



Rural Municipality of Belfast (RMB)

Mayor: Garth Gillis; Chief Administrative Officer: Bob Brooks; *Incorporated 1972*

AMALGAMATION SUB-COMMITTEE MEETING - MINUTES

Wednesday, November 1, 2023 at 7:00 PM
RMB Office, Wood Islands Market

In Attendance:

Sub-Committee: (Chair) *Determined at Item 4*
Councillor Katherine Bryson (voting)
Councillor Billy Gamble (voting)
Mayor Garth Gillis - Ex-officio (voting)

Administration: CAO Bob Brooks (non-voting)

Public: None in attendance

This meeting was open to the public.

Item Order of Business

1. **Call to Order** – The Amalgamation Sub-Committee (ASC) Meeting was called to order by Mayor Gillis at 7:00 PM. (*Mayor Gillis acted as Chair until Sub-Committee Members selected a Chair at item 4*)
2. **Declarations of Conflict of Interest** – None
3. **Approval of Agenda** – No other Agenda Items suggested for today’s meeting.

Moved by **Councillor Gamble** and **seconded** by **Councillor Bryson** to adopt the agenda as presented.

Votes for: 3 Votes against: 0 Result: **Carried Unanimously**

4. **Selection of the Chairperson for the Amalgamation Sub-Committee (ASC)**
*Nominations from the floor? **For Councillor Bryson Only***
Acceptance of the Nomination (YES)

Moved by **Councillor Gamble** and **seconded** by **Mayor Gillis** to appoint **Councillor Bryson** as Chair of the ASC.

Votes for: 3 Votes against: 0 Result: **Carried Unanimously**

Councillor Bryson then chaired the remainder of the meeting.

5. **Approval of the ASC Terms of Reference** – A standard sub-committee terms of reference has been drafted to direct the purpose, direction, and operations for the ASC (*attached*). The CAO went through the provision of the Terms of Reference.

Moved by **Mayor Gillis** and **seconded** by **Councillor Gamble** to adopt the ASC Terms of Reference as presented.

Votes for: 3 Votes against: 0 Result: **Carried Unanimously**

6. **Where we are now** (*presented by CAO Bob Brooks*). The CAO detailed the background information that he and ASC members found, as a starting point for the ASC work to come:
- a. Oct. 18, 2023 - Council authorized the **creation of an Amalgamation Sub-Committee** to look at possible/suitable areas for amalgamation into the current RMB municipal boundaries; identify areas not suitable; and to develop a proposal for RMB Council, then Government acceptance/approval.
 - b. **Map of RMB Boundaries** and surrounding areas that are unincorporated was provided by the Government of PEI (GPEI).
 - c. **Map of current Provincial Electoral Boundaries** also supplied by GPEI.
 - d. **FPEIM Position** - Following the most recent Federation of PEI Municipalities (FPEIM) meeting, where they discussed *their vision* for the municipalization of the Province; the CAO contacted John Dewey (Executive Director), who confirmed that the FPEIM position that was recently put forward, was NOT based on an official position, map or a policy – just an ‘FPEIM’ working concept to be explored.
 - e. **Municipal Affairs and Lands Position** - the CAO contacted Municipal Affairs and Lands to see if there was an official GPEI position about the municipalization of the Province. It was suggested:
 - i. For more than 40 years, the GPEI has had an interest in the municipalization of the Province;
 - ii. The Minister (Honourable Rob Lantz – Minister of Housing, Land and Communities) would like to see this happen sooner than later;
 - iii. The Minister has absolutely *no interest* in forcing municipalities to amalgamate into areas that those municipalities do not wish to amalgamate into (There was concern that municipalities would be forced into some type of GPEI Amalgamation plan – yet to be determined/provided; and
 - iv. The Minister, Municipal Affairs, and Lands is very enthused about receiving proposals from established Municipalities about amalgamation proposals.
 - f. **Lands and Municipal Affairs are very keen on RMB completion of the RMB Official Plan and Development Bylaw** (currently in process):
 - i. Lands is investigating the GPEI position from three years prior, that the completed RMB Official Plan and Development Bylaw can be set up to *only* take on the *Development Approval Process*. After RMB approval decision of a Development Application, responsibility for EVERYTHING else reverts to the GPEI. That stipulation would be written into the submitted/completed RMB Official Plan and Development Bylaw for Ministerial Approval; and/or
 - ii. That RMB may provide *only* an Official Plan and not a Development Bylaw for the Provinces Land Administration. (to be determined/negotiated).
7. **To Be Determined** (*for discussion/determination*). Chairperson – Councillor Bryson went over the list of things that the ASC already knows, that need to be accomplished to meet the ASC Terms of Reference:
- a. **Suitable ‘Rural’ communities/areas** that surround RMB borders that RMB might be interested in for amalgamation:
 - i. What type of infrastructure do those communities/areas already have in place?
 - a. Who owns it? (Not-for profit? Business? Individual? Etc.);
 - b. What financial arrangements do they currently have?; and
 - c. What would be the RMB responsibility if amalgamated?
 - ii. What Fire-Map region (*map attached*) do those communities/areas already belong to?
 - a. Would the Belfast Fire Department need to expand its reach?

