

This report was made public by the CVRD Board at its May 12, 2020 meeting.

In-camera

DATE: May 8, 2020

FILE: 6430-01

TO: Chair and Directors
Regional District Board

FROM: Russell Dyson
Chief Administrative Officer

Supported by Russell Dyson
Chief Administrative Officer

R. Dyson

RE: COVID-19 Response and Renewal Framework

Purpose

To introduce a COVID-19 response and renewal framework for Comox Valley Regional District (CVRD) services based on key principles (Appendix A) identified by the Board, being

- Maintaining core services at an affordable cost
- Sustaining stable services in support of the local economy
- Adapting to changing community priorities
- Realigning resources to support community renewal initiatives
- Communicating clearly about actions.

Recommendations from the Chief Administrative Officer:

1. WHEREAS the Comox Valley Regional District (CVRD) Board of Directors recognize the unprecedented impacts and changes that the global COVID-19 pandemic is having on society, the economy and public health;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the CVRD implement the COVID-19 Response and Renewal Framework, as generally illustrated in Appendix B to the staff report dated May 8, 2020, which provides direction to develop a plan based on the Board's principles during this crisis including: consideration for maintaining core services at an affordable cost, sustaining stable services in support of the local economy, adapting to changing community priorities, realigning resources to support community renewal initiatives and communicating clearly about actions, while also protecting public health, the environment and future economic opportunities;

AND FINALLY THAT the Board rise and report on this resolution and the staff report dated May 8, 2020.

2. THAT the Comox Valley Regional District Chair engage directly, in writing, with Comox Valley Mayors, committee and commission chairs, the Comox Strathcona Waste Management Board, the Comox Strathcona Regional Hospital District Board, K'ómoks First Nation Chief and Council and other community partners to create awareness about the response and renewal framework and promote collaboration on community services.
3. THAT the Federal Government be encouraged to consider and support the immediate and medium-term actions to provide emergency funding to local governments during the COVID-19 pandemic and to monitor and revisit conditions and to provide greater fiscal flexibility to local governments, as outlined in the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) publication, "Protecting vital municipal services", dated April 23, 2020, with copies being sent to the FCM and the Union of BC Municipalities for information.

Executive Summary

COVID -19 has changed everything and the Board of Directors of the CVRD has directed a review of our services in light of the new order. Every individual, organization, business and institution in the Comox Valley has been affected and we need to ensure that service levels and the financial contributions from the community to support those services are appropriate to maintain core service levels and support the community's needs through the term of the five year financial plan.

This report presents the initial details for a process to develop a response and renewal framework for the Board's endorsement in early fall of 2020. The process will be public and will include dialogue with key stakeholders and input from the applicable committees and commissions. The process includes:

1. Continuation of critical and necessary projects to meet regulatory requirements and provide the service delivery that is required within the community;
2. Review of all 2020 functional projects for relevance;
3. An assessment of all CVRD services to confirm service levels, to seek financial efficiencies and to confirm the new practices and procedures that support the community, which may require solutions in partnership with the Water Committee, Sewage Commission, Comox Strathcona Waste Management, Comox Strathcona Regional Hospital District, North Island 9-1-1, Vancouver Island Regional Library and others;
4. Support for COVID-19 Action Teams that will reach out and help critical non-profit organizations throughout the Comox Valley.

The Response and Recovery Framework will include adjustments to the 2020 work plans and a five year financial plan to ensure service delivery while providing an adjustment to the tax impact from current projections in future years.

Outside of this report the CVRD is taking separate initiatives to meet its obligations for health and safety and follow through with its obligations to BC's Restart Plan. The Board is also developing an economic task force working with its partners to support the local business economy and this initiative will be reported separately.

This report is presented to an in-camera session as it relates to negotiations for potential services under section 90(1)(k) of the *Community Charter*. It is recommended that the Board rise and report on its action, making this report available to the public.

