



REPORT

To: Chair and Directors

Report Number: ADM-BRD-351

From: Tyra Henderson, Corporate Officer

Date: November 10, 2022

Subject: Electoral Area B FSJ Public Library Financial Contribution Service Assent Voting Results

RECOMMENDATION #1: [Corporate Unweighted]

That the Regional Board receive the assent voting results for the Electoral Area B Fort St. John Public Library Financial Contribution Service Establishment Bylaw No. 2484, 2022 as follows: 180 votes in favour, 177 votes against.

RECOMMENDATION #2: [Corporate Unweighted]

That the Regional Board adopt Electoral Area B Fort St. John Public Library Financial Contribution Service Establishment Bylaw No. 2484, 2022.

BACKGROUND/RATIONALE:

As required by the *Local Government Act*, the final voting results for the Electoral Area B FSJ Public Library Financial Contribution Service Assent Voting were declared on October 19, 2022. The assent voting passed with 50.4% of votes cast in favour of establishing the new service. With an estimated 3795 eligible voters, and a total of 357 votes cast, the voter turnout was approximately 9.4%.

No mail ballot packages were requested for the Area B Library assent voting.

The Regional Board may now adopt the bylaw. Once adopted, a thirty-day quashing period must be observed, during which the bylaw can be challenged through an application to the Supreme Court in accordance with the *Local Government Act*, sections 623 and 624. Once the quashing period is over, staff will forward a copy of the adopted bylaw to BC Assessment to ensure they have the information required for taxation to begin in 2023, and to the Ministry of Municipal Affairs, for their records.

Should the Board wish to proceed with the implementation of the service in 2023, a third resolution is included in Alternative Options for the Board's consideration, directing that a draft budget be prepared by staff for the Board's consideration. At the bylaw approval stage, when the Ministry of Municipal Affairs contacted staff to ask whether or not the functions would be initiated in 2023 or later, it was discovered that while BC Assessment advice is that bylaws not adopted by October 1 in any given year will not be active in the subsequent year, it is possible to do so. The Chief Financial Officer has confirmed that a budget can be approved for 2023; however, bylaws that are adopted after the October 1 deadline do not show on the Completed Assessment Roll for the upcoming year. Although an estimate of tax rate can be made without the completed roll information, it may not be 100% accurate. Staff uses the completed roll to estimate tax rates during the budget process, as it provides the total assessment for each function. In cases where an entire Electoral Area is in the service function, the information is already provided in the completed roll. Service functions with defined areas have a risk of discrepancy as there are occasionally differences in folio data between the PRRD and BC Assessment, and the

Completed Roll is used to reconcile. Therefore, the risk of discrepancy is small as four of the services are regional, and the Library service is Area B in its entirety.

In the first year, assent voting costs will be recovered from the function, and the other line items included in the budget.

On September 27, 2021, the Rural Budgets Administration Committee passed the following resolution:

MOVED, SECONDED, and CARRIED

“That the Rural Budgets Administration Committee authorize a multi-year grant commitment in the amount of \$60,000 per year for two years beginning in 2022, payable from Electoral Area B Fair Share, to be issued to the Fort St. John Public Library Association to assist with operational costs of the Fort St. John Public Library with the condition that a referendum be held on October 15, 2022 to gain the support of the elector; further, that the 2022 grant be payable upon the approval of the 2022 Annual Budget.”

Should the Board wish to implement the service in 2023, the second year grant approval would need to be cancelled as the funding would come from taxation instead of via grant funding.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS:

1. That the Regional Board authorize a draft budget be prepared for Function 291 – Electoral Area B FSJ Library Financial Contribution Service, for consideration during 2023 Budget Discussions.
2. That the Regional Board provide further direction.

STRATEGIC PLAN RELEVANCE:

☒ Not Applicable to Strategic Plan

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATION(S):

The overall cost of conducting the five assent voting processes has yet to be calculated. Costs were shared between the General Local Election and the five assent voting opportunities. COVID funds set aside in 2021 to assist with assent voting opportunities were also used this year in an effort to encourage voters to return to ‘normal’ activities and get out and vote. Staff costs to run the 19 polling stations are estimated at \$46,000, including meals and mileage. Advertising costs have not been totaled as all invoices are not yet received; however, advertising and outreach costs are estimated at approximately \$90,000. Other costs include ballots, ballot boxes, and other stationary supplies. Once all expenses are invoiced and paid, staff will review costs to inform future budget allocations for election expenses.

Should the Board wish to proceed immediately with the implementation of the service, a draft budget will be required for the Boards approval as part of the 2023 Financial Plan.

The Electoral Area B Fort St. John Library Service bylaw is applicable in all of Electoral Area B, meaning that the entire Electoral Area is included in the service area/benefitting area for the service. The maximum requisition in the bylaw is the greater of \$100,000 or a property value tax of \$0.0281/\$1000,

applied to the net taxable value of land and improvements. The estimated year one residential tax rate on improvements only is \$0.011 per \$1000.

COMMUNICATIONS CONSIDERATION(S):

The preliminary Assent Voting results were posted on the PRRD web page and emailed to all elected officials after the close of the polls on October 15, 2022. The declaration of the final results was posted to the web page on October 19, 2022, and provided to all candidates and elected officials. Elections BC and the Ministry were also provided the election results. The results were also posted to the province wide election report site operated by Civic Info. A notice in the Gazette will be submitted in accordance with the *Local Government Act*.

Zero mail ballot packages were issued for the Electoral Area B FSJ Public Library Financial Contribution Service assent voting.

Extensive communications efforts were made to raise general awareness of the assent voting process and the proposed service, far above and beyond the mandatory public newspaper notices. Attached for your information is the 2022 local government election outreach report, which illustrates the extensive public notice and education undertaken this election year.

OTHER CONSIDERATION(S):

None at this time.

Attachments:

1. Electoral Area B FSJ Public Library Financial Contribution Service Establishment Bylaw No. 2484, 2022
2. Determination of Official Assent Voting Results – Electoral Area B FSJ Public Library Financial Contribution Service
3. Declaration of Official Assent Voting Results – Electoral Area B FSJ Public Library Financial Contribution Service.
4. 2022 Local Government Election Outreach Report.

External Links:

1. [Report No. CS-BRD-148 – Electoral Area B FSJ Public Library Financial Contribution Service Bylaw](#) (Agenda Item 10.1 – May 12, 2022)
2. PRRD Elections Webpage – [FSJ Library Contribution Service Assent Voting Information Page](#)