

**REGIONAL DISTRICT OF BULKLEY-NECHAKO**

**RURAL DIRECTORS COMMITTEE MEETING**

**Thursday, January 21, 2016**

**PRESENT:** Chair Eileen Benedict

Directors Mark Fisher  
Tom Greenaway  
Rob Newell  
Mark Parker  
Jerry Petersen

Director Absent Bill Miller, Electoral Area "B" (Burns Lake Rural)

Staff Gail Chapman, Chief Administrative Officer  
Hans Berndorff, Financial Administrator  
Deborah Jones-Middleton, Protective Services Manager – left at 11:13 a.m.  
Jason Llewellyn, Director of Planning – left at 12:57 p.m.  
Corrine Swenson, Manager of Economic Development – arrived at 12:28 p.m., left at 12:57 p.m.  
Wendy Wainwright, Executive Assistant

**CALL TO ORDER**

Chair Benedict called the meeting to order at 10:01 a.m.

**AGENDA & SUPPLEMENTARY AGENDA**

Moved by Director Greenaway  
Seconded by Director Parker

RDC.2016-1-1

"That the Rural Directors Committee Agenda for January 21, 2016 be approved; and further, that the Supplementary Agenda be received."

(All/Directors/Majority)

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

**MINUTES**

Rural Directors Committee Meeting Minutes -November 5, 2015

Moved by Director Newell  
Seconded by Director Fisher

RDC.2016-1-2

"That the minutes of the Rural Directors Committee meeting of November 5, 2015 be received."

(All/Directors/Majority)

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

**REPORTS**

Allocation of Costs to Rural Fire Service

Moved by Director Petersen  
Seconded by Director Greenaway

RDC.2016-1-3

"That the Rural Directors Committee receive the Protective Service Managers January 13, 2016 memo titled "Allocation of Costs to Rural Fire Service."

(All/Directors/Majority)

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

## **REPORTS (CONT'D)**

Discussion took place in regard to the number of regulations imposed by the Provincial Government on small rural fire departments and the impacts to tax payers in order to continue having an operational service.

Director Petersen mentioned that Cluculz Lake Volunteer Fire Department experiences a number of challenges with regulation changes and cost increases and he has concerns regarding an increase in taxation.

Director Benedict has met with the Southside Volunteer Fire Department and they have indicated that they would like a cost analysis of administration costs. They also brought forward concerns regarding the small population on the Southside of Francois Lake and the impacts of a tax increase of 25% every 5 years in order to pay for the continued fire department service.

Director Newell spoke to fire protection and road safety being essential services in the region. He noted that due to the infrastructure deficit in the north the cost to provide adequate services is high.

Director Greenaway noted that Luck Bay has the highest contribution rate of \$2.10 per \$1,000 and residents have indicated that they are willing to contribute that amount in order to have a Fire Department in their region. He mentioned that there are challenges associated with the shortage of volunteers and that meetings will be held to attempt to recruit volunteers in order to continue the service.

Discussion took place regarding Round Lake's contribution to administration fees wherein they do not have a fire hall or fire department and receive fire protection from the Telkwa Volunteer Fire Department. Deborah Jones-Middleton, Protective Services Manager commented that Round Lake is a fire service and has costs associated with its dry hydrant, contract negotiations in regard to maintained service and administration costs associated with having a fire protection service. Initially residents of Round Lake requested that the RDBN provide a fire protection service to their area. In order for a fire protection service to be developed numerous conversations took place with the Village of Telkwa and the Telkwa Volunteer Fire Department. Staff also need to ensure that all provincial regulations and requirements are continuously maintained.

Originally when fire departments were established there were very few regulations. Fire departments have evolved and there are very stringent regulations in order to provide safety guidelines for the volunteer fire department members, victims, and local authorities having jurisdiction. The Provincial Government has identified local government as the authority having jurisdiction thus the Regional District must ensure regulatory guidelines are being maintained.

Discussion took place regarding the possibility of allocation based on assessment or number of buildings/properties in a fire protection area. There is currently no data that provides the exact number of buildings in an area, only physical addresses for properties.

