

# Local Government Asset Management Working Group

## Notes of March 12 Meeting

Meeting Location: BCIT (Downtown Campus) Room 820  
555 Seymour Street, Vancouver

### In Attendance:

Glen Brown	Ministry of Community Development
Brian Bedford	Ministry of Community Development
Kim Fowler	Planning Institute of British Columbia
Susan Clift	Municipal Engineers Division, APEGBC
Tom MacDonald	Local Government Management Association
Jeannette Austin	Public Works Association of BC
Gordon Brown	City of Campbell River
Tom Abbuhl	Centre for Infrastructure Management, BCIT
Joe Young (for Nicol Benchimol)	INAC
Stan Westby	City of Powell River
Sid Smith	District of Lake Country
Janice Irwin	Government Financial Officers Association of BC
Neil Nyberg	Master Municipal Construction Documents Association
Brenda Gibson	Union of British Columbia Municipalities
Barbara Dabrowski	Centre for Infrastructure Management, BCIT
Wally Wells	Wells Infrastructure Group Inc.

### 1) **Opening – Glen Brown**

The meeting was opened by Glen Brown. Glen thanked BCIT for hosting the meeting at their facilities. Glen welcomed all at our first meeting of the Local Government Asset Management Working Group and commented on the Provincial role of supporting the group but not taking a lead role. The Associations present are those with a specific role and interest in asset management. The municipalities represent different locations around the Province and different size and government structures. Two spaces are still available with the intent of someone appropriate from northern BC, Eastern BC and/ or a Regional District. The membership can and should be reviewed by the Working Group periodically and changes made as deemed appropriate.

*(Note: Subsequent to the meeting Frank Blues of the City of Prince George has been contacted and is very eager to join the Group.)*

Each person was asked to introduce themselves and the group they represent with a short opening statement from each. This was concluded.

## 2) Appointment of Chair

The Working Group was requested to elect a chair from among the members. Glen Brown asked for nominations. Tom Abbuhl recommended Stan Westby as the chairperson. Tom advised that Stan, as a municipal CAO and a member of the National Asset Management Working Group would be an appropriate candidate for the Chair.

Moved by: Tom Abbuhl  
Seconded by: Janice Irwin

That Stan Westby, CAO of the City of Powell River, be appointed chair of the Local Government Asset Management Working Group.

Carried unanimously.

Stan Westby assumed the role of Chair. Stan thanked Glen Brown and the Ministry of Community Development for taking the lead role in establishing and supporting the Working Group. Stan advised he is a Chartered Accountant, a past president of the Government Financial Officers Association and now, as CAO of Powell River, has broader responsibilities and the “bigger picture”. He thanked the group for selecting him as chair and provided his commitment to help lead the group forward on a very challenging agenda. The time is right to move ahead and integrate our various disciplines. His experience recently in visiting New Zealand will be of great value in helping set direction. They are doing many similar things and also have similar problems and issues in achieving the desired results.

Technical Agenda: Wally Wells explained the agenda and the notes issued with the agenda. The approach to issuing notes with the agenda outlining the intended thrust of the item and the direction towards outcomes is considered useful and will be continued.

### **Direction of group, mission statement, Terms of Reference**

Included with the agenda was information on vision / mission statements and statements of objectives from

- National Asset Management Working Group (Canada).
- CERIU (Quebec)
- Infrastructure coalition (Ontario)
- Australia
- New Zealand
- U.S.
- U.K.

This information was provided to assist the discussions on setting direction for our group. Notes of all previous meetings were also distributed.

#### Comments made by group members respecting direction

- It is important we focus what we do as we cannot do everything and cannot be everything to everyone.
- We are better to do a few things well with good deliverables than try to take on too much and produce little
- We have a very long way to go in properly creating our message and making it clearly understood with the importance it deserves especially at political level.
- We need to focus efforts towards smaller communities. However small, medium and large communities, while they have differing degrees of sophistication, have very similar needs.
- We can and should use our Associations to get the message out plus get input from members.
- The Working Group is the core group. Smaller specialty groups can be used for specific tasks. Those groups may include other people from our core group not specifically on the core Group.
- Our municipalities are going bankrupt. Municipalities do not recover full cost of new development. Operating costs of development related infrastructure are underfunded or not funded at all by the developer. We must determine if our assets are sustainable. We need to consider this in all our work.
- INAC represents mainly small communities, some being very remote and some with no roads access. INAC have used the International AM manual. The first Nation's communities have essentially the same issues and problems.
- We need to consider messaging on funding programs and ensure we all carry the same message. We need to link with our elected officials better than we do. We need to establish levels of service and stick to them.

