Notes from the Meeting of the Lakelse Lake, Jackpine Flats Septic System Management Program Working Group held Wednesday, July 11, 2012, in the Regional District of Kitimat-Stikine Board Room, 300 - 4545 Lazelle Avenue, Terrace, BC commencing at 11:00 am

In Attendance

Working Group Members

Mike Brady, Jackpine Flats Community Association  
Terry Brown, Lakelse Lake Advisory Planning Commission  
Gordon Gillam, Lakelse Lake Community Association (until 11:30 am)  
John Jensen, Jackpine Flats Community Association (President)  
Ken Koltermann, Lakelse Lake Watershed Society  
Dave Materi, Lakelse Lake Community Association & DL 6263 Residents

Agency Representatives

No Agency representatives were in attendance. Ted explained that Azeer Gill WG Member representing the Northern Health Authority advised that he is unable to attend because of an illness and that he will provide the information requested by the WG at the next meeting.

Regional District Representatives

Doug McLeod, Regional District of Kitimat-Stikine (RDKS) Electoral Area C Director  
Linda Zurkirchen, Cambria Gordon (Project Consultant)  
Roger Tooms, RDKS Manager of Works & Services  
Ted Pellegrino, RDKS Planner & Meeting Recorder  
Margaret Kujat, RDKS Working Group Assistant

Others

No others were in attendance

1. Introduction

This is the Fourth (4\textsuperscript{th}) meeting of the Working Group (WG).

The Meeting commenced at 11:05 am. Linda Zurkirchen of Cambria Gordon served as Chair for this meeting and welcomed those in attendance.

2. Notes of the Meeting held April 19, 2012

The WG determined that the notes of the meeting on April 19, 2012 be accepted as presented.

3. Notes of the Meeting held May 30, 2012

Ted indicated that Roger requested an amendment to the notes of the meeting since they were circulated to WG Members last week. Draft notes of meeting on the agenda include those changes. Ted spoke to the changes made on Page 5 (No. 4) regarding the potential design of a community sewer system where Roger corrected that with a grinder pump system, the pump is contained within its own chamber and no additional tanks are required.
Also, that to this point there is no overlap between the role of the WG on this project and the Lakelse Lake community sewer project. Ted added that other changes include minor amendments that address spelling and grammar.

The WG determined to accept the notes of the meeting held on May 30, 2012 as amended.

Discussion

John asked about inspections of septic systems and if training of an "inspector" is required. Roger spoke to the purpose of collecting and documenting information about development on the property. He added that the program that will be developed in consultation with the WG will include a requirement for regular pump-outs of septic tanks and system inspections. The program will need to determine how the inspections will be carried out and the minimum requirements of those that inspect whether one hired by the RD or the property owner.

Gordon commented that with a future community sewer development, property owners with long driveways will face higher costs to connect to a mainline at the roadway. He also spoke on the need to ensure that the type of community system selected is not hampered by winter frost conditions. He added that the design for a future system needs to consider length of a connection to a home, depth to frost levels and whether easements are required noting that creek crossings may be necessary in some cases and direct access to a property may not be available.

Roger noted that a future community system will be engineered to meet specifications including frost depth. He added that for example, if a STEP system is used the tanks, lines and pumps will be designed to provide sufficient pressure to push effluent through the lines, the lines can be frost protected and or buried to consider frost levels. Further, easements can be acquired noting that the RD has acquired easements for utility lines with other projects. Roger stated that the RD will address these questions at the pre-design stage of project development.

Mike noted that we need to consider that a pumping system will require power/electricity and would be affected by a power failure. Mike noted that Thornhill has many more properties on septic systems and asked why this program is not being developed for Thornhill or alternatively why is that area not part of this program. Roger responded that this program will serve as a pilot for other areas. He added that the program once developed can also be expanded to include other areas of the RD.

Doug commented that people from other areas should be encouraged to attend and sit in on the WG meetings or peruse the RD website to learn more about the proposed program as it may also be expanded to their/other areas in the future.

4. Review Revised Terms of Reference (TOR)

Linda circulated copies of the revised Terms of Reference (TOR) for discussion by the WG. She noted that this draft is a “work in progress”. Further that this latest version incorporates the WG comments from the April meeting including issues related to conduct of the WG and process regarding decision making by the WG.

Following discussion on the TOR, it was decided that the WG will review the TOR for further discussion and consideration for acceptance at the meeting.
5. Educational Mail-out and Additional Recommendations

Linda circulated potential items for inclusion in the public/property owner information package. The items included a newsletter page and information pages on septic system maintenance/septic savvy and water conservation. It was noted that the date on the newsletter should be changed to June 2012 from July 2012.

John suggested that the information package should be "thinned out" because there is a better chance that property owners will review the information if the package is not bulky. The WG reviewed the information pages/material circulated by Linda and determined what the final mail-out package should include. It was determined that the general content of the mail-out package would include the newsletter, information sheet #1 on septic savvy, information sheet #3 on water conservation and information sheet #4 cleaning products & septic systems. (NOTE: Copy of the Mail-out Package is attached at the end of the meeting notes).

John also suggested that the public should be told they are able to provide input and have access to information about what the WG is doing and the meetings. Linda noted that at the next meeting the WG can discuss other potential information that could be included in a future mail-out. Ted stated that the RD will try to send this mail-out by the end of next week. He added that the RD has access to the BC Assessment Authority Roll and that information will be used to obtain mailing address for property owners. The RD does not have the ability to obtain information on renters of property.

The WG recessed the meeting at 12:05 pm for a lunch break.

The Meeting resumed at 12:25 pm

The WG discussed strategies for further potential Outreach strategies to stakeholders.