**REPORTS (CONT'D)**

The Fort Fraser and Southside Volunteer Fire Departments are appreciative of the training received from the RDBN Regulation Compliance Officer to follow the regulatory standards set out by the Provincial Government's "British Columbia Fire Service Minimum Training Standards Structure Firefighters Competency and Training Playbook."

Discussion took place regarding volunteer fire departments accessing gaming grant funding. Some fire departments have monies in reserve for the future purchase of capital equipment such as fire trucks.

The ability to lobby the Provincial Government in regard to regulatory changes, costs associated with the changes and impacts to rural volunteer fire departments and the tax base were brought forward for discussion. There have been numerous resolutions brought forward through NCLGA (North Central Local Government Association), to UBCM (Union of B.C. Municipalities) endorsed by UBCM and brought forward at the Provincial Government level with very little success. The new regulations "British Columbia Fire Service Minimum Training Standards Structure Firefighters Competency and Training Playbook" were implemented due to safety concerns for volunteer fire persons.

All costs for managing fire departments must be allocated to that service and currently the cost is being allocated to Protective Services. The Local Government Act states that each service must pay for its own costs.

Director Newell noted that the increased development in the area will continue to place pressure on regional infrastructure such as volunteer fire departments and that it needs to be a consideration in conversations with resource companies interested in development in the region. Further discussion took place regarding potential discussions with the Northwest Resource Benefits Alliance and legacy funding.

Director Petersen brought forward his concerns in regard to the costs associated with maintaining mandated provincial regulations of rural volunteer fire departments and perhaps the service is no longer wanted and/or needed as it is too high a price for the tax payers to continue to want the service.

Moved by Director Petersen  
Seconded by Director Newell

RDC.2016-1-4

"That the Rural Directors Committee recommend that the Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako Board of Directors direct staff to provide an allocation schedule based on assessments for municipal and rural administration costs for Rural Fire Protection Services Taxation Capacity."

(Ail/Directors/Majority)

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

Director Greenaway noted the importance of allocating the costs for the service to that service and not to Protective Services. Concerns were brought forward regarding the need to address the said issue prior to the final budget presented on March 24, 2016.

## **REPORTS (CONT'D)**

Discussion took place regarding the oversight required by the RDBN for rural volunteer fire departments including contracts, services provided, adequate training, WCB (Worker Compensation Board) claims and oversight that all provincial regulations and guidelines are being implemented.

Discussion took place regarding the needs of each volunteer fire department being different. Meeting with the rural volunteer fire departments to discuss the possibility of allocating funding minus administration costs to the fire departments to prevent the need to raise taxes was discussed. Increasing the tax limits by 25% for rural fire protection services was discussed.

Directors would like to schedule meetings with the rural volunteer fire departments to discuss the options. Discussion took place in regard to the short time period in which to schedule meetings.

The continued lobbying of the provincial government in regard to the costs associated with implementing and oversight of provincial regulations was discussed. The high costs to tax payers and rural fire departments may eliminate the ability for rural fire departments to continue operations. Concerns were also brought forward in regard to obtaining an adequate number of volunteers.

Some of the concerns and issues associated with rural fire departments:

- Provincial regulations - initiated and implemented when a volunteer fire fighter died in the line of duty;
  - Regulations were implemented for safety reasons and will likely not change;
- Volunteers are not readily available;
  - RDBN staff are developing a youth volunteer program to develop a volunteer base;
- Contrary to the Local Government Act service costs are not being allocated to the specific service but to Protective Services;

Provincial regulations need to be addressed and dealt with and require a considerable amount of staff time.

There is value in rural fire departments and having fire protection and rural fire departments assist in lowering fire insurance costs within fire protection areas.

Nechako Valley Secondary  
School -Request for Grant in  
Aid -Electoral Area "F"  
(Vanderhoof Rural)

Moved by Director Petersen  
Seconded by Director Greenaway

RDC.2016-1-5

"That the Rural Directors Committee recommend to the Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako Board of Directors that the Nechako Valley Secondary School be given \$1,500 from Electoral Area "F" (Vanderhoof Rural) for costs associated with its 2016 Dry Grad Event."

