

Staff Report

Date:	May 15, 2019	File #:	
To:	Chair Russell and Members of the Board		
From:	Frances Maika, Corporate Communications Officer		
RE:	2019 Town Hall Meetings – Review of the process		

ISSUE INTRODUCTION

The primary objectives of the 2019 town halls were to present and gather feedback on the proposed 2019 Budget and 2019-2023 Five-Year Financial Plan, and to provide an opportunity for residents to learn about and provide feedback on how the RDKB operates, what their taxes fund and comment or ask questions about RDKB programs and services. Residents at the town hall meetings in areas A, B, C, D and E/West Boundary were also provided with information about the FireSmart Program.

HISTORY / BACKGROUND FACTORS

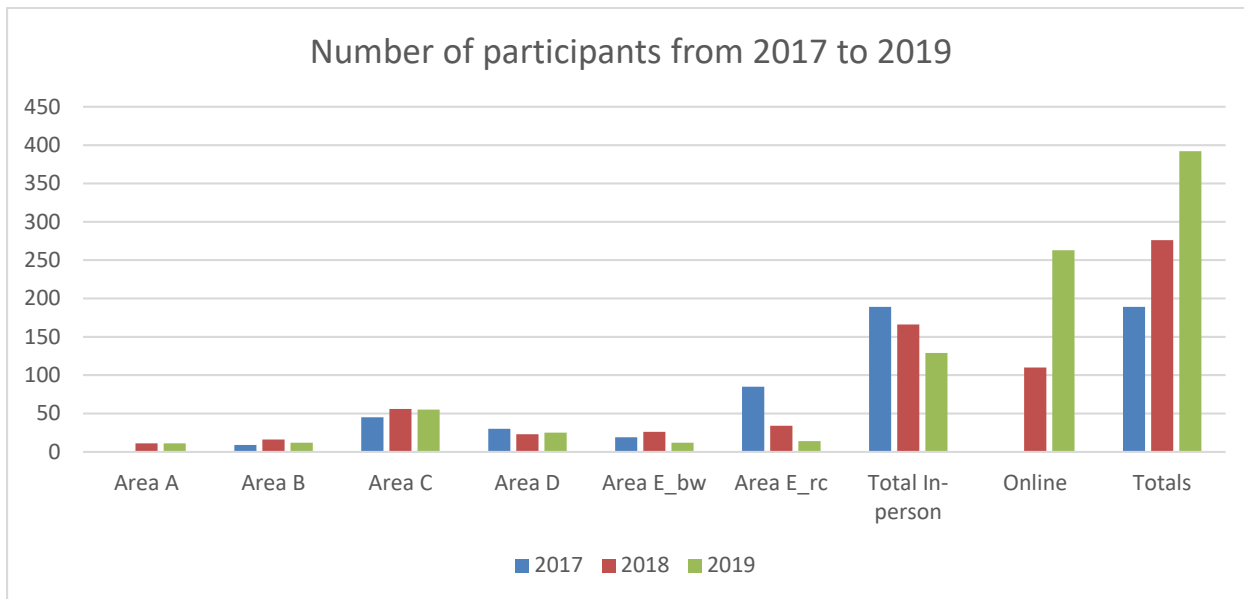
In 2018 Town Hall Meetings, two changes were implemented and carried through to the 2019 events based on positive responses from the public, staff and the Board in 2018:

- The RDKB incorporated the TurningPoint audience response system and real-time polling software paired with individual voting “clickers” that the Rural Development Institute at Selkirk College lent free of charge to the RDKB for a second year running.
- Redesigned ads and colour postcard mail-outs and posters advertised the town halls and residents were invited to participate in an online poll asking which RDKB services are most important to them. The same question was asked in the live-polling at each town hall meeting.

Attendance and Overall Participation

In-person attendance at town hall meetings has continued to trend slightly downward over the past two years; however, participation increased overall when online engagement data from jointheconversation.rdkb.com is incorporated. Added to this, the total number of people (210) who visited our 2019 Town Hall Meeting project page at jointheconversation.rdkb.com was nearly double the total number of people (129) who attended the 2019 town hall meetings in person. While some of those people who visited the online engagement site may have also attended a town hall, we can still

conclude based on these numbers that residents are more likely to participate online than they are to attend in-person town hall meetings based on when and where we currently hold them and what topics we focus on.

