

**REGIONALIZATION WORKING GROUP  
MEETING NOTES  
WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 2, 2019  
COUNTY OF NEWELL**

**COUNCILLORS PRESENT:** M. Douglass, County of Newell  
C. Amulung, County of Newell  
B. Morishita, City of Brooks  
J. Petrie, City of Brooks  
R. Wickson, Town of Bassano  
J. Seely, Town of Bassano  
T. Steidel, Village of Duchess  
K. Steinley, Village of Duchess  
B. Marshall, Village of Rosemary  
Y. Fujimoto, Village of Rosemary

**STAFF PRESENT:** S. Zacharias, Village of Rosemary  
Y. Cosh, Village of Duchess  
A. Martens, City of Brooks  
S. Yokoyama, County of Newell (Recording Secretary)  
K. Stephenson, County of Newell

**1. CALL TO ORDER**

Chairman B. Marshall called the meeting to order at 9:03 a.m.

**2. INTRODUCTION**

K. Stephenson introduced Susan Yokoyama who will be providing administrative support for the Regionalization Working Group.

**3. LUNCH**

Lunch was not required for this meeting.

**4. CONTIGO BUSINESS SERVICES INC. FACILITATION**

- K. Stephenson advised that Tracey Polowich of Contigo Business Services Inc. was available to act as the facilitator for this group. Costs for the services would be \$150/hr plus mileage & out of pocket expenses.
- He indicated that Tracey has in depth knowledge in municipal service delivery with her strengths being finance and strategic planning. She will bring an unbiased, professional and arms length approach to the Regionalization Project.
- It was noted that the City of Brooks will be applying for grant funding to cover the Regionalization Project.
- The group felt that consistent representation for the public meetings going forward would be beneficial and suggested that the facilitator organize the public meetings, compile the data and report back to the Working Group.

- Discussion was held on how the public open houses should be structured. Several suggestions were provided, and members felt that it was important that the public understand the formalities of amalgamation and why the partnering municipalities are considering this process.
- Some members indicated that they are still struggling with reasons as to why any form of amalgamation to one municipality is even being considered at this time as everything seems to be working fine.
- Justification provided was long term sustainability, provincial competitiveness, more efficient service delivery, \$8-12 million annual cost savings while taking control of the future of the region ahead of any future mandated changes.
- Fears suggested included loss of autonomy, political voice with the province and current local decision-making capabilities on service level delivery.

A 15-minute break was suggested to allow each municipality time to break into individual working groups to decide how to proceed going forward.

The meeting broke for discussions at 10:00 a.m.

The meeting reconvened at 10:31 a.m.

- Villages of Rosemary and Duchess were in favour of collaboration but indicated that they don't support amalgamation or the one municipality concept. The Town of Bassano, City of Brooks and County of Newell advised they were ready to move forward with the amalgamation process.
- After further discussion, all parties agreed that even though some reservations exist about the process, the partners agreed to move forward and take the concept out to the public for their input.

## **5. OBTAINING OTHER ASSISTANCE TO ASSIST WITH CHANGE**

K. Stephenson reported that Bench Solutions is a professional change management company located in Calgary so that option exists for the Committee as the process moves forward. Bench Solutions handled the Cenovus Transition Project and rates quoted were \$3,650 per day and \$195 per hour for preparation time.

## **6. DISCUSS COST SAVINGS AND WHERE TO FROM HERE**

- K. Stephenson reviewed the list of potential cost savings outlined in the report provided.
  - Expenses for the entire region were estimated to come in between \$51-\$55 million dollars.
  - Property Taxes for Brooks, Bassano, Duchess and Rosemary would see an annual reduction of over \$6 million dollars.
  - Savings in the first 2-3 years are not expected as the transition/change moves forward.
  - Information was also shared regarding the opportunity to negotiate current grant structures and policing costs with the government.

**MOVED BY BARRY MORISHITA** that Tracey Polowich of Contigo Business Services Inc. be engaged to facilitate the Regionalization Working Group meetings and public open houses.

**MOTION CARRIED**

- A member of the Working Group will be selected to chair the March 6 meeting as the facilitator is unavailable.
- Public open houses will be held in Dutchess, Rosemary, Bassano, Brooks and two locations within the County.
- Information on the public meetings will be included in the February press release with the open houses to be held later that month.
- A handout explaining the process of amalgamation and why we are considering it for our municipalities will be created for the open houses. The handout should also highlight collaborations that currently exist between the municipalities and the following reasons why amalgamation is worth considering:
  - Efficiencies
  - Sustainability
  - Services
  - Cost savings
  - Tax savings
  - Tax competitive

**7. OTHER**

**7.1 Chairperson for Meeting**

- Bill Marshall requested that the chairperson duties rotate each month through the Committee. Consensus was that chairing the meetings and facilitating the public open houses be handled by the facilitator and when the facilitator isn't present to appoint her replacement at the meeting.

***K. Stephenson will prepare the press release from this meeting and coordinate the open house dates with the facilitator.***

***A. Martens will prepare information and handouts for the public open houses. This information will be reviewed at the February meeting.***

**8. ADJOURN**

The meeting was adjourned at 12:09 p.m.

The next meeting will be held February 6<sup>th</sup> @ 9:00 am in the County of Newell Office.