

REGIONAL DISTRICT OF BULKLEY-NECHAKO

MEETING NO. 5

Thursday, March 27, 2025

PRESENT:	Chair	Mark Parker
	Directors	Gladys Atrill Shane Brien Leroy Dekens Martin Elphee Judy Greenaway Clint Lambert Linda McGuire Shirley Moon – via zoom Chris Newell – via zoom Michael Riis-Christianson Stoney Stoltenberg Sarrah Storey Henry Wiebe
	Director Absent	Kevin Moutray, District of Vanderhoof
	Alternate Director	Brian Frenkel, District of Vanderhoof
	Staff	Curtis Helgesen, Chief Administrative Officer Cheryl Anderson, Director of Corporate Services John Illes, Chief Financial Officer Jason Llewellyn, Director of Planning Nellie Davis, Manager of Strategic Initiatives and Rural Services – left at 10:50 a.m. returned at 2:20 p.m., left at 2:21 p.m. Jason Blackwell, Regional Fire Chief – left at 12:08 p.m. Chris Walker, Emergency Services Manager – left at 10:50 a.m. Trina Bysouth, Protective Services Assistant - left at 10:50 a.m.
	Others	Andy Muma, President, Houston Search and Rescue – left at 10:50 a.m. Lance Barrowman, Volunteer, Houston Search and Rescue – left at 10:50 a.m. Frank McDonald, Houston Search and Rescue – left at 10:50 a.m. John Rustad, MLA Nechako Lakes – arrived at 1:00 pm, left at 2:07 p.m.

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Parker called the meeting to order at 10:21 a.m.

FIRST NATIONS ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

AGENDA

Moved by Director Stoltenberg
Seconded by Director Dekens

2025-5-1

"That the Board Meeting Agenda of March 27, 2025 be approved."

(All/Directors/Majority)

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

MINUTES

Board Meeting Minutes
- March 13, 2025

Moved by Director McGuire
Seconded by Director Storey

2025-5-2

"That the Board Meeting Minutes of March 13, 2025 be adopted."

(All/Directors/Majority)

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

Rural Services Committee
Meeting Minutes
- March 13, 2025

Moved by Director Stoltenberg
Seconded by Director Riis-Christianson

2025-5-3

"That the Rural Services Committee Meeting Minutes of March 13, 2025 be received."

(All/Directors/Majority)

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

DELEGATION

HOUSTON SEARCH AND RESCUE – Andy Muma, President, Lance Barrowman, Frank McDonald – Re: Canine Unit Update

Mr. Muma thanked the Board for their advocacy following last year's presentation where they presented challenges they were facing in developing a canine team.

Mr. Muma advised that in 2023, Mr. Barrowman acquired a puppy (Jagger) and began the initial training. He outlined the certification and approval process:

- Jagger, a canine team member, received certification through the BC Search Dog Association (BCSDA)
- The team's initial application to Emergency Management and Climate Readiness (EMCR) was rejected due to a three-year moratorium, despite no canine SAR teams existing north of Kamloops
- The team sent advocacy letters to the Premier, Minister, Deputy Minister, and media and met with Nathan Cullen and Taylor Bachrach to advocate for policy changes
- The Board's support was acknowledged and appreciated
- Policy revisions enabled local-level decisions for canine teams, leading to Jagger's official certification in October 2024.

DELEGATION (CONT'D)

Houston SAR – Canine Response Vehicle

- The Houston SAR team successfully secured funding for a canine response vehicle.

Mr. Barrowman provided a Canine SAR Team Overview

- Current Teams: ~20 validated SAR K9 teams in BC
- Oversight by RCMP E Division
- Dogs undergo training through BCSDA or Canadian Avalanche Rescue Dog Association (CARDA)
- Operational readiness takes 2–3 years, with handlers investing approximately 2,000 hours
- Annual revalidation is required
- Capabilities:
 - Air scent/wilderness validation
 - Trained for contaminated area searches
 - Locate strongest human scent; while not cadaver dogs, they can alert to deceased subjects (e.g., scent on clothing)
- Deployment:
 - Operate primarily in the Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako (RDBN), with mutual aid agreements outside the region
 - Can search previously covered areas and large territories with a dog, preserving SAR resources
 - Close coordination with RCMP; Police Dog Service (PDS) handlers deploy canine teams.

