
Meeting Minutes

Meeting: Board of Directors

Date: April 8, 2016

Attendees

Jimmy MacAlpine, Amanda Whitewood, Russell Walker, Doug Sabeau, Connie Nolan, Robert Bird, Greg Keefe, Alex Morrison, Kevin Saccary, Madeleine Daues, Mike Dolter

Regrets

Michele McKenzie, Betty MacDonald

Staff Attendees

Kathy Gillis, Meredith Buchanan, Chris Doucette, Sandy Tulloch

Guests

Enid Slack, Institute of Municipal Finance and Governance, University of Toronto
Bruce Fisher, Kenzie MacNeil, Andre MacNeil – Halifax Regional Municipality

The Chair, Jimmy MacAlpine, called the meeting to order. He welcomed and introduced the new members: Connie Nolan and Madeleine Daues.

1. **Review of Agenda**

The draft agenda was reviewed.

**Moved by Kevin Saccary, seconded by Russell Walker that the agenda be accepted.
Motion carried.**

2. **Review of the Minutes**

The draft minutes of the February 5, 2016 meeting were reviewed.

Moved by Russell Walker, seconded by Doug Sabeau that the February 5, 2016 minutes be accepted. Motion carried.

3. **Halifax Business Property Tax Review**

Russ Adams introduced Enid Slack, professor from the Institute on Municipal Finance and Governance, University of Toronto. Ms. Slack presented “Proposals to Reform Business Property Taxes in Halifax: An Evaluation”. The main issue discussed was the problem that “small and independent businesses face challenges from large commercial property tax increases arising from spikes in assessed values”. A discussion, question and answer period followed.

4. **Committee Updates**

Governance Committee

The Chair of the Governance Committee, Jimmy MacAlpine, provided an update on the April 7, 2016 meeting.

(a) **Board Recruitment**

At the February Governance Committee meeting, a recommendation was put forward by the Committee to explore potential enhancements to the current Board recruitment process. One of the ideas raised was the inclusion of an interview component as part of the candidate review phase.

- This would:
 - Provide PVSC with more information about the candidates beyond what was documented in the application.
 - Provide an opportunity for the candidates to learn more about the organization and the requirements as a Director, and to ask questions or seek clarification.
 - Bring the municipal recruitment process more in line with the independent process.

The Committee agreed that the current recruitment process would change very little with the addition of the interview step, as Knightsbridge Robertson Surette would continue to conduct the initial review of candidates and present their analysis to the Governance Committee; the Governance Committee would then determine, based on this review, who should be short-listed for an interview; an interview would be conducted and a recommendation would go forth to the UNSM; and, the UNSM would review and approve an appointment.

The Committee recommended that the interview should be conducted jointly between PVSC and the UNSM, and an approval was made to further this discussion with the UNSM with respect to the proposed process revision and involvement in the interview process.

Action: Staff to follow-up and arrange for further discussion between PVSC and the UNSM on the proposed recruitment revision with regard to the inclusion of an interview process.

(b) **2016-17 Business Plan**

The Committee felt that the 2016-17 Business Plan was very effective and a great reflection of the organization's priorities for the year. There was a suggestion to select a different graphic for the "Strengthening Our Business" focus (as it is a bit difficult to distinguish). A graphic representing "people" was recommended as an alternative, this will be reviewed by staff. It was also recommended that the financial component of each initiative be included for next year's plan.

Overall, the Committee was impressed with the 2016-17 Business Plan and recommends that it be approved by the Board. With a possible revision to the graphic as noted.

Moved by Greg Keefe, seconded by Alex Morrison that the 2016-17 Business Plan be accepted. Motion carried.

Quality and Client Service Committee

Jimmy MacAlpine, provided an update on the April 7, 2016 Quality Committee Meeting on behalf of the Chair, Michele McKenzie.

(a) 2016 Inquiry Period Survey

The Committee received an update from David Dudka and Aseneth McGrath on the results of PVSC's 2016 Inquiry Period Survey. This survey is conducted annually with property owners who contacted PVSC during the 31-day appeal period. Overall, the survey results were extremely positive, with PVSC's service centre receiving its highest score (84%) in the almost 20 years this survey has been conducted. There appears to be consistency in the score trend over the last number of years suggesting that clients are being provided with quality and consistent customer service. This is a great achievement for the organization. The Committee discussed whether it would be a good idea to talk to the Real Estate Board with regard to providing them additional information and a better understanding on the Capped Assessment Program (CAP), or perhaps producing a brochure, this may help to cut down on the number of first time callers. Madeleine Daues indicated she had previously attended a first time home owners "school" in Ontario. The team was congratulated on the great results.