Stan summarized the discussion. We need to:

- Focus on what we are doing (next meeting establish a listing of priorities.)
- Education at all levels including crafting our messages to the public and politicians is a priority plus getting the word out on what we are doing.
- Our work must bring practical solutions and help the smaller municipalities with the 'tool chest' for asset management.

The following were reviewed:

- Working Group membership. The conclusion was the Group is fine as is and key players for asset management are represented. There are two or three municipal reps to come. Glen Brown advised that he will appoint one person from the Engineering / Infrastructure section (Brian Bedford) and one person from the finance group of the Ministry of Community Development to the Group.

- Terms of Reference: The draft was reviewed. A shortened version was agreed to as the final Terms of Reference. This is attached. These were accepted in principle with the suggestion that each party take them back to their own Association and come forward at the next meeting with any suggested changes.
- Vision / Mission / Objectives: The New Zealand version was preferred as a model. Several suggestions were made for alteration to meet our needs.

After considerable discussion and review of alternatives a mission, vision and revised terms of reference were accepted.

Moved by: Neil Nyberg  
Seconded by: Tom Abbuhl

That the revised mission and vision statements and the terms of reference be accepted and that each Association seek approval of same from their Board.

Carried unanimously.

(Subsequent to the meeting, we have prepared and attached a document which provides the vision and mission statements, the terms of reference, the membership focusing on agencies and the contact information. This can be used as a handout.)

### **Status of Grant Programs and Build Canada**

Glen Brown, with input from Brian Bedford, made a short presentation on the grants programs including the Build Canada program. This was followed by discussion with the group. The purpose of this was / is to ensure that all are getting the same information and have the opportunity to see how the programs fit in with what we are doing. He wants to see how our Working Group will connect with the Build Canada program and the provincial requirement for a Provincial Plan within the Canada – BC agreement. Glen has talked with Carol Beal, ADM, Program Operations at Infrastructure Canada about using some of the program funding to support the work of this group and fund deliverables.

The Local Government Management Association has assembled a booklet for municipalities on grants, what they apply to and how to apply for them. This is very useful. The Ministry want to reward good behaviour not just provide monies to the parties who, on paper, appear to have the greatest needs. This may affect how the province sets criteria for evaluation and scoring of applications. Asset management is going to be incorporated into the grants program as a condition of receiving the grant. Exactly what this means is not yet been finalized. The province wants the municipalities to provide a ‘snapshot’ of where they are with an AM strategy. The next step is to raise the bar and define program / condition requirements. This group could have significant input to that.

### Comments raised in discussion:

- There are concerns about the limit on number of grant applications by one party. Where capital grants and ‘soft’ grants compete with each other, the capital grants will always win. The Province is looking into making grants for AM strategies independent of grants for capital project. AM can be included in other grants up to 15% for capacity building. However local politicians, given the choice, will go for maximum on capital grant.
- The use of Gas tax monies is quite specific though the way the money has been distributed seems to work. What we need is less restrictions on the monies other than more restrictions.
- Communities could use help in getting grants. Associations could help by providing seminars on grants and grant program. BCWWA is doing this at their conference the end of April. The LGMA guide would be helpful.

### **BC Strategy Study**

The Province submitted a proposal to INFC respecting undertaken a study province wide on the state of asset management in our communities. The proposal was accepted and funds are available to complete this study. Part of the work program was to establish our Working Group as a major resource in carrying out the study.

The primary data collection method for the study is a survey. Wally commented that having reviewed many forms of surveys, personal interviews likely are the best way to achieve reliable results. Glen and Wally provided the group with the background and the “thinking” in carrying out this program.

Tom MacDonald advised there is a regular schedule with Civic Info for surveys to municipalities. It is a well established network used by most municipalities through the province. After discussion, the best use of Civic Info seemed to be to notify municipalities of the survey in order to seek their cooperation. Having the survey only done on line and or by mail would likely lead to questionable results as the subject is not well understood we would not know the context in which the survey was completed.