K9 Validation and Training Process

- Phases:
 - Puppy assessment
 - Intermediate course upon passing
 - Validation
 - BCSARA Status
 - Ongoing training
 - Annual re-validation.

Funding and Expenses

- Self-funded expenses: Breeder fees, food, veterinary care, and basic equipment
- Some equipment is supplied by BCSDA after successful validation
- Houston SAR operational funds cover training camps and some obedience training
- Sponsorships for K9 response vehicle and training.

Chair Parker stated that the canine SAR issue was presented at the Union of British Columbia Municipalities (UBCM) Convention in 2024 to raise awareness and support.

Mr. Muma mentioned recent policy changes and the formation of an advisory committee with representation from all 78 SAR groups. He highlighted the committee's role in shaping provincial policy and advocating for local decision-making and expressed optimism about the committee's influence and acknowledged the Board's support in driving these changes.

DELEGATION (CONT'D)

Mr. Barrowman commented on Jagger's lifestyle:

- Trains almost daily
- Highly energetic and thrives on working
- Friendly with people but less so with other dogs
- Lives with him permanently and has downtime with three companion dogs
- Previous search lasted three days in deep snow, demonstrating endurance and dedication.

Chair Parker thanked the delegation for their presentation.

ELECTORAL AREA PLANNING

Official Community Plan (OCP) Moved by Director Newell
Review – Electoral Area G Seconded by Director Brien
(Houston/Granisle Rural)

2025-5-4 "That the Board approve the work plan and consultation and consideration checklist for the Area G OCP review."

(All/Directors/Majority)

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

Membership Update - Area A Moved by Director Stoltenberg
Advisory Planning Commission Seconded by Director Atrill

2025-5-5 "That the Board appoint Darren Jakubec to the APC for Electoral Area A (Smithers/Telkwa Rural)."

(All/Directors/Majority)

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

Referral

Necoslie & Nautley Road Moved by Director Greenaway
Name Changes – Electoral Seconded by Director Storey
Area C (Fort St. James Rural)
and D (Fraser Lake Rural)

2025-5-6 "That staff inform the Ministry of Transportation and Transit (MOTT) that the RDBN has no objections to renaming Necoslie Road to Nak'azdli Road, and Nautley Road to Nadleh Road."

(All/Directors/Majority)

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

Other

RDBN Wildfire Resiliency Plan Recommendations

Moved by Director Stoltenberg
Seconded by Director Dekens

2025-5-7

"That the Board receive the memo from the Director of Planning titled RDBN Wildfire Resiliency Plan Recommendations."

(All/Directors/Majority)

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

Jason Blackwell, Regional Fire Chief advised that he would invite Wildfire Risk Reduction Program staff to attend an upcoming meeting.

Illegal Dumping Mitigation Strategy

Moved by Director Moon
Seconded by Director Riis Christianson

2025-5-8

1. "That the letter regarding Illegal Dumping on Crown Land be sent to the Minister of Environment and Parks.
2. That staff implement a community clean-up program."

(All/Directors/Majority)

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

Recent Agricultural Land Commission Decisions

Moved by Alternate Director Frenkel
Seconded by Director Stoltenberg

2025-5-9

"That the Board receive the memo from the Planning Technician titled Recent Agricultural Land Commission Decisions."

(All/Directors/Majority)

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

Parks and Trails

Parks Use Regulations Bylaw Amendment

Moved by Director Storey
Seconded by Director Greenaway

2025-5-10

"That Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako Parks Use Regulations Amendment Bylaw No. 2074, 2025 be given first, second and third reading this 27th day of March, 2025."

(All/Directors/Majority)

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

Bylaw Enforcement

Bylaw Notice Enforcement
Bylaw and Dispute
Adjudication Registry

Moved by Director Riis-Christianson
Seconded by Director Wiebe

2025-5-11

"1. That Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako Bylaw Notice Enforcement Bylaw No. 2041, 2025 be given first, second, and third reading this 27th day of March, 2025.
2. That staff be authorized to execute the Bylaw Notice Dispute Adjudication Registry Agreement with the Village of Burns Lake upon adoption of Bylaw No. 2041, 2025.
3. And, that the Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako Screening Officer Policy be approved."

