

## BEAR STREET STAKEHOLDER COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE MEETING

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

(Phone-in town hall:  
March 20, 2020, at 10 am)

#### BACKGROUND

- A phone-in town hall meeting was held March 20, 2020 from 10 - 11 am with an estimated 35 representative Bear Street business stakeholders calling in.
- Medical and professional services stakeholders were, for the most part, unable to attend. In one case, one medical-related stakeholder experienced technical difficulty. His feedback is now included.
- An email has also now been set up for stakeholders to send in their questions, comments, and feedback: [bearstreettalk@banff.ca](mailto:bearstreettalk@banff.ca)

#### MAIN OBJECTIVES

1. Continue an open and transparent conversation with this committee on the upcoming reconstruction of Bear Street.
2. Share empathy for others during the COVID-19 crisis.
3. Share messaging on the Town of Banff's current "intentions" with this capital project. Include reasoning for moving forward while asking for input whether or not the intention to proceed is supported.

#### TOWN of BANFF TEAM on the call

- Jason Darrah, Director of Communications
- Janice Carson, Senior Communications Specialist
- Darren Enns, Director of Planning and Development
- Adrian Field, Director of Engineering
- Pierre-Hugues (PH) Gagnon, Engineering Coordinator – Project Manager
- Kerry MacInnis, Administrative Assistant
- Wade Wilson, Communications and Engagement Consultant (FKA Agency)

## SUMMARY

1. **Business stakeholders on this phone-in town hall meeting were overwhelmingly in favour of the project moving forward in 2020.**

### Example comments

- a. It's a good time to move forward as it would be the least amount of disruption to do the work now.
  - b. We are in support of the Bear Street Reconstruction Project going forward as originally planned.
  - c. We are in full support for this project to move forward.
  - d. We have met with Darren and Jason and we want to be part of the solution.
  - e. We encourage the Bear Street Project to go forward so we will be so ready for business in 2021.
2. Example of comment about dire situation with COVID-19:
    - a. With respect to the retail business on Bear Street, we see many excellent reasons for proceeding with the Bear Street Project. However, for retail business right now, unless we can get our rent for free, we will be out of business, whether this project goes forward or not.

## ISSUES

1. **Extra business and residential financial relief for Bear Street businesses**
  - a. Request in general for extra business and residential financial relief from the Town
  - b. A scaled back marketing budget for the project was recommended with savings redeployed as part of relief or deferred to completion
2. **Construction considerations**
  - a. Inquiry into possibly doubling up crews to expedite construction
  - b. Inquiry into possibly moving up the start date for construction
  - c. Discussion on maximizing productivity on the project to expedite completion
3. **Hiring and labour considerations**
  - a. Inquiry into possibly hiring local
4. **Taxation**
  - a. Inquiry into taxation impact for this project, short and longterm
5. **Rent relief from landlords**
  - a. Inquiry and discussion on rent relief including discussions on Federal and Provincial programs.
6. **Parking**
  - a. Offer to provide parking stalls in Cascade Shops parkade.



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**MINUTES OF THE BEAR STREET STAKEHOLDERS  
of the Town of Banff in the Province of Alberta  
Town Hall Conference call  
Friday, March 20, 2020 at 10:00 a.m.**

**TOWN OF BANFF PRESENT**

Jason Darrah	Director, Communications & Marketing
Janice Carson	Senior Communications Specialist
PH Gagnon	Engineering Coordinator (project manager for Bear Street)
Darren Enns	Director, Planning and Development
Adrian Field	Director, Engineering
Rick Williams	Development Compliance Officer
Kerry MacInnis	Administrative Assistant, Planning and Development (MPC Recorder)
Wade Wilson	FKA, Communications Consultant (Contracted Consultant for Town of Banff Bear Street Project)

**Communications Committee for Bear Street Representatives on the call.**

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Darrah addressed the Bear Street Stakeholders:

1. Welcome everyone to the call. Thank you for joining in on short notice.
2. I would like to firstly introduce myself in case someone on the call doesn't know me. I'm Jason Darrah, Director of Communications for the Town of Banff. With me here in the Town offices are: (introductions).
3. All of us at the Town of Banff hope you, your families, and your staff are making it through this unprecedented health crisis. If anyone needs support, for individuals or businesses, we want to work with you.
4. We know many businesses have been forced to stop operations and are making very difficult decisions relating to your employees. This is heartbreaking. But the Town is doing what it can to help, and to coordinate the desire to help out in this caring community.
5. The Town of Banff is looking at our expenditures. All capital and operating projects are being reviewed in response to the COVID-19 crisis.
6. The Town of Banff is looking to reduce expenditures, in hopes of lessening the tax burden on our residents and businesses, in this difficult time. We are identifying some projects that we will recommend to be pushed to next year, so they are not paid for in this tax year.



