



Blue Mountain Ratepayers Association

Grey County Uploading / Enhanced Service Models Deputation

January 14, 2021

Why the BMRA is Here Today

- BMRA serves in an advocacy role with Town of Blue Mountains and Grey County Council and staff on behalf of our ratepayers to ensure and enhance our community's quality of life
- An important influence on quality of life is the effectiveness and efficiency of government delivered services
- Covid driven pressure on the budgets of all levels of government heightens the urgency to find new and better ways to operate

Grey County Commitment to Service Excellence

- As stated in the Grey County Corporate Strategic Plan (2017 – 2019), a goal of the County is to “**Deliver Excellence in Governance and Service**”
- Within that broad goal, relevant supporting elements include;
 - 1) Enhanced asset management and long term financial planning
 - 2) Greater operational efficiencies
- A number of enabling strategic initiatives were detailed;
 - 1) Investigate cooperative models of service delivery
 - 2) Continue to raise awareness of service overlap and ensure efficient flow of information
 - 3) Continue to plan for impacts of provincial downloading on all services
 - 4) Collaboration with member municipalities
 - 5) Comprehensive asset management plan and long term financial plan that guides investment and maintenance decisions

BMRA Position Paper re County Service Delivery of November 25, 2020 Stated our Support of Efforts to Enhance Efficiencies

Blue Mountain Ratepayers Association (BMRA)

Position Paper re County Service Delivery Efficiency / Uploading Programs

November 25, 2020

The BMRA is aware that the County is developing an approach for evaluating operational improvement proposals, either across all municipalities, such as the uploading of waste services tabled by Meaford, or between subsets of municipalities. As you know, our association has been endorsing the idea that the County pursue such opportunities, seeing them as potentially offering financial benefits to Grey municipalities. We also recognize that evaluating proposals for shared services across municipalities is a complex exercise, fraught with the risk of unanticipated consequences. For this reason, the BMRA offers the following considerations and criteria that we believe should be incorporated into the analytical framework applied to these exercises.

- 1) “Think Outside the Box” – The pursuit of service delivery enhancements should not be limited to new County-wide service models. As suggested, there could be opportunities that would most logically involve just a few of the Grey municipalities. Also, service agreements between Grey municipalities and partners outside Grey County may prove viable. For example, the Town of Blue Mountains currently employs inter-County service models with Collingwood for police and a portion of our water supply, and public transit with Collingwood and Wasaga. Not allowing our collective thinking to be limited by Grey County boundaries could prove advantageous.
- 2) “Do No Harm” - Whenever amalgamating services across the County, the idea that no municipality should find itself in a worse off position than their status quo should be non-negotiable. The only exception would be if a municipality determined that a short-term cost increase would provide long term benefits to its residents. One of the factors that could help to ensure new efficiency models benefit all municipalities would be to ensure cost allocations are applied on a per household basis, rather than applying the tax levy formula. This would ensure a direct link between the benefits received and costs borne.

3) “No Surprises” – It would be absolutely essential that all participating municipalities be able to bring current, accurate data to the table in evaluating any efficiency or uploading concepts. This must include completed Asset Management Plans for each jurisdiction, as well as disclosure of any relevant obligations or unfunded liabilities that could impact achievable efficiencies and / or pose financial risk. The analysis would also need to identify the value of relevant assets that different municipalities could provide for shared benefit, such as TBM’s waste management facility which has an estimated 30-year remaining life span. Recognizing this would entail significant data sourcing and analysis, we anticipate that it may be necessary to bring on extra resources to support this effort.

