Saskatchewan Municipal

Best Practice

Twin Lakes Planning Commission

CONTACT

Town of Nipawin
Kai Bath
P. 306306-862-0010
Email. K.bath@nipawin.com
Box 2512, Nipawin, SK, S0E 1E0
Project Date: Formed 2009 - ongoing

THE PRACTICE

The Twin Lakes Community Planning Association was initially formed in 2009 in recognition that regional planning for the area was necessary to ensure the long term growth of the region. The organization has since evolved into a formal Planning District created pursuant to *The Planning and Development Act, 2007*.

The formal planning commission includes members from each of the nine affiliate communities:
- Town of Carrot River
- Town of Choiceland
- Town of Nipawin
- Rural Municipality of Moose Range #486
- Rural Municipality of Nipawin #487
- Rural Municipality of Torch River #488
- Village of Codette
- Village of White Fox
- Resort Village of Tobin Lake

The commission's mandate is to provide a forum for the affiliate communities to discuss economic, land-use and other matters of mutual interest within the District, and to provide advice and recommendations to the respective affiliate municipal council on these matters from a regional perspective.

THE PROCESS

The idea of creating a partnership between municipalities was first expressed in March 2008 when the RM of Nipawin council passed a resolution instructing their administrator to arrange a meeting with staff from the Municipality Capacity Development Program (MCDP). The subject was to be joint planning and land use, and three other municipalities were invited to this meeting on April 23, 2008.

Some of the municipality's bylaws did not meet *The Planning and Development Act* and the original municipalities saw the need for regional planning and the efficiencies of working together. The partnership grew and continues to grow as new municipalities join every year. Staff from the MCDP has helped model the structure of the organization and have provided outlines while the representatives have developed the body from discussions at the two-hour monthly meetings.

Through discussion, a structure was chosen to best suit regional needs. The partnership was named Twin Lakes Community Planning Association. As the association made decisions and put them to paper, the various councils were provided

opportunities to review and evaluate the documents and were then expected to adopt the documents, sometimes after amendment. The group relied on MCDP staff rather than hiring a consultant. While the municipal employees do not vote on matters, they have been important resources.

THE RESULTS

As Saskatchewan municipalities grow, there is an ever-increasing need for communities to consider how to facilitate the kind of growth that they want. Increasing economic opportunities, an influx of new residents, greater demands on aging services, rising costs for new infrastructure, and more interest in land development are just some of the issues that municipal councils are required to consider.

District and inter-municipal planning consider broad issues that cross municipal boundaries, such as watershed management, utility servicing, economics, recreation, drainage, and transportation networks. Inter-municipal planning is most effective when councils commit to the process, often by entering into an agreement.

Forming a planning district can connect neighbours and build on regional strengths. The district planning commission (the advisory board for the planning district) can address issues affecting the economic, environmental, or social well-being of member municipalities and can often act as a sounding board for councils. To address district planning issues, the participating municipalities create a District Official Community Plan and adopt local zoning bylaws to provide each council with the tools to coordinate new development and their infrastructure. The District Official Community Plan allows councils to coordinate regional strategies to address economic development, social needs, municipal goals and servicing. The District Planning Commission can work together to strengthen local identities, manage environmental hazards, capitalize on economic opportunities and facilitate a resilient, attractive and prosperous region.

These kinds of "big picture" results are possible when neighbouring municipalities work jointly to plan and develop their region.

In October 2013, the Twin Lakes Planning Association formally became a district planning commission.

LESSONS LEARNED

- Hire a full-time community planner at the start of the project, even if you do have a consultant.
- Position the district to be able to capitalize on various economic opportunities, improving economic competitiveness through availability of training and educational resources, responsive public policies and services, and connectivity through efficient infrastructure and technology.
- Encourage and support the tourism industry by providing a welcoming arrival and departure environment and a variety of unique, memorable, and enriching experiences for visitors.
- Promote and capitalize on the prosperity derived from natural features and resources while preserving these assets and their environmental integrity, for the enjoyment and economic benefits of future generations.
- Encourage regional coordination of infrastructure and services, where possible and appropriate, to efficiently respond to needs of the region.
- Act collectively and effectively to support appropriate and sustainable health care services that are accessible to residents throughout the district.
- Facilitate the provision of a range of housing options across the housing continuum to address community needs, recognizing the contribution of quality housing to economic and social wellbeing.
- Encourage and support inclusive social infrastructure that incorporates and builds upon the cultural history within the district.
- Encourage and support regional cooperation and the ability to look beyond local interests while maintaining an awareness of the opportunities and challenges of each jurisdiction.