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7. While we are proposing to defer or pause some projects, we also need to redeploy staff and ramp up some essential services and social support programs.
8. The Bear Street Reconstruction Project is a capital project, or infrastructure project. Deferring it will not increase or decrease the tax burden on residents and businesses in the short-term, because it is financed through borrowing. In fact, since interest rates are so low, we may save dollars in the long run because interest rates are so low and because labour is so affordable.
9. However, we know the decisions we make are not only about budgets and taxes. Decisions are also about what's right at the particular time.
10. The Town of Banff has direction – confirmed in the budget on January 27 – to proceed with the Bear Street Reconstruction Project. But it has not been discussed since then.
11. The Town's project team believes it is the right thing to move forward with the Bear Street Reconstruction project for several reasons:
  - a. We can provide construction and other employment opportunities in a time of job losses and economic pressure.
  - b. We can demonstrate optimism for our Town coming through the COVID-19 crisis knowing that the Town of Banff will continue to be a leading global tourist destination.
  - c. It can be an appropriate time to implement the reconstruction project as the number of visitors to our community disappears for several weeks, if not months.
  - d. Construction can be a less of a disruption on businesses on the street because many have been forced to close and many are running partial operations. (At the same time, we know some services are running full speed, such as medical offices.)
12. We don't know how long this crisis will last. We don't know how long the Town of Banff will be hurt by COVID-19. But what we do know – we must believe we will get through it if we work together as a community. And we need to be ready when we are back open for business, as a community. So we have to think of the construction impact and when is the best time to schedule the disruption – now or in the recovery period.
13. The Town of Banff has consulted with the contractor procured for the reconstruction and they have stated they have capacity to undertake the work during these trying times.
14. The Town of Banff sympathizes with our residents and business communities on any project which causes disruption but especially regarding the COVID-19 crisis and subsequent loss of tourist visits. We do not intend to add any more pressure to our business community with this project but do believe that a reconstruction project like this could be best suited during a period when our tourist visit count will be at a historical low. But we need your feedback.

So, before I hand it over to our facilitator, Wade, I want to share with you that we have set up an email address for you to send in questions or feedback regarding the reconstruction project. The email address is [bearstreettalk@banff.ca](mailto:bearstreettalk@banff.ca) I will say it again and Wade will as well at the end, [bearstreettalk@banff.ca](mailto:bearstreettalk@banff.ca) I will now hand it over to Wade.



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Wilson addressed the Bear Street Stakeholders:

- Welcome to everyone on the call.
- Discussed the format for speaking and encouraged all to take one minute each for comments and questions.

Bear Street Representatives Questions

Tom Couture; Banff Cycle

- Excited that the project may go forward.
- It's a good time to move forward as it would be the least amount of disruption to do the work now.

Stavros Karlos; Banff Hospitality Collective

- We really have to commend the Town of Banff on their actions during this crisis.
- Our reality is that we may get partial business back by July 2020. At worst case scenario, we may have a six month recovery timeframe.
- It is predicted that we will be shut down for 8-10 weeks.
- We are in support of the Bear Street Project going forward as originally planned.
- Small and medium sized business will see some relief from the government and we all need to start planning for 2021.
- We need to have this new infrastructure on Bear Street.
- Request consideration be given by the Town for extra financial relief to the Bear Street businesses.

Maureen VanMackelbergh and Allison Brewster; Brewster Mountain Lodge

- We are in full support for this project to move forward.
- Question: Can we double the crew size to speed up the construction process?
  - Answer - PH Gagnon/TOB: we will do all in our power to reduce the impact to the businesses/public. However, we can't dictate the size of the crew. There is much to consider and nothing is for sure at this moment. The contractor is ready to start as previously scheduled; however, we don't know their crew size and how their own company has been impacted by this situation (self-isolating employees, employees with child care concerns, who is available to work, etc.)
  - Answer - PH Gagnon/TOB: we continue to work with the contractor and to assist wherever we can.

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Sophie Short; Bison Courtyard

- We are in full support for the project to move forward as scheduled.
- We would like to request that consideration be given to the residential tenants on Bear Street. Perhaps something extra for the residential tenants and landlords as they will be doubly impacted by COVID-19 virus as well as the Bear Street Project.

