transportation part of the strategy talks about the river –is this an option to the Trail? It's been brought many times over the years that the Trail should be paved (to attract more tourism). Is this part of the infrastructure cost? Who pays?
- Is the "region" roughly defined? This could be important insofar as competing interests with other similar initiatives.
- What is the \$90 investment by the investor? A typo?
- I'm not clear on investment apportionment. The Corporation will invest 50% for infrastructure; what about the other 50% ? It states funding "attraction operators" on page23 – is this it?
- To whom or what specifically does the levy apply?
- I'm not sure "arts and culture and food and drink" are strong strengths in the strategic analysis. We have Ukrainian and Metis culture predominantly and possibly waning (could be opportunity) and Ukrainian restaurants around Edmonton have never gained a significant market share (just my opinion).
- The idea of Artisans is great. But, they may need subsidy. Is this where the Corporation comes in? Or the County?

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- Under the Accommodations discussion it states purchase of several small hotels – is this existing or building new ones?
- It's difficult to follow the Risk Assessment. After trying to understand the risks, I'm still not clear on if the County and taxpayers are on the hook. It states the Corporation will borne startup costs but yet a moderate risk to the County.
- Lastly, but not leastly, any such endeavor should undergo a socio-economic impact assessment, at least at a screening level. For example, will policing and emergency services needs increase? I'm sure there are other spinoff issues.

Thanks and good luck,
Don



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June 21, 2020

Mayor and Town Council
Town of Smoky Lake
56 Wheatland Avenue, Smoky Lake
Alberta, T0A 3C0

RE: Victoria District Economic Development Plan Strategy – Your Local Tourism Conversation

Esteemed Council Members;

I was excited to learn about the work being done to further understand the importance and impact of tourism on your local community being completed. Tourism is an important industry for Alberta's future – and Smoky Lake can be an important player.

As a marketing and communications agency owner I am someone that is directly affected by a thriving tourism economy – though you would not immediately associate me with the tourism industry. My colleagues and I are not ticket-takers or groundskeepers, we do not own a tourism destination or provide accommodations, but we assist these businesses in getting the word out, providing strategic support, and building out innovative and dynamic campaigns to ensure tourism operators – and those ticket-takers – are busy.

As you move towards pursuing tourism planning in Smoky Lake and the Victoria District think about the spin off and the ripple effect of tourism. So many people benefit; your local tourism destinations and accommodators – but also your gas stations, your retailers, your courier, your event planners, your restaurants, your farmers, and your vendors at the farmers market ... the list goes on. A thriving tourism economy ensures more jobs in your region which gives opportunities to your current population to be successful and to make long term plans to stay and build a life in the region. Tourism gives those families options for careers and gives their children potential jobs as they grow up.

Travel Alberta has reported year after year that the full impact of the visitor economy is felt when the multiplier effect of tourist spending ripples throughout the whole economy. Investing in tourism supports job creation, infrastructure upgrades (and development), and plays a huge role in community building. When you support the tourism industry it ensures the community continues to benefit from a vibrant visitor economy well into the future.

Travel Alberta provides an [interesting summary](#) of statistics around the visitor economy; surprisingly the visitor economy in Alberta is largely based on attracting other Canadians to our destinations – “Canadians are Alberta's biggest fans”. Smoky Lake can provide a true Albertan experience and be an added destination on itineraries for those visiting Alberta.

CIPR Communications Inc.
8339 33 Avenue NW, Calgary, Alberta, T3B 1L5
Strategy-First – Marketing and Communications Solutions



5 Members of the Public virtually left the meeting leaving a total of 45 virtual participants, time 11:37 a.m.

4.0 Delegation's Presentations

The Reeve called upon Delegations as listed on the Agenda, who were present, to speak who were all in support of the Victoria District Economic Development Strategy.

Tony Sefton, CEO, Vision Experience Specialists (VSX), verbally provided information including but not limited to the following points:

- This is an opportunity to work collectively and the positive feedback of this small rural community is encouraging and rare in tourism. It is a wonderful opportunity for future generations.
- Tourism is not the only answer and we need significant investment into the infrastructure and attractions to compete with surrounding tourist competition for Canadian and International tourism to grow here. We need to welcome the tourist with smiling faces.
- Thank you for this opportunity.

Juanita Marois, Executive Director, Métis Crossing, verbally provided information including but not limited to the following points:

- I commend the County, Town and Administration; this community driven approach and engagement process is unseen and phenomenal.
- Metis Crossing has invested over \$13 million so far and have completed the \$8.9 million construction project for the cultural gathering center and we were very conscious of keeping that investment within Alberta.
- This summer we are offering a modified meet the Métis experience.
- Destinations who able to survive through this pandemic will be in a very strong position to thrive.
- We have created jobs: in 2017 we had one full time person and now we have 4 full time people and have just hired 10 summer students, as well as we will be hiring for 3 new position in next few months.
- We are supporting small and medium size entrepreneurs by buying local products.
- This is a strategy to identifying how to work it out with a solution to benefit all. Booking systems and details will get worked out.
- We plan to invest \$10-12 million in the next 2 years, helping the economy.
- We are stronger together.
- Thank you. We are strongly in support.

James Leppan, Experience Development Manager, North, Travel Alberta, verbally provided information including but not limited to the following points:

- Holistic tourism is an essential core pillar now and, in the future, to appeal to residents alike, the key is connecting land to each other.
- The goal is to support a diverse tourism offering and this Victoria District Strategy will be a key role in developing and providing a truly unique experience.
- Alberta is working on a 10-year plan including a \$20 billion investment in Alberta to promote intercultural diversification.

2 Members of the Public virtually left the meeting leaving a total of 43 virtual participants, time 11:59 a.m.

James Tessier, Manager Northeastern Region, Regional Economic Development Services Alberta Economic Development, Trade & Tourism (EDTT) read his following submission which was provided to the Recording Secretary:

- Tourism is a central player in Alberta's economy. Alberta's "visitor economy" holds great promise as a core pillar of economic diversification now and in the future. Tourism is more than just a business sector; it is an economic driver that crosses multiple industries and supports growth in myriad ways. The visitor economy refers to the widespread and often unseen benefits to Alberta by dollars spent by travelers.
- Building and nurturing Alberta's tourism assets means developing new and exciting attractions and robust activities that appeal to visitors and residents alike. In north-east Alberta, Metis Crossing has emerged as a

year-round destination centered around the distinct Metis Indigenous story and culture. For many years, people have travelled to visit and live in the Smoky Lake region because of its rich culture, heritage, and natural beauty.

- Creating the Victoria District Economic Development strategy is key to building and nurturing opportunities for people to connect with the past, connect with the land, and connect with each other. Travel Alberta has appreciated the opportunity to engage with the strategy team over the last few months to collaborate and enhance the momentum being built in the region. Our goal is to support tourism operators, nurture their growth and guide development of future operators in the region.
- Alberta is a province of diverse tourism offerings, including the majestic Rocky Mountains, sophisticated urban hubs, and unique landscapes. The Victoria District will play a key role in further developing Alberta's tourism economic bench strength in the north of the province through authentic, experiential tourism offerings centered around language, heritage and nature, providing a truly unique and immersive experience for visitors and residents alike.
- Currently, Travel Alberta and the Government of Alberta are working on a ten-year tourism strategy to double tourism revenues in \$20b by 2030. This is only achievable if communities such those in the Smoky Lake area come together to build and grow the visitor economies in their respective regions in Alberta.
- Travel Alberta acknowledges the Victoria District Economic Development strategy as it strives to cultivate a captivating cultural destination, further diversifies the local economy, and promotes intercultural appreciation and understanding. Tourism has always been lifted up as a model for resiliency and diversity as an industry of industries – and strategies such as this one are a roadmap and a framework to support tourism operators and build a network of proactive and productive partners working towards the common goal of becoming a true tourism destination.
- Maura Gast (Destinations International): "If you build a place where people want to visit, you will build a place where people want to live. If you build a place where people want to live, you will build a place where people want to work. If you build a place where people want to work, you will build a place where business has to be. If we build a place where business has to be, we will be back to building a place where people have to visit."

Shannon Stubbs, Alberta Member of Parliament for Lakeland was not present.

Nancy Broadbent, President & CEO, Portage College virtually left the meeting with regrets at 11:00 a.m. prior to being called upon. Donna Feledichuk, Dean - Faculty of Education, Cultural Arts, & Paramedicine Faculty of Education & Cultural Arts, Portage College, verbally provided information including but not limited to the following points:

- The College is strongly in support of this and will support this in any way we can.

