

**REGIONALIZATION WORKING GROUP
MEETING NOTES
WEDNESDAY, MAY 1, 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

STAFF PRESENT: K. Stephenson, County of Newell
A. Martens, City of Brooks
T. Polowich, Contigo Business Services Inc.
S. Yokoyama, County of Newell (Recording Secretary)

ABSENT: J. Seely, Town of Bassano

1. CALL TO ORDER

T. Polowich called the meeting to order at 9:03 a.m.

2. ADOPTION OF MINUTES

MOVED BY MOLLY DOUGLASS that the Regionalization Working Group Meeting Notes dated April 3, 2019 be adopted as presented.

MOTION CARRIED

3. CALL FOR POST AGENDA ITEMS

A question was raised about the agenda items for this meeting and when the group would begin discussions on areas such as taxation, governance and service levels.

In order to determine what information should be collected and analyzed, it was recommended that the group have a clear understanding of the end goal. It was also suggested that the RWG discuss the potential benefits of hiring a communications strategist to assist with providing clear messages to the public on the information being presented.

Comments from the group regarding the panel discussion originally proposed for June indicated that this item should be postponed until more information has been provided to the residents. It was suggested that this panel discussion be scheduled in conjunction with the open houses slated for the fall. This item was deferred to a future agenda.

ICF's and the progress made to date were discussed. The group agreed that discussions on amalgamation should not be delayed while the ICF's are being completed. It was noted that the Managers of Finance for the City of Brooks and County of Newell are currently working on a draft financial budget for the RWG to review at a future meeting.

Governance, service level commitments and taxation policy recommendations were identified as topics that should be discussed first.

The following item was added to the agenda for discussion under Item 10:

- Governance Structure

4. ADOPTION OF AGENDA

MOVED BY CLARENCE AMULUNG that the agenda be adopted as amended.

MOTION CARRIED

5. MEDIA RELEASE

The City of Brooks agreed to prepare the media release for this meeting. A draft will be submitted to the group for review by May 2 and the final draft will be released on May 6. The Vauxhall, Strathmore, Taber and Medicine Hat newspapers as well as Chat TV will be added to the media distribution list.

The RWG agreed that the media releases would not be advertised as a separate display ad but would be included on the websites and any social media accounts for each of the three municipalities. Only specific information items would require official advertising.

A subscriptions list where interested parties could receive the media releases sent to them via email was also suggested. S. Yokoyama will speak with the IT department to gather options for providing this service.

6. PUBLIC FEEDBACK

There was no public feedback to review at this meeting.

7. COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGIST

RWG members reviewed the draft Terms of Reference and Scope provided for the Communications Strategist position. It was noted that the resources required to supply this person in-house are not available. After reviewing the budget, it was determined that there is funding available to consider this position. It was suggested that a Request for Proposal (RFP) be developed for the communication plan and implementation and that an hourly rate be provided for any other work required. T. Polowich and A. Martens will develop the RFP.

8. PANEL DISCUSSION

This item was deferred to a future agenda.

9. FINAL INFORMATION PACKAGE COMPONENTS

The RWG reviewed the draft outline for the final information package components. It was requested that facilities be added to the outline to determine where the offices will be located and how these assets will be used.

Engaging the Minister of Municipal Affairs and their staff on the required steps for amalgamation was also identified. Items to consider include the formation order, boundaries, items in the amalgamation application, provisions on grants, representation, how long the amalgamation process takes and vote requirements.

RWG members discussed the Public Participation Spectrum and felt most comfortable with level 3 (Involve). The goal of this level is to work directly with the public to ensure that their concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered and to provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.

Open surveys or polls of the public were also suggested as strategies to ensure the group is on the right track.

10. TIMELINE

A proposed timeline for the various components of the final information package was reviewed. T. Polowich will update the timeline to include the changes identified at this meeting. T. Polowich also presented a draft explanation on duplication in Municipal Government. Additional areas of duplication will be added and brought back to a future meeting.

RWG members discussed Governance Structure options and agreed that each area represented must have similar taxation and service levels.

The following governance options were presented for discussion:

Option 1: (11 representatives)

4 Brooks community, 5 County of Newell, 1 Bassano community, CEO elected at large

Option 2: (11 representatives)

5 Brooks community, 5 County of Newell, 1 Bassano community, CEO elected from within

Option 3: (10 representatives)

4 Brooks community, 5 County of Newell, 1 Bassano community, CEO elected from within

The terms “Brooks community” and “Bassano community” are used as the existing boundaries may be enlarged slightly to square off the areas.

County Council must also consider if they wish to continue with a ward system and if so, how the wards would be defined.

The pros and cons of electing a mayor or selecting the mayor from within were also discussed.

RWG members will take these options back to their individual councils for consideration and discuss any other alternative suggestions proposed.

11. POST AGENDA ITEMS

The post agenda item was dealt with under Item 10.

12. NEXT STEPS

Action items include:

- City of Brooks to prepare draft media release by May 2 and distribute by May 6.
- S. Yokoyama to investigate options for media release subscriptions.
- T. Polowich and A. Martens to prepare RFP for Communications Strategist.
- B. Morishita to gather more information from the Minister of Municipal Affairs on the formation process and what items to be aware of.
- RWG members to review governance options with individual councils and County members to bring back options for wards.
- Discussions on taxation policy recommendations and service levels will be added to the next agenda.

The next meeting is scheduled for June 4, 2019.

12. ADJOURN

The meeting adjourned at 12:01 p.m.