



PEACE RIVER REGIONAL DISTRICT

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE MEETING MINUTES

April 18, 2024, 10:00 a.m.

**Pomeroy Hotel and Conference Centre
11308 Alaska Road, Fort St. John, BC**

Directors Present:

Chair Sperling, Electoral Area C
Vice-Chair Hiebert, Electoral Area D
Director Courtoreille, District of Chetwynd
Director Dober, City of Dawson Creek
Director Hansen, City of Fort St. John
Director Kealy, Electoral Area B
Director Krakowka, District of Tumbler Ridge
Director Quibell, District of Hudson's Hope
Director Rose, Electoral Area E
Director Taillefer, District of Taylor
Director Veach, Village of Pouce Coupe
Director Zabinsky, City of Fort St. John

Staff Present:

Shawn Dahlen, Chief Administrative Officer
Tyra Henderson, Corporate Officer
Roxanne Shepherd, Chief Financial Officer
Joanne Caldecott, Deputy Corporate Officer
Kari Bondaroff, General Manager of Environmental Services
Kevin Clarkson, General Manager of Community Services
Ashley Murphey, General Manager of Development Services
Gerritt Lacey, Solid Waste Services Manager
Trevor Ouellette, IT Manager
Annette Andrews, Communications Manager
Becky Gelsthorpe, Executive Assistant
Carmen Willms, Recording Clerk

Delegations:

North Pine Farmers Institute

Wade Cusack, President, and Committee Chair

RCMP, Fort St. John Detachment

Staff Sergeant Scott Watson, Acting Officer-In-Charge

1. CALL TO ORDER

The Chair called the meeting to order at 9:59 a.m.

2. **ADOPTION OF AGENDA**

CW/24/04/01

MOVED Director Krakowka

SECONDED Director Veach

That the Committee of the Whole adopt the April 18, 2024 meeting agenda:

1. **CALL TO ORDER**

2. **ADOPTION OF AGENDA**

3. **GALLERY COMMENTS OR QUESTIONS**

4. **DELEGATIONS**

4.1 North Pine Farmers Institute RE: Past, Current, and Future Community Engagement

4.2 RCMP, Fort St. John Detachment RE: Review of Policing Activities

5. **REPORTS**

6. **MEDIA QUESTIONS**

7. **ADJOURNMENT**

CARRIED

3. **GALLERY COMMENTS OR QUESTIONS**

4. **DELEGATIONS**

4.1 **North Pine Farmers Institute RE: Past, Current, and Future Community Engagement**

Wade Cusack, President of the North Pine Farmers Institute, presented to the Regional Board regarding the past, current, and future community engagement of the North Pine Farmers Institute. The presentation included the following topics:

- A video that contained past highlights of the Institute.
- The history of the North Pine Farmers Institute.
- The consistent goals of the Institute throughout its history, despite being reviewed regularly.
- The purchase of the grain elevator in Fort St. John and its usage.
- Appreciation for the support of the Peace River Regional District.
- The need for communication with the rural community.

A question-and-answer period ensued and included:

- The potential purchase of property to the west of the grain elevator and its use. The presenter explained that an increase from 16 to 24 railcars was needed to accommodate the loading of 24 railcars per week without CN Rail needing to do an extra pull during the week.
- The good relationships between the Institute and CN Rail, and between the Institute and Viterra Canada.
- How the grain elevator was one of only two Viterra elevators in Western Canada that accepts specialty canola.
- The importance of the Agricultural Advisory Committee.
- Whether the membership of the Institute was strong. Mr. Cusack explained that while some members were aging out, they have younger members actively involved.
- The formation of a general group of agricultural producers. The presenter explained that a general committee was being considered by the different factions in the farming community.

4.2 RCMP, Fort St. John Detachment RE: Review of Policing Activities

Staff Sergeant Scott Watson, Acting Officer-in-Charge of the Fort St. John RCMP Detachment, presented to the Regional Board regarding policing activities in Fort St. John (FSJ). The presentation included the following topics:

- Staff Sergeant Watson's 26 years of service, background, and policing experiences in the Fort St. John area.
- The Security Professional Intelligence Network (SPIN); a network based on the sharing of intelligence between the security professionals in the Peace River Region.
- The breakdown between rural and municipal members in the FSJ Detachment, and that action taken by members was response-based.
- How the announcement by the Province of BC regarding additional money for rural police had led to a proposal of a seven-man unit based out of Fort St. John, which is at the District Office for review before going to the Criminal Operations Office in Divisional Headquarters, who will then present it to the Province of BC. The timeframe for approval was estimated to be two years.
- How decriminalization had blended the crime reduction unit and drug unit into one unit that deals with prolific offenders.

A question-and-answer period ensued and included:

- Whether the proposed unit would also encompass Dawson Creek. The presenter answered that it would be a Peace Region team, with members from both Fort St. John and Dawson Creek.
- The number of members in the Fort St. John Detachment and the number of members dedicated to rural patrols. Staff Sergeant Watson replied that the Fort St. John Detachment had 54 members, and that all members responded to calls whether they were a designated municipal member or a rural provincially funded member.
- Whether decriminalization had increased the workload of the Detachment. The presenter explained that Crown Counsel had not laid possession charges for years before decriminalization, so the workload had not increased. Rather, a blend of problems arose in communities such as the opioid crisis and homelessness, that resulted in the current issues being experienced. Asked about drug trafficking, the presenter said that criminal enterprise was constantly looking to expand and were partially responsible for the increase in violence.
- Whether offenders had become more confrontational and violent. The presenter confirmed that violent crime had increased.
- Whether a committee had been formed on a federal level to bring changes to the *Criminal Code of Canada* regarding the "revolving door" of the criminal justice system. The presenter confirmed there was ongoing frustration when suspects were captured only to be let go. He explained that the biggest tool to effect change was to vote for change.
- Whether rural policing was considered proactive or reactive. The presenter explained that it was reactive and likely would continue to be, even with an increase in rural policing members because of the vastness of the Peace Region.
- Whether staffing levels were partially based on the number of reported incidents. The presenter answered in the affirmative.



4.2 RCMP, Fort St. John Detachment RE: Review of Policing Activities (Cont'd)

- The number of vacancies in the Fort St. John Detachment. Staff Sergeant Watson replied that the Detachment was staffed appropriately at the current time, however he noted that some members would be moving shortly and stated that generally Fort St. John received more new recruits than experienced officers. He explained that some members did not fulfill their five-year commitment.
- Whether the seven-man unit proposal would be funded locally or provincially. The presenter replied that the unit would be provincially funded, and that the proposal had asked for the maximum number of resources, such as vehicles and equipment.

5. REPORTS

6. MEDIA QUESTIONS

7. ADJOURNMENT

The Chair adjourned the meeting at 10:59 a.m.

CERTIFIED a true and correct copy of the Minutes of the Regional Board of the Peace River Regional District from a meeting held on April 18, 2024 in the Pomeroy Hotel and Conference Centre, 11308 Alaska Road, Fort St. John, BC.

Brad Sperling, Chair

Tyra Henderson, Corporate Officer