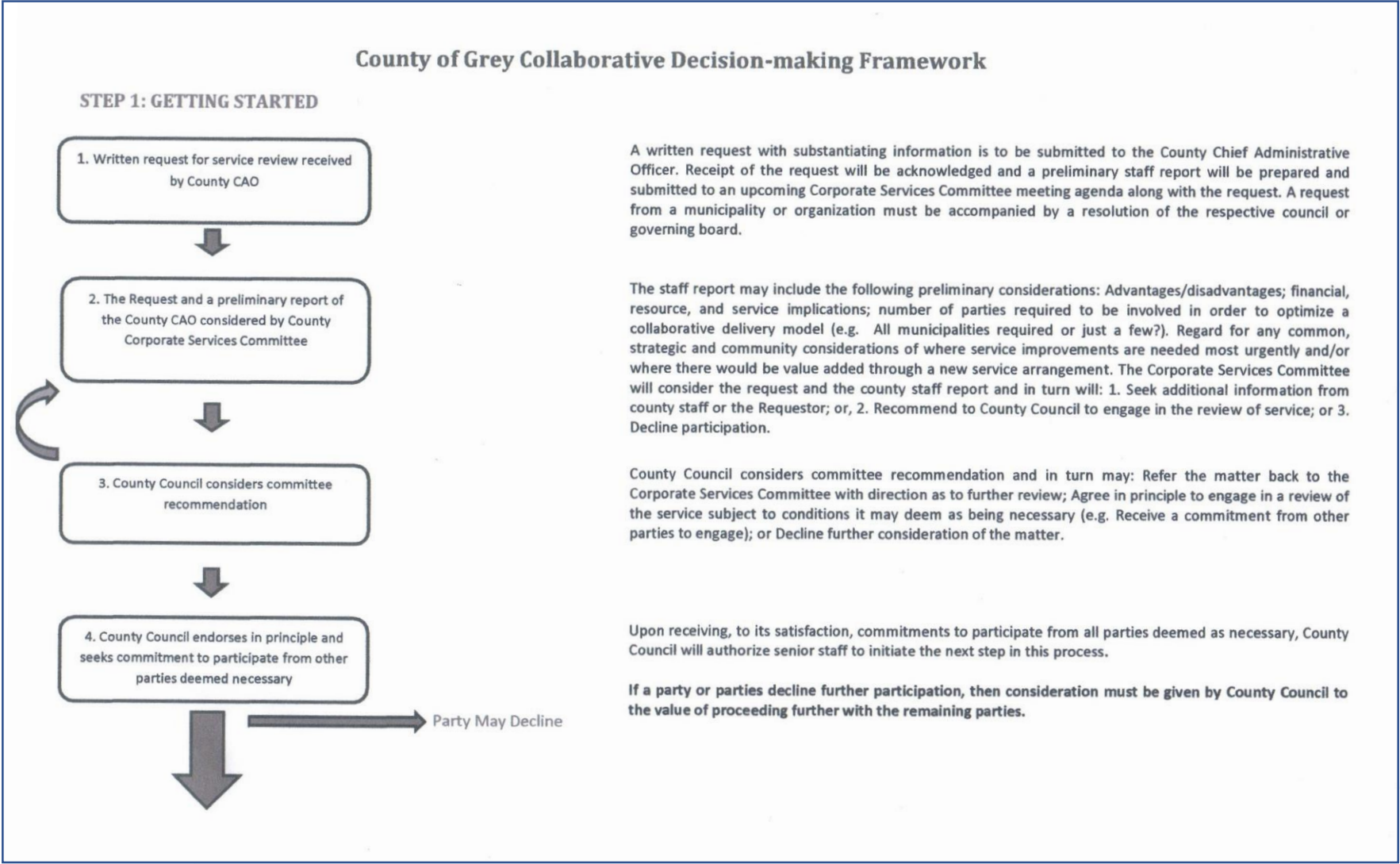
4) “Play the Long Game” – Opportunities to capture efficiencies can often be looked at with a short-term lens, reflective of the fact that governments may approach issues within the timeframe of their current term in office. Avoiding the appeal of approaches that would allow us to realize immediate benefits, but could expose municipalities to significant long range cost challenges, must be avoided.

The BMRA looks forward to reviewing the County’s model for evaluating efficiency and uploading proposals. If the analytics applied are sound and fact based, there could well be opportunities for all Grey municipalities to benefit.

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Grey County Development of an Analytical Framework for New Service Delivery

- Grey has recognized the need for a disciplined and rigorous approach to evaluating new service delivery models
- We understand an updated analytical framework is being developed



The BMRA Perspective on Evaluating Service Models

- It is encouraging to see a collaborative approach being developed
- Based on what we have seen to this point, there are some critical success factors
- The “substantiating data” referenced in the initiation phase of the evaluation framework needs to be specifically defined, and should, at a minimum, include;
 - Consistent, transparent and audited financials of the existing system
 - A detailed operational overview of the current system, and what new model is being proposed
 - A reserve fund analysis in general, and specifically, incorporating any liabilities current or projected
 - Completed Asset Management Plans for all participants
- The inclusion of defined “off ramps” for participants to choose to end their involvement with the process - vital to allow for appropriate risk management and control for municipalities
- This also highlights the need for significant data being required to initiate the analysis, allowing municipalities to make fully informed decisions to go / no go

The BMRA Perspective on Evaluating Service Models

- As stated in our November communication, our Association suggested four key principles to apply to new service delivery model development;
 1. **Think Outside the Box** – don't limit potential new models to simply full County structures
 2. **Do No Harm** – need to ensure fairness, equity and self determination of service delivery standards
 3. **No Surprises** – up to date, relevant data must be brought to the table by all potential participants
 4. **Play the Long Game** – properly weigh off short and long term impacts
- Beyond those considerations, there are two other elements that should be incorporated;
 5. All participating municipalities must feel the process exhibits fairness, equity and self determination of service delivery levels
 6. Any proposals would have to recognize current provincially legislated scope of service delivery responsibilities

A Broad Range of Service Delivery Models Should be Considered

- We encourage the County and Grey Municipalities to consider all possible structures in pursuing enhanced service delivery models, such as;
 1. Delivery amongst lower tier municipalities who have entered into a transparent agreement between themselves:
 - Municipalities within the same County
 - Municipalities across County boundaries
 2. Service delivery facilitated by a County or Counties
 3. Provincially legislated uploading of a lower tier service to the County or other Provincially recognized body and in accordance with the included option(s) for cost recovery

To Summarize the Perspective of the BMRA

- In a time of continuing, and likely increasing funding pressure, there needs to be a shared commitment to finding efficiencies across all levels of governments including Grey County and Municipalities
- We believe that by taking a coordinated approach the County as a whole benefits
- The analytical framework to be applied to service enhancements should result in “Win – Win” solutions

The BMRA looks forward to tracking the development of these collaborative service optimization efforts