

Economic Development and Tourism Advisory Committee 2020 update

January 26, 2021

Ken Lesniak, Chair EDTAC
Vince O'Brien, Vice-Chair EDTAC (Outgoing)

Agenda

1. Committee member introductions and acknowledgements
2. Economic Development and Tourism Committee (EDTAC) purpose and duties
3. Topics discussed in 2020
4. Business conditions
5. Successes
6. Recommendations

2020 Committee members

- Ken Lesniak- Chair
- Vincent O'Brien - Vice-Chair (outgoing)
- Todd Banks - Chamber of Commerce Representative
- Pam Cholak
- Norm Greenwood (outgoing)
- Susan Haselgruber (outgoing)
- Joshua Oviatt
- Aaron Plawke
- Michael Woldemichael (outgoing)
- Councillor Bill Tonita- Council Representative
- Councillor Robert Parks- Alternate Council Representative
- Mayor Rod Frank, Ex-officio
- New Members 2021: Seana Almer, Kim Stefaniuk, Michael Warmby, Wade Wilson

Economic Development and Tourism Committee (EDTAC) purpose

- BYLAW 46-2015 The purpose of EDTAC is to consider and recommend actions and propose policies that are in alignment with the:
 - Economy pillar of sustainability as set out in Council's Strategic Plan
 - Economic priority areas and strategic goals as identified by Council from time-to-time
 - EDTAC shall assist Council and administration with the implementation of the strategic objectives related to Economic Development and Tourism.

Duties of committee

- Provide strategic advice and information to Council and administration on business and collaboration; product development; marketing and promotion; and investment attraction and development opportunities in advancing the strategic objectives of Economic Development and Tourism.
- Review and provide advice on administration's implementation of strategies related to Economic Development and Tourism as per the mandate letter from County Council.
 - In 2020, the committee met four times and adjusted the schedule and format as a result of COVID-19 (January, May, September and December)
 - Note: The committee meets a minimum of four times per year.

Topics discussed in 2020

The committee has discussed and/or provided advice on topics contained within the mandate letter provided by Council including:

- COVID-19 impacts and joint session with Economic Resilience and Vision Task Force
- Petrochemical diversification opportunities
- Red Tape Reduction Task Force
- 10-year tourism strategy and implementation plan engagement

Topics discussed in 2020 continued...

- Edmonton Global sector development and mandate
- Labour, demographics, Alberta Industrial Heartland, vacancy rates, industry projects
- Trends and best practices for seminar development, business coaching, small business week, retention and expansion (virtual business visits)

Business conditions in Alberta

Challenging or adverse impacts:

- Continued economic downturn in the global oil and gas industry
- Major impacts from COVID-19 on local businesses
- Emotional impact on the mental health of business people and their employees
- In-restaurant service impacted tremendously
- Hoteliers impacted in Sherwood Park, third lowest occupancy in Alberta
- Travel industry impacted, tourism down.
- Gyms, fitness centers and at home fitness impacted

Business conditions in Alberta

Challenging or adverse impacts:

- Supply chain challenges
- Investment conditions and commitment for larger projects uncertain
- Consumer confidence could have been influenced by CERB and federal stimulus funding

Opportunities or positive impacts:

- Reason for optimism: several vaccines available
- Downstream capital or idle capital waiting for a bit of stability to be deployed \$3 trillion dollars sitting in the banks within Canada
- Professional, scientific and technical services doing alright
- Online shopping and working from home more common

Successes

- Red tape reduction successes with administration, business community and Council
- Property tax deferral and utility bill deferral appreciated by the business community, input from committee. 0% tax increase implemented and appreciated by committee.
- Tourism Strategy and future plan to build on success to grow the sector
- Strategic vision of committee maintained during the uncertain times of COVID-19
- Input from EDTAC to Economic Resilience and Vision Task Force has resulted in accomplishments and work that will help quickly transition the community once COVID-19 restrictions are lifted

Successes

Comments from members:

- County has done a good job with creating a new modern online presence in terms of the way information is communicated. i.e. website, scoop, online social media by Mayor and Councillors.
- Industrial Heartland Success is not limited to Asian investment. There have been strides towards economic diversification.

Recommendations

- Continued focus on business retention efforts including support local campaigns
- Real collaboration between all levels of government to focus on the business conditions
- Political focus for foreign direct investment from China needed
- County should remain focused on red tape reduction

Thank you