Beverly Lockett, Dean of Business & Food Sciences, Portage College was not

present.

Christina Pilarski, CEO, CIPR Communications was not present and her written submission is included above.

Brenda Holder, President, Indigenous Tourism Alberta (ITA) and Alberta Chair, Indigenous Tourism Association of Canada (ITAC), was not present.

Shae Bird, Executive Director, Indigenous Tourism Alberta (ITA), verbally provided information but not limited to including the following points as well as provided a typed comment in the virtual chat window:

- It is fantastic the collaboration and I applaud the efforts as these are the key pieces to build the tourism economy with these anchor type experiences; it is important to turn a day use experience into a multi-day experience.
- Typed in chat window "Thank you for the opportunity to learn about the Victoria District Economic Development Strategy. This is great to see what the region is doing as we know with Indigenous Tourism Alberta, projects like these and Metis Crossing as a whole is a key piece to growing Alberta's tourism economy. I applaud the hard work and collaboration everyone involved is putting in."

Catherine Laquerre, Hospitality & Tourism Industry, Former Resident of St. Paul County, Current Resident of Île d'Orléans, Quebec, was not present.

5.0 Public Presentations at the Public Hearing

2 Members of the Public virtually left the meeting leaving a total of 41 virtual participants, time 12:12 p.m.

The Reeve called upon those Members of the Public who indicated they wished to speak, and when called upon, to state their name, title and whether they were in support or opposed of the Victoria District Economic Development Strategy - Proposed Bylaws.

Brian and Leesa Jones, Smoky Lake business owners, spoke **in favour** and provided information including but not limited to the following points:

- Very exciting Métis Crossing is progressing so quickly.
- We have been in business here for over 20 years and are trying very hard to expand our tourism.
- We are also pushing for the Ukrainian twining project.

Don Klym, Resident of Victoria Trail, Smoky Lake County, spoke **in favour** and provided information including but not limited to the following points:

- Would like supplemental info relating to the two funding models as well as detail of the reporting structure and expectations of Advisory Board, and the whole initiative should be subject to analysis.
- This will enhance and preserve our historic resources, these existing sites would be part & parcel of the attractions

Tony Sefton, CEO, Vision Experience Specialists (VSX), verbally provided information including but not limited to the following points:

- The advisory board should be independently nominated and elected with the idea of a grant that would be towards heritage projects. The funding model is evolving, we're sounding out a number of options such as a differential license fee (not a levy) and only tourist would pay it.

5 Members of the Public virtually left the meeting leaving a total of 36 virtual participants, time 12:42 p.m.

Leon Boychuk-Hunter, Manager of Métis Crossing, along with three Métis Crossing employees from Smoky Lake and Buffalo Lake: John Kennedy, Larissa Heron, and Krista Leddy, spoke **in favour** and provided information including but not limited to the following points

- Tourism gives the ability sustain staying here.
- Partnerships within the community are essential and the bylaw will solidify this.
- We value being able to provide knowledge of our culture, so more tourism will be very nice.
- Having this opportunity is important so we can be close to home.
- This will defiantly support local indigenous artist to live and work and showcase their work and provide more work within the community.

1 Member of the Public virtually left the meeting leaving a total of 35 virtual participants, time 12:57 p.m.

6.0 Questions and Answers

Tony Sefton, CEO, Vision Experience Specialists (VSX), Council, and Planning and Development Staff verbally provided additional comments including but not limited to the following points for clarity purposes:

- The alternatives to the 6% busines tax could be replaced by an infrastructure invest but someone has to pay for the investment such as in the form of more charges for the products and services; the business tax is a cleaner way of doing it and more globally recognized.
- We need to join forces together and know that we are looking at all areas and cultures, we believe to tell the entire story of the culture in our region to draw people.
- We are excited in moving forward and building a steerable model.

There were no further questions.

7.0 Closing Remarks

There being no further presentations.

The public hearing and discussion on Smoky Lake County's proposed **Bylaw No. 1334-19**: a bylaw to adopt an Intermunicipal Development Plan between

Smoky Lake County and the County of St. Paul was declared closed, time **1:09 p.m.**

Meeting Reconvened, time 1:25 p.m.