(All/Directors/Majority)

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

Community Resiliency
Investment Program
- 2025 FireSmart Community
Funding & Support
Application

Moved by Director Brienien
Seconded by Director McGuire

2025-5-12

"That the Board support the submission of a grant application to the Union of British Columbia Municipalities (UBCM) Community Resiliency Investment (CRI) Program – FireSmart Community Funding & Support, to extend the FireSmart Program for an additional two year term.
And that the Board authorizes staff and understands that if the grant is approved, the RDBN will receive and manage all grant funding, and commits to any associated ineligible costs and cost overruns."

(All/Directors/Majority)

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

Break for lunch at 12:08 pm

Reconvened at 1:00 pm

DELEGATION - JOHN RUSTAD, MLA Nechako Lakes

Mr. Rustad discussed economic and trade concerns. He spoke to the potential economic consequences, including a 25% tariff impact on multiple sectors, rising lumber prices, and challenges in softwood lumber agreements. Additional issues included proposed levies on carbon emissions, potential trucking tolls, and the vulnerability of BC's economy due to reliance on U.S. imports such as jet fuel, electricity, and refined products. He indicated the need for greater investment in resource industries like mining, LNG, and agriculture to drive down costs and improve self-sufficiency.

DELEGATION (CONT'D)

Healthcare challenges were also a significant topic, with discussion on ER closures, staff shortages, and the inefficiencies of the current healthcare model. It was suggested that empowering ER nurses and paramedics and reforming the health authority structure could help address these issues.

Concerns about crime, addiction recovery, and public safety were raised, emphasizing the need for better solutions beyond harm reduction.

Mr. Rustad commented on resource management, mining and forestry in the context of permitting delays, First Nations consultation requirements, and the need to retain more resource value within BC agriculture and food security. He spoke of the need for improved infrastructure, changes to land-use policies, and restrictions on foreign farmland ownership to strengthen local production.

Discussion took place on local governance, funding for communities without direct resource access, and the need for Northern BC representation in decision-making.

Mr. Rustad requested being copied on letters that the Board sends to the Province.

Chair Parker thanked Mr. Rustad for his presentation.

ADMINISTRATION REPORTS

Mail Ballot Voting

Moved by Director Moon
Seconded by Alternate Director Frenkel

2025-5-13

"That the Board authorize region-wide Mail Ballot Voting for both elections and referenda, and further;
That staff be directed to prepare a Mail Ballot Voting bylaw for the Board's consideration."

(All/Directors/Majority)

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

Telkwa Rural Fire Protection Service Area Boundary Amendment Bylaw No. 2073, 2025

Moved by Director Dekens
Seconded by Director Stoltenberg

2025-5-14

"That Telkwa Rural Fire Protection Service Area Boundary Amendment Bylaw No. 2073, 2025 be given first, second and third reading this 27th day of March, 2025."

(All/Directors/Majority)

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

ADMINISTRATION REPORTS (CONT'D)

CWF for Village of Fraser
Lake – Ammonia Chiller
Replacement

Moved by Director Riis-Christianson
Seconded by Director Dekens

2025-5-15

1. "That the Board authorize contributing up to \$100,000 in Canada Community Building Fund BC monies from Area D (Fraser Lake Rural) to the Village of Fraser Lake for a Recreation Infrastructure project, and further,

(All/Directors/Majority)

2. That the Board authorize the withdrawal of up to \$100,000 from the Federal Gas Tax Reserve Fund."

(Participants/Weighted/Majority) CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

2025 Budget Approval
RDBN Five Year Financial
Plan Bylaw No. 2070, 2025

Moved by Director Stoltenberg
Seconded by Director Dekens

2025-5-16

"That Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako Five Year Financial Plan Bylaw No. 2070, 2025 be given third reading as amended and be adopted this 27th day of March 2025."