Prepared by:

J. Warren

James Warren
Deputy Chief Administrative Officer

Government Partners and Stakeholder Distribution (Upon Agenda Publication)

Chief Administrative Officers City of Courtenay, Town of Comox, and Village of Cumberland	✓
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Background/Current Situation

In March 2020, the World Health Organization declared COVID-19 as a global pandemic. Nations around the world quickly began restricting movement, closing borders and disabling economic opportunities in an effort to stop the disease from spreading, aiming to protect human health and prevent health care systems from being overwhelmed. In Canada, federal and provincial wage

subsidies, employment benefits and numerous other fiscal programs have been constructed to offset economic impacts from the COVID-19 pandemic. Senior government has also supported local government by enabling more flexibility to support revenue flow and borrowing internally. For local governments themselves, recreation centres have closed causing some layoffs, transit ridership and service levels have dropped substantially, transit fares are not being collected and public meetings cannot occur. Staff have also adjusted, in many cases by working from home during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Throughout this pandemic, uncertainty remains a constant element where no one is able to say when the restrictions will be relaxed and economic opportunities can return. Nor is anyone able to say the degree in which society will return to a ‘normal’ sense in that great uncertainty exists for public gatherings and large group settings. Local government finance staff and budget managers are monitoring financial positions and referring to the relevant authorities for insight and advice including Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM), Union of BC Municipalities (UBCM), Municipal Finance Authority and others. In the Comox Valley, the CVRD is working closely with the City of Courtenay, Village of Cumberland and Town of Comox as well as staying connected with other municipalities and regional districts.

CVRD Board Directors have provided some context and perspective on the COVID-19 pandemic and the role of the CVRD. Appendix A highlights many of those elements, which are characterized generally around five themes: **maintaining** core services at an affordable cost, **sustaining** stable services in support of the local economy, **adapting** to changing community priorities, **realigning** resources to support community renewal initiatives and **communicating** clearly about actions. With these themes in mind, and reflecting on the CVRD’s core services and strategic drivers, a response and renewal framework is presented in this report to help the CVRD, Comox Valley residents, and business owners manage through the pandemic. The framework’s response puts a focus on the immediate and urgent actions during the coming weeks and months while so much uncertainty exists; whereas the framework’s renewal pays attention to the structures and processes in place to guide CVRD service delivery through the fall and winter and into subsequent financial plans.

One element staff are undertaking, regardless of the preferred approach, is an assessment of the CVRD’s 97 services to determine 2020 projects that should or should not continue, in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. As a guide, Schedule 1 lists the 97 services the CVRD is responsible for.

- 2020 projects have been organized into three categories:
 - **Necessary tasks** are those that must continue to be provided to the community, including water supply, sewage treatment and works at the landfill.
 - **Critical tasks** are those that must also continue, given their importance to the community and in support of a COVID-19 response such as parks and their emerging critical role for mental health in times of crisis. (Schedule 1 also shows the necessary and critical tasks under COVID-19.)
 - **Functional tasks** are those which have more flexibility to consider adjustments. Certain capital projects are also being reviewed to confirm the ability to deliver and also the practicality of moving ahead. There are over 350 functional tasks across the 97 services in any given year.

The review will consider the relevance and priority of projects, impact on and requirements for public engagement, financial impacts and cost savings, new ways to enhance partnerships for service delivery and an understanding of community values and benefits

- The review will consider the relevance and priority of projects, impact on and requirements for public engagement, financial impacts and cost savings, new ways to enhance partnerships for service delivery, an understanding of community values and benefits and may result in projects being cancelled or delayed, service levels adjusted or continuing where appropriate.
- Appendix D describes in more detail the methods to review the CVRD services and functional tasks. One expected outcome is a timeline identifying the key considerations for management advisory groups, committees, commissions and the Board with respect to specific services being analyzed for functional changes and budget reviews. For example, the Board can expect to see one or more reports in May and June relating to the transit system and work plan components and a review of the recreation services at the July Sports Commission meeting.

Policy Analysis

The CVRD undertook its strategic planning process through 2019 and into 2020's first quarter. The Board's four strategic drivers (fiscal responsibility, community partnerships, indigenous relations and responding to the climate crisis) guided the 2020-2024 financial plan and maintained a focus on the CVRD's core services (<https://www.comoxvalleyrd.ca/corporateplan>). The COVID-19 pandemic first impacted local government services March 16, 2020 with curtailment of public service and the establishment of a regional EOC on March 17. Consideration was given to known information and circumstance and it was determined that proceeding with adoption of the 2020-2024 financial plan as presented was the best course of action. Consultation with other regional districts across the province determined the common approach was adopting the financial plan in mid-March, thereby setting the tax rates for 2020 and finalizing service delivery plans. However, adjustments can and are being made to service delivery in order to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic and to deliver the level of service that is beneficial and appropriate to the Comox Valley at this time. The CVRD's website (<https://www.comoxvalleyrd.ca/strategic>) lists how the core services are delivered to support the strategic drivers, as well as noting changes to service delivery in response COVID-19.

