



Rural Municipality of Belfast

Mayor: Garth Gillis; Chief Administrative Officer: Bob Brooks
Incorporated 1972

Annexation Exercise

(RMB's road to Consultation with Surrounding Unincorporated Communities)

August 14, 2024

Welcome to tonight's Public Annexation Sub-Committee Meeting. My name is Councillor Katherine Bryson, I am the Chair of the Annexation Sub-Committee, and I just wanted to express my appreciation for you being here. Tonight, we will try to alleviate any concerns and provide you with accurate information.

But first, just a reminder for all participants that offensive language and abusive behaviour (verbal, physical or written) will not be tolerated towards Councillors, RMB staff, or any other members of the public. If at any time during tonight's meeting, any individual fails to comply with the above behavioral rules, they will be asked to leave the meeting. If they choose not to leave; the meeting will end immediately and will be rescheduled for a later date.

That said, what we would like to do tonight is to bring everyone up to speed as to where we started, where we are now, and the process moving forward. Then we will open the floor for public comment, every participant will be allotted five minutes to start, then we will give the Committee an opportunity to respond and the ability to ask questions to the participants.

Why we started:

In Spring 2023, the Honourable Minister Lantz announced his intention to have more unincorporated communities in PEI become part of a Municipality or establish themselves as a Municipality, by way of introducing province wide municipalization.

At that time there were legitimate fears that the PEI Government might force Municipal Restructuring onto existing Municipalities and unincorporated communities. In conversation with several individuals, it was discovered the ultimate intention for our region was the creation of a large municipality encompassing Route 3-South, which would include Three Rivers, Belfast, Murray River, Murray Harbour and the surrounding unincorporated areas.

When the issue was brought to the Rural Municipality of Belfast Council; Council decided they would prefer a proactive approach to see if Annexation made sense rather than wait and see what the government issued, both for RMB and the surrounding unincorporated communities. Council gave the go-ahead to do some initial research to see if RMB should even start the process. After approximately a year of Sub-Committee research; Committee recommended and Council agreed that RMB should consider and consult with 17 communities to see if Annexation would make sense for all parties. Months after the committee was formed, The Premier firmly denounced the idea of province wide municipalization during this term, and instead suggested

that it would be better if it were a Community/Municipality-led Municipal Restructuring Process instead. We have proceeded with our research despite this news as an attempt to get ahead of the restructuring process which is undoubtedly to occur at some point in the future.

RMB has also met with Provincial Government representatives to confirm the steps for annexation and information required and have contacted Three Rivers, Murray River and Murray Harbour, to see if they had any current plans of their own for Annexation or Amalgamation. All said they have no current plans, but were interested in being kept up-to-date and informed in our process and committed to letting RMB know if any problems or issues arise.

As committee members we have many of the same concerns you may have. Questions we have asked and addressed through our committee meetings include:

- How do we work with and support each individual Fire District? We have been informed that if the annexation process goes forward there will be NO changes to the fire districts. Every individual will continue to be covered, as they are today by their local fire departments. The only change to unincorporated areas would be that RMB would collect the fire dues (included in our property tax payments) and pass them on to the fire departments instead of the provincial government. There would be no change to RMB residents.
- Would there be an additional tax burden for the residents, and if so, how much? We are still examining this and will have information available for the community consultation meetings, when they are held in the future.
- Can RMB provide additional benefit to those unincorporated communities, like:
 - Extra Funds for its individual fire services?
 - Extra funds for its Rec Centres?
 - Extra funds for its community groups?
 - Extra funds for its community projects?
 - The preliminary findings of the Committee answered YES to all those questions.

The committee continues to do research to firm up these findings and ensure all questions are answered prior to community consultation meetings.

Where we are now:

RMB, under the Committee Mandate:

- Is really just starting the process.
- Have committed to making ALL committee meetings public, as they have been to date and will continue to be moving forward.
- ALL meetings are in accordance with *Municipal Government Act* notification specifications. They are announced at our monthly council meetings and posted to our RMB website.
- Is currently looking for a contractor to assist RMB with the public process and funding from an outside source.
- Is gathering all the background information that will be required for a proposal to the Government of PEI (if there is agreement to move forward with the process).

- RMB is committed to transparency. ALL information on this topic is located on the RMB website and a summary report is made during public Council Meetings on the progress.

The Process Moving Forward:

Once a contractor is found and the funding confirmed from an outside source:

- RMB and the Contractor will complete the required research to ensure all questions are answered prior to the community consultation meetings.
- RMB and the Contractor will inform each individual resident of the unincorporated communities, by mail, about what is going on, the plan moving forward and the dates, times and locations of community consultation meetings.
- RMB will host public community consultation meetings for comments and concerns.
- RMB will work with the Provincial Government to ensure all proper protocols are followed.
- After all the committee work is completed, in another public meeting, Council will decide to proceed (or not) with a proposal.
- If the decision is to proceed, a proposal will be sent to the Province.
- If the decision is to not proceed, the work on possible Annexation stops.

That is where RMB is at on this issue. We hope we have cleared up any misinformation. That said, RMB is now more than happy to open the floor for questions. Just a reminder that this meeting is being live streamed on Facebook, and by its nature all comments and the video itself become a permanent record. I would also like to remind any viewers watching, that comments on this stream are not monitored and not responded to. Should anyone have questions following this meeting they are encouraged to email those to the RMB office email ruralmunicipalityofbelfast@gmail.com.

Anyone wishing to present or ask questions please raise your hands. Once recognised, we will have you move to the front.

Sincerely,

Chair – Councillor Katherine Bryson

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