



Hagensborg Waterworks District Conversion Study Public Meeting Minutes October 3, 2019

Location: Nusatsum Elementary School Gym **Time:** 7:30 pm

Trustees: Chair Kevin O'Neill, Jeremy Baillie, Diane Skelly, Tony Norton and John Morton

Staff: Diane Skelly, CAO

Delegation: Jim Tarves, Evangeline Hanuse

Technical Support: David Ratcliff

Public: 24

1. Introduction by Chair O'Neill:

Chair O'Neill opened the meeting stating that in response to ratepayer requests at this year's AGM and the pending government grant proposal a conversion study was undertaken by the Hagensborg Waterworks District. Independent consultant Jim Tarves was retained to prepare the Conversion Review, and this evening he will present an executive summary of his findings for members of the district. Mr. Tarves background includes 27 years of experience with the Regional District of East Kootenay. As their finance manager he was involved in two sewer, three water, and at least three fire conversions to a regional district service area.

2. Conversion Review Executive Summary by Jim Tarves:

Purpose:

- Jim Tarves commenced his presentation stating that the purpose of the review was to outline the implications for the conversion of the Hagensborg Waterworks District (HWD) to the Central Coast Regional District (CCRD). This review is to address concerns surrounding water treatment, approval of the current grant application and representation of the ratepayers after conversion. He further explained the differences between improvement districts and regional districts in regards to legislative requirements and current government policy.

Summary of Points Presented:

- The necessary replacement of our aging infrastructure and new water treatment plant would not proceed without the recently approved grant.
- A new water treatment plan will bring the HWD in compliance with the *Drinking Water Protection Act* and treatment objectives outlined by Vancouver Coastal Health.
- Climate change is expected to cause continued unpredictability impacting watercourses.
- The provincial government remains committed to the continued development of regional districts.
- Conversion is the process of bringing the management and operations of improvement districts under the same legislation that governs regional districts.
- There are difficulties in recruiting and retaining staff. The duplication of legislative, administrative, financial and operational positions can be reduced through conversion.
- Future funding opportunities for fire and water are available through the CCRD, not the HWD Improvement District.
- A standing committee could be created by the CCRD comprised of electoral area director(s), ratepayers and/or trustees from the HWD.
- Regional districts have better access to borrowing (lower interest rates) through the Municipal Finance Authority.
- The Cabinet Order dissolving the HWD would *ensure* that reserve funds of the HWD could only be used for the HWD water system and fire protection within the current boundaries of the HWD. The CCRD will not be able to spend operating funds on any other services than the ones transferred from the improvement district.
- The CCRD is a member of the Municipal Insurance Association of B.C. MIABC's insurance rates are generally more comprehensive and less expensive than rates acquired by improvement districts.
- The \$3.78 million grant is to replace the aging infrastructure and a new water treatment plant. The Ministry requires resolutions from both the HWD and CCRD as soon as possible to secure the grant.
- Options for the HWD assent process are still under investigation.

3. Question Period:

Jim Tarves and Chair Kevin O'Neill answered questions from the public with information received to date. With the possible conversion of the HWD to the CCRD some queries regarding future costs, treatment options, representation and administration could not be fully answered, as these decisions would fall within the jurisdiction of the CCRD.

Summary of Questions/Comments:

- Chlorination and ultraviolet disinfection as treatment options
- Community input towards treatment options post conversion
- Timeline for implementation of a treatment plant
- Relief for businesses with the removal of the current boil water advisory
- Future administration costs
- Other improvement districts experiences after conversion
- Opportunity for the community (standing committee) to have further input after conversion
- Dissemination of information and transparency during the conversion process
- Total costs to bring the HWD into compliance
- CCRD asset management plan
- Current Bella Coola townsite water rates
- Steps needed to secure the \$3.78 million grant
- Process and assent of the electors (referendum/petition/alternative approval process)

4. Closing:

Chair O'Neill thanked Mr. Tarves for his presentation and expressed appreciation to members for their attendance and questions. The next step for the board in the conversion process will be the determination of the ratepayer assent process.

Jim Tarves thanked the board, members of the community, and his assistant and cowriter Evangeline Hanuse for her support during the conversion review process.

Copies of the *Hagensborg Waterworks District Conversion Review* remain available through the District website, HWD Facebook page, Hagensborg Post Office and Trustees.

Adjournment: 8:48 pm

Chair

Corporate Administrative Officer