(All/Directors/Majority)

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

## **REPORTS (CONT'D)**

Village of Granisle  
-Request for Grant in Aid  
-Electoral Area "G"  
(Houston Rural)

Moved by Director Newell  
Seconded by Director Greenaway

RDC.2016-1-6

"That the Rural Directors Committee recommend to the Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako Board of Directors that the Village of Granisle be given \$2,500 grant in aid monies from Electoral Area "G" (Houston Rural) for the Babine Lake Tourism Marketing & Branding Project."

(All/Directors/Majority)

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

Recreational Sites/Areas in  
the RDBN

Moved by Director Petersen  
Seconded by Director Fisher

RDC.2016-1-7

"That the Rural Directors Committee receive the Chief Administrative Officers January 13, 2016 memo titled "Recreational Sites/Areas in the RDBN."

(All/Directors/Majority)

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

The use of rural recreational sites by municipal residents and tourists was discussed as well as a possible user pay system to be able to provide maintenance to rural recreational sites.

Chair Benedict mentioned that she had met with the Village of Burns Lake along with Director Miller to discuss recreation needs and wants in the region but it is an extremely large topic and it was difficult to determine how to move forward.

Discussion took place regarding the large number of tourists that travel from outside the region to utilize the regional amenities for recreating. Director Newell mentioned that he attended the Northern B.C. Tourism Association Conference and Annual General Meeting in Prince George in October, 2015 and discussion took place in regard to investigating ways to utilize rural recreation sites to provide route tours through the region. Discussion had also taken place in regard to how to fund the areas for improvements and enhancements to the sites utilized in said route tours.

Discussion took place regarding the costs associated with Regional Districts that took over some parks areas within their regions such as the Peace River Regional District. The Peace River Regional District has estimated that operations and maintenance for the five regional parks that they established will cost \$3.2 million for ten years. Each Regional District that manages regional parks is very individual in its definition of "regional park" and funding is also unique to its region.

The RDBN Grant Writer assists regional recreation societies to obtain grant monies to assist in maintaining recreation sites. The use of grant in aid for projects was also discussed.

Liability issues were discussed in regard to disrepair of recreation sites. Recreation sites are located on Crown Land.

## **REPORTS (CONT'D)**

Concerns were brought forward in regard to the cost and staff time that would be required for the Regional District to have a parks and recreation service. Chair Benedict noted that the amount of responsibility required in overseeing the rural recreational areas throughout the entire region would require its own department.

Director Fisher mentioned that there are groups in Electoral Area "A" (Smithers Rural) considering developing a society to oversee the parks and recreation areas in that area of the region. Discussion took place in regard to Electoral Area Director support and presenting to the Regional Board for support on a potential project to develop a commuter bike trail from Telkwa to Smithers.

## **DEVELOPMENT SERVICES (All Directors)**

### **REFERRALS**

Land Referral File No.  
7409813 Fort St. James  
Snowmobile Club  
Electoral Area 'C'

Moved by Director Greenaway  
Seconded by Director Petersen

RDC.2016-1-8

"That the comment sheet titled "Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako Comment Sheet on Crown Land Referral 7409813" be provided to the Province as the Regional District's comments on Crown Land Referral 7409813."

(All/Directors/Majority)

**CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY**

### **Break for lunch at 11:38 a.m.**

### **Reconvened at 12:11 p.m.**

Land Referral File No.  
0331140 Keith Brett and  
Brenda Joan Landry  
Electoral Area 'F'

Moved by Director Petersen  
Seconded by Director Parker

RDC.2016-1-9

"That the comment sheet titled "Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako Comment Sheet on Crown Land Referral 0331140" be provided to the Province as the Regional District's comments on Crown Land Referral 0331140."

(All/Directors/Majority)

**CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY**

Land Referral File No.  
7409817 Jeffrey and Valerie  
Johnson Electoral Area 'F'

Moved by Director Petersen  
Seconded by Director Greenaway

RDC.2016-1-10

"That the Land Referral File No. 7409817 Jeffrey and Valerie Johnson, Electoral Area "F" be deferred to the January 28, 2016 Regional Board Meeting."

