

**MINUTES OF THE  
MAYOR'S TASK FORCE ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND PROSPERITY MEETING  
HELD FRIDAY, MAY 29, 2015, 8:00 A.M.**

**1. THE CHAIR CALLED THE MEETING TO ORDER AT 8:00 A.M.**

**Task Force Members Present:** Mayor Lisa Helps in the Chair, Councillor Margaret Lucas, Dallas Gislason, Dan Gunn, Nicole Chaland, Paul Nursey, Ken Kelly, Jill Doucette, Suzanne Bradbury, Tony Joe, James Coccola, Liam Scott-Moncrieff, Scott Gurney, Peter Kuran

**Staff Support:** Jocelyn Jenkyns, General Manager, Victoria Conference Centre; Shannon Craig, Policy Analyst, Legislative and Regulatory Services

Larry Alexander, Consultant (by phone)

**Absent:** John Wilson, Robert Jawl, Darlene Hollstein

**2. APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA**

**Action:** It was moved by Mayor Helps, seconded by Councillor Lucas, that the agenda be approved.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

**3. ACTIONS**

**3.1 Timelines**

The following timelines and tasks were outlined for future meetings:

- June 12 (8 to 9:30) – Year 2 finalize
- June 19 (8 to 9:30) – Year 3 finalize
- June 26 (1 to 4) – Open House for business community to showcase draft recommendations
- July 3 (8 to 9:30) – Wrap up meeting to integrate recommendations
- July 16 – Report to Council (Governance and Priorities Committee)

There was consensus among the Task Force that its work should be showcased through an Open House before the recommendations are brought forward to the Council.

### **3.2 Review of Draft Recommendations**

The Task Force reviewed a Draft Recommendations document, which included the recommendations provided by Group 1 - Culture at City Hall and Group 5 - Support Start-Ups, Entrepreneurs and Social Enterprises. The document categorizes recommendations for the years 2015 to 2017 under the following two themes, which mirror those from the recommendations from the Mayor's Task Force on Housing Affordability:

1. Increase City of Victoria's capacity to support business and social enterprise, and
2. Remove barriers to business and social enterprise

The Task Force discussed the following for Year 1 (2015) under the second theme:

- Removing recommendation 1(c), which is a carry-over from the Housing Affordability Task Force document.
- Broadening recommendation 4 to include a fully integrated package for welcoming business to Victoria; adoption of a "Team Victoria" approach which designates the appropriate people to greet new businesses, potential investors and retailers at the airport.
- Adding as a recommendation 5, that City staff should get to "yes" or "no" as quickly as possible.
- Sending a message to the business community that City staff are enablers, not regulators.
- Creating better visuals associated with a "Team Victoria" approach.
- Creating and communicating established timelines for all of the City's business-related decisions and measuring progress against those timelines; eliminating "horror stories."
- Comparing timelines to those in other municipalities; using benchmarking and striving to be the best.

### **3.3 Review of Additional Working Group Recommendations**

The Task Force reviewed documents prepared by each of the three remaining working groups.

Group 3 - Red Tape Reduction presented their recommendations, which included:

- Trusting in the judgment of City staff and empowering them through a review of delegated authorities.
- Performing a "spring cleaning" of bylaws, including the permitted uses outlined in the Zoning Regulation Bylaw; adopting a practice of "one bylaw in, one bylaw out" and conducting routine reviews of bylaws.
- Focusing on profit centres to increase City revenue and resourcing those areas appropriately.
- Considering a process chaperone at the Front Desk of City Hall so that outsiders coming into City Hall to invest are made to feel like an insider.
- Including an "Economic Development Context Statement" in development application letters.
- Looking for free money opportunities, such as events in Beacon Hill Park and issuing food truck licences.

The Task Force discussion of the recommendations from Group 3 included the following:

- The City does not consider itself a business and could operate more like a business.
- Concerns regarding the City competing with other businesses or impacting other businesses, for example, impacts on brick and mortar restaurants from an increase in food carts.
- Support for a review of the Zoning Regulation Bylaw.
- Suggestion of a moratorium on certain types of licences, for example, liquor primary licences.
- The low profit margins associated with concerts.

Group 2 - Barriers to Entry (formerly Street Issues) presented their recommendations, which included a number of short term strategies focussed on street issues, including the following:

- Adding more ambassadors on the street to address street issues; parking ambassadors may be able to assist with this role but the City should also increase the number of bylaw officers focussed on downtown street issues.
- Striking a creativity task force to develop innovative approaches to providing low-barrier, motivational employment opportunities for marginalized residents.
- Discussing with the Downtown Service Providers group the merit of relocating some community services to other locations within the region.
- Re-establishing the DVBA panhandling education program for businesses, in partnership with the City and VicPD.
- Hiring a facilitator to bring people together to find solutions, including those who are causing the problem; getting a better sense of the views of people on the streets.

The Task Force discussion of the recommendations from Group 2 included the following:

- Using caution when considering moving services to outside of the downtown or region.
- Concerns regarding an increase in bylaw enforcement.
- The lack of current resources to support community economic development and social enterprise.
- The premise that economic development should be for all residents, including those experiencing poverty.
- Addressing the dichotomy between business and people; businesses are people and people are businesses.
- Renaming the creativity task force as the “social enterprise and community development task force”.

Group 4 - Enhance the Retail Environment presented their recommendations, which included the following:

- The primary recommendation is to hire a retail advocate whose job is to focus on business recruitment and retention.
- Striving for a healthy economic ecosystem or an “orchestra of experience.”
- Addressing the local versus national discussion; retailers want both.
- Utilizing public-private partnerships as one of the most effective means for getting things realized.
- Needing to embrace change, such as internet sales.
- Addressing the local versus tourist polarity; we need both.

The Task Force discussion of the recommendations from Group 4 included the following:

- Whether the City has the authority to incentivize landlords to fill vacancies by imposing additional taxes if a property owner has a vacant storefront.
- Talking to absentee landlords and the Victoria Real Estate Board Commercial Division to see how to help them; renting at a rate lower than that paid by a previous tenant affects asset value, which can be more important to some landlords than cash flow.
- Demonstrating a business case for being a community-minded landlord; asking landlords who are fully rented to assist with preparation of this.
- Celebrating the successes of those who are making change.
- Considering a reduction in the business tax rate; continuing to shift the tax ratio from business to residential taxpayers.
- Concerns regarding the impact on affordability for residents if the tax ratio is shifted.

#### **4. REVIEW**

##### **4.1 Action Items**

Mayor Helps reminded Task Force members to send their action items directly to her for compilation. Mayor Helps will distribute a refined document that includes the draft recommendations from all working groups and reflects the discussion from this meeting by the Monday (June 8) before the next Task Force meeting (June 12).

The following action items were assigned:

- Jocelyn Jenkyns will distribute information to Task Force Members on comparative tax rates from other municipalities.
- Ken Kelly will distribute information to Task Force Members regarding municipal grant programs in other jurisdictions.

#### **5. ADJOURNMENT**

**Action:**

It was moved by Mayor Helps, seconded by Councillor Lucas, that the May 29, 2015 Task Force on Economic Development and Prosperity be adjourned at 9:30 A.M.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY