



GMRSC – Meeting Minutes – 2024-2
Greater Miramichi Regional Service Commission
February 28, 2024

The Chairperson, Art O'Donnell, called the meeting to order at 5:02 pm.

Item 2024-2-01 Record of Attendance

Members present:

Mayor, Art O'Donnell
Mayor, Adam Lordon
Mayor, Kevin Russell
Gerald Ross, Alternate (Alnwick)
Lynn Gregan, RD Rep

Also present:

Wilson Bell, Chief Executive Officer
Sharon Williston, Recording Secretary
Justin Forbes, Director of Operations
Krista Chase, Economic and Labor Force Development Director
Sylvie Roussel, Community Development Director
Tara Ross, CAO Alnwick (Zoom)
Mike Randall, Portfolio (via Zoom)
Ron Gaudet, Local Services Manager
Nathan Delong, Press

Regrets:

Mayor Doug Munn
Mayor Ernest Robichaud

Item 2024-2-02: Approval of Agenda

Moved: K. RUSSELL
Seconded: L Gregan

Motion: "that the Agenda Item 2024-7 be tabled for this meeting and to be revisited at a later date."

Moved: L. Gregan
Seconded: A. Lordon

Resolved, “that the amended agenda of meeting 2024-2 be accepted.”
Carried

Item 2024-2-03: Declaration of Conflict of Interest

None declared.

Item 2024-2-04: Approval of Minutes of January 24, 2024

Moved: L. Gregan
Seconded: K. Russell

Resolved, “that the minutes of the GMRSC Meeting 2024-1 be approved as presented.”
Carried

Item 2024-2-05: GMRSC Regional Strategy – Implementation Plan

Wilson Bell, CEO presented the GMRSC Regional Strategy – Implementation Plan.

BACKGROUND

With Local Governance Reform, the GMRSC has the obligation, according to regulation, to develop a comprehensive Regional Strategy aimed at identifying the strengths and gaps in the region and at establishing priorities and actions, especially with respect to the additional mandated functions, to provide direction to the board of directors for the next five years. With the numerous changes to the organizational structure of the GMRSC and to the service delivery model because of Local Governance Reform, this strategy guides the Commission in ensuring it delivers quality services at an affordable cost for the population, strengthen investment opportunities for economic development and tourism promotion, and also help the region attract entrepreneurs, newcomers, and visitors from outside New Brunswick.

The consultant (Portfolio) facilitated a bottom-up process of creating the Regional Strategy and consultation process that involved conducting a strategic assessment for each mandated service, stakeholder and First Nations engagement, developing a vision statement, establishing regional goals, and developing an implementation plan with performance targets and an accountability framework. More specifically, the Regional Strategy contains:

- A vision statement
- State the methodology and First Nations engagement process that has contributed to the adoption of the Regional Strategy.
- State the strategy development methodology and stakeholder engagement processes that have contributed to the adoption of the Regional Strategy.
- Include a strategic assessment for each mandated service as defined in the Regional Service Delivery Act, in addition to existing (e.g., land use planning

- services) and voluntary services (i.e., Miramichi Regional Housing Authority), that examines how services are interconnected with other mandated services.
- Accounts for current provincial priorities related to services and how they intersect with regional priorities.
 - Set regional goals to be met during the period covered by the strategy (5years) that consider, at a minimum, the mandated services as defined in the RSDA and any other services and collaborative initiatives provided by the GMRSC.
 - Have a five-year implementation plan with measurable (attainable) benchmarks (targets) and objectives, and establish means to set priorities, through collaboration with stakeholders and partners, that match resources and opportunities.
 - The Implementation Plan served as a basis for the preparation of three-year department operational Work Plans that Commission staff can use and refer to achieve the objectives of the Regional Strategy. The Work Plans accompany the Implementation Plan and clearly articulates tasks, timelines, and responsible GMRSC department. The Work Plan provides direction and clarity of the tasks, initiatives, and projects that will be undertaken for the member communities over the next three-years.

Previous Motion:

The following motion was passed at the August 17th, 2023, GMRSC Board Meeting:

Resolved, that the GMRSC Board hereby approves the vision mandate goals and objectives of the Regional Strategy dated August 17, 2023, endorsing the fundamental strategy principles outlines therein, with the exception of the Implementation Plan detailed in Appendix A. Furthermore, the GMRSC shall engage board members to develop and finalize the implementation plan detailed in Appendix A.”

