
Meeting Minutes

Meeting: Board of Directors

Date: February 28, 2014

Attendees

Russell Walker, Greg Herrett, Alex Morrison, Bill Joe MacLean, , Jimmy MacAlpine, Brian Cullen, Raymond Tynes, Betty MacDonald, Kevin Saccary, Doug Sabean, Bob McNeil, Amanda Whitewood (by phone)

Regrets: Dan McDougall

Staff Attendees

Kathy Gillis, Dwayne Phillips, Kim Ashizawa, Meredith Buchanan, Chis Doucette, Tracy Williams

The Chair called the meeting to order.

1. Review of Agenda

The draft agenda was reviewed.

Moved by K. Saccary, seconded by G. Herrett that the agenda be accepted. Motion carried.

2. Review of the Minutes

The draft minutes of November 22, 2013 were reviewed.

Moved by B. McNeil, seconded by K. Saccary that the Minutes be accepted. Motion carried.

3. Update from Committees

Audit & Finance Committee

(a) eDelivery Project

G. Herrett, Chair of the Audit and Finance Committee, reported the Committee met on February 27, 2014. Michael Kelly, Mara Consulting, provided an update to the Committee on the eDelivery project regarding revisions to the Canada Post contract. There were revisions to the set-up fee structure which means there will be an increase of \$80,000. This increase can be covered through a revised "all in" implementation fee to Canada Post of \$105,000, as approved by the eDelivery Steering Committee.

In terms of rollout, it is anticipated the rollout to municipal units will begin in the spring.

(b) Third Quarter Financials

Third Quarter Financials, ending December 31, 2013, indicate that spending is within the budget. For the most part, savings are due to salary savings.

(c) Hosting

PVSC is going through a Request for Proposal (RFP) process for external hosting services. The anticipated timeframe to exit the current hosting environment provided by the Province, the Chief Information Office (CIO), is September 2014.

(d) Annual Investment Policy Review

As per the approved policy, an annual review is currently being conducted to determine if the policy commitments and requirements are being met. The Non-Pension Benefits Fund, and the Technology Replacement Fund are within target.

(e) Audit Plan

J. Hutchings, Grant Thornton, attended the Audit and Finance Committee meeting and reviewed the audit plan (ie. risks, internal controls, materiality, & changes in accounting standards). The audit will begin in May.

Governance Committee

R. Walker, Governance Committee Chair, indicated the Committee met on February 27, 2014 with Anna Stuart, Knightsbridge Robertson Surette, regarding the Board Self-Evaluation. The draft report will be finalized and a full Board *in camera* discussion will be arranged for April.

Quality Committee

J. MacApline noted the Committee met on February 27, 2014 and had a good discussion on the following initiatives:

(a) Income & Expense

As previously discussed, PVSC is examining the Income & Expense valuation methodology for applicable commercial properties. Some of the rationale for this project includes collection and analysis in the current process is expensive and time consuming, only about 40% of responses are received back from the annual Income and Expense mail-out, and clients are asking for web-based data collection.

To date, a comprehensive review of the current state has been completed, PVSC has engaged International Property Tax Institute (IPTI) to provide best practice guides for Income Modeling that are tailored to the practices for use in Nova Scotia, and high level technology solutions have also been identified including on-line forms for clients.

(b) 2014 Appeal Period Survey Results

Detailed results of the survey were reviewed at the Quality Committee meeting. 400 property owners who placed a call to PVSC during the 2014 assessment period were randomly selected to conduct the survey. The organization received a rating of 83% for service delivery.

(c) Advanced Notification

PVSC will be improving and expanding their client consultation process. Planning is underway for an advanced notification process that will give clients a preview of their upcoming year's market assessment (preliminary values), which will enable clients to review values and speak with PVSC prior to the formal appeal period. This will provide an opportunity to both clients and PVSC to deal with questions, concerns and/or issues outside of a formal process. The hope is to have this in place prior to the next assessment roll.

(d) International Property Tax Institute (IPTI) Certification

K. Gillis indicated that while looking at another reengineering initiative with Jerry Grad of IPTI, the certification initiative was discussed. IPTI has an international standing and acceptance as being experts in valuation methods and tools. As part of PVSC's commitment to be a leader in the industry, and be viewed as such in terms of best practice, IPTI is interested in working with PVSC to develop a certification process. IPTI would certify that PVSC's processes and procedures meet best practice standards making PVSC the first in Canada to achieve the certification. IPTI has put forward a proposal and PVSC will engage them in the future, possibly around the September 2014 timeframe to begin exploring certification for PVSC.

(e) Nova Scotia Assessment Appeal Tribunal (NSAAT)

K. Gillis explained how the appeal court is structured, and indicated that problems do exist with the current process. Some of the issues are within PVSC's scope of control and other issues are outside of PVSC's scope of control. PVSC has approached Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations (SNSMR) with regard to reviewing the process. With the support of SNSMR, PVSC will engage IPTI to perform an evaluation of the current governance model. The evaluation will include assessing the effectiveness of the current Nova Scotia system, best practice model for an independent tribunal, and best practice model for Alternative Dispute Resolution.

The Board asked that PVSC ensure a jurisdictional scan of appeal costs and associated fees is included in the NSAAT review (including other levels of court, ie. UARB).

K. Gillis noted that the projects and initiatives noted above are interrelated.

4. **Municipal Tax Study**

C. Doucette provided an update on the Municipal Tax Study.

- The project has proceeded as per the objectives, scope, and deliverables set out in the Terms of Reference, approved October 25, 2013.

- This started with the study that Shingai Nyajeka completed and evolved to a much bigger study.
- The Association of Municipal Administrators (AMA) has joined PVSC and the UNSM co-sponsors.
- Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations has been supportive.
- Enid Slack and Harry Kitchen were procured in November 2013, and the Steering Committee was launched in January 2014.
- The first and second rounds of consultations have taken place with various stakeholders (as per the list reviewed).

The Board suggested that perhaps an invitation be extended to the agriculture & farming group, if this fits with the analysis that E. Slack and H. Kitchen will be examining.

- The next steps will include finalizing the consultations, having a draft report by the end of March, and the final report the end of April. In addition, a communications strategy and next steps will be developed by the end of April, and the Study released to the public in May.

5. **Strategic Planning Framework**

C. Doucette & M. Buchanan reviewed the strategic and business planning framework to ensure the process makes sense, and provides direction and focus in preparation for the 2015-2020 strategic planning session with the Board in April.

It was suggested that a weighing be incorporated for each of the strategic priority goals.

Moved by A. Morrison, seconded by J. MacAlpine that the Strategic and Business Planning Framework be accepted. Motion carried.

6. **CEO Report**

K. Gillis advised that in terms of the 2014 reassessment, residential appeals are down this year, and commercial appeals are up (this reinforces the need to ensure best practices are in place).

The Chair advised that he and K. Gillis met with the PC Caucus, at the request of the Caucus, and noted the meeting went well. PVSC will work with them where needed.

Meeting adjourned