

MINUTES
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE
via MS Teams
November 06, 2025, at 5:35 PM

ROLL CALL

In Attendance: Councillor Karen Harper, Raymond Chan, Rachid Ouache (5:46 p.m.), Tim Petropoulos, Ingrid Strauss and Rob Wickson
Regrets: Jason Arruda, Russ Benwell, Amber Hockin, David Lewis and Richard Michaels
Staff: Mitchell Edgar, Economic Development Manager and Angela Hawkshaw, Committee Clerk

The meeting was called to order at 5:35 p.m. Quorum was not present at that time. The meeting proceeded as an information session, open to the public to observe or listen.

Quorum was achieved at 5:46 p.m. when R. Ouache joined the meeting; however, the adoption of the minutes was not addressed. The minutes will be brought forward for adoption at a future meeting.

BUSINESS CARE AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT INVOLVEMENT

The Manager of Economic Development provided a presentation on the Business Care and Economic Development Involvement (PowerPoint on file.) The following was noted in response to questions and during committee discussion:

- A working group could help track both challenges and successes to identify effective business practices.
- Twenty-two businesses have been visited to date. The goal is five visits per week for approximately twenty weeks, with survey results expected by year-end and a report to Council early 2026.
- Businesses noted that construction and development activity can affect operations, with parking being a common concern.
- Approximately 5,000 businesses operate in Saanich, with 1,000 email contacts currently on file. Updated e-apply licensing forms are expected to increase email collection and newsletter subscriptions. The first monthly BusinessCare newsletter was issued this month.
- Weekly business walks are planned, with potential committee involvement during Economic Development Week. Staff continue regular outreach, distributing program rack cards.
- Progress continues on digital modernization, including enhanced document management and improved collection of business contact information.
- Committee involvement during Economic Development Week could include poster creation and outreach. Personal engagement with businesses remains a priority.
- The new e-apply digital submission portal has replaced paper-based business licence applications. Online e-billing for renewals is planned for 2026.

INTELLIGENT COMMUNITY INITIATIVE

The Economic Development Manager gave a presentation on the Intelligent Community Initiative (PowerPoint on file). The following was noted in response to questions and during committee discussion:

- Most of Saanich has fibre connectivity, though improvements remain possible.
- Digital inclusion opportunities may include education programs for seniors, youth, and the broader community, including Artificial Intelligence (AI) awareness.
- A future task force or subgroups could include representation from community, inclusion, and sustainability sectors.
- Saanich's diverse demographics, including a large senior population, may influence future initiatives and planning.
- Using existing regional infrastructure and partnerships, including post-secondary institutions, can support economic development and preparation for AI-related opportunities.
- The Intelligent Community Forum (ICF) model emphasizes innovation and infrastructure as key elements of future-focused economic development.
- Accelerator processes are short, focused sessions that bring people together to work on specific priorities.
- Collaboration with universities offers opportunities to engage younger people in future initiatives.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CHECK IN

The Economic Development Manager provided an update on the Economic Development Plan:

- Flavour Trails, delivered with the Capital Region Food and Agriculture Initiatives Roundtable (CRFAIR), was successful this summer. A program review is underway in its second year.
- A review of the film policy is underway, including work to develop a facility fee schedule. A report to Council on a proposed film promotion policy is planned for 2026.
- The Circular Economy Accelerator is being promoted through the BusinessCare program, with nine businesses enrolled and five spaces remaining. Synergy Foundation delivers the program.
- Saanich remains ahead of many jurisdictions in circular economy initiatives, with businesses highlighting cost savings associated with electrification.
- With funding for the current program ending in March, staff are working with Synergy Foundation on options for a renewed circular economy initiative that continues to support businesses.
- Interest continues in the mixed-use development site on West Saanich Road. Market conditions currently favour hotel development, and applicants are exploring revised concepts.
- Destination Greater Victoria's regional hotel working group includes municipal, hotel, and development representatives, with Saanich staff participating. The group will examine what is needed to support hotel investment.

The following was noted in response to questions and during committee discussion:

- Housing development in Saanich continues, though economic conditions may slow activity in the near term.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 7:25 p.m.

CHAIR

I hereby certify these Minutes are accurate.

COMMITTEE CLERK

DRAFT