(b) 2016-17 Communications Plan

The Committee felt that the plan was well laid out, straightforward and effectively captured PVSC's four areas of focus for communications – Reputation for Excellence, Access to information, Employee Engagement, and Stakeholder Outreach and Collaboration. Kathy Gillis advised the Committee she had spoken to the CEO of the Nova Scotia Liquor Corporation (NSLC) regarding their social media policy and that the discussion was very helpful, provided lots of information, and PVSC was encouraged to use/adapt their policy. Further follow-up is required and it will then be brought forward to the Board. The Committee recommends that the 2016-17 Communications Plan be approved by the Board.

Moved by Betty MacDonald, seconded by Madeleine Daues that the 2016-17 Communications Plan be accepted. Motion carried.

(c) Annual Report Approach

The approach for the 2015-16 Annual Report was presented was reviewed with the Committee. The emphasis this year will be on the presentation of information through visuals, rather than text (as a suggestion from the Board last year). The theme for the report will be Great Places, People and Partnerships – A Year in Review, to reflect our certifications, and our partnerships with municipalities and other stakeholders.

A draft will be brought back to the Quality Committee in early June for input and feedback, and the final report will be presented to the Board for approval at the June 24th meeting.

(d) Roll Quality Report

Regarding Municipal Affairs' plan to proceed with their external audit of PVSC - the RFP has short-listed 3 American firms and will likely be taking place in the June/July timeframe. Rather than focusing on the International Property Tax Institute (IPTI) certification, the audit will encompass the full assessment function. An outcome of the audit will be recommendations on a go-forward process for future audits. PVSC has offered to share their Roll Quality Report with the auditors to outline the quality program currently in place.

Staff presented the Roll Quality Report to the Committee, which indicated PVSC has met legislative and quality standards. It also identified challenges related to low volumes of sales in some municipalities and achieving equity between sold and unsold property where many sold properties tend to be renovated.

The Committee also received an update from staff on PVSC's Quality Assurance Approach and Management's Response to the Roll Quality Report conclusions, including updated guidelines for sales validation, having the valuation team better leverage available statistical analysis, exploring ways of addressing low sales volumes, and prioritizing areas for data improvement to ensure more equitable treatment of sold and unsold properties.

(e) IPTI Commercial Audit Update

Staff reported on PVSC's engagement of IPTI to provide an independent, third party, opinion as to the accuracy and validity regarding PVSC's commercial property valuations. In March, IPTI spent two days with PVSC to collect data, speak with staff, visit key business areas and review processes. The report findings and recommendations for enhancement are expected in June/July and will be communicated to stakeholders in the fall.

Moved by Mike Dolter, seconded by Amanda Whitewood that the Quality and Client Service Committee update be accepted. Motion carried.

5. **CAP Engagement Update**

Kathy Gillis advised when she previously met with the Minister of Municipal Affairs in January to brief him on the 2016 Assessment Roll, PVSC was given the opportunity to provide their thoughts to the Minister on the CAP program. Following that, PVSC met again with the Minister and shared their CAP exit strategy document.

The Province has indicated there will be no change to the CAP program unless and until the public is educated on the CAP. First, elected officials need to be educated, this will take some time and it will have to be determined how to inform them. Kathy indicated that a strategy is being developed, similar to what was shared with the Minister. She noted that a CAP review is also one of the three priorities of the Union of Nova Scotia Municipalities (UNSM) and that they are passionate about the issue. She noted that perhaps Cape Breton Regional Municipality (CBRM) could be a potential test pilot.

The first step will be to create a working group, and strive to understand the issues and problems before suggesting solutions. This initiative will begin at UNSM spring conference.

Enid Slack noted the key will be deciding what to replace the CAP program with and how; a slow retreat versus substitution. Perhaps look for examples of other jurisdictions who have had to deal with a similar program. A 7-10 year phase out was suggested.

6. CEO Report Q4

There was a call for questions following the review of the CEO Report. There was a question with regard to the Open Data Service, and it was advised that there are adapters for each municipality.

7. In Camera

An *in camera* session was held. The CEO's goals and objectives for 2016/17 and compensation were ratified *in camera*.

Meeting adjourned