The Group can help identify what we want out of the survey and ultimately the results of the study. Each member is asked to provide the questions from the point of view of their membership and/or community. One of the intended outputs is an identification of the gaps existing in our AM strategic processes which may include knowledge, communication, tools, training and education. The report will be of use to this group also will be a document INFC can use to look at their programs and compare with other areas of Canada.

After discussion, the preferred way to proceed is to retain a consultant to conduct on-site interviews with selected communities / municipalities. It is expected there is enough money to include 25 – 30 communities. These will vary in size, location and form of government at local level. The interviews where possible will include political, administrative, technical / engineering, operations, financial and

planning components (specialty staff where appropriate) in each municipality so the various disciplines will be fully covered.

*(Note: An e-mail was sent out subsequent to this meeting asking for input. Some was received but not from all disciplines)*

We will proceed with notification on Civic Info when we know the timeframe. The notification will ask municipalities if they want to participate. Tom MacDonald (LGMA) suggested he could call the CAO's of the selected municipalities to assist in getting cooperation. This would be very helpful. All Associations present expressed a willingness to notify their members of the project and seek their cooperation. This will be very important.

### **NAMWG Proposal – BC Role**

With the agenda were the appropriate pages from the National Asset Management Working Group proposal to Infrastructure Canada on preparing a parallel document to PSAB 3150 respecting condition assessment guidelines. (Assessing Infrastructure Condition and Performance: A Multi-discipline Framework and Guidelines document for Asset Management and Financial Statement Supplementary Reporting for new PSAB 3150 Requirements.) The contract will be with the Canadian Society for Civil Engineering headquartered in Montreal. A national project manager will be hired (Dr. Guy Felio) to see the work carried through. A consultant will be retained. INFC has expressed a strong interest in using BC and our LGAMWG as a case study for this project. *(At the time of note preparation, we have been advised further approvals are again required within INFC and no timeframe can be assigned yet to this project.)*

The question for us is “Do we want to be involved?” After discussion, the collective opinion was “yes”. There is good information that can come from this that will help BC. We will recommend the retention of the BC consultant to CSCE and will, through this group, monitor the work of the consultant. Our input will be fed back to CSCE for inclusion in the final guideline. LGAMWG would likely use a sub working group focused on public works and finance to assist with this project. Persons to be representatives in this group will be requested to participate when the time is right.

The Group saw benefit in being involved and instructed Wally Wells to advise CSCE and NAMWG accordingly. Glen Brown suggested we be clear in any negotiation with CSCE and NAMWG on the ownership of the material and the right for BC to use the material.

### **LGAMWG Communications**

Now that the Group is formed and working, it is important we get the message out. The chair asked all Associations to consider space on their conference agendas for presentations and/ or announcements. We will also prepare a release that can be posted on Civic Info to all municipalities.

Tom Macdonald asked for a release by the next day as they have a Regional Meeting in Northern BC and he will ensure the president has the info for presentation. *(This was sent the next day.)*

Glen advised that the Province has a spot on the Agenda at BCWWA conference the end of April. Part of that spot will be used to present LGAMWG.

*(Subsequent to this meeting Tom MacDonald has advised a spot has been found on the LGMA Association conference in June. Stan Westby will undertake to do the presentation.)*

All Associations are encouraged to get the information to their members through all communications means they use.

It was agreed we would work on a communications strategy for presentation at the next meeting.

### **Next Meeting**

The BCIT location is very convenient for all. It was agreed that the next meeting would be held at the BCIT downtown campus around the end of May.

All were requested to provide Wally Wells with suggestions for the agenda. The Working Group expressed collective excitement for the directions we are taking and the fact we have succeeded in getting all of us working together.

Chairman Stan Westby thanked the Ministry of Community Development for taking the lead role in establishing this Group and financially supporting it.

There being no further business at 2:05P.M.

*These notes are prepared by Wally Wells, coordinator.  
kwwells@msn.com*

#### NOTE:

The next meeting is Wednesday June 3, 2009 at 9:00 A.M. at the BCIT downtown campus.

**PLEASE SUBMIT AGENDA SUGGESTIONS**