



MUNICIPALITY OF THE DISTRICT OF WEST HANTS
Special Council Minutes
March 26, 2019 8:00 p.m.
Sanford Council Chambers

1. Call to Order

Warden Zebian called the meeting to order at 8:00 p.m.

2. Call of Roll

Present:	A. Zebian	Warden
	P. Morton	Deputy Warden
	R. Jannasch	Councillor District 1
	K. Monroe	Councillor District 2
	D. Keith	Councillor District 3
	T. Leopold	Councillor, District 4 (left 8:35 p.m.)
	D. Francis	Councillor, District 5
	R. Hussey	Councillor District 6
	J. Daniels	Councillor District 7
	M. Laycock	Chief Administrative Officer
	C. Rochon	Director of Finance
	C. Remme	Acting Municipal Clerk
	J. Woodman	Administrative Assistant
Regrets:	R. Zwicker	Councillor District 10
Guests:	H. Allard	BioVectra
	J. Tusks	CEO Valley REN
	S. Robarts	Acadia
	C. Milne	Economic Development Consultant

There were 5 members of the public in attendance.

3. Announcements

Warden Zebian advised that the Council meeting is live-streamed on Facebook then reviewed the fire evacuation procedures.

4. Approval of Agenda, including additions or deletions

MOVED and SECONDED that the agenda be approved as circulated.
Motion Carried.

5. Report(s) of the Committee(s) and Officer(s)

a. Report of the Chief Administrative Officer(s)

I. Valley Regional Enterprises Network – Request for Direction

CAO Laycock explained that the Regional Enterprise Networks (REN) provide regional economic leadership and help to develop regional economic strategies, while supporting small, local businesses. He reported that REN bring together business communities, the Province, and municipalities. He advised there has been ongoing interest in the role that the Valley REN plays in the economic benefit of West Hants. He suggested there has been some concern raised that there has been little activity in West Hants from the Valley REN. He confirmed that Jenn Tufts was part of the BioVectra meeting on March 6, 2019 to support the needs of BioVectra as it looks to increase its operations. He added that Rachel Brighton has been critical in supporting the VFCN and its consultants as they work toward the VFCN business plan. He noted that Richelle Brown-Redden has been streamlining the business services and has been actively working with small and medium size businesses in West Hants. He explained that Emily Kennedy has hosted three events supporting mentoring and immigration resources in the West Hants area and has a small number of Connectors and Connectees in West Hants and will look to expand services and presence in the area now that the Program has officially renewed for another year.

CAO Laycock advised to date they have engaged with 97 businesses in total (66 Business and Retention clients, 13 manufacturers and 18 informational meetings with businesses).

CAO Laycock advised should Council wish to give notice to withdraw from the Valley REN, then section 14 of the inter-municipal agreement would have to be followed. He advised written notice must be given by West Hants at the beginning of any fiscal year to the Chair of the Liaison and Oversight Committee and the Chair of the Board of Directors at a minimum of twelve months in advance of the fiscal year in which West Hants intends to withdraw. He suggested there are some asset and liability issues that need to be considered and that any share owing to or from West Hants would be based on its proportional contribution, which is currently at 18.6% of the total budget.

CAO Laycock confirmed that he had reviewed Bill 55 and that it does not speak to West Hants need to obtain the Co-ordinating Committee's approval to withdraw from the Valley REN contract.

CAO Laycock reported that funding for the Valley REN is provided by the municipal partners and the Province. He stated that currently the municipal partners contribute 50% of the total budgeted cost with the other half coming from the Province. He noted the anticipated 2019-2020 total Valley REN budget is \$526,131. He confirmed a review of the cost sharing formula is required every five years and is up for review this year. He explained the 2019-2020 cost to West Hants is \$49,891 and should Council choose to withdraw from the Valley REN this would be a potential savings to the new Regional Municipality.

CAO Laycock pointed out that he received a call from the Province today to reassure Council that they are committed to this process and pointed out the importance of the REN model. He advised that the Province indicated they would be creating more accountability to Council so there is more communication about the activities and would like Council to reconsider withdrawing from REN. He asked for direction from Council on how to proceed.

Deputy Warden Morton introduced Heather Allard, BioVectra; Jennifer Tusks, CEO Valley REN; Scott Robarts, Acadia; and Colby Milne.

Councillor Hussey advised that he is a firm believer that the Municipality needs to take matters into their own hands to promote the area but believed with the consolidation process now is not the time to withdrawal and cautioned that West Hants may have to pay for the Town's share as well. CAO Laycock agreed due to consolidation it is already a complex process and staff would need to brainstorm solutions to deal with that issue.

Councillor Monroe indicated that she did not see the return coming, she felt that Council would see a better return by engaging on our own. She reminded that West Hants is not even part of the valley and the perception is we are not serviced as we should be, and do not have the industry here. She clarified that she meant no disrespect to the Valley REN.

Councillor Daniels suggested that REN has a broad area to cover but suggested it affects all areas in a positive way. She noted the industries that REN work with throughout the valley employee people in West Hants. She expressed concern about withdrawing and reminded that West Hants is a major stakeholder and feared it would cripple REN and they would not be able to meet their mandate. She cautioned penalizing the business and industry community. She felt Council is obligated to strengthen the business community as per the citizens request in the strategic plan. She suggested leaving it in the hands of professionals to provide tangible results. She offered if there are any concerns now is the time to ask.