Emphasizing three elements that support the changes presented, and the work plans in general, are important:

- CVRD service delivery is driven by:
 - existing long range planning documents, developed with community input and support, such as official community plans, the regional growth strategy, parks master plans
 - regulatory frameworks put in place by senior government in order to protect public health, the environment and community infrastructures
- CVRD services are intended to provide for community amenities and conditions that are not delivered by other public authorities, such as the federal or provincial governments, or by private enterprise.
- CVRD services and the financial plans are subject to extensive stakeholder and public engagement.

Options

Three options for response and renewal from the COVID-19 pandemic are possible. Each option could be further described in a multitude of ways, however the high-level principles are described here. The recommendation in this report is for option 1.

1. Measured Response (recommended)

A response and renewal framework that is built upon the Board's principles can provide for community values during the initial and more urgent time period, where great uncertainty exists and community needs are acute.

The actions taken during this response and renewal framework by staff in assessing services and the Board in further setting direction, will lead to a set of activities and structures from which the 2021-2025 financial plan can be set. The board's direction will be confirmed at a fall facilitated session.

The CVRD COVID-19 Response and Renewal Framework (Appendix B), includes a timeline, focus on the CVRD's Core Services and continued importance of the Board's strategic drivers. Regular communications with the public to continue awareness about services, impacts and community value. The framework is also the guideline to follow for setting future financial plans, being mindful of the overall community and financial impacts that result from the COVID-19 pandemic. Inherent within the framework is the continuously changing conditions associated with the pandemic, and therefore the framework and CVRD's actions must be adaptable.

2. Maintain status quo

Continuing to deliver CVRD services at the same level as pre-COVID-19 can be an approach for consideration, and is an appropriate effort for some services such as the necessary or critical components (water supply, sewage treatment, landfill operations and fire protection). This approach is not being recommended given the community and fiscal impacts associated with the COVID-19 pandemic and the Board's five principles; maintaining, sustaining, adapting, realigning and communicating.

3. Significant Reduction in Services

The Board could consider significantly reducing CVRD services. This would achieve cost reductions, minimize expenditures and potentially reduce the impact of any future tax impacts. To achieve this, staff could present to the Board an inventory of services, projects and infrastructure improvements that could be delayed, cancelled or stopped altogether. Part of that assessment, however, would have to determine the legal ability to delay or cancel, based on regulatory requirements, the future costs needed to maintain assets and the community response to reduced or eliminated services. This approach is not being recommended, at this stage, as the more reasoned and measured approach applies the Board's principles, continues with the important and valued CVRD activities and creates the conditions for re-establishing the CVRD's services after the COVID-19 pandemic.

Financial Factors

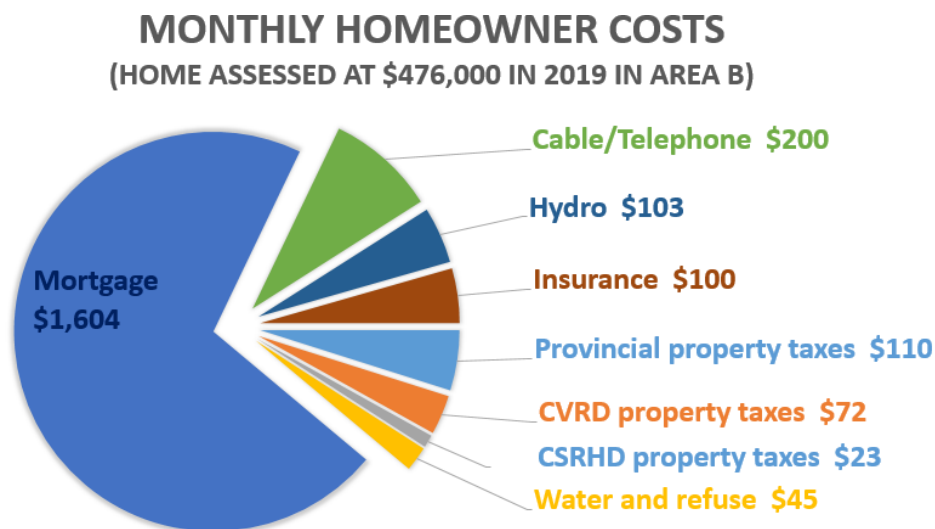
The five year financial plan was adopted March 19, 2020 following extensive analysis, engagement and feedback over a five month period. This financial plan was developed with the lens of the Board's strategic priorities and four strategic drivers. The pandemic took effect March 11, 2020 with the CVRD implementing a regional EOC March 17. Consideration was given whether to reconsider the plan in light of the pandemic. At the time the COVID-19 impact was uncertain, considering appropriate alternatives was not possible with March 31 being the deadline for the adoption of the budget. A survey of other regional districts determined that proceeding with the plan was consistent and appropriate.

