

Area C Governance Committee Meeting Minutes, June 15, 2017

AREA C GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE MINUTES

THURSDAY JUNE 15, 2017 BLIND BAY HALL

PRESENT: Henry Schnell (Eagle Bay), Renee Rebus (White Lake), Karen Brown (Shuswap Lake Estates), Cal Heschuk (Sorrento), Edith Rizzi (Sunnybrae Hall), Lenore Jobson (Sunnybrae Seniors), Larry Stephenson (Carlin), Steve Wills (Cedar Heights), Andy Bartels (McArthur Heights/Reedman Point), Gareth Seys (South Shuswap Chamber of Commerce), Paul Demenok (Director, Electoral Area C) and Facilitator Allan Neilson (Neilson-Welch Consulting)

REGRETS: Don Paterson (Notch Hill)

SPECIAL GUESTS: Ms. Virginia Smith, Mayor District of Barriere; Mr. Mike Fennell, Councillor District of Barriere; Ms. Grace McGregor, Electoral Area C Director & Board Chair - Regional District Kootenay Boundary

MEETING CALLED TO ORDER AT 6:05 PM

Chair Steve Wills introduces the Governance Study Committee to those sitting in the public gallery. Committee member Karen Brown is appointed to take the Minutes.

Chair Wills calls for adoption of the February 16, 2017 Minutes: MOVED/SECONDED Andy Bartels/Larry Stephenson. CARRIED.

The first orders of business being done, Allan Neilson then takes over to give those in attendance a briefing on how the community has been informed for all of the meetings and open houses. He summarizes the open houses sharing that anywhere between 11 and 40+ showed up to each of the community open houses. To date 210 surveys have been received which is a fairly good response. General level of satisfaction exists in the more rural areas compared to the larger sectors of Area C. For example in the more urban area of Shuswap Lake Estates, a general interest in moving to the next phase of the study is evident. Comments from the more rural areas show no opposition to the interests of more urban areas but they don't necessarily embrace the same opinions or thoughts for change for themselves.

Generally in all areas, there is some bewilderment in the voting model and accountability and the issue of autonomy is consistently raised. The consultants and committee hear lots about roads and the frustration with current road conditions. Finally Allan comments that although residents may be satisfied today, further expectations should be considered when conducting a study such as this one.

Allan then sets out the purpose of this specific study and where we are at. This is Phase 1 of possibly a 2 phase governance study. Phase 1 is studying our governance model and the level of services received

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at all levels. The study documents what we have in place and allows us to reach out to the community to see if there are concerns with respect to the model and services and whether those interests are enough to warrant moving forward to Stage 2 of the Study.

At this point Allan then turns the meeting over to the three guests in attendance, pointing out to the public gallery that each guest will give a presentation as to why they chose or did not choose to incorporate as an area. He reminds the gallery that the committee will ask and have answered, their questions and then it will be opened up for general Q&A to the gallery afterward.

First Speaker: Current Mayor of Barriere: Virginia Smith

Ms. Smith has been on council in Barriere since 2007. Initially she was against incorporation for the reasons that autonomy might be lost and she was concerned about her taxes rising. She states “I was wrong; totally wrong. It’s the best thing that has happened to Barriere”. In the first year, BC Assessment came and did a full assessment; as a result, Barriere’s assessment went up. That came with some initial resistance, however residents now had a clear picture as to where their tax dollars were going . They built a community park, replaced outhouses for flush toilets at their ball field, started looking at bylaws that work for Barriere. People began to see results which settled their initial fears as they saw results in their community that came due to that tax increase. The community was also able to develop an economic development plan relative and specific to their area.

Second Speaker: First Mayor, Now Councillor of Barriere: Mike Fennell

Mr. Fennell shares that in 2007 before incorporation, there was a lot of crown land in the middle of town, the water system was aged and decaying. Since incorporation, the district’s tax take is approximately \$750,000 and the district has been able to bring in \$18 million in grants for sewers, to upgrade their water system, to build parks and a band shell, a community splash pad, but most importantly the important upgrades to their water system.

December of 2007 is when they incorporated. By November 2008 blue bag curbside recycling was instituted. He shares that the referendum vote was very close: 4 votes decided the change.

