

Colorado Association of Ski Towns

January 20, 2016

Whistler, BC

Meeting Minutes

The following were in attendance:

Steve Skadron	Aspen	Anne Corrock	Ketchum, ID
Sarah Smith-Hymes	Avon	Jim Slanetz	Ketchum, ID
Tim Gagen	Breckenridge	Joe Fitzpatrick	Mt. Crested Butte
John Warner	Breckenridge	Greg Clifton	Telluride
Dean Brookie	Durango	Sean Murphy	Telluride
Peggy Smith	Fraser	Melissa Turley	Teton Village, WY
Bill Efting	Frisco	Dave Chapin	Vail
Gary Wilkinson	Frisco	Stan Zemler	Vail
Bob Lenz	Jackson, WY	Mike Furey	Whistler
Bob McLaurin	Jackson, WY	Ted Battiston	Whistler
		Melissa Laidlaw	Whistler

The meeting was called to order by CAST President Stan Zemler at 8:10am.

Approval of Minutes

There was a motion and a second to approve the August 2015 and October 2015 meeting minutes, which was passed unanimously.

Nancy Wilhelm-Morden – Mayor Whistler

Mayor Nancy Wilhelm-Morden welcomed the group and gave us a brief history of Whistler.

Melissa Laidlaw – Whistler Senior Planner and Roger McCarthy – former Whistler Councilor

In 1914, Myrtle and Alex Philip built Rainbow Lodge. The 1960's bid for the Olympics started the idea the start Whistler. The Resort Municipality of Whistler incorporated in 1975 and in 1979 construction of the village commences. The Provincial Government provided 53 acres to develop town center to be located at the base of Whistler and Blackcomb mountains. The premise and design of the village was to be pedestrian friendly, car free, in harmony with the surroundings, and there were stringent design guidelines and careful planning. Developed a "warm bed strategy" to address vacant second homeowner units which requires property to be available for rent when owner is absent, and limits owner to 28 nights in the winter and 28 nights in the summer. Built year-round attractions and recreation, and created a resort experience through innovative infrastructure funding.

Since 1979, Whistler has pursued a variety of initiatives to enhance affordability and achieve its goal to house 75% of its workforce locally. Whistler Housing Authority, subsidiary of RMOW, oversees 62 resident-restricted locations. The athlete village for the Olympics is not temporary, is being used for affordable housing. Community is not in growth stage, they're focused on reinvention and reinvestment in their aging infrastructure.

Whistler Village Land Co. built extensive parking systems. RMOW operates, maintains and owns the land. Hotels sitting above the parking systems lease the spaces from RMOW and the money is used to maintain them. As far as future development, Whistler has about 62,000 bed units and will extend that only if it has "extraordinary benefit" – which means not very often. Their goal is to keep within their footprint. Zoning is what it is, no re-zoning.

Panel Discussion

Barrett Fischer – President & CEO of Tourism Whistler

Mike Furey – CAO of RMOW

Val Litwin – CEO Whistler Chamber of Commerce

Dave Brownlie – President & CEO, Whistler-Blackcomb

Whistler is a purpose built resort town. There is a big difference in how Whistler collects revenues compared to Colorado. Whistler has about 10,500 permanent residents. Average daily population with guests is about 29,000. 10,000 residents cannot support 2.7 million guests per year. Revenue mainly comes from property tax and utility fees, which accounts for about 65% of their revenue. Basic property tax and utility fee structure generates about \$1.2 million a day in taxes. RMOW has no access to sales tax or transaction tax. Most of the build happened into the 90s – they're currently in the middle of life of key infrastructure. The Resort Municipality of Whistler (RMOW) receives funding from the Province of British Columbia through its Resort Municipality Initiative (RMI) program. A revenue source for eligible resort municipalities since 2006, RMI funding has been invested in a range of programs and services that support and help grow tourism in Whistler.

Tourism Whistler is a non-profit member-based association formed in 1979. Tourism Whistler represents about 8,000 members who own, manage and operate properties or businesses on resort lands including hotels, restaurants, activity operators and retail shops. They are responsible for promoting the resort as an international, four-season destination with the goal of increasing overnight visitation. Membership assessments are the primary source of funding.

