

Best Practice

The Weyburn District Regional Planning Commission

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THE PRACTICE

The Weyburn District Regional Planning Commission (WDRPC) was founded in early 2011 (conception discussion began in 2009). The commission is a joint effort between the City of Weyburn and the RM of Weyburn No 67. The commission is comprised of two city elected officials, two RM elected officials, one member at large, the Chamber of Commerce manager, the City Planner, and the RM Administrator. This commission has also hired a professional planning consultant and a secretary. The commission's main focus is on cooperative regional growth.

The purpose of developing the commission was to promote and foster long range planning and cooperation between municipalities and provincial agencies, provide an inter-municipal forum to communities on regional issues, and advise the councils of member municipalities on matters of regional significance.

THE PROCESS

The real need for a commission of this type arose when both the City and the RM of Weyburn experienced an influx of people and businesses to the area. The RM and the City met to discuss what each municipality could offer, and how they could meet the different needs and service requirements of those moving into the area.

All parties signed a Memorandum of Understanding. This memorandum contained all of the terms of the agreements, how the parties would meet, when they would meet, how the money would be split and how many representatives each municipality would have. The memorandum was also accompanied by the Terms of Reference, which went into detail what the memorandum stated, and what the role of the members would be. Before the agreement could be signed, a resolution had to be passed by both Councils in favour of the commission and a Member at Large was hired.

In order to start working on this project, the commission followed the "Planning Districts: A Tool for Growth" from the *Planning and Development Act, 2007*. An application for funding from the New Deal for Cities and Communities was submitted in order to help the development of a District Planning Commission and to develop a District Official Community Plan. Funding was approved on October 26, 2010 for the amount of \$72,000. Each municipality contributed \$18,000 and PFG funding contributed the other \$36,000. This money allowed the commission to hire a planning consultant.

THE RESULTS

A measurable outcome for the RM is getting low pressure water to an industrial subdivision called Evanston Park. The commission received and reviewed a submission for low pressure water. Once the specifics were defined, the commission recommended low pressure water for Evanston Park. The recommendation was taken back to City Council and was approved.

A measurable outcome for the City is increased communication with the RM. A Municipal Interface Area (MIA) was also established. The MIA deals with all proposed developments.

LESSONS LEARNED

- Cooperation between municipalities, and interest groups is important for working towards a common goal
- Hiring a planning consultant and mediator may be necessary in order to help facilitate further discussions
- The commission itself must be a workable size, but must also be capable of communicating ideas to Council in a clear and concise way
- The commission must be treated as an advisory body for now, but there is potential for it to evolve into an approval authority