First budget meeting post-incorporation was interesting. The public showed up and they weren’t happy. As Virginia shared, they were concerned about their tax increase but that soon settled. The District was able to garner federal gas tax money. They built on their reserves for roads. There was an initial five year ‘grace period’ by the province to transition over to road repairs responsibilities. At first, they were paying \$330,000 to maintain their roads; this figure has now dropped due to more companies submitting bids for road maintenance in Barriere.

Third Speaker: Electoral Area C Director & Board Chair RDKB: Grace McGregor

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Ms. McGregor shares that four or five governance studies regarding the possible incorporation of Christina Lake have been done in their area, the most recent in 2011. At one specific meeting, the general public simply walked out of the room which was a strong indication not to move forward. Christina Lake has 1,400 year round residents which grows to 5,000 in summer. Taxation is always a concern. What Ms. McGregor did reiterate was that while a rise in tax dollars can be good and it can help get you some of the things that you want for your community, she feels that as a regional district you can get all that a municipality has.

In their area of the regional district they have Christina Lake Parks & Recreation, Welcome Centre with Solar Aquatic system for processing sewage. They have a solid volunteer fire department, Christina Lake Gateway Association, an Economic Development department, tennis and pickleball courts, outside exercise park, arts and artisans, a lake stewardship committee that looks after the lake, a millfoil pulling group (a \$300,000 service) and a full recycling green bin and organics pickup. Ms. McGregor feels that it's not about what you can or cannot have with incorporation. She urges the committee to ask what does your community see as good for its citizens? How do the citizens feel about a change in governance?

Ms. McGregor is a full believer in studies and stresses the need to get to Stage 2 of this particular study. You don't get to see the data and the numbers in this stage of the study therefore Stage 2 is highly needed to make an informed decision.

She suggests after looking at the data, then taking a look at the wish list of the community. Consider all of those people who are in charge of the lake – docks, beaches, etc. Consider road systems. In one of Christina Lake's studies it was noted by the consultant that 'they had never seen such an extensive road system'. Also consider if you're going to make a change, do you change a smaller portion or do you go to the outerlying areas as well?

Ms. McGregor offers other food for thought "People always think that the grass is greener somewhere" Ms. McGregor gets asked a lot about why they haven't incorporated especially by newcomers which is rather stunning given that the new arrivals have chosen to come to live at Christina Lake because the community appealed to them 'as is'.

Ms. McGregor gives further advice to the group in attendance by taking a good look at the numbers in Stage 2 of the study, talking to the consultants and the governance study committee and making up their minds from facts. She suggests not letting one's attitude or preconceived notions to get in the way of the facts. Then a proper decision can be made.

At this point in the evening, Allan then asks for questions from the governance study committee members.

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Andy Bartels asks Ms. McGregor what was the #1 issue of resistance raised that caused their community to decide against incorporation. Ms. Gregor shares 'roads'. There were so many factors to consider like cost of equipment, more buildings, more employees – it just wasn't a reasonable or feasible move for Christina Lake.

Edith Rizzi asks Ms. McGregor if that was the issue that stopped all of the studies to which Ms. McGregor replies 'yes'. She added that residents don't seem to get that if they have a specific request like a streetlight on their roadway for example, they have to pay for it.

Allan asks Ms. Smith why it was initially her position to stand against incorporation. Ms. Smith answers "tax increase". She was very nervous about it. This seemed to be the consensus of most residents as the first incorporation vote was turned down. The second study was 10 years later in 2007 and it was passed.

Gareth Seys asks both Ms. Smith and Mr. Fennell what the differences in play were between the first and second studies as far as the community's perspective on incorporation. Mr. Fennell states that Barriere suffered a severe fire in 2003 and they lost a major employer in the Tolko Mill in Lewis Creek and a vast amount of timber was burned. This was the catalyst for big changes in the community as it spurred the residents to come together. A stronger sense of community resulted and the vote on the second incorporation vote went through.

Larry Stephenson asks a general question to all guests about the population growth in each of their respective areas – has it been a steady growth or dramatic in nature? Barriere reps state that growth has stayed consistent. In 2008 their population was 1760 and it is now 1793. In Christina Lake, population has also stayed the same. They have done some things to limit growth in their community as 'they do not want to be Kelowna'. Their Official Community Plan is a living document to allow for visioning and planning for the future. Ms. McGregor adds that they are in the middle of a Parks Management Plan where their Welcome Centre is.