Linda spoke to the importance of WG members to talk with others about the program development including neighbors and members of the organizations they represent. It was noted that the newsletter is a good start in generating interest and obtaining feedback from the public. Ideas on how to get more information out to the public were discussed. It was noted that a media release should wait until a concept program is completed as this would provide something of substance that can be presented to the public.

Roger spoke to the importance of budgeting to include for good public education about this program. Linda added that she will prepare a draft communication plan that will be forwarded to the WG at a future meeting. Linda and Roger offered, if requested, to attend meetings of Community Associations and Societies to speak and answer questions about the program. Doug suggested that copies of this mail-out should also be sent to RD Board Directors and recommended that copies be placed in their office mailboxes.

Linda indicated that she is drafting a communication plan which will be forwarded to the WG for discussion at a future meeting.

6. Review Revised Conceptual Program – Cleanout & Inspection Component

Linda distributed, for further discussion, a handout displaying a conceptual program for cleanout and inspections. This was revised from the last meeting in accordance with input provided by the WG.
Linda also distributed and discussed a 2003 Environment Canada/Ministry of Environment publication entitled “Toolkit for the Development of Management Programs for On-Site Sewage Systems”. Linda noted that this is a fairly lengthy publication at some 50 pages and suggested that the WG could take copies with them to review and discuss at the next meeting.

The WG determined to table the revised conceptual program. The members will review the information for further discussion at the next meeting.

Further Discussion

Doug noted that the public newsletter should advise that the RD will be seeking information from property owners about sewage discharge and water supply.

John noted that the concept of the program is supportable. He suggested that the program design should go through a public process within the proposed service area so that the public can have a say on program components like who pays and who does inspections, private or public. He added that in his experience when you involve people they take ownership of the process and will more likely support an initiative. He added that to end up with a successful program you will need as many residents onboard as possible which will not occur by implementing bylaws and regulations without adequate public consultation. Roger noted that in his opinion a referendum on the proposed service is not necessary in this case. He explained that the RD has completed a Liquid Waste Management Plan (LWMP) for the Lakelse Lake and Jackpine Flats which has been approved and adopted by the Board and the Ministry of Environment. The LWMP identifies that in the absence of a community sewer system for the lake, problematic septic systems on small lots, areas of high water table, impermeable soil condition, and in Jackpine Flats the high water table, extremely permeable soils, pressure for subdivision development, livestock and agricultural uses, the public demand/need to protect the lake environment and the groundwater supply in Jackpine, there is a necessity to ensure that septic systems are functioning properly. The Board recognizes that the RD needs to assist property owners to ensure that septic systems are functioning properly until a community system is available at the lake and a continued need to monitor groundwater in Jackpine which serves as the potable supply for the great majority of the homes in that area. Protecting groundwater supply through a continued water monitoring program and implementing standards for example that ensure livestock pens and manure piles are adequately setback from a neighbor’s well is a significant issue in Jackpine Flats.

Mike noted that the RD is considering providing a service that some property owners may not want. He added that his septic system was properly installed and inspected. If a system is maintained properly the tanks should not require pumping.

Doug noted that this program can be viewed as government intervention and how much “intervention” is necessary is what this WG needs to determine.

The WG discussed the type of information that would be collected by the RD under this program. Roger noted that the RD would maintain a database with information on each system. The information could be provided by each property owner, where they require assistance because they don’t have the information, the RD can assist the property owner.

Terry asked who would pay to collect the information on individual septic systems. Roger responded that the program concept which will be developed will look at the costs and how they will be recouped. He added that the cost recovery options still require refining.

(Page 4)
Dave asked if the concept will be one where everyone pays the same; where perhaps the entire region benefiting from the lake as a regional amenity shares in the cost of this service. Roger responded that the cost for a program or service is generally borne by the benefiting area and in this case the area which receives the service, Lakelse Lake and Jackpine Flats.

The WG discussed program options for managing septic systems including the private-private option (where the systems are privately owned, privately maintained and inspection remains the responsibility of the property owner), and the private-public option (where the septic system is privately owned and privately maintained and the inspection program is operated by the RD). Roger reiterated that under both options, the RD would be responsible to maintain a database and set standards on inspection criteria and pumping frequency.

Linda indicated that she will make revisions to the conceptual program and the cost recovery options.

Methods to obtain information regarding property owners’ septic systems were discussed by the WG. Roger noted that sending a questionnaire for property owners to fill out could be an option to consider. He added that this was done for a project in Thornhill where the RD was trying to establish septic system failure rates for a community sewer grant application.

7. New Items and Next Meeting

Linda noted that the WG should read the handouts in preparation for the next meeting.

Doug stated that he encourages the WG to come up with a solution on how this program will operate. He acknowledged that this will require hard decisions to be made and the WG will be challenged to come up with good recommendations for the people of this area. He added that the final decision will be made by the RD Board but the decision should be on a program developed by the WG. Further that if the WG does not make a decision, one will be imposed by the Board and Directors that do not live in this area and some who might not care what happens in this area. Roger acknowledges that the RD Board structure includes Directors who reside in other areas of the RD adding that in his opinion the entire Board takes this issue very seriously. Roger noted that the Board made a substantial commitment to working towards addressing human health and environmental impacts to this area through the development of a Liquid Waste Management Plan. The Plan was developed with the participation of a public advisory committee and through extensive public consultation. In his opinion the Board will provide opportunity to consult with the public, the Community Associations/Societies on this program. He reiterated that there are other Directors on the Board who have constituents that use the lake and are interested in protecting the public health and environmental values of this area.

8. Next Meeting Date

It was determined that the next meeting date will be on Wednesday August 1, 2012 commencing at 11 am in the Regional District office. Lunch will be provided.

Ted will confirm the meeting date.

9. Adjournment

Linda thanked everyone for attending. The meeting ended at 2:10 pm.