Tanya Price; Banff Adventures

- We agree with going forward with this project.
- We would hate to see back to back summers where our street was disrupted. So going forward now is for the best for us.

Martin Holland; Cascade Shops

- We have met with Darren and Jason and we want to be part of the solution.
- We have 50 parking stalls on the top floor of Cascade Shops that we will open.
- We want to work with everyone to help in any way that we can.

Caley Ram; Snowtips/Backtrax

- Could we move forward with the Bear Street Project sooner than April?
  - Answer - PH Gagnon/TOB:
    - We are in direct contact with the general contractor every day and they have confirmed that they are ready to go for the third week of April. We wouldn't be able to start earlier because of ground freeze.
  - Answer - PH Gagnon/TOB:
    - We are also looking at options to increase productivity for the project; considering opening construction hours for weekends as well.
  - Answer – PH Gagnon/TOB:
    - We have hired a local contractor for the Bear Street Project who, in turn, hires local subcontractors and employees; helps to keep locals in jobs. We all want this project to go quickly but we must adhere to the safety rules and labor laws.

Kaitlyn Paris; Standish Home Hardware

- Will there be an increase in taxes if this project proceeds?
  - Answer – Darrah/TOB, great question that we will have to come back with for answers. However, interest rates are at an all-time low; thus, we have greater cost savings by going



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ahead with the Bear Street Project now. As a result, we would see a decrease in the tax draw for the long term.

Katie Tuff; Banff Hospitality Collective

- Huge thank you to the community for all of the support and your efforts.
- We are looking toward summer 2021.
- We encourage the Bear Street Project to go forward so we will be so ready for business in 2021.
- We see this project as an asset.

Kathryn; Lole Banff

- With respect to the retail business on Bear Street, we see many excellent reasons for proceeding with the Bear Street Project. However, for retail business right now, unless we can get our rent for free, we will be out of business, whether this project goes forward or not.

Susan and Tom; Wilcox and Sax Gallery

- Is the Town of Banff talking with the landlords on Bear Street with regards to helping out people along this street and in particular the retailers on Bear Street?
- It helps in our own conversations with our landlords that we can speak together as a group to the fact that we aren't the only ones asking for this deferral.
- We request that these meeting minutes to be sent out to all Bear Street representatives as those who couldn't make the call today may have more feedback on this.

Darrah/TOB

- Yes, we will circulate these meeting minutes to all Bear Street businesses.
- We will also take your feedback to Council.
- Town of Banff has been speaking with the provincial and federal governments and are advocating for the Town. Our first focus was on family and community services and the response has been a big top up on those funds. We are advocating for commercial support as well.
- We have been in talks with commercial property owners in town.
- Town of Banff is reopening our budgets to re-evaluate all projects and expenses. Providing essential services is our first focus. However, property taxes and fees are being looked at as well.



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Stavros Karlos; Banff Hospitality Collective and Board Member of Banff Lake Louise Tourism Bureau

- We have made a formal request to defer Q2, Q3 taxes.
- The government is talking about mortgage deferrals.
- I encourage you to start talking to your landlords and banks about lease, mortgage and utility deferrals.
- It was just announced in Ontario, there will be a 60 day non eviction notices for all residents
- Individual lessees should be speaking to your landlords.
- We are looking at a 10 week shut down; with partial recovery into the summer.
- We need to be planning for the worse; start the community conversation to ensure we have business continuity for the future.
- We are all in this together.

Wilson asked if there was anyone on this call who represented the medical and office communities on Bear Street.

- Darrah/TOB responded that it didn't appear there was; however, it is likely a busy time in those offices right now. We will follow up with the medical and professional offices later today.
- Darrah/TOB could see that a member was on the call but couldn't connect. Darrah will follow up with him directly and ensure his comments are added to these meeting minutes.

Brigitte Ryan; Carter Ryan Gallery

- Thank you for all of this information. It has been very informative. It is great to have this support and gives us confidence to carry on.
- We support the Bear Street Project moving forward.

Darrah/TOB - wrap up and next steps

- It has been very rewarding to have so many people join us today.
- We are thinking of everyone; we are really looking at different aspects of this project and going as fast as we can.
- Thank you for your time today.
- Please take advantage to send your comments to [bearstreettalk@banff.ca](mailto:bearstreettalk@banff.ca) and ask others on the block to send their thoughts – we want diversity of opinions.
- More information will be shared with you shortly.
- Thank you to all who shared their email (permission) so I may relay this communication to you.



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Conference call ended at 11:00a.m.