Making business easy. The Whistler Chamber of Commerce has been around for about 50 years and is about "making business easy." Their membership are #1 stakeholders and if they're not making business easy, then they're doing something wrong. Their role is to stay relevant to businesses - benefits that lower overhead, deep training, events that give profile – moving away from old school reasons why businesses join a chamber. Stay responsive to the needs of the business community. Reaching out to first nations community for untapped labor force. Augment workforce with foreign labor. World Class Training - Partnership with University of Victoria to create world-class customer service program. Executive program. Fits nicely with advocacy efforts. Biggest role of Chamber in Whistler is training – they train about 6,000 per year. Why aren't Chamber and Tourism Whistler combined? Chamber is focused on advocacy

for their businesses. If you combine, you have to have a very large staff. Both work hard to stay relevant.

In 2006, Intrawest was purchased by Fortress. Intrawest eventually spun off Whistler-Blackcomb and sold the last of its shares in that company in 2012. Largest employer – 1200 ski school instructors alone. WB controls about 1200 beds for employees. Important driver for the community. If WB is to be successful then the community has to be successful too. Work really hard to be involved with the community. Need to listen and understand. Align our resources. Need tourism. Reinvest and reinvent strategy. Greatest legacy from Olympic Games is infrastructure for amazing capacity for events. Who is biggest competitor? Not many.

Ted Battiston – Manager of Special Projects

Ted presented on “Integrated Sustainability Planning – A Focus on Climate Change and Energy Management.” From 2004-09 created 17 different task forces which really delved into the issues. The Official Community Plan of the Resort Municipality of Whistler (the "OCP") contains detailed policies regarding land use, development, servicing the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, and protection of the natural environment. Whistler2020 is Whistler’s integrated community sustainability plan, highest level policy document, and vision. Whistler2020 is the community’s shared vision and plan for continued success to the year 2020 - an ambitious step on a longer journey to a sustainable future. The Carbon Neutral Operations Plan outlines the steps necessary for the Resort Municipality of Whistler to achieve its carbon neutrality commitments under the BC Climate Action Charter.

Whistler is one of the few communities in BC that has a history of setting emissions reductions targets and measuring and monitoring our emissions footprint. A carbon tax is one form of pricing emissions in order to provide a financial incentive for the reduction of GHG emissions throughout the economy. Whistler committed to its first greenhouse gas emission reduction targets in 1997. In that year, Whistler Council endorsed the Kyoto Protocol target of having their community’s emissions at 6% below 1990 levels, by the year 2012.

What’s the climate going to be like in the future? What are the potential impacts?

Three key climate changes for Whistler

1. An increase in the intensity and frequency of heavy rain events
2. Longer, hotter, drier summers
3. Milder winters and changes in amount of precipitation as snow

Open Discussion

The group had an open discussion forum in the agenda and covered the following topics:

- Colorado climate action – almost all action happens at the local level for climate action. Federal government is hopeless, the State is quasi involved, but is split.

- Transportation - Robust bus service, once they can educate people that they don't need car, once they arrive is biggest challenge. Feedback is positive, Whistler may have reputation as obscure and hard to get too, but experience once here is pretty positive.
- Strength of the dollar – Do you have data on your room rates and where have they trended? Have increased room rates. 2009 was lowest point. Had a bump during the Olympics and 2011 was a weak point, 2012 started recovery. If US has bump and recovery then Whistler usually follows.
- Vancouver population – do you have competitors where Vancouver population goes to? Regional resorts – Okanagan, Revelstoke and small resorts. Whistler is also a regional destination for Seattle market.
- VRBO/Airbnb – does the Province play any role in trying to collect taxes or regulate? Answer is no, not actively tracking. None or very little. Just now starting to look at impacts and quantifying it. Political speak, but no structure.
- 101 on carbon tax – based on all carbon footprints. Look up BC carbon tax and how it works.
- Glass recycling used in sand blasting, in asphalt, use goes up when streamed by color.
- Plastic bag charge in Whistler. Grocers and retailers put charge in themselves, Whistler not allowed by law to put that in place.
- Subterranean parking put in place several years back, attributed to pedestrian atmosphere. Ventilation was an issue and lighting as well.
- Police force, how does it work? How visible are they in Whistler. Are they provincial? Whistler contracts out with them. About 21 officers.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:00pm.

From 1:30pm-3:30pm the group took a bus tour of multiple resident housing projects and was led by Marla Zucht, General Manager of the Whistler Housing Authority.