The GMRSC met on two occasions in briefing sessions to review, amend and discuss the content of the Regional Strategy’s Implementation Plan. The Plan has been adjusted to reflect the direction provided by the Board. The Implementation Plan is divided into service delivery categories and describes when (year) each will be initiated or completed. Timing of when tasks or projects are scheduled to be completed to consider staff resources, financial ability, and the priorities of the member communities and the Commission.

Once approved by the Board, the Implementation Plan will provide a checklist to review the activities each year. The Implementation Plan will be referred to during annual budget preparations to determine if additional funding is needed or if funds are to be allocated within the budget to ensure a specific project is initiated each year. Ther Plan also identifies possible outside funding opportunities that can assist in the implementation of components of the Regional Strategy.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

The GMRSC Board should approve the GMRSC’s Regional Strategy Implementation Plan as presented and amended (Dated January 2024). Further, that the Implementation Plan be implemented as financial resources permit and that the Board review it annually in preparation for the operating and capital budget.

This implementation plan reflects the comments and concerns directed by the board at the time of the two briefing sessions.

POSSIBLE MOTION:

Resolved, that the GMRSC Board approves the GMRSC’s Regional Strategy Implementation Plan (Dated January 2024) as presented and amended. Further, that the Implementation Plan be implemented as financial resources permit and that the Board review it annually in preparation for the Commission’s operating and capital budget.

Moved: L. Gregan
Seconded: A. Lordon

Mayor Lordon stated that all involved worked hard on both sides of the table and the revisions have made the plan stronger and has shared their vision.

He also had some questions on the Economical Development side of the Implementation plan on *Page 21 of appendix A*, Items 4, 5 and 6 regarding hiring staff. It was noted that the current position of Director of Regional Growth is Krista Chase already hired at the GMRSC.

Mayor Lordon wanted to ensure that the Regional Plan is reviewed annually. He also supported the motion but wanted to reword the “possible” motion suggested above.

The following motion reflects the changes as recommended by Mayor Adam Lordon.

Motion, that the GMRSC Board approves the GMRSC’s Regional Strategy Implementation Plan (Dated January 2024) as presented and amended. Further, that the implementation Plan be implemented, and funding considered thru the annual budgeting process.

Moved: A. Lordon
Seconded: G. Ross

Resolved, “that the motion be approved as amended.”
Carried

Item 2024-2-06: Miramichi Regional Housing Authority – Proposed Amendments to Service Agreement

Justin Forbes, Director of Miramichi Regional Housing Authority presented the proposed amendments to Service Agreement and Financial/Budget Implications.

BACKGROUND:

In August 2022, the GMRSC formed a partnership with the City of Miramichi, supported by the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency (ACOA) and Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour/WorkingNB (PETL/WorkingNB), to serve as the Regional Housing Authority for the Miramichi region. This initiative, operational for about 18 months, is detailed in the Service Delivery Agreement in Attachment A of this memo, with Schedule A on page 5 outlining the services.

The initial agreement specified the services provided by the Housing Authority, which has been diligently fulfilling its responsibilities. The GMRSC/MRHA is positioned to enhance our services, focusing on increased housing stakeholder support, the promotion of regional housing needs, and the facilitation of non-market housing solutions, such as affordable housing and homelessness initiatives. The proposed changes, which include amendments to the services listed in Schedule A and the introduction of new services in Schedule B, reflect our shift from the development to the implementation phase of our Regional Housing Action Plan, approved by the Board in May 2023. These changes aim to:

- Acknowledge ongoing and potential collaborations with municipal housing working groups.
- Formally recognize the advisory and support services provided to developers by the MRHA.
- Clarify the MRHA's role in advocating for housing needs on regional committees.
- Define a mandate for the MRHA to develop non-market housing solutions.
- Expand annual reporting requirements to include a broader range of stakeholders beyond the City of Miramichi.

These proposed changes are designed to formalize and broaden the scope of the Housing Authority's operations, aligning with strategic objectives and regional needs. The amendments have been developed in accordance with the Commission's Regional Strategy, feedback from the City of Miramichi, and an assessment of service gaps.

As a labor and employment matter, the proposal was discussed in-camera during the January 24 Board meeting. On February 21, 2024, representatives from the GMRC/MRHA, City of Miramichi, PETL/WorkingNB, and ACOA reviewed the proposed service agreement revisions, endorsing the addition of new services in a new Schedule B.