(All/Directors/Majority)

**CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY**

## **REFERRALS (CONT'D)**

Land Referral File No.  
6408872 Glenna Daniels  
Electoral Area 'G'

Moved by Director Newell  
Seconded by Director Fisher

RDC.2016-1-11

"That the comment sheet titled "Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako Comment Sheet on Crown Land Referral 6408872" be provided to the Province as the Regional District's comments on Crown Land Referral 6408872."

(All/Directors/Majority)

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

## **DISCUSSION ITEM**

### **Gas Tax**

Discussion took place regarding societies that lease/rent privately owned properties not being eligible for gas tax funds to complete building improvements.

Staff have sent letters to all non-profit societies and put schedules in place for non-profit societies to complete annual reporting to the RDBN to provide project update information and documentation that the societies are in good standing. Non-profit societies requesting further funding must have all reporting current and up to date.

Discussion took place regarding joint projects within the RDBN that would utilize gas tax funds from Electoral Areas that would benefit rural residents.

## **SUPPLEMENTARY AGENDA**

### **DISCUSSION ITEMS**

#### **1. Northern Development Initiative Trust (NDIT)**

- Director Fisher is the RDBN representative on the Northwest Regional Advisory Committee (RAC);
- Director Miller is the RDBN representative on the Northeast RAC;
- The RAC's review funding applications and decide whether or not to approve the application;
- If approved by the RAC the application is brought forward to the NDIT Board of Directors;
- The monies accrued from the sale of BC Rail were put in a fund and the interest from those monies are allocated to the various NDIT funding programs to be allocated for various project applications.
- **Various Programs**
  - New Program – Fabulous Festivals and Events;
    - Provides non-profit organizations with up to \$2,500 in grant funding from a regional development account to support unique events and festivals throughout the region;
    - The Northwest and Northeast RAC's have 40 potential applicants and approximately 12 have applied thus far.

Director Fisher noted that the NDIT website contains the pre-project application to determine adequate criteria for a project to move forward. RDBN staff can also assist applicants. Director Fisher commented that the general criteria is to further economic development throughout Northern B.C.

## **DISCUSSION ITEMS (CONT'D)**

Chair Benedict mentioned that providing new funding opportunities is a good idea but she noted concerns that funding for major projects is now becoming more challenging because there is not sufficient funding for major projects. Director Fisher mentioned that the funding for new programs and projects enabled other non-profit organizations to potentially access funding opportunities. The RDBN accesses funding in the amount of \$50,000 for collaborative projects and capacity building within each local government and \$8,000 for grant writing.

- **Façade Program**
  - Municipalities can apply for the Business Façade Program and can then allocate funds to local businesses for business façade improvements;
  - Regional Districts can apply;
  - Can be applied for on an annual application intake

Discussion took place regarding the RDBN accessing the Business Façade Program funding for signage for agri-tourism businesses and at rest areas that could provide a listing of opportunities throughout the entire RDBN. A number of rest areas within the region have signage that provides information regarding that area within the region.

Staff will bring forward the Business Façade Program funding in regard to the Regional District at a future Rural Directors Committee meeting for further discussion.

## **2. New Societies Act**

Chair Benedict brought forward concerns in regard to Directors of societies not always understanding their roles and responsibilities in a director position. Discussion took place in regard to the RDBN providing an opportunity for non-profit societies to be provided information through workshops and/or webinars to explain responsibilities. The turnover of volunteers for societies can often be challenging and it can be difficult to maintain a volunteer base. Allowing a non-profit society's registry filings to lapse with the Registry Services Corporate Filing system creates a number of challenges consequently it is far easier to keep filings current. Corrine Swenson, Manager of Economic Development mentioned that NDIIT has a Governance Essentials Scholarship that may provide funding for directors of non-profit organizations to be able to participate in the Institute of Corporate Directors' Governance Essentials program. The RDBN website also has links to information for societies to access to assist in forming a society and the running of a society. The BC Centre for Social Enterprise would be the agency for societies to access in regard to the new *Societies Act*.