Director Demenok asks about the roads issue and how many kilometres of road are in each community. Barriere has approx. 32 kms in roads. Christina Lake – not sure but lots. Barriere reps state that they pushed hard for MOTI to get roads up to shape in the first five years after their incorporation ie the 'grace period' to save costs further down the road for the district.

Andy asks of Ms. Smith and Mr. Fennell what Barriere would do differently: Ms. Smith replies 'I don't know. Maybe we were a little over the top and gung-ho; perhaps they needed to be more patient as they moved forward'.

Mr. Fennell adds. The incorporation committee was told by Ministry of Transportation (MOTI) that all roads would come up to level 3 (1 being the best) – no one could find that piece of paper confirming that. Couple of things he adds "when negotiating with MOTI, know that they do want to help and they

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like incorporation as it relieves the pressure at their end”. He warns get a reassessment done before you incorporate – as the values will change spiking taxes.

Steve Wills asks Barriere reps if they held a referendum and if so, at what time of year to which they reply ‘yes, it was held in mid-June’. Ms. McGregor of Christina Lake adds that they never went to referendum as their studies never reached that stage. She looks up the numbers and states all of their Area C in Christina Lake – maintenance takes care of 95 kms.

Karen Brown asks how Barriere, prior to their referendum, ensured that their residents were properly informed before going to referendum. Ms. Smith replies that keeping people informed or getting people interested enough to be informed is difficult. They used notices at the grocery store, library and clinics. Using the media is crucial. Mr. Fennell suggests holding the referendum in July. Taxing a small “pay to play” item that could be refunded if they come out and vote could be a strategy ?

Allan asks about Barriere’s success in getting grant monies. Mr. Fennell responds that Barriere’s regional district has 24 members. Only one area of the regional district is eligible each year for a Towns for Tomorrow grant. Having more than one electoral area resulted in high competition. Now, while incorporated, the extra \$18 million that they have received through federal grants and through gas tax, they’ve been able to bring in a solar aquatics system for sewage management, for example.

Henry Schnell questions Ms. McGregor about the 5,000 residents in summer and how they included those seasonal residents in the study info and feedback. Ms. McGregor shares that now they use EBlast to inform everyone and also make full use of the bulletin boards and their welcome centre.

Allan asks about the issue of tax dollars staying within the community; the idea of being autonomous and making your own decisions. Ms. McGregor is asked directly if autonomy and directors from other areas having a vote in Christina Lake is an issue to which she answers ‘No’. What she likes about the regional district model is that monies can’t be shuffle from one service to another. They follow a ‘pay to play’ model in that fringe communities such as Grand Forks who might be impacted by a certain decision are invited in to give input and have a vote – it promotes good partnership.

Edith Rizzi asks Ms. Smith about community cohesiveness. Prior to the fire in 2003, there were six or seven groups – Little Fort, Barriere, etc. Since the fire, the feeling of community has grown. When incorporating it was more difficult for all to be changing governance therefore Barriere ‘proper’ was named as the area to undergo the incorporation referendum.

Steve Wills asks before they went to referendum, who determined the boundary for incorporation. Ms. Smith and Mr. Fennel reply that consultants certainly helped but as neither served on the incorporation committee, they weren’t really sure who drew boundary. Their assumption is that it was the governance/incorporation study committee together with the consultants.

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Andy asks both Barriere and Christina Lake reps if other governance models were considered. Ms. McGregor responds that Christina Lake is not big enough to split up and add more directors. Ms. Smith and Mr. Fennell respond that as the pressures/stress was coming from Barriere 'proper' that it was the only area considered for change.

Allan asks about the changes that preceded governance initiative, in particular was it the 2003 fire that prompted the study or were Barriere's efforts driven by economic development concerns or ? Ms. Smith thinks it was economic development and other issues as well. Mr. Fennell points out in the time of crisis the community pulled together in the hope of getting some industry. Government spent money to buy land from Tolko and then gave to Barriere. They contributed some to tourism as well. They have a Chamber of Commerce and have instituted the 2% hotel room tax. Businesses of the Chamber benefit from tourism.

Gareth Seys asks what strategies were used to engage the younger demographic in the process. Ms. Smith from Barriere responds that 52% of their demographic is senior. How they reached out was basically again through print, social media. Mr. Fennell shares that they have started to take meetings to the highschool to engage those 'community leaders of tomorrow'.

