



THE CORPORATION OF THE DISTRICT OF KENT

**A SPECIAL IN CAMERA JOINT
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE MEETING**
of the Councils of the District of Kent
and the Village of Harrison Hot Springs
in Council Chambers, Municipal Hall, Agassiz, BC
on Tuesday, May 5, 2026 at 4:00 p.m.

IN CAMERA MINUTES - CONFIDENTIAL

Present: Elected Officials

District of Kent
Mayor S. Pranger
Councillor K. Schwichtenberg
Councillor S. Spaeti
Councillor S. Watchorn

Village of Harrison Hot Springs
Mayor F. Talen
Councillor L. Facio
Councillor M. Schweinbenz
Councillor M. Vidal

Excused: Councillor D. Post

Councillor A. Jackson

Appointed Personnel

District of Kent
Mr. W. Mah, Chief Administrative Officer
Ms. C. Lee, Director of Corporate Services
Mr. M. Veenbaas, Director of Financial Services
Mr. J. Blood, Director of Recreation/Culture and Projects
Mr. S. Gormley, Manager of Recreation/Culture and Projects
Ms. J. Bentroudi, Executive Assistant
Ms. L. Jonk, Assistant Deputy Corporate Officer (Recording Secretary)

Village of Harrison Hot Springs
Mr. T. Koch, Chief Administrative Officer
Mr. S. Schultz, Finance Manager
Ms. A. Graham, Corporate Officer

Public
J. Allen

1 Call to Order

Mayor Pranger called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m. and acknowledged that we are on the Stó:lō traditional territory with our neighbours of Cheam First Nation, Seabird Island and with the independent communities of Sts'ailes and Sq'ewlets First Nation.

WATCHORN / SPAETI

THAT the Public be excluded and the meeting move In Camera under the *Community Charter*, pursuant to Section 90(1)(k) and 90(2)(b) related to proposed service delivery and negotiations between two municipalities.

CARRIED

(The public left the meeting at 4:01 p.m.)

2 Opening Remarks by Mayor Pranger

Mayor Pranger thanked everyone for attending and noted that Councillor Post is absent and sends his regrets.

Councillor Watchorn remarked on the value of continued dialogue and collaboration between the District and the Village of Harrison Hot Springs.

Mayor Talen introduced members of Village Council and staff present at the meeting. Noting that Councillor Jackson sends his regrets.

Mayor Pranger invited members of District Council and staff present to introduce themselves. Further, the purpose of the meeting is to discuss shared services and continued cooperation, emphasizing that many shared services are often overlooked.

Mayor Pranger extended her congratulations to Councillor Vidal on her recent election as President of the Lower Mainland Local Government Association (LMLGA).

(Short recess from 4:03 p.m. to 4:13 p.m.)

3 Partnerships in Services We Share

Mayor Pranger highlighted the value of shared recreation facilities, including the pool and recreation centre, which serve residents of both communities and neighbouring areas, promoting health and well-being for children, seniors, families, youth, and individuals with special needs. Further, the Ferny Coombe Pool is frequently used for therapeutic purposes. The following shared services and partnerships were highlighted:

- Fraser Valley Regional Library;
- Public Works (Street Sweeping and Vacuum Truck);
- Waste Water Treatment Plant (solid waste collection services);
- Emergency Management Program;
- Mutual Aid Fire Services;
- Recreation and Culture Programs (same costs and benefits, such as super senior programs, advanced swim registration, economic access programs);
- Agassiz Bottle Depot and Recycling;
- Agassiz-Harrison Museum;
- Kent-Harrison Search and Rescue;
- Agassiz-Harrison Community Services; and
- Seasonal Policing.

Appreciation for the current partnerships and interest in expanding collaboration in the future was expressed.

4 Pool Operating Costs Presentation by the Director of Recreation/Culture and Projects

J. Blood spoke to the presentation attached as Appendix 'A'.

Councillor Schweinbenz asked for clarification regarding the reported 168 members from Harrison Hot Springs, enquiring whether this figure referred to individuals or families.

