

Bowen Island Municipality Economic Development Committee
2015 Annual Report
For submission to Bowen Island Municipal Council
DRAFT

Summary of Activities

In 2015, EDC forwarded work begun in previous years, focusing on implementation of the Municipality's Economic Development Action Plan. The committee convened for 11 regular meetings and more than 20 sub-committee meetings.

The committee acknowledged the past support of Tim Rhodes and Alison Morse, who stepped down as Councilor liaisons. They welcomed new Councilors, Maureen Nicholson and Michael Kaile to the table. They welcomed back Sheana Stevenson, staff liaison, who returned from a maternity leave of absence, thanking Hope Dallas for her hard work over the previous year.

At the first committee meeting of the year, the Committee reappointed Gordon Ganong as Chair, Jacqueline Massey as Vice-Chair. Membership of the EDC increased from seven to nine with new members jumping onboard including Sheree Johnson, Edward Wachtman, John Parker, Chris Corrigan, and Heidi Kuhrt. And Murray Atherton rounds out the full complement of the committee.

Priorities were identified. They included: Business Retention & Expansion (BRE), the Branding Initiative, Council referrals and consultation with delegations.

Considerable work in these areas ensued throughout the year. Additionally, the Committee endeavored to establish and nurture strong ties with business and relevant government representatives and entities. Outreach and liaison with a number of groups was a focus and occupied considerable time of the committee. The Chair personally connected with a number of individuals and groups, responding to queries and concerns regarding economic development matters on Bowen.

Over the course of the year the EDC kept close contact with Council, ensuring awareness of its activities and focus. Members of the EDC appeared before Council on several occasions, including at its orientation in January and at a Committee of the Whole in December focusing on results of the resident survey.

In preparation for 2016, the committee reviewed its budget and drafted a submission to Council in the fall of 2015. It requested new funds of \$14,000 to support its on-going work. In addition, with community cash, in-kind donations, and funds carried over from previous years, the committee has successfully achieved both funds and expertise to proceed with the place/community Branding initiative and implementation.

2015 Highlights

In order to tackle the ambitious work plan the EDC set out in 2015, it created a number of sub-committees to focus directly on activities and deliverables. These included the Fundraising Working Group, the Business Retention & Expansion (BRE) Working Group, the Branding Working Group (formerly the Branding Sub-committee) and a Community Profile subcommittee.

Fundraising Working Group

This group worked to raise donations for the Community/Place Branding initiative and implementation, achieving its goal in a relatively short time, raising both cash and in-kind donations from the community in support of this initiative. Combined, the community donations exceeded \$90,000.

Business Resource Working Group

Following the bankruptcy of a major contractor on island in the New Year, it was agreed that EDC would seek to develop ways to help businesses keep strong, and adopt and implement best practices. The Chair and Vice-Chair visited the Small Business BC offices in Vancouver to explore how their resources could be made available to local businesses. There was consensus that EDC's role might include facilitating access to necessary tools enabling business success.

At the request of some members of the business community, EDC discussed the topic of business licensing. It was agreed that it would be imperative to clearly articulate the rationale and objectives for proposing a business licensing program, as well as to identify clear benefits to businesses. The committee agreed to return to the subject at a later date to further consider such a program.

Business Retention & Expansion Working Group

A series of meetings were set up with small groups of business owners with the intent of gauging the state of the local business environment. Sessions highlighted the unique intersection between businesses, community and environment. A total of five BRE sessions were completed by November, involving approximately 49 local businesses. Outcomes of these sessions along with a report was targeted for early 2016, to be made available to Council and in preparation for the branding initiative.

Branding Working Group

A great deal of work on the Branding initiative was done throughout 2015. As research for the branding process, a Visitor Exit Survey had previously been conducted in 2014. In 2015, a Resident Survey was launched, and as mentioned above, a series of meetings with business resulted in gathering of further data. Analyses of results of the surveys were tabulated and presented to various groups including merchants of Snug Cove and members of the arts community.

The work of the EDC had already benefited and moved forward significantly thanks to the pro-bono work of two of its committee members – Sheree Johnson and Edward Wachtman of StoryTellings Inc. In 2016, another resident, Chris Staples, also offered services of his agency – ReThink -- to work pro bono with the committee to develop a Community/Place Brand for Bowen Island. This made the project feasible and possible in the short term and the EDC

welcomed the assistance of the professional and competent team.

