

Minutes of the **NORTH WESTSIDE PROVINCIAL RESTRUCTURE PLANNING GRANT COMMITTEE** meeting of the Regional District of Central Okanagan held at Regional District Offices, 1450 KLO Road, Kelowna, BC on Wednesday, January 20, 2021

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- Directors: M. Bartyik (Central Okanagan East Electoral Area)  
W. Carson (Central Okanagan West Electoral Area)  
G. Milsom (City of West Kelowna)  
C. Simpson (North Westside Communities Association Representative)
- G. Given (City of Kelowna) Ex-officio  
A. Neilson (Neilson Strategies-Consultant) (*attended electronically*)
- Provincial Staff: M. Edmonson, Director-Governance Structure, Province of BC (*attended electronically*)  
B. Nicholls, Program Analyst, Governance Structure (*attended electronically*)
- Staff: B. Reardon, Chief Administrative Officer  
J. Foster, Director of Communication & Information Services  
M. Rilkoﬀ, Director of Financial Services (*attended electronically*)  
M. Drouin, Manager-Corporate Services (recording secretary)

1. **CALL TO ORDER**

Chair Milsom called the meeting to order at 10:05 a.m. and acknowledged the meeting is being held on the traditional territory of the syilx/Okanagan peoples.

Roll call was taken.

*In accordance with the most recent Provincial Health Officer Order regarding gatherings and events, the public is currently not permitted to attend Board meetings in-person.*

*As an open meeting, a live audio-video feed is being broadcast and recorded on rdco.com.*

2. **ADDITION OF LATE ITEMS**

There are no late items for the agenda

3. **ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA**

**BARTYIK/CARSON**

THAT the Agenda be adopted.

CARRIED Unanimously

4. **BUSINESS ARISING**

4.1. Introductions of Committee Members, Consultant and Provincial Government Staff

Chair Milson thanked the members of the committee for participating in this process. Those in attendance introduced themselves and their role. It was noted that Chair Given serves as ex-officio on all board committees and therefore does not have a vote, if and when taken.

4.2. Review of Committee's Terms of Reference (Regional Board Endorsed January 14, 2021) Brian Reardon - Chief Administrative Officer

Brian Reardon provided an overview of the Terms of Reference (TOR) for the committee as endorsed by the Regional Board. The TOR will guide how the committee operates including the membership, term of the committee, who is the spokesperson for the meeting (Chair Milsom), meeting procedures and voting provisions, reporting to the Regional Board. This committee is an advisory committee and therefore has no power to carry out resolutions approved by the committee.

4.3. Review of Conclusions and Suggested Action Plans from the North Westside Services and Community Issues Study

Jodie Foster, RDCO Director of Communications, provided an overview of the conclusions and action plans from the initial Issues Study completed in October 2017.

Summary of the document included the conclusions

- Erosion of trust is impacting working relationships between the community and RDCO
- Misinformation is prevalent within the community
- Type and extent of services and how they are delivered to the community
- Persistent feeling by the community that their interests were not being heard
- Community felt that services costs were too high in particular water rates and administration overhead.

First considerations

- Improve communications
- Clarifying the constraints on information is being provided to the public
- Clarifying the role of elected official in Central Okanagan West
- Establish regular dialogue
- Detailed cost analysis and comparable analysis on services ie: water rates, parks, bylaw enforcement, voting structure of the Regional Board.

In discussion;

- RDCO is currently updating its website as it has been difficult for the public to find information.
- Community has not asked for an incorporation study

#### 4.4. Presentation of RDCO 2021-2022 Electoral Area Communication Strategy (Regional Board Approved January 14, 2021)

Jodie Foster, RDCO Director Communications addressed the committee on the newly approved Electoral Area Communication Strategy.

- Formal process for the communication strategy for both electoral areas
- Goal of the review was ensuring RDCO has good information put out to the community. There was much work done to enhance communication since 2017: website improvements, open houses, information provided in the Westside newsletter, etc.
- Six goals were identified:
  - o Residents receive clear, correct and truthful information from the RDCO.
  - o Residents understand what services RDCO provides as well as what other agencies provide (ie: roads are the responsibility of the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure)
  - o Residents feel Board decisions are transparent and understand how decisions are made
  - o Residents value the services they receive
  - o Electoral area director and the Board are aware of, and feel supported by issues arising in the area
  - o Residents feel they have the information they need during crisis
- Some current activities completed to date include: website with specific electoral area web pages, media directed to electoral area, specific issues ie: water rates communicated, water utility newsletter, email system set up for communication on water rates.
- A number of activities are underway: RDCO website to be replaced by Q3 2021; RDCO has at the end of 2020 provided a live-streaming of Board meetings online; doing a formal statistically valid citizens survey in 2021
  - o Advocacy – helping EA directors with issues in their community (ie: ambulance service).
  - o Going back to open houses if COVID-19 allows – face-to-face meetings are important. If not, will look at an online service for residents to voice concerns on an issue.
  - o Work with the community association for staff to present on ‘hot topic’ issues at a community meeting.
  - o Develop a ‘service directory’ for services RDCO provides or others provide and how to contact the appropriate person.
  - o Annual newsletter providing budget information to the specific area.
  - o 2022 looking at an online engagement platform in a more formal way than what we have now.

