



Date: 24/05/2024

To: Chair and Directors, Cariboo Regional District Board

And To: Murray Daly, Chief Administrative Officer

From: Gerald Pinchbeck, Manager of Communications

Date of Meeting: Cariboo Regional District Board_May24_2024

File: 1480-20/2024 Bouchie Lake Sewer

Short Summary:

Pre-Feasibility Study Public Engagement Results for Proposed Bouchie Lake Sewer System

Voting:

Stakeholder Vote Weighted – All EA's

Memorandum:

In November 2023, the Board of Directors provided direction for residents of Bouchie Lake to be surveyed about a proposal to complete a feasibility study for a community sewer system. The requested budget for such a study was \$50,000 at the time. Further authorization and direction was received at the April 12, 2024 meeting, where the Board authorized the use of Area "B" Director Initiative funds for that purpose.

The engagement process was as follows:

- March – Information gathering and engagement planning. A conceptual service area was decided upon based on internal review and Director Bachmeier's feedback. The area has an estimated population of 378 people based on 191 total house points.
- Early April – directly mail letters with information about the engagement process, including the public information meeting and input survey. Over 200 letters were sent to property owners with unique addresses in the proposed service area.
- April 15 – Survey opens for participation.
- April 30 – Public Information meeting held at Bouchie Lake Community Hall from 4pm to 7pm. Director Bachmeier, CAO Daly, and Manager Pinchbeck were in attendance as CRD representatives. Approximately 60 citizens were in attendance, and 26 paper surveys were returned.
- May 15 – Survey closed, with 57 digital surveys completed.

Participants' age skewed older in age, with the median age of participants being in the range of 55-59 years old (median refers to the 50% of participants mark, versus averages which are an aggregation of all participants). A majority of residents indicated they lived in two person households, with the next most common being one or three person households.

The Board should note that, despite efforts to limit participation to area residents, the survey was completed by persons outside the proposed service area. Print surveys were more at risk of this higher level of access, and therefore the data for both online and print surveys are presented separately.

Even when separating the data, residents indicated support for completing a feasibility study for the proposed sewer system. In follow up questions, there was no desire to pursue a sewer system further without any grant funding. Taxation for a system was supported by 60%, with 40% opposed.

If a sewer system were not to proceed, participants indicated their support for the following alternative actions:

- Requiring sewer systems to be updated or repaired before building permits are issued.
- Advocating to Northern Health to enforce existing regulations.
- Increasing lakefront setback requirements for private sewer systems.
- Restricting land use proposals to reduce contaminants entering Bouchie Lake.
- Restrict further residential development near the lake.

Some additional informal feedback communicated at the public meeting included:

- Concern for costs, particularly with the uncertainty of costs.
- Concern for the current state of Bouchie Lake (climate change, algae blooms).
- Concerns for escalating costs of investigating a service.
- Questions about the inclusion or exclusion of areas from the conceptual service area.
- Concerns about the possible location of a sewage treatment plant (smell, development, drainage of treated effluent).
- Questions about who would pay for connecting to the system and decommissioning private sewer systems.
- Length of time for construction of a system to begin.
- Concern about upstream land use impacts on the watershed.
- Concern about water supply availability for existing residents.
- Concern about potential densification and development as a result of this project.
- A strong desire for further engagement on this issue.

The Board needs to carefully assess its commitment to this project. This project is not identified in the Board's Strategic Plan nor in any department's business plan for 2024, meaning no staff time has been allocated for this project. There is also no asset management program in place for existing utility systems to inform future reinvestment, not to mention new utility systems which may be acquired.

If a feasibility study is approved, further engagement is also recommended throughout the process to ensure that residents' concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered through the study process, and that the results reflect those considerations.

Funding would need to be allocated either through an amendment to the financial plan or through the 2025 budget, in which case a new budgetary estimate for a feasibility study and

public engagement would be recommended. Additional policy requirements also need to be met prior to proceeding with a study – please refer to the “Policy Implications” section of this AIS. As this item is not in any department’s business plans for 2024, it is recommended that this study proceed in 2025 to effectively manage competing workloads.

Attachments:

1. Conceptual Service Area Map
2. Survey Results – all participants
3. Survey Results – participant comments
4. Survey Results – Print Responses only
5. Survey Results – Web Responses only
6. Public Information Meeting Displays
7. Mailout to residents (sample)
8. 2009 Bouchie Milburn Watershed Management Plan

Financial Implications:

There is no expenditure authorization included in the 2024-2028 Financial Plan to fund this feasibility study. \$215,239 is available in surplus for the Feasibility Study function (\$0 requisition for 2024), and \$103,698 in surplus for the Rural Feasibility Study function (10,935 requisition for 2024).

To initiate the study in 2024, a financial plan amendment is required, along with subsequent procurement requirements under the Board’s Procurement Policy F4.1.

Policy Implications:

The Official Community Plan for this area does not identify a sewer system in Bouchie Lake as an objective, and this was not included in the Bouchie Milburn Neighbourhood Plan.

Policy E2.1 “Feasibility Studies and Use of Reserve Funds Policy” outlines the requirements for accessing funding for feasibility studies. The requirements for establishing a new service under the policy include:

- An agenda item summary outlining the particulars of the request will be presented to the Board for authority to proceed including a request to access feasibility funds.
- The scope of the services will be determined.
- The proposed service area will be determined.
- Costs required to provide the service will be determined.
- The assessed values of the new proposed service area will be determined.
- The method of taxation and taxation limitations will be determined.
- A draft budget will be developed and the proposed tax rate of the new service area will be determined.
- If deemed appropriate, a public information meeting will be held to inform residents of the proposed service and associated costs.
- An appropriate assent process will be determined to seek property owner Approval.
- A Bylaw will be drafted and presented to the Board for consideration.

The policy further states:

All associated costs will be charged to the feasibility study reserve. If a new service is established, funds utilized from the feasibility reserve shall be repaid by the service."

The Board will further note that Policy EN3.3 "Acquisition of Existing Water/Sewer Utilities Policy" has several provisions which can or are applicable to the development of a new sewer system, and should be considered as part of decision making.

Alignment with Strategic Plan:

- ☐ **Infrastructure and Asset Management:** To establish a systematic, predictable approach to managing the regional district's assets and infrastructure that builds on current asset management data and condition assessments.
- ☐ **Enhanced Communications and Engagement:** To build trust and credibility of the regional district by enhancing our communications and engagement with citizens, stakeholders, and volunteers.
- ☐ **Effective and Responsive Land Use Planning and Development:** To ensure our land use planning and development is responsive to future growth and housing needs, anticipates risks and hazards associated with climate change and provides efficient and consistent processes for landowners and developers.
- ☐ **Relationships with First Nations:** To foster a healthy and inclusive region by building and strengthening our relationships with First Nations and embracing the principles of reconciliation.

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CAO Comments:

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Options:

1. Authorize funding for the feasibility study and proceed with necessary policy actions.
2. Deny the request for feasibility study funds.

Recommendation:

Action at the discretion of the Board.