



ACTION

Kenora Event Centre Committee Minutes

**Monday April 14, 2014
12:00 noon**

Kenora Recreation Centre Upstairs Meeting Room

PRESENT: Mike Dietsch, Co-Chair
Rory McMillan, Councillor
Judy Bain
Ruth Illman
Chris Van Wallegghem, Co-Chair
Colleen Neil, Recreation Manager
Megan Derouard, Recreation Programmer
Heather Kasprick, Deputy Clerk
Kerri Holder, Administrative Assistant

TOURISM COMMITTEE GUESTS:
Chris Clark
Teresa Gallik
Mort Goss
Kathleen Novak
Jeff Port
Sharon Smith, Councillor
Heather Gropp, Tourism Development Officer

REGRETS: Laci Dingwall
Ron Lunny, Councillor
Scott Green
Jen Hall
James Hendy

Chris Van Wallegghem called the meeting to order at 12:04 p.m.

A. Declaration of Pecuniary Interest & the General Nature Thereof:

- 1) On Today's Agenda**
- 2) From a Meeting at which a Member was not in Attendance**
There were none declared.

B. Welcome and Introductions:

Chris Van Wallegghem welcomed everyone to the meeting and introductions were

made. A brief history of the committee and the purpose of the meeting today was given. It was acknowledged that although Tourism representatives had been involved in the public consultations, several background documents had been provided to the Tourism Committee members prior to the meeting for their review.

C. Items:

4. Purpose of Meeting

- To share event centre information with the Tourism Committee
- Learn more about the plans of the Tourism Committee
- Establish any ways the committees can support the initiatives of the other

5. Discussion

Mike Dietsch explained the reason to have this discussion today was to answer questions about what has been put forward so far and determine how the two committees can work together on the next steps of refining the proposal and putting together a solid business case. Colleen Neil added the purpose for the meeting was to understand each committee and to see how an event centre can be part of the new tourism strategy.

It was recognized that both groups could work with each other on this, and that the Tourism Committee is currently working on a new strategic plan with sport tourism referenced within the strategy.

There was a concern raised that the concept of the event centre was not clear to the public. It was suggested there is a need for further communication and education with a focus on what is gained by expanding as an event centre by showing the value of its components. There was discussion about how to present value from investment.

It was acknowledged that the numbers show the public is behind the project, but there was a concern that there may be negative aspects not revealed. Mike responded that nothing has been held back however the funding piece is missing. Colleen added that the long term sustainability numbers need to be clarified also.

It was noted that the cost/benefit analysis was not laid out completely and this is the method that the Tourism Committee would prefer to use in deciding to take on a project. It was noted that Tourism was not involved early on with the process therefore there is not currently a strong tourism business case.

Colleen acknowledged the cost/benefit analysis has not been included as the Committee is moving to that stage now. It was further explained that the process had been to first pursue a consultant to get a design concept and estimates of the cost to build and operate. The public was consulted for support once that report had been completed. Now a business case is being developed.

Heather Gropp suggested to examine the overall impact of sport tourism on the retail and hospitality industry in the community as there is public concern that an event center will negatively impact local businesses. It was agreed that local merchants need to support this project and that there needs to be more education about the project in the community. The group was reminded about the Kenora & District Chamber of Commerce survey that showed 82% of members were in support of the expansion.

There was discussion about the 2011 Allan Cup and that an economic impact study was done after the tournament and the result was over two million dollars spent in the City. The report also found that there is a perception that Kenora is not 'open for business', citing varied hours of operation for many shops and restaurants. It was also explained that it is part of the tournament application to include activities for families to do here while staying for a tournament. If big tournaments are invited, activities have to be provided. This can mean extra work for an organizing committee to get small businesses on board.

Heather Gropp also suggested to study historical information from other cities that expanded recreation facilities to know the impact on businesses. It was pointed out that the Stantec report used comparisons to communities outside our region and these may not have been the best comparisons. It was suggested to research Fort Frances or Dryden arena expansions as comparisons.

There was an inquiry about what the balance between a sports plex and an event centre would be and what type of events outside of sport would be held. Colleen Neil clarified the event center is not only about hockey as there are other ice users and other events involved. Gaps have been found when trying to provide service for other activities over hockey. The message is not to simply increase hockey tournaments but is a project about much more.

It was also clarified that at the public sessions and on-line survey, the community said it wants more multipurpose components as well as ice surfaces. All demographics were represented and shown to support this. Losing the Hockey Day in Canada event was mentioned. The week-long event could not be held here because the existing banquet/conference centre facilities were not large enough. There was mention of the type of funding available and multipurpose projects are more likely to receive provincial funding right now.

