

Cape Breton University

TO: Mayor Cecil Clarke and Members of Council, Cape Breton Regional Municipality

FROM: Prof. Tom Urbaniak

DATE: 21 June 2018

RE: Economic Development – “Go-Forward” for the Cape Breton Regional Municipality

On May 1, General Committee on Planning and Economic Development resolved to request that Council “host a workshop on economic and community development to discuss the go-forward plan for CBRM in order to provide direction to staff.”

According to notes from the meeting: “It was agreed that the parameters of the workshop be broadened to invite various stakeholders including the Cape Breton University President and representative(s) of the former Business Cape Breton Board of Directors.”

It was likewise agreed to invite “representatives of various provincial and federal government departments who have information on funding programs.”

I was contacted by Mayor Clarke to serve as an independent facilitator. I have agreed to do so on a *pro bono* (volunteer) basis.

At the meeting of Council on Tuesday, May 29, it was agreed to hold a **pre-workshop** to discuss objectives, format, and participants. **This is scheduled for Tuesday, June 26, from 9 a.m. to 11:30 p.m.**

I hope we can achieve a broad consensus on how to structure the workshop and the de-briefing/next steps. I believe we all want this exercise to be productive, transparent, and inclusive.

The following are questions that I wish to discuss with Council when I meet with you on Tuesday:

1. What are your objectives/intended outcomes for the workshop?

I understand that the General Committee resolution was linked, in part, to resolving the Regional Enterprise Network issue. I understand that this is also part of an effort to ascertain the larger municipal role in economic and community development.

In that spirit, would the following objectives be reasonable? Are there revisions you would propose?

- a) **OBJECTIVE:** *To articulate a general understanding/consensus of the (intended) municipal role in economic and community development;*
- b) **OBJECTIVE:** *To understand what are the strategic priorities of the Cape Breton Regional Municipality in economic and community development and/or how to develop or refine those strategic priorities;*
- c) **OBJECTIVE:** *To determine if there is an effective way(s) to follow through on a) and b), while unlocking provincial REN funding and any other untapped funding. How might we structure ourselves to move forward?*
- d) **OBJECTIVE:** *To clearly state some plausible next steps and timelines.*

2. Whom would you like to specifically invite to the workshop?

Regardless of who are the participants (discussants), the discussion would be carried out in public. Anyone would be welcome to observe.

Who would be the invited discussants? There is a *focused option* and a *broader option*.

The focused option is to reach out to those persons mentioned in the General Committee meeting notes. However, the GC resolution leaves open the possibility of additional participants. In other words, there could be a larger list of stakeholders (hence the broader option). Some Council members have already made good suggestions for discussants, and I have provided an additional starting list of organizations.

In conjunction with the broader option, there could also be a registration feature (similar to a conference), whereby an organization/stakeholder that has not been specifically invited could still register as a participant by a designated date.

Your response to Question #2 will affect venue and set-up.

3. Would the following be acceptable as a format for the workshop?

8:30 a.m. – 9 a.m.: Check-in – Tea/coffee/sweets

9 a.m.-11:45 a.m. Understanding options and possibilities/the role of the municipality in economic development.

For approximately the first 45-60 minutes, I would moderate (by moving around the room with a hand-held microphone) a plenary, talk-show style discussion, asking many questions in a friendly manner and bringing multiple discussants into the conversation. This is to ensure that we all gain a good grasp of the context, recent data, and obstacles. As a result of this plenary discussion, I would attempt to synthesize some key problems and questions.

We would then do some work in small groups (questions to be determined).

11:45 a.m. – working lunch

Wrap up by 1:30 p.m., with clear articulation of some points of consensus (or points that need to be resolved), next steps, and a basic timeline.

4. For when should the workshop be scheduled?

Invitations have not been issued, pending the discussion with Council.

5. Would you agree to meet with me, as your facilitator, 1-2 weeks after the workshop for a de-briefing and further clarification of next steps?

Any designated staff would be present and the session would be open to the public to observe. I would propose a roundtable format for this post-workshop de-briefing. It would be a facilitated session, but less formal than a regular Council meeting. There would be no motions, but hopefully some consensus with regard to the Council process going forward.

6. Is there any information that you would like me to try to research and provide before the workshop?

I am looking forward to working with you. I am committed to assisting you in a way that is fair, objective, positive, and helpful.

When I facilitated a roundtable for you on November 15, I recalled the advice of Moses Coady. In 1943, he wrote that progress “was discovered by facing the actual situation and planning a way by which people could mobilize ... We founded the discussion circle [study club]. It was in line with our whole co-operative idea.”

For Coady and his contemporaries, the study-club method was discussion leading to action. They could not afford to take casualties; they needed everyone’s talents.

I am grateful for your talents. I am grateful for everyone who will help with this workshop and the deliberations and decisions that will flow from it.

Respectfully submitted,

Tom Urbaniak, Ph.D.

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