



REGIONAL DISTRICT OF BULKLEY-NECHAKO RURAL/AGRICULTURE COMMITTEE AGENDA

Thursday, October 10, 2024

PAGE NO.

ACTION

AGENDA, October 10, 2024

Approve

Supplementary Agenda

Receive

MINUTES

2-6

Rural/Agriculture Committee Meeting Minutes - June 6, 2024

Approve

REPORT

7-9

**John Illes, Chief Financial Officer/Nellie Davis, Manager of Regional Economic Development
-Community Works Funds and Regional Grant in Aid**

Recommendation

DISCUSSION ITEM

- **Transit Service – Rural Contribution Options: 2025 Budget**

SUPPLEMENTARY AGENDA

NEW BUSINESS

ADJOURNMENT

REGIONAL DISTRICT OF BULKLEY-NECHAKO**RURAL/AGRICULTURE COMMITTEE MEETING****Thursday, June 6, 2024**

PRESENT: Acting Chair Mark Parker

Directors Judy Greenaway
 Clint Lambert – via Zoom – arrived at 10:15 a.m., left at 10:44 a.m.,
 returned at 10:46 a.m.
 Shirley Moon
 Chris Newell – left at 10:44 a.m.
 Stoney Stoltenberg
 Michael Riis-Christianson

Staff Curtis Helgesen, Chief Administrative Officer
 Megan D’Arcy, Regional Agriculture Coordinator
 Nellie Davis, Manager of Regional Economic Development
 John Illes, Chief Financial Officer
 Jason Llewellyn, Director of Planning - via Zoom
 Wendy Wainwright, Deputy Director of Corporate Services
 Christopher Walker, Emergency Program Coordinator

Others Gregory Bartle, Land Use Planner, Ministry of Agriculture and Food –
 arrived at 10:10 a.m.
 Shane Brienen, District of Houston – arrived at 9:48 a.m.
 Leroy Dekens, Village of Telkwa – arrived at 10:44 a.m.
 Martin Elphee, District of Fort St. James
 Audrey Fennema, Village of Fraser Lake
 Brian Frenkel, District of Vanderhoof
 Linda McGuire, Village of Granisle
 Charlie Rensby, Village of Burns Lake – via Zoom – arrived at 10:00
 a.m.
 John Stevenson, Regional Agrologist, Ministry of Agriculture and Food
 – arrived at 10:10 a.m.
 Andre Solymosi, General Manager, BC Vegetable Marketing
 Commission – via Zoom – left at 10:09 a.m.
 Derek Sturko, Chair, BC Vegetable Marketing Commission – via Zoom
 – left at 10:09 a.m.

CALL TO ORDER

Acting Chair Parker called the meeting to order at 9:30 a.m.

AGENDA

Moved by Director Stoltenberg
 Seconded by Director Newell

RDC.2024-5-1

"That the Rural/Agriculture Committee Agenda for June 6, 2024 be approved.

(All/Directors/Majority)

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

MINUTES

Rural/Agriculture Committee Meeting Minutes
-May 9, 2024

Moved by Director Stoltenberg
 Seconded by Director Moon

RDC.2024-5-2

"That the minutes of the Rural/Agriculture Committee meeting of May 9, 2024 be approved."

(All/Directors/Majority)

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

DELEGATION

BC VEGETABLE MARKETING COMMISSION – Derek Sturko, Chair and Andre Solymosi, General Manager Re: BC Vegetable Marketing Commission's Role in Northern BC and Re-Introduction of "Regulated Area" Restrictions

Acting Chair Parker welcomed Derek Sturko, Chair and Andre Solymosi, General Manager, BC Vegetable Marketing Commission.

Mr. Solymosi provided a PowerPoint presentation.

BC Vegetable Marketing Commission

- Orderly Marketing of BC Vegetables
- Vegetables Currently Regulated in the South
- Role of the BCVMC
- Function of the BCVMC
- Role & Function of the BCVMC
- Benefits of Regulated Marketing
- North of the 53rd Parallel North Latitude
 - o What specific measures are being implemented to support local farmers in adapting to the new licensing requirements?

The following was discussed:

- Lack of consultation with northern producers prior to BCVMC's introduction of regulated areas north of the 53rd parallel
 - o BCVMC noted the need for consultation and have paused the implementation of regulations in the north
 - o Wanting to have a commonsense approach that works for the north
 - o Reached out to Farmers' Markets

DELEGATION (CONT'D)

