

Executive Summary: Findings of the MNP Review

Meyers Norris Penny LLP (“MNP”) was engaged by Mountain View County Council to conduct an independent review of the issues raised by petitioners from September to December 2009. During 2009, the Rural Roots Association (“RRA”) conducted six petitions concerning the County’s Administration and bylaws. In addition, MNP reviewed management practices and made recommendations for improvement. The observations and findings of MNP’s review are in direct response to the request by Mountain View County. We have conducted our work in an unbiased manner and are independent of any party to this matter.

Key Findings:

1. There is no evidence that any illegal or inappropriate actions were taken by the Council, CAO and County Administration, or the Operational Services and Planning and Development department staff.
2. A review of legislation indicates that Mountain View County acted in accordance with the Municipal Government Act in developing their Municipal Development Plan, Land Use Bylaw, and proposed Offsite Levy Bylaw.
3. The main issue between Mountain View County and its citizens appears to be a matter of communication. Citizens require explanation about Mountain View County’s decisions and actions, in context of why they are undertaken, in a manner that is understandable.
4. The petitions created by the RRA were not in accordance with the Municipal Government Act. Under the Act, petitions cannot be created against land use bylaws, and must be submitted to the CAO of the municipality for verification. The RRA petitions did not meet the legislative criteria.
5. The RRA has effectively engaged the public and created dialogue regarding issues surrounding the Land Use Bylaw and other matters central to municipal administration. Although at times their tactics are provocative, they have created awareness of issues affecting all residents.
6. The RRA’s primary concerns are with the size of the municipal government and protection of individual landholders’ development rights. Some of the RRA’s concerns appear to be motivated by personal reasons. The RRA and Mountain View County agree that protection of rural and agriculture heritage and lifestyle are paramount to residents of the County.
7. In an independent public opinion survey, taxpayers are generally satisfied with the services of the County. However, they are concerned the new Land Use Bylaw and the Offsite Levy Bylaw may not be in their best interest. Taxpayers do not understand the rationale and purpose of the new bylaws.
8. Management practices are generally satisfactory within County Administration but some areas could be improved, most notably the development and monitoring of measurable improvement goals.

Key Recommendations:

1. Develop an internal communication strategy within the municipality to engage the public and explain the rationale for decisions made by Council and resulting changes to the operations of the Administration.
2. Develop a process for receiving and responding to various types of public enquiries, complaints, and critical incidents, and measure and track complaints to gauge satisfaction and improvements.
3. Re-engage the public with consultation about the Municipal Development Plan and explanation of Council’s vision for the future of the County that is represented in the plan.
4. RRA members should volunteer to assist Mountain View County with community consultation and feedback, as members of a community consultation committee.
5. County Administration should develop performance measures for each department, and track activity against these metrics to monitor financial and operational results.