The need for a Community Profile, which would help inform the Branding process but that would be a stand alone asset had long been identified by the EDC. To achieve this goal the EDC developed a budget and hired a consultant to draft a document that would illuminate the Bowen community. Heather Prittie carried out this work under direction of the committee. Two versions of the profile were drafted, with the first, shorter draft going to Council for review and approval in November.

Following up on social media comments, the committee also recognized that a Newcomers Resource was also in demand on the island. Heather Prittie was further contracted to work on such a document.

Referrals & Delegations

As a mandate of its Terms of Reference, the EDC receives delegations and referrals during its regular meeting sessions. In 2016 these included:

- Presentation of the Buy on Bowen (BOB) program, which is currently in limbo due to lack of volunteer leadership;
- A delegation from Heritage Bowen regarding the importance of preservation of the Davies Cottages, and in relation to tourism and economic development;
- A presentation re a proposed new distillery in Snug Cove;
- A presentation regarding Cardena Road parking issues;
- Presentation of Zoom Zoom Bowen's business vision and plans;
- A proposal for a new taxi service on Bowen.

Action Items

In the course of its meetings, the EDC made numerous recommendations and took action on points and issues raised. Some of these included:

- Formally expressing support for the reintroduction of the long-census form administered by Stats Canada;
- Composition of a letter to BC's Passenger Transportation Board in support of helping to expedite the permitting process for a taxi service on Bowen;
- Communication to Translink to support the concept of Bowen Island Community Transit's (BICT) application for both an interim and a long term application for an Independent Transit Service agreement (ITS);
- Consultation re connectivity and broadband issues with service providers and others.

Networking and Consultation

The EDC continued to nurture and maintain ties with appropriate and relevant professional organizations, government representatives, departments and entities to help further the cause of creating a vibrant economy on Bowen Island.

- The Chair, Council liaison and others met on a number of occasions with MLA Jordan Sturdy to discuss various economic development issues impacting the island.
- The EDC continues to work with Lindsay Bisschop, the Regional Manager, Ministry of Jobs, Tourism and Skills Training of the provincial government. Lindsay regularly attends EDC meetings and consults on provincial economic programming and opportunities.
- Discussions with Ministry officials concerning installation of new and improved highway

signage on the Upper Levels Highway continued in 2016 with positive results and appreciation expressed by members of the public.

- The Chair, Vice Chair and Councilor Nicholson attended the Ministers' Dinner sponsored by the BC Economic Development Association in February.
- Murray Atherton attended the BC Economic Development Associations annual Economic Summit

Outreach & Liaison

EDC met with members of various organizations to discuss a myriad of issues. In some cases and where appropriate, they partnered with groups in activities that benefited the community.

- EDC co-sponsored a free webinar with Bowen Heritage during Heritage Week in February on the topic of Dynamic Downtowns, featuring urban planner Maria Stanborough, who explored best practices in heritage conservation for downtown revitalization.
- The EDC offered support for the review and update of the Cultural Master Plan.
- EDC had a presence at the Tourism Bowen Island table at the West Vancouver Business Show Case Event.
- The Chair participated as a judge in the West Vancouver Chamber Best Businesses Awards

Summary

The EDC remained active in the life of Bowen Island in 2015, fulfilling its mandate and responding to Council's requests. It is grateful for Council's support and direction and looks forward to continuing to work to achieve goals identified in the municipality's strategic plan. In 2016, EDC looks forward to celebrating with Council as we unveil a brand and identity for the island and municipality. We expect to continue to connect with businesses and community members to develop resources and enhance opportunities that will benefit Bowen economically and socially. We will strive to continue to meet and exceed expectations and continue to offer service in our collective areas of expertise, acting as good citizens of Bowen.

Respectfully submitted by:

Gordon Ganong, Chair
Jacqueline Massey, Vice-Chair
Murray Atherton
Glenn Cormier
Chris Corrigan
Sheree Johnson
Michael Kaile
Heidi Kuhrt
Maureen Nicholson
John Parker
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