- b. What price tag comes with that?
 - c. Is there some other financial effect on RMB?
 - d. What are the Tax implications?
 - iii. What would the Municipal/Provincial tax-rate change be for those communities/areas and RMB, with an amalgamation with RMB?
 - a. Would they see a drastic tax increase?
 - b. Would RMB ratepayers see a drastic tax increase?
 - c. Or just a change in distribution?
 - iv. **Options Maps** – ASC had a *preliminary* discussion to create Options Maps (areas to look at to help generate ASC findings). Four initial options were discussed that might be suitable/beneficial to both the GPEI and RMB to add unincorporated areas in RMB, which still allow the current RMB structure to stand, (*maps attached*); namely:
 - a. **A** – immediate areas to the east of RMB boundaries;
 - b. **B** – smaller section of areas to the east of RMB boundaries;
 - c. **C** – immediate areas to the north of the RMB boundaries; and
 - d. **D** – immediate areas to the north that includes Earnscliffe and the Vernons).
- b. **Can/Will these Amalgamations take place in a timeframe that will affect the 2026 RMB Municipal General Election?**
 - i. Will those amalgamated residents now be voting in the RMB Election?
 - ii. Will the election process for RMB change? And if so how?
- c. **Are there other sources of funding** to help get the required larger RMB municipal office infrastructure established, *before* any Amalgamations take place? (Preliminary estimates are that RMB will need approximately double the space for more office equipment and more staff - to be determined). Possible other sources suggested:
 - i. Infrastructure Secretariat
 - ii. PEI Emergency Measures Organization (Reception Centre Resiliency Fund)
 - iii. Rural and Regional Development
 - iv. Municipal Affairs
 - v. FCM Green Funds
 - vi. CLIM-Atlantic (depending on initiatives)
- d. **What will be the financial, infrastructure and human resource implications to RMB be with the Amalgamations?**
 - i. Financial _____
 - ii. Infrastructure _____
 - iii. Human Resources _____
- e. **Which communities/areas are NOT Suitable** for Amalgamation into the RMB current boundaries?
 - i. *Preliminary* ASC discussions suggest that the areas to the far east of the current RMB boundaries (all those communities east of the County Line Road – RTE 325) would not be suitable candidates for the following reasons:
 - a. A number of communities in that area have municipal infrastructure (RMB would have to make a significant and expensive change to its operations/staffing systems to take on those communities and would require a complete overhaul to the RMB operations);
 - b. Historically, that whole area noted that neither they or RMB wanted to amalgamate; and
 - c. Taking on only pieces of that area, would make that areas’ own amalgamation plans unworkable.

- d. Adding the *Murrays communities and surrounding* would make the RMB Municipality too geographically large to be effectively managed without major changes to RMB’s operational system/infrastructure, and the distances that RMB would have to take in, too large.
 - e. Would there be significant Fire-Map concerns with this addition?
 - ii. Additional preliminary ASC discussions suggest that the areas to the far north of the current RMB boundaries (**Option/Map D**) would not be suitable candidates for the following reasons:
 - a. A number of communities in that area have municipal infrastructure (RMB would have to make a significant and expensive change to its operations/staffing systems to take on those communities and would require a complete overhaul to the RMB operations);
 - b. Adding Option/Map D would make the RMB Municipality too geographically big and distances too large to be effectively managed without a major overhaul to RMB’s operational system/infrastructure.
 - c. Would there be significant Fire-Map concerns with this addition?
 - f. **Proposal to Council** and ultimately to the Government of PEI for consideration.
 - g. Does the **Town of Three Rivers** already have a plan for further Amalgamation?
- 8. **Next Steps** (*as discussed by ASC that might be accomplished within the next three weeks*).
 - a. Find out **Process for Amalgamation/Timelines** - CAO
 - b. Identify the **Boundaries of the Four Options** - CAO
 - i. With Maps (**Completed**) (*attached*).
 - ii. Identify Community Names within the option areas.
 - c. Identify the other environmental group with possible funding avenues - *Councillor Bryson (Completed) (CLIM-Atlantic)*.
 - d. Discussion and/or set up a meeting with Helen Smith-MacPhail – Mayor of West River, to discuss previous experience/pitfalls with the Amalgamation Process – *Councillor Bryson*.
- 9. **Next Meetings:**
 - a. **Regular Meeting of Council** - scheduled for Wednesday, November 15, 2023 @ 7:00 PM in the Upstairs Hall at Wood Islands Market.
 - b. **Next ASC Meeting** - Tuesday, November 21, 2023 @ 7:00 PM; RMB office.
- 10. **Adjournment** – As there is no further business...

Moved by Mayor Gillis to adjourn the meeting at: **8:33 PM**.

Bob

Minutes Approved on: _____

ASC Chair – Councillor Bryson

CAO – Bob Brooks

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