

Date: 08/03/2022

**To:** Chair and Directors, Committee of the Whole

**And To:** John MacLean, Chief Administrative Officer

**From:** Alice Johnston, Manager of Corporate Services/Deputy CAO

**Date of Meeting:** Committee of the Whole\_Mar17\_2022

**File:** 8130-01

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## Short Summary:

Request from Director Forseth to discuss the future of Rural Community Halls

## Background:

The following has been received from Director Forseth:

*Community halls in the 12 Electoral Areas of the Regional District exist to serve the needs/purposes of the unincorporated communities where they are located. Most are operated by volunteers with modest taxation support from the Regional District except for the community halls at Bouchie Lake, Parkland and Barlow Creek – limited staff support coming from the North Cariboo Recreation/Parks Function, via City of Quesnel Staff. The community hall at Kersley also has a Staff position to look after the community hall there which is paid out of the Kersley Recreation Service.*

*Until recently – the administrative burden upon the volunteers operating these communities halls was light, due to lesser provincial/federal government regulations (water/sewer, etc.) of the day however the administrative burden has increased over time leading, in some cases, to challenges in recruiting enough volunteers in the rural areas to continue operating these very necessary rural community facilities and we do know that volunteerism in our Regional District (and elsewhere in BC) is in general decline.*

*Rural Community Halls serve many purposes including:*

- Rentals for weddings, funerals, or other events
- Community dinners to build up local community spirit
- “Base of Operations” for local emergencies, if a local Fire Hall does not exist in that unincorporated community
- Place for the Regional District or other organizations to either host “Board on the Road” or other public meetings/public hearings

*The Regional District has helped to invest dollars into the community halls over the years, by facilitating grant applications, Canada Building Community Fund, etc.*

*Without Community Halls – I am deeply concerned about the Regional District’s ability to host public hearings/public meetings, “Board on the Road”, etc. in a safe space in rural unincorporated communities without relying on private homes/facilities (which is problematic for a variety of reasons including liability concerns, etc.) and clearly, the Regional District does not currently have the staff capacity in the Community Service Department to take on this subject but the Regional District does have a Stakeholder interest in ensuring that the rural community halls are sustainable on a mid to long term basis.*

**Attachments:**

N/A

**Receipt Only:**

That be memorandum from Alice Johnston, Manager of Corporate Services/Deputy CAO, dated March 8, 2022, regarding a request from Director Forseth to discuss the future of rural community halls, be received. *Further action at the discretion of the Committee.*