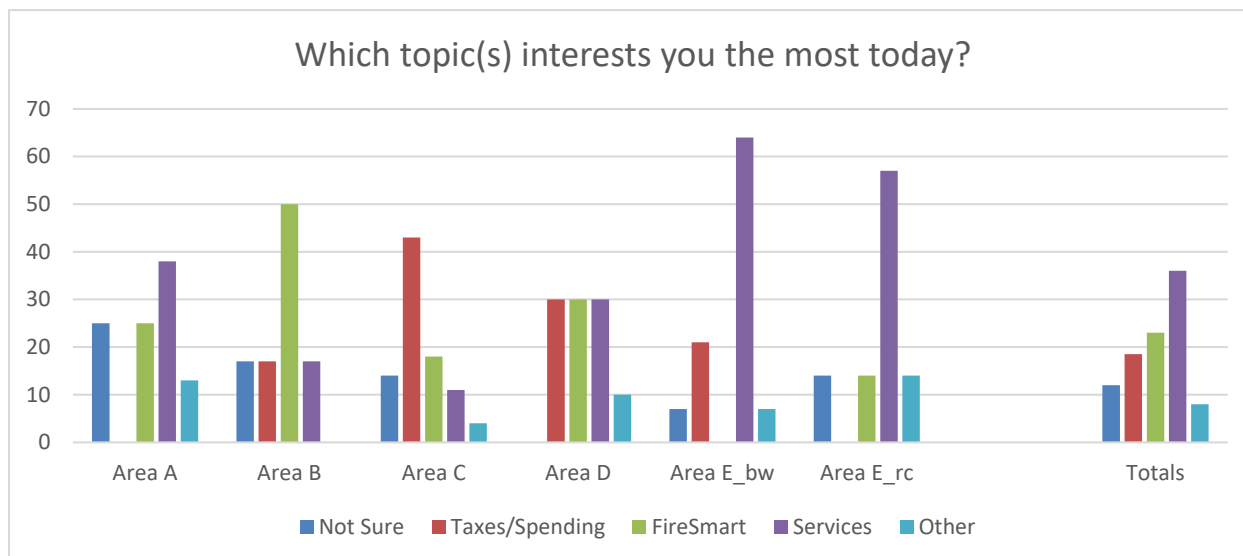


Polling Results

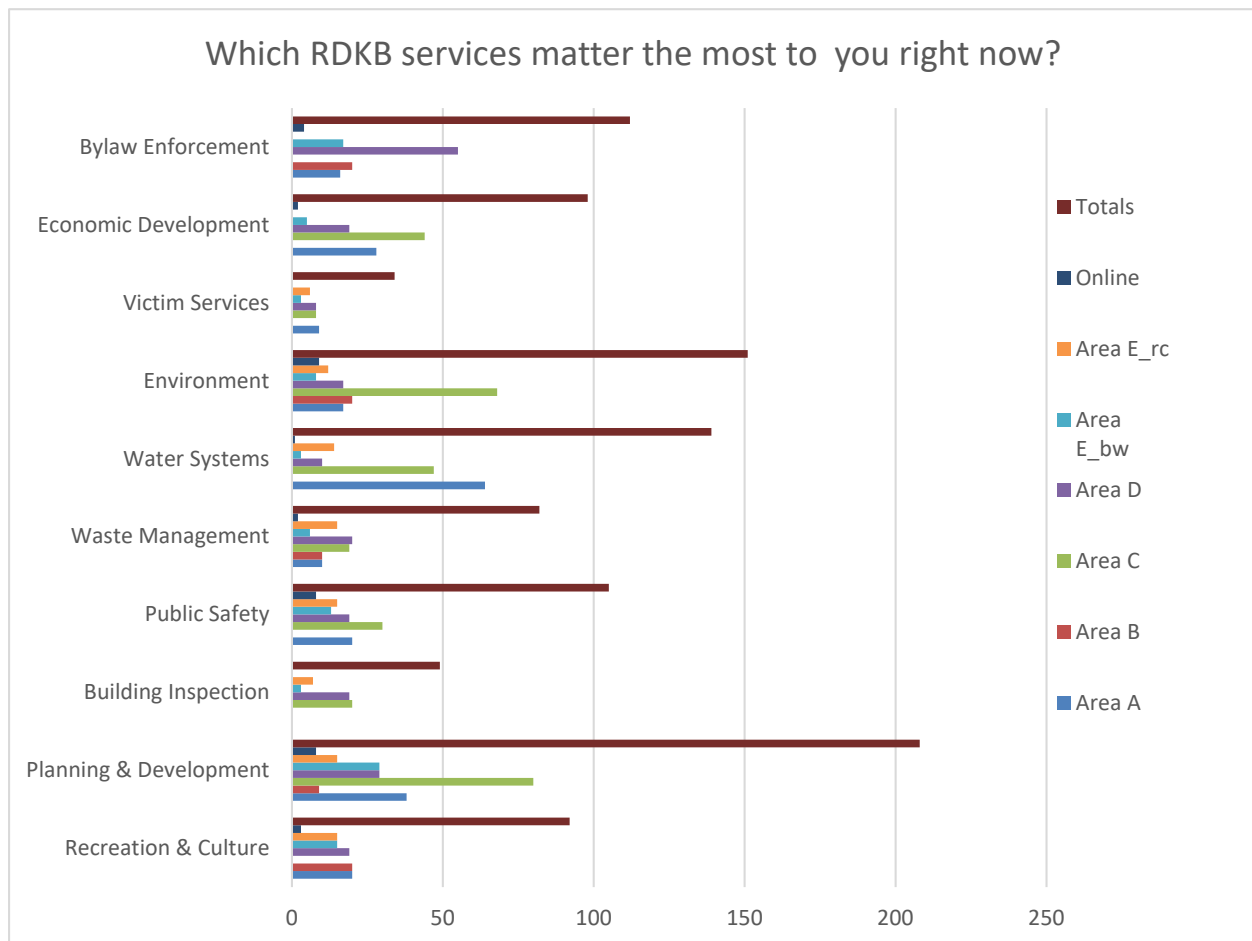
The topics of greatest interest overall to RDKB residents according to live polling at the town hall meetings were:

1. RDKB services (36%)
2. FireSmart (23%)
3. Taxes/Spending (18.5%)

The exception is Area 'E'/West Boundary at the Big White town hall meeting where Firesmart information was not presented as an option.



The services that residents identified as most important to them were Planning and Development followed by Environment, and Water Services. The exception was in the Area 'D'/Rural Grand Forks Town Hall meeting, where residents identified Bylaw Enforcement as the service of greatest importance to them.



PROPOSAL

Given lower attendance at the annual town halls and a clear interest in topics other than the financial plan specifically, that the Board:

- Revisit the actual purpose of the town hall meetings and determine whether they are in sync with the strategic and organizational objectives of the RDKB.
- Determine whether town halls are the best tactic to present financial plan and budget information.
- Determine whether annual town halls should continue to focus on the RDKB financial plan and budget when it is nearly completed, or whether more people may participate in an engagement process that informs the annual financial plan and budget earlier in the budgeting process.

Continue using interactive polling in town hall meetings and request use for the TurningPoint technology in 2020 from Selkirk College's Columbia Basin Rural Development Institute.

IMPLICATIONS

- More effective public engagement including possibly higher turnout at town hall meetings.
- More meaningful feedback on the RDKB annual financial plan and budget itself.
- Staff, and RDKB Financial Services staff in particular, are able to fully focus on the financial plan and budgeting process without having to participate in town hall meetings on the topic as well.
- The RDKB final financial plan and budget is shared with RDKB residents after they have participated in a budget-related planning process earlier in the year, and so may be more motivated to review the actual final plan.

ALTERNATIVES

1. Receive the report (no action).
2. Discuss and refer back to staff.
3. Adopt the recommendation to review the purpose, format the timing of the town hall meetings and take appropriate future action as determined by the Board.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Board:

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- Determine whether town halls are the best tactic to present financial plan and budget information.
- Determine whether annual town halls should continue to focus on the RDKB financial plan and budget when it is nearly completed, or whether more people may participate in an engagement process that informs the annual financial plan and budget earlier in the budgeting process.

ATTACHMENTS:

PollingResultsCompiled_190515.pdf

Summary_Report_Regional_District_Of_Kootenay_Boundary_19_September_18_To_01_May_19.pdf