J. Blood confirmed that this number represented individual participants.

Councillor Watchorn provided comments regarding the development of the Lets'emot Regional Recreation and Aquatic Centre (LRRAC), noting that earlier cost projections from 2018 estimated between \$20 - \$25 million for an expanded eight-lane pool with additional amenities. He highlighted the successful receipt of grant funding, the application of the District's accumulated gas tax funds, and the project's completion within projected costs. Further, strong enthusiasm was expressed following a recent tour of the facility and commented positively on its design and setting.

Mayor Talen thanked staff for the presentation and acknowledged the complexity of the project, noting the level of preparation undertaken for the facility's opening.

5 Councillor Spaeti, Chair of the Lets'emot Regional Aquatic Centre Fundraising Committee

Councillor Spaeti provided an overview of the Lets'emot Regional Aquatic Centre Fundraising Committee's work over the past four to five years, noting that the Committee includes both District of Kent and Harrison Hot Springs residents. The strong level of collaboration and community enthusiasm surrounding the new pool was highlighted. Further, fundraising activities have included events such as golf tournaments and 'Burger, Brew and Bids', which, while not major revenue generators individually, have been successful in building community awareness and excitement for the project. She advised that approximately \$650,000 has been raised to date and expressed appreciation for the participation of Harrison Hot Springs residents on the Committee.

In reply to a question regarding the anticipated opening date of the facility, staff advised that the District is expecting to receiving occupancy of the LRRAC mid-August, subject to completion of remaining construction items and artwork installations. Following occupancy, staff training and facility outfitting will occur, with a tentative goal of hosting a grand opening toward the end of September. It was noted that the District hopes to align the opening of the facility with Truth and Reconciliation Day, in recognition of Indigenous partnerships connected to the facility.

In reply to Councillor Vidal, Councillor Spaeti advised that the Committee's long-term goal remains to raise \$1 million and that fundraising efforts are expected to continue, including potential merchandise sales and additional community-led initiatives.

Councillor Schwichtenberg added that on August 7, 2026, plans are being made to host a Barn Party to raise money for the LRRAC.

6 District of Kent Funding Presentation by the Director of Financial Services

M. Veenbaas spoke to the LRRAC capital construction budget attached as Appendix 'B'.

Councillor Watchorn provided an overview of the rationale behind the proposed capital and operating cost-sharing discussions for the LRRAC. He explained that of the approximately \$26 million project cost, roughly \$16 million was secured through grants and other funding sources, leaving approximately \$10 million unfunded. Based on anticipated usage by Harrison Hot Springs residents of approximately 18-20%, he noted that a proportional contribution toward the unfunded capital amount was discussed, resulting in a proposed contribution of approximately \$1.8 million. He clarified that this figure represents a usage-based share of the unfunded capital costs.

Councillor Schweinbenz raised questions regarding future revenues, including whether membership and attendance were expected to increase following the opening of the new facility and whether pricing adjustments were anticipated due to increased amenities.

J. Blood advised that increased participation is anticipated following the opening of the LRRAC. Further, revenue projections remain conservative and are based on existing usage data, and that a comprehensive pricing review is underway using regional comparatives.

In response to Councillor Schweinbenz, W. Mah responded that while grant funding and fundraising are considered part of the overall financial picture, the District had originally sought to include equity language in the operating agreement to account for future operating cost reductions (i.e., if grants are secured for solar panels). It was noted that such language was not ultimately included in draft agreements. The importance of fairness and transparency in operating cost-sharing was emphasized, and highlighted parallels to other shared services such as policing.

Councillor Watchorn further commented that recreation services are not designed to be cost-recovery and require ongoing municipal support, some costs are offset through user fees. He emphasized the importance of ensuring that residents of both communities are treated equitably through an agreement that removes barriers to access and promotes a sense of shared community. Further, current estimates suggest approximately \$1 million annually in operating costs are not recovered through user fees, and that an 18% proportional share would equate to approximately \$180,000 per year. From his perspective, any contribution above \$100,000 represented a reasonable starting point for collaboration and acknowledged budget pressures facing both municipalities and suggested that an initial agreement be established and reviewed annually over a three-to-five-year period to better understand actual operating costs and usage patterns.