4.5. North Westside Community Association Presentation Callie Simpson - NWCA Appointee to Committee

C. Simpson addressed the committee outlining a presentation from the North Westside Communities Association re: Request for a Governance Study dated January 2021 including:

- What the community is about – mix of residential, agricultural, Fintry Park, LaCasa resort, beaches, forestry campground, community parks, sewer system, fire halls, transfer site.
- Request for alternative governance structure through a governance study.
- Can boundaries be adjusted.
- Detailed diagnostic study needed.
- Concerns on increased water rates and cost of addition engineering work. Believes as a self-government would save money.
- Governance study would provide exact costs and comparisons.
- Believes as a municipality would have more say.
- Doesn't believe an electoral area director from COE should vote on decisions affecting their area.
- Can't employ their own residents or employ volunteers to work and build structure, etc.
- Fire halls – believes current form of management is in turmoil. RDCO staff do not live in the community and understand their community. Residents feel there is better equipment needed. Need to expand mutual aid to the north—OKIB, City of Vernon.
- A governance study would provide facts.

In discussion:

- Many issues raised in the presentation were identified in the Services Issue Review. Would the next steps—diagnostic study--be beneficial, and would it be detailed enough.
- Community residents want to know what the current costs are, pros and cons, and if they were their own government could they afford to incorporate.
- If incorporation is not viable maybe boundaries should be adjusted—would North Okanagan Regional District be a better fit?

4.6. Allan Neilson (Neilson Strategies - Consultant) Comments on process and protocol

Allan Neilson provided comments on process and first principles.

- Easy to dive into the costs and who gets to make decision and it's easy to get lost in the minutia
- When we think of the local government system in BC, it provides for how decisions are made. For smaller communities there is flexibility in the system to make changes, possible for new structure with a lot of study.

When considering changes to local government structure important to explore in as neutral fashion as possible.

- The local government structure is the responsibility of the provincial government through Ministry of Municipal Affairs.
- Takes a long time to make changes to structure and decisions are not made lightly and are only made on an objective analysis and engagement of the population.
- The analysis consists of three different phases: first, governance and services study overseen by a citizens based group [funded by the province] (first study did not get into the detail); second phase, if incorporation an option the boundaries are then considered; and third part is if there is a desire for a change of structure (an incorporation study).
- Always a sense of urgency to jump into the final phase. The system is designed however to slow things down in order for community leaders and residents to understand the full picture. The Province reserves the right to make the decisions on procedure.

#### 4.7. Provincial Governance and Structure Branch Staff Comments

Marijke Edmondson, Director, Governance and Structure Branch - Province of BC and Barrie Nicholls, Program Analyst, Governance and Structure Branch were in attendance electronically.

The December 8, 2020 letter from M. Edmondson re: North Westside Governance was provided to the committee for review.

The EcoPlan Study (pg 39) outlines the full steps of incorporation.

Provincial process is designed for diagnosis before prescription.

- Need to make issues transparent in the process
- Various options can be considered
- Province intentionally moves slowly to allow time to consideration and review
- Incremental improvements may have the desired effect instead of exploring future options. What is worthy of more substantial work.
- Hesitant with governance and services study if thought is to move to incorporation
- Better to have questions at this stage. Must be purposeful and open minded. Cannot move to one particular direction.
- Full cost of a governance and services study is not just provided by the Province. There are additional costs to be identified: for staff, etc.

#### 4.8. Next Steps

Discussion ensued:

- North Westside feels like its own community not just a part of the other communities in the electoral area. The area director raised concerns regarding: looking for a voice in the non-delivered RDCO services (ie: policing, schools and roads); areas outside North Westside have no future

in regards to incorporation—amalgamation is likely an option for these areas.

- There is a lot to consider in next steps.
- Summarize what's been discussed today and bring forward a staff report to the next meeting.
- Allan Nielson commented:
  - o Start to flush out what a study would look like, how to move forward to a governance and services study. Explain what that would look like – what it would provide and what it would not provide.
  - o If a request goes forward to Province – need to know the scope of work, what would be the process, the timeline and a budget.
- This is a provincial government process and the Province will need to determine next steps.
- Points can be very emotional but it's necessary to provide accurate information.
- The committee may wish to explore what the scope is
- Concern about what information is being presented and what are actual facts. Must be neutral and unbiased information presented.
- Staff report summarizing today's discussion and will include the Allan Nielson's and the Province comments.

Date for next meeting--to be determined by the Chair. RDCO staff are in the midst of budget and year-end so at present there is no date set for the next meeting.

#### **4. ADJOURN**

There being no further business the meeting was adjourned at 12:10 p.m.

**CERTIFIED TO BE TRUE AND CORRECT**

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G. Milsom (Chair)

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B. Reardon (Chief Administrative Officer)