

MINUTES
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Held at Saanich Municipal Hall, Committee Room 2 and via MS Teams
770 Vernon Avenue
February 20, 2025, at 5:31 PM

ROLL CALL

In Attendance: Karen Harper, Chair, Jason Arruda (5:38 p.m.), Raymond Chan, Amber Hockin (via Teams), Rachid Ouache (via Teams), Tim Petropoulos, Ingrid Strauss and Rob Wickson (via Teams)

Regrets: Richard Michaels, Russ Benwell, David Lewis and Patrick Marshall

Staff: Sheila Allen, Director of Corporate Services; Mitchell Edgar, Economic Development Manager; Nichole Brown; Economic Development Coordinator; Angela Hawkshaw, Committee Clerk

ADOPTION OF MINUTES

MOVED by R. Chan and Seconded by R. Wick: "That the Economic and Development Advisory Committee meeting held November 21, 2024, be adopted as circulated."

RESULT: Carried 7 TO 0

IN FAVOUR: Chan, Ouache, Hockin, Petropoulos, Wickson, Harper, Strauss

OPPOSED: None

COMMITTEE BUSINESS ITEMS

CHAIRS REMARKS

The Chair welcomed the members and the following was noted:

- Introductions were made.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT UPDATE

The Economic Development Manager provided an update (PowerPoint on file). The following was noted during committee discussion and in answer to questions:

- The Economic Development Strategy focuses on two main themes, place development and service development. Key areas of the focus include affordable housing, 15-minute community, competitive business climate, and new urban value.
- Permitting Approvals and Modernization (PAM) aims to digitize planning, inspections and applications. A dashboard has been developed to internally track the workflow and progress of development applications.
- The ongoing collaboration with the development sector includes communication with land developers to gather feedback and identify future project opportunities.
- The IT department is managing numerous digital service projects, incorporating new applications and processes.
- We joined the Intelligent Community Forum in December. The first annual assessment to evaluate our progress is complete. The plan is to launch our own intelligent community initiative in the fall by establishing a task force. Engagement with community stakeholders to gather input and develop a strategy will take time.
- New urban value focuses on supporting job creation and sustainability in key growth areas identified in the Official Community Plan (OCP), such as major corridors, centers, and

institutional lands. Working with the planning staff to create policies that attract businesses and development and growth in key areas of the community is ongoing.

- Promoting hotel investment in the region is essential due to a shortage of over 2,000 hotel rooms. Saanich is well-positioned to attract hotels in the coming years.
- Business services, place marketing, and entrepreneurship fall under service development, which focuses on services that support business growth, attract new investments, and improve labour, marketing, and efficiency. These three main areas are essential for fostering a thriving business environment.
- Business retention and expansion is a focus of local economic development, serving as the foundation for growth. A Customer Relationship Management (CRM) platform is essential to achieve this. Current work is focused on data population and integration with existing operations.
- The business visitation program is a primary focus area, set to launch in the spring. The goal is to conduct approximately 250 visits a year, engaging with businesses to understand their needs and inform them about available programs.
- A key initiative in 2024 was tourism, including agriculture, ecotourism, and agricultural tourism. The Flavour Trails program was introduced in 2024 and will continue annually. This program encourages and promotes the local consumption of food and agricultural products.
- Saanich is working with the Greater Victoria Sport Tourism Commission to improve the region's sports events. The goal is to attract larger events that benefit the whole community.
- Saanich is collaborating with the Cadboro Bay Business Improvement Area (BIA). The focus is on clear communication and transitioning into a beautification project.
- Work is underway on the Saanich website to create an Economic Development micro site that incorporates best practices.
- Networking with the Vancouver Island Life Science Association (VILS) provides an opportunity to ensure that research and activities from post-secondary institutions are transferred into the business community.
- Competitive communities are those that actively work to attract and support businesses by offering a strong infrastructure, resources, and opportunities for growth. They focus on innovation, networking, and creating an environment where businesses can thrive and succeed.

MOVED by J. Aruda and Seconded by I. Strauss: “That the Circular Economy Accelerator Program presentation be rescheduled for a future meeting.”

RESULT: Carried 8 TO 0

IN FAVOUR: Chan, Ouache, Hockin, Petropoulos, Wickson, Harper, Strauss, Arruda

OPPOSED: None

MANUFACTURING BRITISH COLUMBIA’S FUTURE – REPORT

A presentation was given on Manufacturing British Columbia’s Future – Report (PowerPoint on file). The following was noted in response to questions and during committee discussion:

- Consultation and data gathered for this report was published in October 2024.
- The organization is primarily funded by membership fees, with one government-funded program. It runs training programs and industry socials, and serves two main purposes: representing the industry to the government and public, and offering a range of programs and services to help members improve as manufacturers.
- The First Nations Major Projects Coalition (FNMPC) is a collaboration with over 100 First Nations across Canada that negotiate and secure equity positions in major projects within their territories. Education and collaboration within this partnership are ongoing.
- Standardizing procurement processes across municipalities could prove to be beneficial.

- Supporting innovation in manufacturing is complex and specific, with opportunities varying for each situation.
- Partnering with and supporting life science innovations to transition into manufacturing is an opportunity that could be explored. Providing cheaper land, resources, expedited approval processes, and tax breaks could offer support to these opportunities.
- Support could be given in helping to maintain and protect industrial land use, ensuring the land remains productive with manufacturing processes as one way to achieve this.
- Eliminating small issues that may require variances could be monitored to help businesses continue operations smoothly.
- Focusing on specific U.S. products to avoid during tariffs can help strengthen the Canadian economy and support local businesses.

ADJOURNMENT

On a motion from I. Strauss the meeting adjourned at 7:41 p.m.

CHAIR

I hereby certify these Minutes are accurate.

COMMITTEE CLERK