(All/Directors/Weighted) CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

Northwest BC Regional
Funding Agreement (RBA)

Moved by Director Dekens
Seconded by Director Greenaway

2025-5-17

"That the Board approve the Long-term Development Plan and the 2025 Annual Development Plan."

(All/Directors/Weighted) CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

VERBAL REPORTS

District of Houston – Update

Director Brien reported that the Northwest Regional Hospital District meeting took place last Saturday. A letter was sent to the Province urging them to keep working on a process for hiring medical professionals from the United States and from out of province.

Electoral Area F (Vanderhoof
Rural) Update

Director Moon advised that there will be a meeting in early May with the water project consultant. The meeting will be open to producers. She added that she is still involved in the Primary Care and the public consultation process.

VERBAL REPORTS (CONT'D)

Electoral Area A (Smithers Rural) - Update

Director Stoltenberg reported that he will be working with the three community halls in his area regarding upgrades.

Electoral Area B (Burns Lake Rural) - Update

Director Riis-Christianson thanked the rural directors for for ongoing discussions on the Rural Director Survey.

District of Vanderhoof - Update

Alternate Director Frenkel encouraged Directors to forward their comments regarding BC Timber Sales.

District of Fort St. James - Update

Director Elphee reported that arena renovations will begin next week. He added that the hospital is running well. He noted that their Recreation Director has played an important role in welcoming professionals to the area.

Village of Fraser Lake - Update

Director Storey advised that she had toured the Fraser Lake arena. She noted that the 2nd phase upgrade should be completed in May. She commented that she, along with Director Greenaway, would be attending UBCM Advocacy days next week.

Village of Granisle – Update

Director McGuire reported that senior housing in Granisle is progressing and they anticipate completion in August. She added that last year Granisle received funding from Pacifican to upgrade the municipal campground. The sites will all have electrical service. She added that they are working on their budget and due to rising costs, an increase is necessary.

Village of Burns Lake – Update

Director Wiebe reported that there are 2 new doctors in Burns Lake, however, the hospital remains 5 doctors short from being fully staffed. Construction of a golf course is being planned. Three commercial lots at Richmond Loop subdivision have been sold.

Village of Telkwa – Update

Director Dekens commented that council continues to work on their budget.

Electoral Area C (Fort St. James Rural) - Update

Director Greenaway advised that the Extreme Weather Shelter in Fort St. James will be shutting down. It was a successful season and discussions have begun with BC Housing for the reopening in the fall.

Electoral Area G (Houston Rural) - Update

Director Newell noted challenges with FSR road use and maintenance as a result of the downturn in the forest industry. He added that he will be attending the upcoming Minerals North Conference.

VERBAL REPORTS (CONT'D)

Town of Smithers - Update

Director Atrill reported the Town of Smithers has approved a taxation increase of 6.13%. She added that Smithers hosted over 300 skiers and over 200 hockey players during spring break. An Airport Capital Assistance Program (ACAP) grant has been approved in the amount of \$3.64 million to support lights at the airport. With RBA funding, the Town of Smithers is able to fully fund Princess Street rebuild.

Chair/Electoral Area D (Fraser Lake Rural) Update

Chair Parker thanked the Board for open communication and feedback before and after meetings. He thanked staff for assistance with the legislative review survey. He added that he walked the new trail at Stellako and he is committed to providing funding for lighting the trail.

Receipt of Verbal Reports

Moved by Director Brien
Seconded by Director Stoltenberg

2025-5-18

"That the Board receive the various Directors' verbal reports."

(All/Directors/Majority)

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

IN-CAMERA MOTION

Moved by Director Storey
Seconded by Director Stoltenberg

2025-5-19

"That this meeting be closed pursuant to Sections 90(1)(c), 90(1)(h), and 90(2)(b) of the *Community Charter* for the Board to deal with matters relating to the following:

- Labour Relations
- Enforcement Action
- Northwest BC Resource Benefits Alliance (RBA)."

(All/Directors/Majority)

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

ADJOURNMENT

Moved by Director McGuire
Seconded by Director Dekens

2025-5-20

"That the meeting be adjourned at 2:48 p.m."

(All/Directors/Majority)

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

Mark Parker, Chair

Cheryl Anderson, Director of Corporate Services