7 Open Discussion

- * Mayor Talen acknowledged the significance of the LRRAC and expressed appreciation for the information provided by the District of Kent. He recognized the facility as a major benefit to residents of both the District of Kent and the Village of Harrison Hot Springs and commended the District for undertaking such a substantial project. He noted, however, that as a small municipality, the Village faces challenges in committing to large financial obligations. Further, he outlined concerns regarding the proposed capital and operating contributions. Based on analysis by Village staff, a capital contribution of approximately \$1.85 million would equate to approximately \$2.6 million over 20 years when interest is included. Annual operating contributions, whether \$100,000 or proportionally higher, could result in total costs of \$5-6 million over a 20 year period. He further noted that Council faces difficult questions from residents regarding the current funding gap or shortfall associated with the project, particularly given that key project decisions were made by the District of Kent prior to formal Village involvement. As such, there is concern about whether it is appropriate or reasonable for the Village to contribute towards offsetting this shortfall. This level of financial contribution would be difficult to support without strong public backing and cost certainty, particularly as the facility would be owned and operated by the District of Kent. Any commitment by the Village would require an Alternative Approval Process (AAP).

- * Mayor Talen stated, "I'll be blunt. People in the Village can look at it very simplistically and say for the cost to the Village, we'll get participation on an advisory committee that oversees the aquatic centre and be treated as all residents on an equitable same basis as District residents....And I can hear people coming up to me on the street saying, why did you give the District a blank cheque?" He expressed concern that residents may question the value proposition, particularly given potential tax impacts, and may prefer a pay-per-use model rather than a long-term financial contribution.

Councillor Watchorn reiterated that the District views recreation as a community health investment rather than a cost-recovery service. He emphasized the goal of equitable access for residents of both communities and discussed proportional cost-sharing based on anticipated usage. He noted that approximately \$1 million in annual operating costs is not recovered through fees and that an 18% usage share would equate to approximately \$180,000 annually. He suggested that an agreement in the range of \$100,000 or more could provide a reasonable starting point, with annual reviews over several years to refine cost estimates.

- * W. Mah emphasized that the District is not seeking Village support due to a funding shortfall but rather as part of a broader approach to shared services and regional cooperation. He highlighted that many public facilities and services are funded collectively for the benefit of the wider community. The District's willingness to work collaboratively and to respect the Village's approval processes was reiterated, noting that if partnership is not achieved, a tiered fee structure could be implemented.

Mayor Pranger highlighted that successful grant funding for the project was supported by demonstrated regional cooperation, including letters of support from Harrison Hot Springs. She compared the situation to broader public service funding models and emphasized the value of shared investment for community benefit.

- * T. Koch advised that the Village's primary concern is the lack of cost certainty, particularly on operating contributions. He noted that while the Village has not questioned the capital contribution amount, clear and more predictable operating figures are required to move forward. Any agreement would require public support through an AAP and noted timing challenges related to upcoming elections and staff capacity.

Councillor Facio echoed concerns regarding operating cost uncertainty, referencing past community reactions to similar projects. He stressed the importance of firm figures before proceeding and suggested that formal presentation by District representatives to Harrison Hot Springs residents could assist in public understanding and engagement. Councillor Watchorn advised that the District would work toward providing more definitive cost figures within approximately two weeks and expressed willingness to participate in public presentations to Village residents.

T. Koch noted that the Village's next regular meeting is scheduled for May 19 and requested information in advance of that meeting, if possible, to facilitate discussion.

Additional discussion clarified that the AAP would apply to both capital and operating contributions. It was noted that, should an AAP fail, further options, including a referendum, would be at Council's discretion.

Mayor Pranger thanked the Village of Harrison Hot Springs for their candid and respectful dialogue and reaffirmed interest in continued collaboration.

8 New Business

9 Adjournment

WATCHORN / SPAETI
THAT the meeting adjourn at 5:40 p.m.

CARRIED

CERTIFIED CORRECT:

S. Pranger, Mayor

W. Mah, Chief Administrative Officer

CERTIFIED A TRUE & CORRECT COPY
of the Minutes of the Special In Camera Joint
Committee of the Whole meeting of the
Councils of the District of Kent and Village of
Harrison Hot Springs held Tuesday, May 5, 2026 at 4:00 p.m.
in the Council Chambers, Municipal Hall, Agassiz, B.C.

Clair Lee, Director of Corporate Services