
Meeting Minutes

Meeting: Board of Directors

Date: November 28, 2014

Attendees

Jimmy MacAlpine, Alex Morrison, Brian Cullen, Raymond Tynes, Betty MacDonald, Kevin Saccary, Doug Sabeau, Amanda Whitewood, Greg Keefe, Billy Joe MacLean

Regrets

Russell Walker, Michele McKenzie

Staff Attendees

Kathy Gillis, Dwayne Phillips, Kim Ashizawa, Russ Adams, Carlos Resendes, Meredith Buchanan, Chris Doucette, Rebecca Vorstermans, Tracy Williams

The Vice Chair, Jimmy MacAlpine, called the meeting to order.

1. **Review of Agenda**

The draft agenda was reviewed for any additions or deletions.

Moved by Kevin Saccary, seconded by Greg Keefe that the agenda be accepted. Motion carried.

2. **Review of the Minutes**

The draft minutes of October 24, 2014 were reviewed.

Moved by Raymond Tynes, seconded by Kevin Saccary that the Minutes be accepted. Motion carried.

3. **Update from Committees**

Audit & Finance Committee

The Audit & Finance Chair, Greg Keefe, reported the Committee met about a week ago (November 21, 2014) and that the financials are in fine shape. In terms of an investment report update, things are tracking soft however there are internal contingencies where they have been; not losing any money. The budget is on target as per the Second Quarter Financials. It was noted that at the next Audit & Finance meeting the Committee will discuss the special operating reserve of \$160k that had been set aside for an anticipated financial pressure with regard to postage & IT hosting in 2014/15 that is no longer required.

EDelivery is moving along – the first bundle is up and working, and currently working on the second. \$564k of the \$762k budget has been spent to date.

Moved by Greg Keefe, seconded by Amanda Whitewood that the Audit & Finance Committee update be accepted. Motion carried.

4. Assessment Roll Update

Russ Adams introduced Carlos Resendes – Area Manager for Work Unit I (South Region), who will also be filling in as Area Manager for Work Unit II (Central Region) as Phil Schofield will be working on another project.

The Assessment Roll is in the process of being finalized and will be submitted in the iasWorld system by end of day. A final quality check and assessment roll validation will occur next week (quality checks are also conducted quarterly) and an IT validation. The Assessment Roll will be filed with Municipalities on December 30, 2014, Property Assessment Notices will be mailed to property owners on January 9, 2015, and the 31-day appeal period will end February 9, 2015.

Kathy Gillis acknowledged Russ for his role in determining an earlier mailing date for the Property Assessment Notices in advance of a Canada Post increase, which resulted in a cost savings of \$90k.

The Base Date for this year is January 2013 and the State Date is December 1, 2014. Meaning that the 2015 Assessment Roll is based on market value sales as of January 2013 and the physical condition of a property as of December 1, 2014. The 2015 (preliminary) Assessment Roll values and percentage changes were reviewed. Russ noted that with a few exceptions (commercial/income properties), the vast majority of the preliminary roll has been available on PVSC's website.

In terms of a communications strategy and rollout, the Assessment Roll will be delivered in December, and PVSC will offer presentations to municipal units (HRM's is scheduled for January). In January, media training will take place with operational staff, call centre training will occur with staff, and the media briefing and press release will be held in the Dartmouth office on January 9, 2015.

5. Assessment Overview

As per a request from the previous Board meeting, Carlos Resendes provided an overview on assessment in Nova Scotia. He presented information on the Mandate - how property is assessed (as per the Nova Scotia Assessment Act); the Valuation Process - characteristics of market value, why market value is used, base date & state date, the approaches to market value, mass appraisal, assessment tools used, and information on the commercial valuation process. Information was given regarding the inquiry period; the appeal process, and; the Capped Assessment Program (CAP).

It was noted that as a recommendation coming out of the Municipal Property Taxation study PVSC is looking at changing the base date to one year (versus two years), that will likely become effective for 2017.