Steve Wills raises three concerns: police, fire and roads. Mr. Fennell responds that a community is okay with policing as long as you stay under 5,000. Christina Lake tackled the issue of policing by hiring their own police officer for July and August by seeking out a retired RCMP member. Through negotiation with the Provincial Government and an ensuing partnership, they are able to fund a police on-land presence and now have a police boat on the lake as well.

Larry Stephenson then raises a few general points: a) Consensus in getting the data is important. B) When faced with an issue like Barriere endured, this was a rebuilding exercise. C) Christina Lake maintains their governance model but asks for what they need and they pay for it. Ms. Gregor adds an interesting point. Rock Creek had previously voted down having a Fire Department. There was a Rock Creek fire and now a Fire Department exists. Sometimes an incident or a series of events can sway the vote when it comes to community changes.

Mr. Fennell adds that in the Barriere area, they have parts that want it preserved the way it is, much in the same way as the outer lying areas of our Area C may feel ie there are no demands for development. Where there are areas that demand more development, then the governance study committee needs to get more answers to assist with those issues. Mr. Fennell also adds that back in the 1970's both Prince George and Kamloops were forced to amalgamate and we don't want to go through that.

Karen Brown states that at this crossroads, it's a time to really think about creating a vision and planning for the future. She asks the guests if they would agree. Ms. McGregor offers advice: Bring what is important to the community to the forefront. She reiterates to get the numbers and do Phase 2 of the

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study as it will provide some answers and will determine what the end result should be. Mr. Fennell adds that one of Barriere's first statements after incorporation was "We don't want to change the rural nature of our town. We don't want a bunch of bylaws."

Andy Bartels asks who does the cost analysis ie cost projections for the incorporation study to which the answer is the consultants together with a team of accountants.

Director Demenok asks for the annual budget in Barriere. Information can be accessed through their Annual Report online however they think around \$770,000 is what they take in for taxes. They also get a Small Communities Grant.

Director Demenok asks how many employees are needed to run the district. There is the equivalent of 4.5 employees in office and 4 on the outside – 2 year round and 2 seasonal.

Director Demenok asks if they share services with anyone else. The Barriere CAO is a planner, they share a Building Inspector with Sun Peaks. Operations Manager is the CAO.

Steve Wills asks if the Annual Report is on the Barriere website which it is. Ms. McGregor adds that the governance studies for Christina Lake are not on the website however they can be requested through the regional district.

Allan now turns questioning over to the gallery. Chair Steve Wills stresses that this is a Governance Study meeting and questions regarding issues aside from governance will not be addressed or answered.

Q Ms. McGregor: How many districts are within the regional district wherein Christina Lake is a part?

A: Electoral Areas A to E plus Grand Forks, Midway, Greenwood, Fruitvale Trail, Big White and Montrose, Rossland and Warfield.

Q: Ms. McGregor: Which area is the most populated?

A: Trail. As far as assessment, Trail, Big White and Christina Lake in that order, have the highest assessments of the RDKB

Q: Ms. McGregor: Where do people go for their services, amenities, medical help?

A: Trail has the regional hospital but a lot go to Kelowna. Avg distance to travel to a larger grocery store is 26 kms. They have 3 doctors and a clinic.

Q: Ms. McGregor: Does Christina Lake have a commercial core ?

A: They have a motor inn, post office, grocery store. Ms. McGregor notes the post office is instrumental in determining where people go.

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Q: Ms. McGregor: What is the distribution of electoral area directors?

A: There is one director in each of the areas. Population does vary between areas. Trail has 7,700, Christina Lake 1,400 and the smallest is Midway at 621 residents.

Q: Ms. Smith/Mr. Fennell: Question for clarification. Did you try to incorporate without a referendum?

A: Mr. Fennell. No, there were two; the first referendum vote was defeated, the second went through ten years later.

Q: Ms. McGregor: From your perspective how much variation was there in the feedback from study to study or were the results fairly consistent each time you conducted a governance study?

A: Results were consistently the same.

Q: Allan Neilson: What is the format for the June 29th meeting? Will a recommendation be arrived at? What is the time frame moving forward?

A: A recommendation will be determined on June 29th with a view to presenting the recommendation to the CSRD Board at the July 20th Board meeting.

Q: Ms. McGregor It seems to make sense that a small confined community was a good idea to incorporate. Christina Lake is spread out like we are here without a defined core. How does one define the boundaries?