- Producers having to pay a \$250 fee
- BCVMC has authority to impose regulation in the north and chose not to in the past
 - o Climate change a consideration regarding the implementation of regulations in the north
 - Acting Chair Parker recognized climate change and noted that in northern B.C. there is one crop grown per season unlike southern B.C. where there can be 2-3 crops grown in a season
 - Northern communities have higher heating costs to grow produce during frost events that are often unpredictable and occur during the growing season
- Definition of regulated vegetables
 - o Producing 1 tonne of vegetables over a 12-month period is defined as a producer and needs to be licensed
 - o BCVMC intends to review the amount and apply the right model for the region
 - Have the opportunity to adjust for growing in the south and north of the province
- Regulations for other sectors of farming e.g. dairy, poultry, eggs, etc.
- Enforcement of regulations
 - o Starts with education and involuntary enforcement
 - o Enforcement relies on evidence
 - Class 1 to 5 enforcement – different fines apply
 - If it is extreme non-compliance - rely on litigation
 - Ability to seize product and restrict product license
 - Rather have voluntary compliance and be a positive influence on the industry
 - Generally, resolve amicably
- Vegetable production in the region supplies communities with fresh produce which is not in abundance and is required for food security
- Important to have freshly harvested produce and any surplus provided to lower income demographic
- Importance of consultation and meaningful communication with stakeholders prior to implementation of changes to regulations in the north.

Acting Chair Parker thanked Messrs. Sturko and Solymosi for attending the meeting.

AGRICULTURE REPORTS

BC Vegetable Marketing
 Commission - Update

Moved by Director Stoltenberg
 Seconded by Director Riis-Christianson

RDC.2024-5-3

“That the Committee receive the Regional Agriculture Coordinator’s
 BC Vegetable Marketing Commission Amending Orders.”

(All/Directors/Majority)

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

AGRICULTURE REPORTS (CONT'D)

IAF BC Agriculture Water Infrastructure Program

Moved by Director Stoltenberg
 Seconded by Director Greenaway

RDC.2024-5-4

"That the Committee receive the Regional Agriculture Coordinator's IAF BC Agriculture Water Infrastructure Program."

(All/Directors/Majority)

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

Director Moon spoke of supporting a water sustainability and irrigation study and the significance of gathering information. She noted that agriculture is an important economic driver in the region and that money made by farmers remains in the community. Director Moon identified the importance of irrigations systems for small farmers and the significance of small farming businesses in the region.

IAF BC Agriculture Water Infrastructure Program

Moved by Director Moon
 Seconded by Director Newell

RDC.2024-5-5

"That the Committee recommend that the Board direct staff to investigate applying for the IAF BC Agriculture Water Infrastructure Program and determine the 50% cost share ratio for community projects in Electoral Areas C (Fort St. James Rural), D (Fraser Lake Rural), E (Francois/Ootsa Lake Rural) and F (Vanderhoof Rural)."

(All/Directors/Majority)

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

DISCUSSION ITEM

Society Wildfire Groups

The following was discussed:

- Several groups throughout the region are interested and have created wildfire group societies
- Funding for the societies/groups
 - o Grant funding options
 - Grant in Aid
 - Region-wide Grant in Aid
 - o Regional District grant writing support
 - o Rural Government Budget
 - o Private funding options
- Regional District liability to provide infrastructure
 - o Municipal Insurance Association insurance for emergency preparedness and planning and not response
 - o Option to rent/lease equipment to societies
- Chinook Emergency Response Society
 - o Funding
 - o Liability insurance

DISCUSSION ITEM (CONT'D)

Society Wildfire Groups (Cont'd)

- BC Wildfire Service engaging with local wildfire community groups
 - o Options for wildfire community groups to work with BC Wildfire Service
- Municipalities working with rural areas to purchase wildfire fighting equipment/trailers
- Workshop with interested groups, municipalities and electoral areas to come together to find solutions regarding funding and purchasing of wildfire fighting equipment/trailers
 - o Staff will investigate a joint workshop
- Signage at lake and river boat launches to identify the priority for fire fighting water tankers and air support.

NEW BUSINESS

Illegal Dumping

Director Moon spoke of local groups conducting clean up of illegal dumping areas in Electoral Area F and whose jurisdiction it is to clean up the sites. Staff will bring forward information at a future meeting.

ADJOURNMENT

Moved by Director Stoltenberg
 Seconded by Director Moon

RDC.2024-5-6

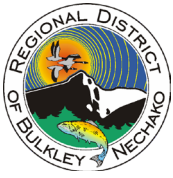
"That the meeting be adjourned at 10:48 a.m."

(All/Directors/Majority)

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

Mark Parker, Acting Chair

Wendy Wainwright, Deputy Director
 of Corporate Services



Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako Rural/Agriculture Committee

To: Chair and Committee

From: John Illes, Chief Financial Officer
Nellie Davis, Manager of Regional Economic Development

Date: October 10, 2024

Subject: **Community Works Funds and Regional Grant in Aid**

RECOMMENDATION: (all/directors/majority)

- 1) That the Committee recommend that the Board approve in principle allocating up to a maximum \$724,000 annually from the RDBN's Community Works Fund allocation to the Environmental Services Capital Budget in the 2025-2029 draft financial plans.
- 2) That the Committee direct staff to develop an amended Grant in Aid Policy and new Community Works Fund Allocation Policy that reflects the changes to the program and recommends alternative actions if the full Grant in Aid balance is not spent annually.