11 Members of the Public, Smoky Lake County Chief Administrative Officer, and Town of Smoky Lake Councillor Terry Makowichuk virtually had left the meeting leaving a total of 22 virtual participants, at 1:25 p.m.

4. ISSUES FOR DISCUSSION:

Victoria District Economic Development Plan Strategy

J197-20: Halisky

That **Smoky Lake County Council** and **Town of Smoky Lake Council** give **SECOND READING** to Smoky Lake County Bylaw No. 1372-20 & Town of Smoky Lake Bylaw No. 006-2020: Victoria District Economic Development Strategy respectively.

Town of Smoky Lake: motion moved by Holowaychuk.

Carried.

J198-20: Lukinuk

That **Smoky Lake County Council** and **Town of Smoky Lake Council** each give **THIRD AND FINAL READING** to Smoky Lake County Bylaw No. 1372-20 & Town of Smoky Lake Bylaw No. 006-2020: Victoria District Economic Development Strategy respectively, and that the Reeve/Mayor and the Chief Administrative Officer respectively are hereby authorized to fix their signatures to all necessary documents and that the corporate seal also be fastened where it is deemed to be necessary.

Town of Smoky Lake: motion moved by Morton

Carried.

SLC199-20: Halisky

That **Smoky Lake County Council** RESCIND Motion 1135-19, effectively DISSOLVING the Victoria District Economic Development Strategy Ad Hoc Committee, given the adoption of Joint Town/County Victoria District Economic Development Strategy Bylaw Numbers 006-2020 and 1372-20 respectively.

Carried.

J200-20: Halisky

That **Smoky Lake County Council** and **Town of Smoky Lake Council** jointly ESTABLISH a Victoria District Economic Development Strategy Implementation

Working Group as an ad hoc committee, for the purposes of implementing the Joint Town/County Bylaw Numbers 006-2020 and 1372-20 respectively, to be composed of the following membership:

- Tony Sefton, CEO Vision XS (COMMITTEE CHAIR)
- Cory Ollikka, County Chief Administrative Officer
- Adam Kozakiewicz, Town Chief Administrative Officer
- Brenda Adamson, County Finance Manager
- Jordan Ruegg, County Planning & Development Manager
- Juanita Marois, Executive Director, Metis Crossing
- Aaron Barner, Senior Executive Officer, Metis Nation of Alberta

and, the following elected and staff resources as ex-officio/non-voting:

- Craig Lukinuk, Reeve, Smoky Lake County
- Hank Holowaychuk, Mayor, Town of Smoky Lake
- Rodd C. Thorkelsson, Partner, Brownlee LLP
- Bob Black, Partner, MLT AIKINS LLP
- John McDonnell, Partner, Brownlee LLP
- Michelle Wright, Regional Community Economic Development Officer
- Kyle Schole, County Planning, Development, and Heritage Assistant
- Lydia Cielin, County Assistant Chief Administrative Officer
- Patti Priest, County Legislative Services Clerk (Recording Secretary)
- Any others as deemed necessary

and, that the Committee shall keep minutes, and regularly report as necessary to Joint Councils.

Town of Smoky Lake: motion moved by Holowaychuk.

Carried.

J201-20: Cherniwchan

That **Smoky Lake County Council** and the **Town of Smoky Lake Council** DIRECT administrations to begin work for the establishment of a Smoky Lake Economic Development Corporation as a Municipally Controlled entity in accordance with Section 75.1(2) of the Municipal Government Act and the Municipally Controlled Corporations Regulation AR112/2018; and to be brought forward to a future Meeting of Joint Council for consideration.

Town of Smoky Lake: motion moved by Morton.

Carried.

5. OTHER BUSINESS:

Nil.

7. DELEGATION:

Nil.

8. EXECUTIVE SESSION:

Nil.

6. CORRESPONDENCE:

Nil.

9. NEXT MEETING:

The next **Smoky Lake County** and **Town of Smoky Lake** Joint Council meeting will be scheduled at the call of the Chairperson.

ADJOURNMENT

J202-20: Lukinuk

That the **Smoky Lake County** and **Town of Smoky Lake** Joint Council meeting of June 26, 2020 be adjourned, time 2:29 p.m.