Discussion took place in regard to webinars being useful and cost effective tools for societies to access and they can potentially take place at the RDBN office. There are currently 62 societies in the region that have been contacted and provided information. Information can and has been provided to societies also in regard to framework for respectful behavior among society board members.

## **CORRESPONDENCE**

Ministry of Technology,  
Innovation and Citizens'  
Services - Government  
Continues Connecting  
Communities throughout B.C.

Moved by Director Newell  
Seconded by Director Parker

RDC.2016-1-12

"That the Rural Directors Committee receive the Ministry of Technology, Innovation and Citizens' Services - Government Continues Connecting Communities throughout B.C.

(All/Directors/Majority)

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

## **CORRESPONDENCE (CONT'D)**

Director Newell mentioned concerns regarding the lack of cell phone coverage, the high cost for high speed internet services and the lack of adequate high speed upload and download speeds. Discussion took place regarding the limitation for economic development in rural northern B.C. with the lack of inadequate service levels. The lack of cell service also impacts safety within the region.

Discussion took place regarding funding through Northern Development Initiative Trust's Connecting British Columbia Grant. It assists to pay for infrastructure required to deliver high-speed internet connectivity at speeds to at least 5 Mbps down and 1Mbps up to homes and businesses

The RDBN has been working on the issue for a number of years. Information was gathered from RDBN residents as to whether or not they had service and if they did what kind of service. This information was then mapped and provided to Telus and Network B.C. A number of areas that Telus and Network B.C. indicated there was coverage, area residents noted that the level of service was not adequate. Chair Benedict mentioned that in order to map the entire region to determine cell and internet coverage and levels of coverage would require additional staff to physically go to locations throughout the region to determine availability. She also noted that B.C. residents are being forced to use the internet for a number of government forms and it becomes very challenging with no internet service.

Staff will bring forward internet and cell phone coverage at a future Rural Directors Committee Meeting.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

### **Northwest Resource Benefits Alliance (NWRBA)**

Director Newell brought forward for discussion the RDBN infrastructure inventory provided to the NWRBA in regard to fire departments. The infrastructure inventory is not for service provision but would be for fire department infrastructure. Staff has corresponded with the NWRBA regarding a proposed draft allocation model. The NWRBA is meeting with the Mining Association of B.C. at Minerals Roundup in Vancouver on January 25-28, 2016.

### **Community Forest – Electoral Area "G" (Houston Rural)**

Director Newell mentioned that residents in Electoral Area "G" (Houston Rural) have expressed an interest in applying for a Community Forest License. He spoke of the benefit to small scale salvagers, assisting with infrastructure development and provide a source of revenue for the rural area. Discussion took place in regard to the need for forestry expertise in regard to applying for a Community Forest License, completing a Forest Management Plan and Business Plan. Staff will provide an outline of what is required for a Community Forest License and the process undertaken for the Chinook Community Forest.

### **Defibrillator for Rural Area**

Director Newell spoke of having a defibrillator located centrally on Buck Flats Road for the clusters of houses located on the road. He noted that there are societies that would purchase the defibrillator with the assistance from grant in aid.

**NEW BUSINESS (CONT'D)**

Shavings Program – Meeting  
with David Van Dolah  
-December 11, 2015

Director Greenaway provided written notes from a meeting he attended on December 11, 2015 with David Van Dolah, District Manager, Resource Management Vanderhoof/Fort St. James, Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations in regard to the Shavings Program for cattlemen. He spoke of the importance of shavings for farmers and ranchers in the region.

RDBN Agricultural Committee

Director Parker mentioned that the RDBN Executive Committee has determined that an RDBN Agricultural Committee be formed moving forward. Agriculture is a very key economical resource in the region and is very important. Director Parker has been asked to Chair the committee. Discussion took place in regard to scheduling an additional meeting.

**ADJOURNMENT**

Moved by Director Petersen  
Seconded by Director Greenaway

RDC.2016-1-13

“That the meeting be adjourned 1:38 p.m.”

(All/Directors/Majority)

**CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY**

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Eileen Benedict, Chair

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Wendy Wainwright, Executive Assistant