

**REGIONALIZATION WORKING GROUP
MEETING NOTES
WEDNESDAY, APRIL 3, 2019
COUNTY OF NEWELL**

COUNCILLORS PRESENT: M. Douglass, County of Newell
C. Amulung, County of Newell
J. Petrie, City of Brooks
B. Prentice, City of Brooks
R. Wickson, Town of Bassano
J. Seely, Town of Bassano

STAFF PRESENT: K. Stephenson, County of Newell
M. Fenske, County of Newell
T. Polowich, Contigo Business Services Inc.
S. Yokoyama, County of Newell (Recording Secretary)

ABSENT: A. Martens, City of Brooks
B. Morishita, City of Brooks

1. CALL TO ORDER

T. Polowich called the meeting to order at 9:01 a.m.

Arrived at the Meeting

J. Seely & B. Prentice arrived at 9:02 a.m.

2. ADOPTION OF MINUTES

MOVED BY MOLLY DOUGLASS that the Regionalization Working Group Meeting Notes dated March 6, 2019 be adopted as presented.

MOTION CARRIED

3. CALL FOR POST AGENDA ITEMS

The following items were added to the agenda.

- Inviting Town of Bassano to April 9, 2019 City/County meeting
- Media Releases - Duchess & Rosemary
- Governance - Added under Item 8

4. ADOPTION OF AGENDA

MOVED BY JOHN PETRIE that the agenda be adopted as amended.

MOTION CARRIED

10. POST AGENDA ITEMS

Media Releases – Duchess & Rosemary

The recent media releases received from the Villages of Duchess and Rosemary regarding their decision to withdraw from the group were discussed.

The remaining members had hoped that all municipalities would be at the table to discuss the issues and bring the information back to their respective municipalities; however, they respect the decisions made by the Villages of Duchess and Rosemary to do what they feel is right for their communities.

The remaining members of the RWG agreed to continue with the process. They will review and analyze the information received at the open houses to provide more facts and figures to the residents.

The County will still complete Intermunicipal Framework Collaboration agreements with the Villages of Duchess and Rosemary and the City of Brooks by the legislated date of April 1, 2020.

A formal letter from the RWG will be drafted and sent to the Villages of Duchess and Rosemary.

MOVED BY JACKIE SEELY that the Regionalization Working Group accept with regret the withdrawal of the Village of Duchess and Village of Rosemary from the committee.

MOTION CARRIED

5. OPEN HOUSE DEBRIEF

RWG members reviewed the open house expected outcomes, discussed whether they felt the outcomes were achieved and what they were excited about moving forward.

The group also discussed the need to develop a communications strategy. T. Polowich will contact the City of Brooks to see if their communications staff has the capacity to provide this service to the group or whether outside sources should be considered. The budget will also be reviewed to determine if there is enough funding for additional resources.

6. PUBLIC FEEDBACK

The RWG reviewed questions received from the last two open houses and other submissions that were received through the website or email.

K. Stephenson will assist with drafting the responses to the remaining questions received.

It was requested that any submissions received going forward be collected and sent to the RWG once a week or every two weeks depending on the volume received.

The RWG took a short break at 10:56 a.m. and reconvened at 11:06 a.m.

7. REGIONALIZATION WEBSITE

RWG members reviewed the website content and suggested that the following items be revised or added:

- remove logos and representative names for the Villages of Duchess and Rosemary
- include links to media releases from the Villages of Duchess and Rosemary
- include link to map beside definition of hamlet
- include links to financial statements on Financial Info tab and under the related question on the Feedback tab
- include RWG notes on website

Members discussed alternative ways to advise the public about information regarding regionalization/amalgamation. It was noted that most libraries in the region provide computer access to the public. Printed copies can be made available and residents can also contact their local municipal office to obtain information.

Including the RWG Notes on the website was also discussed. Members felt that in order to have the notes available to the public in a timely manner the unapproved notes would be included on the website and updated once the notes were approved.

8. COMMITMENT FOR ACTION

The RWG members considered the phases of this process (investigation, analysis, consultation, decision) and reviewed the International Association for Public Participation 2 Spectrum. This spectrum provides a guide on what stage is best to engage the public in the process.

A timeline for the phases of this process going forward were discussed and agreed to by the RWG members.

Apr - Sept 2019 - Complete investigation and analysis phase

Oct 2019 - Target to complete remaining internal ICF's with Brooks, Duchess & Rosemary

Oct - Nov 2019 - Consultations with the public

Jan - Aug 2020 - Decision Making on information received

IF DECISION TO AMALGAMATE IS SUPPORTED:

Aug 2020 - Amalgamation Application Development

Oct 2020 - Target Amalgamation Application Complete

Apr 2021 - Complete Rural ICF's

Oct 2021 - Municipal Election

To keep the public engaged and to satisfy their request for information from other areas that have gone through this process already, it was suggested that the RWG consider holding a panel discussion like the one in Grande Prairie. A link to the Grande Prairie panel discussions on YouTube will be included on the website.

The preliminary analysis information comparing **NRSC services** in Bassano, Brooks and the County, outlining areas of redundancy and potential savings as well as service capacity was reviewed by the RWG. Items identified in this analysis indicate a possible savings of \$400,000 which could be used in other areas.

Left the Meeting

J. Seely left the meeting at 12:08 p.m.

The RWG broke for lunch at 12:28 p.m. and reconvened at 12:45 p.m.

Items that the RWG felt needed to be investigated further included:

- Unions
- Facilities
- Equipment
- Budgets (Including Capital)

Further research will be completed to get a greater understanding of all budget items and how they are connected to each other.

RWG members discussed how to ensure that the interests of the residents are protected with the new governance model. Now that there are only 3 municipalities involved in this process, do we still stay with the 5 and 5 model proposed initially or a 4 and 4 model with the mayor being elected from any area? Should the County be divided into a ward system? These questions will be considered further at the next meeting.

Information presented to the public should include the following:

- explaining in detail the \$8-12 million cost savings
- explaining why and how the duplication happens
- providing options for elected representation so that municipalities retain their voice
- informing the public of the costs involved in the services they receive
- providing information on services and service levels
- taxation structure
- potential staff changes
- providing a sample organizational chart with service capacities.

It was noted that with the timeline established the RWG has 5 more meetings to complete the investigation and analysis phase. T. Polowich will work with the municipalities to determine what information should be compiled for each meeting. At the end of the next 5 meetings the full package will be reviewed and plans for presenting it to the public will be prepared.

In the meantime, further research will be done on the possibility of organizing a panel discussion presentation for June.

Members agreed that there are pitfalls when comparing regions because no two are alike. It is always good to learn from the experiences of others, but we need to remember every community is unique.

Left the Meeting

M. Fenske left the meeting at 1:06 p.m.

9. PRESS RELEASE

- The Town of Bassano will prepare the press release for this meeting.

10. POST AGENDA ITEMS CON'T

- **Inviting Town of Bassano to April 9, 2019 City/County meeting**

M. Douglass brought forward this item on behalf of B. Morishita. He felt this meeting would be a good opportunity for the three councils to get together and reaffirm their commitment to the process. Bassano members will discuss this request at their Council meeting on April 8 and will advise if they feel this meeting is still necessary.

11. NEXT STEPS

The next meeting is scheduled for May 1, 2019.

12. ADJOURN

The meeting adjourned at 1:14 p.m.