Community Works Fund and Regional District Grant in Aid

As presented at the September 12 Board meeting, for every dollar of Community Works Funding (CWF) that is included in the Environmental Services Capital budget, the amount of tax for all jurisdictions in the Regional District will drop by the same amount. If, at the same time, that same amount is taxed for Regional District Grant-in-Aid, there will be no net impact to taxpayers. The maximum amount that can be spent on Grant in Aid in one year is 10¢ per \$1,000, or \$724,000.

Staff recommend that Directors take advantage of the option to maximize Regional Grant in Aid in the 2025-2029 budget, creating the opportunity to streamline all RDBN grants to societies into one administratively efficient program. A new Grant-In-Aid policy would need to be developed to ensure that Regional Grant in Aid is tracked and divided in a manner comfortable to the Electoral Area Directors. An increased allocation of staff time will be required to facilitate this work.

Because the Local Government Act does not permit taxing to increase the Regional Grant in Aid balance above the annual spending threshold of \$724,000, Regional Grant in Aid balances will be monitored and tracked to ensure equitable spending across the region. Should an annual balance be not fully allocated, it could be transferred to a rural reserve for Electoral Area Directors to accrue for future RDBN projects.

These recommendations are made in tandem with considerations of the other funding and associated restrictions that the RDBN will need to consider in the next five years, including the remaining CWF balance carried into 2025 that will need to be spent by 2029, as well as Resource Benefits Alliance Funding that will need to be spent in the same time frame. It is the intent of all of these funding sources to be fully allocated/spent with no net decrease in taxation. At the November 7th meeting, staff will bring forward a report to discuss the RBA funding envelope along with recommendations and options for consideration.

The following table indicates what the three main grant sources consider eligible expenses:

√ = eligible, X = ineligible, blank = better defined eligibility in another program.

Eligible Infrastructure Category:	Grant in Aid	CWF	RBA
Project owned by a Society	√	X	X
Project owned by a member municipality	√	√	√
Recreation and Cultural Infrastructure	√	√	√
Drinking Water, Waste, and Storm Water	√	√	√
Solid Waste Management	√	√	√
Active Transportation*	√	√	√
Public Safety/ Emergency Management*	√		√
Local Roads and Sidewalks	√	√	√
Public Transit	√	√	√
Local and Regional Airports	√	√	
Education and Healthcare projects	√	X	X
Childcare Facilities	√	X	√
Resilience	√	√	
Tourism infrastructure	√	√	
Fire Halls and Fire Trucks	√	√	√
Regional Transit Operations			√
Park additions/maintenance/upgrades	√	X	√
Recreation and Cultural related amenities	√	X	√
Designing, tendering and acquiring land**	√	X	√
Maintenance costs for new or existing infrastructure	√	X	√
some operational costs (max 15% of total annual)	X	X	√
Community Energy Systems	√	√	
First Nations Liaison Staff	X	X	√
Asset Management Staff time	X	√	√
Development of MOU and service agreement with FNs	X	X	√

*some qualifications in RBA about 'not funded by senior levels of government'

**where wholly required for eligible infrastructure projects

Staff recommend that the Regional District Grant in Aid be allocated in the same manner as CWF (based on census populations):

Area	Annual Grant in Aid	Remaining CWF	
A	\$252,323	\$69,370	
B	\$77,049	\$21,182	
C	\$57,176	\$15,720	
D	\$72,576	\$19,953	
E	\$68,286	\$18,773	
F	\$158,837	\$43,668	
G	\$37,756	\$10,380	
Total	\$724,000	\$199,046	\$923,046

The RDBN's annual allocation of CWF for the next three years will be \$923,046. With a \$724,000 allocation to Environmental Services Capital, that leaves a remaining balance of annual CWF in the amount of \$199,046. This remaining balance can be available for approval on a project basis in the same process currently used. Staff recommend considering the remaining annual CWF as one regional allocation.

Directors also still have CWF balances carried over from the previous agreement that will have to be spent on eligible projects by 2029. Those amounts, including all 2024 CWF payments, as of September 17, 2024 are:

Electoral Area	Opening Balance 2023	Funds Spent	Funds Committed	Funding Received	Total Remaining to end of 2024*
A	1,796,434.82	172,000.00	783,657.60	321,692.62	1,162,469.84
B	947,014.51	-	558,117.00	98,229.39	487,126.90
C	752,891.72	-	679,748.73	72,894.73	146,037.72
D	715,888.40	-	474,493.71	92,529.09	333,923.79
E	679,378.50	-	588,326.10	87,059.11	178,111.51
F	920,369.40	-	770,605.00	202,504.55	352,268.95
G	793,377.70	45,095.30	264,904.70	48,135.86	531,513.56
	6,605,355.05	217,095.30	4,119,852.84	923,046.00	2,729,929.58

*for long-term planning purposes, these totals include the second 2024 CWF payment which is not due to arrive until December 2024. Totals will increase slightly once annual interest accrual is accounted for at the end of the year.