The amendments are scheduled for immediate implementation upon mutual agreement and signing of the revised contract.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS AND BUDGET:

The proposed service expansions and the inclusion of a Housing Initiatives Manager in 2024 have been budgeted for in 2024. Consequently, these amendments can be accommodated within our existing budget for 2024 into 2025. Post this period, the GMRSC will engage in developing funding contracts with all regional communities to support the Housing Authority, furthering our collective effort to address the housing needs within the Miramichi region. Additionally, the MRHA continuously monitors provincial and federal funding opportunities to minimize costs to members.

Moved: A. Lordon
Seconded: L. Gregan

Resolved, that the GMRSC Board authorizes the CEO to finalize and sign the updated agreement with the City of Miramichi on the GMRSC's behalf, incorporating these amendments and enhancing our service delivery to meet the evolving housing needs of the Miramichi region.
Carried

ITEM 2024-2-07: Compressed Work Week Proposal (this item was tabled for next GMRSC Board meeting)

ITEM-2024-2-08 2024 Regional Public Safety Initiative – Project Lifesaver

Justin Forbes, Director of Operations presented the Public Safety Initiative.

The GMRSC's Public Safety Committee, established in February 2023, aims to enhance collaboration on policing, fire protection, and emergency management through information exchange and joint planning. Following discussions on regional public safety initiatives during the Committee's meeting on June 14, 2023, and subsequent endorsement by the GMRSC Standing Committee on July 11, 2023, the GMRSC Board approved a strategic objective within the August 2023 Regional Strategy to allocate funds for regional public safety initiatives.

For the 2024 fiscal year, a total of \$10,000, comprising \$5,000 from combined GMRSC member contributions and an equal match from the Regional Services Support Fund (RSSF), has been earmarked for such initiatives.

During the Public Safety Committee's meeting on February 13, 2024, the Miramichi Ground Search and Rescue's (MGSAR) proposal for "Project Lifesaver" received broad support. This initiative aims to safeguard individuals with cognitive impairments by utilizing wearable transmitters for efficient location in the event of their disappearance. Project Lifesaver, established in 1999, is recognized internationally for its effectiveness in reducing search times by 95%, averaging 30 minutes through the use of specialized locating technology.

MGSAR's proposal for "Project Lifesaver" can be effectively implemented within the \$10,000 budget, with projected costs around \$7,000 (CAD, including taxes). This includes essential equipment such as transmitters, bands, batteries, and receivers, potentially covering up to 25 bracelets per community.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Based on the Public Safety Committee's endorsement, it is recommended that the GMRSC allocate up to \$10,000 to MGSAR for the implementation of Project Lifesaver within our member communities. This funding aligns with the Commission's overarching regional goal to maintain Greater Miramichi as a safe region to grow and thrive, efficiently utilizing the available budget, with 50% of the funding sourced from the 2024 RSSF allocation for regional public safety initiatives.

This is a one-time cost for the GMRSC. Wilson Bell commented that this is a win for us "Project Lifesaver" and expressed what a huge asset the newly formed Advisory Committee is for the GMRSC.

Moved: L. Gregan

Seconded: K. Russell

Resolved, that the GMRSC Board approves funding up to \$10,000 for the region-wide implementation of Project Lifesaver by MGSAR, with half of the funding derived from the RSSF for 2024 public safety initiatives.

Carried

Item 2024-2-09 – CEO Update

Wilson Bell, CEO presented the update.

The following new positions have been posted:

- Approvals Coordinator
- Economic Development Growth Officer
- Senior Communications and Marketing Manager
- Housing Initiatives Manager.

- A study is underway to determine if a Mobile Depot for HHW is feasible option/alternate to the annual HHW collection events.
- GMRSC Branding Strategy is also underway. Proposed Brand Name and Logo
- A study to evaluate the feasibility of applying Performance - Based Zoning in the Rural Communities and the Rural District will commence shortly. Meetings with the municipal councils and rural district will be arranged in the coming weeks.
- The next Regular Commission Board meeting is scheduled for March 27th, 2024, at 5:00 PM.

Moved: K. Russell

Seconded: L. Gregan

Resolved, to accept the CEO update as presented."

Carried

Item 2024-2-10 – Board Briefing Session (Moved In Camera Session - 5:47 pm)

ADJOURNMENT

It was moved by Kevin Russell to adjourn the meeting.

There being no further business, the Chairperson declared the meeting adjourned at 6:59 pm.

Respectfully submitted:

Sharon Williston

Sharon Williston, Recording Secretary

Wilson Bell

Wilson Bell, RPP, MCIP, CEO