Carlos also explained the pros of moving to a one year base date and the fact that the assessment information will be current and assessments more easily explained to property owners and the public.

6. **Communications and Media**

Meredith Buchanan, Chief Strategy Officer, and Rebecca Vorstermans, Communications Coordinator, provided an overview on the Communications and Media Relations Policy in terms of the communications strategy, the Assessment Roll communications and consultation, a review of the Media Policy, Communications' roles and responsibilities, and website resources used to communicate with the public. The Board was also provided a demo of PVSC's website.

Meredith noted that going forward she would like to include Board members in getting messages out. One of the Board members indicated that leading up to property assessment notices going out, their particular area will be sending out a letter that will include a piece on who PVSC is. It was also noted by Board members that new Directors joining the Board as well as Assessors achieving accreditations should be announced through the media (ie. newspaper ad) to bring identify to the organization and to recognize the professionalism of the organization.

It was moved by Alex Morrison, seconded by Raymond Tynes that the idea of moving forward with professional designations being recognized through a media announcement be discussed further at the next Board meeting be accepted. Motion carried.

7. **Staff Survey Results**

Annual Employee Feedback Surveys are being conducted with staff to gain a "pulse" of the organization and to see how staff are feeling, through an anonymous channel that will allow them to voice concerns, opinions, and recommendations. Staff discussions have been held across the province to discuss the results. Chris Doucette pointed out this is the third survey. A comparison of the survey scores was provided to the Board, and the opportunities and results achieved to date. Some of the next steps will include having the survey results incorporated into the 2015/16 business planning session – to set an Employee Feedback target, and ongoing updates to staff on progress of actions items.

Board members acknowledged they like the approach to how the survey results are being follow-up – platform for conversation, and they also liked how the information was presented. It was suggested to perhaps have "champions" for problem areas.

8. **Nova Scotia Open Data Council**

Chris Doucette provided an overview of what open data is, why it's important, who provides and uses open data, and the role and mandate of the Open Data Council. The organizations representing the current authority of the Open Data Council are the Provincial Government, Halifax Regional Municipality, Union of Nova Scotia Municipalities, and Property Valuation Services Corporation – the Authority needs to be formalized through the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding.

In addition, a Request for Information (RFI) will need to be developed for an open data shared portal (one central location for information), as well as ongoing research, discussion and exploration. To note, the Open Data Council began under the former Property Innovation Council and has been in place for about two years.

9. **Directors and Officers Insurance Compliance**

PVSC's insurance coverage is based on a Claims Made policy. Annually a check-in needs to occur with directors and managers. Dwayne Phillips put forward the following question to the Board of Directors:

In your capacity as a PVSC Director, do you know of any claims or circumstances which would give rise to claims that should be reported to the Insurer?

Board members advised they are not aware of any claims or circumstances to be reported.

Board members asked that going forward PVSC staff look at conducting the insurance claims question via a survey type format.

10. **Macro Agenda**

The macro agenda for 2015 Board and Committee meetings was reviewed. Further discussion may be required to determine if there is a need for a Quality Committee meeting before March 2015 (as the November 2014 meeting was cancelled).

Moved by Raymond Tynes, seconded by Greg Keefe that the 2015 macro agenda be accepted. Motion carried.

11. ***In Camera* Session**

An *in camera* session was not held as there were no issues or concerns for discussion.

12. **Other**

Queen's Governance Training Session

Board members commented that overall they enjoyed the session, found the material to be useful and very good, was educational, risk management piece was great, facilitator was very good, the session should be held annually, and more time (perhaps 1 ½ - 2 days versus 1 day) should have been allotted to absorb the information.

There are items as a result of the session that require discussion at a Board level, initially through the Governance Committee. A summary of the items will be provided to the Board.

Board Term Expiry

On behalf of the Board, the Vice Chair thanked Billy Joe MacLean for his dedication and great work while serving on the Board. In addition, Billy Joe thanked the Board and expressed the Board and the business was conducted in a professional manner.

Meeting adjourned