A: Through the consultants and the committee, she would think.

Q: Direct Suggestion to All by Ray Nadeau: He agrees that one of the underlying problems is that we are not getting someone close to us making decisions. Can we re organize the CSRD itself that resembles something closer to the boundaries of the watershed? Bring in Chase, Enderby, ie more confined and surrounding the water/lake? When a coalition took it to the Ministry in previous years, it was his read that the Minister was interested. Should be part of this governance study?

A: Allan responds that certainly that could be one of the options if we got to a further stage.

Q: Ms. McGregor: Why would other area directors at the table vote in opposition to you as the area director for your region if you've gone to referendum on an issue?

A: If you go to referendum and the people are voting for a service, why on earth would any one of the other directors not see the wisdom in what the area director is recommending?

Q: Concern raised about lack of autonomy under the current governance model.

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A: Mr. Fennell responds that there are no hard and fast rules. If we have an abundance of smaller communities within an area, why not set up your own regional committee to tackle some issues? Lake Country has done a little bit of this with their communities

Q: Asked to all regarding a perceived high cost of incorporation.

A: Mr. Fennell responds that in their case, they installed a 7.5 million dollar sewage system, 100% funded through the federal Innovation Fund. No cost to hook up to it to the residents other than a fee to go from road to house resulting in a \$40 charge per month on their tax bill.

Q/A: Allan adds it's important to understand that the study for Barriere took place in 2003, then incorporation followed in December, 2007. The process takes time. Impacts from a cost perspective are going to be dependent on the area that is being considered and what facilities there are, the infrastructure that is there and also needed, potential impact on the lake, etc. What we've heard tonight underscores the importance of getting all of the data before we jump too far ahead. Provincial Government input will also make a difference as well.

Q: To All/Allan – Who decides on what areas will undergo change, if change is recommended?

A: Allan responds that the Committee (whether this one or a newly formed committee) will wrestle with this as one of the first orders of business taking into account road patterns, developments patterns, surveys of residents ie a whole bunch of criteria. The question will be asked 'what is the defined area for where we want to consider change?' and the Province will weigh in on those boundaries as well.

Q: Ms. Smith/Mr. Fennell: Before incorporation, how many other communities were in the TNRD?

A: Ms. Smith: TNRD has 26 directors, 6 from Kamloops and 20 from surrounding areas (one per area). Area O, the Lower North Thompson electoral area, Barriere's electoral area before incorporation, still exists. Only Barriere 'proper' was included in the incorporation, not the entire region of Area O.

Q: Ms. McGregor Question arose from the public gallery as to the water and sewage treatment. How is it handled in Christina Lake?

A: Christina Lake has a solar aquatic system that handles sewage from the welcome centre. This is a pilot project to test the system and to share the results of this type of system with the community. Newer homes are using a tertiary system; their sewer system needs to be better than others that have come before it. Some are pulling from the lake for their drinking water. And, as stated previously, they hand pull the milfoil to protect the integrity of the lake, a program costing \$300,000 per year.

Q: To All: One of the big cost issues is sewer in Sorrento and down in Blind Bay foreshore. Would there be a difference in government funding if we incorporated or not ? Where would we get the biggest bang for our buck?

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A: Ms. McGregor from Christina Lake can't begin to answer that as they won't go down that road. Mr. Fennell shares that they use a solar aquatic, gravity feed, big pipe system that brings the sewage to a pump house. Solids are pumped out and pumped back up to a greenhouse where it goes through 8 big tanks and goes through a micro filter system. They currently measure 1 part per million, very close to what Interior Health demands for use back out in the community ie sprinkling parks etc.

Q: Karen Brown asks about qualifying for grants like the Innovation Fund. Did Barriere find that there were more opportunities for granting that opened up post-incorporation?

A: Mr. Fennell confirms that not all regional district electoral areas can apply for certain grants and there is the competitive nature of the grant to be considered when you're part of a larger regional district. There are some grants that are targeted to incorporated communities only and the level of competition is reduced due to being more autonomous as a community.

NEXT COMMITTEE MEETING

Thursday, June 29, 2017 at 6 pm. Meeting Location: Sorrento Memorial Hall.

In closing, Director Demenok thanks our guests for taking the time to come to our community and provides a token gift of local wine to each.

MEETING ADJOURNED 8:05 PM.

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Certified Correct

Chair:

Steve Wills