It was asked if phase one is to expand with an additional rink only. Mike responded stating that the project is not broken down into phases yet. If funding is limited then decisions will be made to adjust the current plan.

There was discussion about reaching the public in other ways so they can have a say in the project. It was noted that the Committee has utilized public sessions, using social media and advertising. Any other ways to reach out were requested to be brought forward.

There was discussion about communication with the public about funding opportunities and criteria. It was mentioned that when government funding is involved, it is difficult to understand where the money comes from. It was suggested to show the community value and community cost so it is understood.

It was acknowledged that Council has been elected to represent the public and make decisions on their behalf. This is a difficult decision to make, based on the large amount of funding needed and the work to be done yet. There is a need to show the value of the project, specifically the return on investment. Going back to the public in a referendum was suggested as a next step for the Committee. It was noted that the project needs Tourism's support to get to the next level. Strategically the next step is to prove the value of the project and the benefit of attracting big events, conferences, banquets etc.

Councillor Smith pointed out that the on-line survey showing results of 97% in

support, is not completely correct. Over 500 people answered the survey however that works out to only 3% of citizens.

Councillor Smith referenced the Whitecap Pavilion, stating that it was to be a year round facility in the original plans. The cost was 2 million and was supposed to be the event centre with large seating capacity. It was mentioned that Council has to look at other projects that meet the demand, maybe by supporting private sector ownership of an event centre. Councillor Smith stated that there is a responsibility for return on investment of tax payer money and therefore would support a referendum on the project.

There was discussion about survey structures, sampling and fair representation. It was agreed that the survey done did produce a 3% sample. It was noted it is difficult to get real representation of opinion in the community; those who are interested will take part. Colleen verified that there were more event arts groups than hockey groups represented at the stakeholders' session.

There was an inquiry as to whether the Committee had met with user groups who may not use this facility. Colleen clarified that various gymnastic and dance groups as well as others had been reached out to. Colleen spoke about shared space and the difficulty to address specific needs of groups. Multipurpose areas allow multi users. There was an inquiry about what components would be included for various groups other than ice users. A diagram of the conceptual design was shared with the group.

Heather Gropp expressed excitement for banquet facilities as Tourism is involved in event planning, particularly weddings. It was asked if the Committee has into looked at a transportation plan for large events, and noted that accessibility is a challenge without an international airport, the closest being Winnipeg.

There was discussion about the Seven Generations development and the types of events that facility will host. It was suggested to factor this in talking about this project. Colleen noted that the community has lost a gymnasium with sale of the Lakewood School property. There was an inquiry about the past usage of that gym and the types of groups that may not have a place to hold their activities now. It was qualified that there are a few groups who are not being accommodated right now and that gymnasium was utilized by many organized groups. It was mentioned that the intention of Seven Generations development is to have the facility for to host their own events and provide facilities for educational programming.

Councillor McMillan pointed out that there had been many positive comments today with no indication to stop progress on the project but rather some important issues were brought to light. It is important to ensure the tourism strategy is within this proposal as once this Committee is done their work, the facility will be operated by the City as a City project.

Megan Derouard shared that she will be giving a presentation to Council, on the ability to fill this facility with supporting data and booking guarantees from ice users. It was noted that ice events, such as the big tournaments like Allan Cup, are the anchor activities that generate use for a multipurpose center through dry land training and other training workshops.

There was discussion about the cost of ice time and whether the user groups are

prepared to pay more money for the increase in ice time. A response was given that groups will look at the value for money and, for hockey specifically, value is time on the ice. It was noted that more ice time means more ice time cost, but there is an understanding of this value and benefit to most ice users.

Councillor McMillan shared that a second ice surface was the catalyst to start this concept and that the Committee was appointed by Council to explore an event centre plan for an expansion of the Kenora Recreation Centre.

There was discussion about the cost of this large capital project. It was mentioned that the both the capital cost and operating costs need to be the focus. The Tourism Committee would like to see the hard numbers in order to promote and support the project.

Mike summarized that there was a common element raised to look for value proposition with supportive numbers and include an economic impact study.

6. Outstanding/Action Items Resulting from Today's Meeting

- 1) show value of investment
- 2) complete an economic impact study
- 3) increase communication about Event Centre concept

7. Communications and/or Announcements

None

8. Next Meeting Date

- Tuesday, May 6, 2014

Meeting adjourned at 1:07 p.m.