Councillor Jannasch indicated that he understood how REN got started and that the goals and intentions were good but suggested for the last three years there has not been any results. He offered some of the fault is on Council for not setting up goals, and not discussing what they believe is economic development. He stated at this point it is very important to decide to withdraw or not. He advised so far, he has not been in support of staying with REN and would like to hear a good argument to continue.

Councillor Francis asked if someone could speak on what REN is doing for BioVectra. Ms. Tufts reported in the summer of 2018 the Task Force met with manufacturers and service providers to get a consensus on the challenges of the manufacturing sector. She suggested the three issues identified were labour, marketing and energy. She

noted from there they did qualitative and quantitative data collection and issued a third-party survey to manufacturers with 9 in the region participating. She noted they average an annual revenue of \$30 million and employ approximately 2500 people as employees in this area and in the next five years will need to fill 604 full time equivalent positions. She reported they also conducted site visits with 6 manufacturers including CKF and BioVectra and from there held a summit event. With the information collected they began to craft strategies to solve the three key areas identified. She confirmed they formed action teams with manufacturers who are currently formulating their action plan which will be implemented by the Task Force.

Ms. Tufts reported they have helped 66 Business and Retention clients and 13 are from West Hants. Ms. Allard of BioVectra noted that BioVectra is new to the community and advised she is interested in the overall strategy, so people understand that this area is very unique and there are all these competencies across the board to help continually grow their business. She confirmed they have had 4 or 5 members of their employee group on the Task Force and engaged in various levels of activities, adding they are getting an understanding of what the resources are across the region and who they need to connect with.

Mr. Robarts advised he is the most recent member of the Valley REN Board and expressed the importance of the partnering that is occurring and ensuring that resources are not being as duplicated. He suggested letting REN continue and felt that significant improvements will occur.

Councillor Keith agreed that West Hants should wait until next year and provide the opportunity to move ahead and be positive. Councillor Monroe offered that she respected the opinion but expressed disappointment in seeing reports but not results. She suggested if nothing else this is a word of notice from her. She offered that at a recent meeting she was very concerned about the tone and suggested that the communications were threatening which she did not agree with.

Councillor Francis inquired how REN approach the businesses. Ms. Tufts offered they only have one person dedicated to that position, and that traditionally it has been word of mouth. She confirmed they have not actively gone and promoted yet, but that they now have experience and that they plan to be more strategic. She asked Council if they know of any businesses that need assistance to please refer them to REN. Councillor Francis suggested that she is concerned that REN is not actively seeking businesses to come to the area.

Councillor Francis asked how West Hants can find out exactly what REN is doing for this area. Ms. Tufts asked Council how they would like to be communicated with. She suggested normally they collect data on a valley wide scale however offered to pull West Hants data out to present to Council. Councillor Francis suggested it should

be brought to Council and shown how many businesses that REN reached out to in West Hants.

Councillor Leopold indicated that she supported the recommendation as presented to withdraw. She noted that she has an issue with duplication of programs that exist at multiple levels. She expressed concern about the changeover in the CEO position and the turnover of staff. She suggested that there are several reports but there does not seem to be an explanation of key performance indicators and if they are being met. She did not agree with waiting to withdraw and reminded that the new Council will make lots of decisions and take the direction they feel is prudent.

Councillor Leopold left the meeting.

Councillor Hussey pointed out that the area has significant job loss and that with the new Regional entity it is important to grow the area. He advised he would like to see Colby Milne and Valley REN prove to Council that REN has earned the funding. Warden Zebian clarified that Council would not be pulling funding for this current year only giving notice to withdraw.

Mr. Robarts offered there has been valid criticism and suggestions around the table this evening. He confirmed there is a Liaison and Oversight Committee (LOC) made of Council members to which REN reports the business plan and the approval of this is what sets out the benchmarks that is used by REN for reporting throughout the year showing what was achieved. He stressed that the need for communications between the Council and LOC to ensure the goals and outcomes set are what is needed.

Councillor Monroe suggested that West Hants is not the only unit who has concerns about the liability of REN. She does not believe there is a feeling that everyone is getting their monies worth and felt it would be better to have our own internal staff. She suggested there was a desire for manufacturing in the area but there were key pieces missing that was needed to make it happen.

MOVED and SECONDED that Council direct staff to write a letter to the Valley REN Liaison and Oversight Committee and the Valley REN Board of Directors before March 31, 2019 outlining West Hants's intent to withdraw from the Valley REN effective April 1, 2020.

Motion Defeated.

Councillors Keith, Francis, Hussey, Daniels, Warden Zebian and Deputy Warden Morton voted nay.

6. Miscellaneous/New Business

There was no miscellaneous or new business.

7. Date of Next Meeting – April 09, 2019

The next Regular Council meeting will be held April 9, 2019 at 7:00 p.m.

8. Adjournment

MOVED and SECONDED that the meeting be adjourned.

Motion Carried.

The meeting adjourned at 8:46 p.m.

Abraham Zebian, Warden

Rhonda Brown, Municipal Clerk