Finance staff continue to monitor the financial implications to our 97 services and the response of senior government in relation to CVRD services. Of note:

- Rural taxes are collected by the province and the surveyor of taxes is committed to reimburse regional districts according to usual timeframes.
- The CVRD depends on municipalities to collect the property taxes for the regional district services they participate in. With new deadlines being implemented the province has been clear it expects that municipalities will provide payment to regional districts within the usual timeframes.

- The province offers various programs including tax deferral, options for commercial and managed forest lands relief from school taxes.
- The CVRD continues to receive grant revenues according to anticipated timelines.
- Finances are more limited than normal, given loss of revenue and homeowners’ reduced ability to pay for and taxes.
- Disruption to transit rider fees and recreation programs have resulted in diminished revenues.
- Municipal Finance Authority has recommended that during this time and into the near future, local governments keep their investments as liquid as possible and invested in secure financial institutions.
- Staff continue to monitor each of the services for revenues and expenditures. Some services have the potential for surplus and some reduced revenues. There are currently no issues with respect to cash flow and potential for deficit.
- Looking into the renewal period, budget managers will be reviewing the 2021 financial plan which has a forecasted requisition increase of 4.3 per cent over 2020 in the adopted 2020-2024 financial plan. Some of the factors that influence the financial plan are collective agreements, utility providers, external agencies such as the Vancouver Island Regional Library, contractual service agreements, service level increases, regulatory requirements, etc.
- The majority of the 2021 requisition increase relates to asset renewal plans or projects, and a detailed review of each service and service level will form part of the 2021-2025 financial planning process and will be influenced by the Board’s fall strategic planning session.

Schedule 2 provides more detail on the financial impacts and actions resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic for local governments. Schedule 1 includes the various roles for local, provincial and federal governments. Of note, local government taxation is impactful on homeowners but must be considered in light of the services that the CVRD delivers, the impacts on the community if those services are reduced or changed and some comparison with other costs of home ownership. The chart below provides a very simple illustration of local government taxes compared with other home ownership expenses. The chart is not meant to apply to every home owner’s situation and certain assumptions were made to describe the degree of impact. It should be noted the CVRD property taxes in relation to Provincial property taxes, and the inherent limitation on local government’s ability to raise revenues.



Legal Factors

As the response and renewal framework is implemented over the coming weeks and months, the CVRD will need to balance its legal obligation to deliver services with the impacts COVID-19 has on society, specifically related to the financial impacts and physical distancing requirements. This balance inherently rests on the fact that the CVRD is under authority of the Province of BC and follows senior government regulations. At times it may appear that regional district are inflexible, however many regional district actions are for transparency and accountability reasons; nonetheless all available means for response and renewal will be explored.

Necessary and critical tasks are already identified (Schedule 1) and functional tasks continue to be assessed to ensure that CVRD services continue to be delivered, respecting public health and safety within the CVRD's legislative structure.

Regional Growth Strategy Implications

The CVRD has eight core services. The Board's strategic drivers were applied to those services through its budget process in early 2020. Those drivers, being fiscal responsibility, community partnerships, indigenous relations and responding to the climate crisis. They continue to be important and must be considered, even more so during the COVID-19 pandemic response and renewal. The framework itself creates the opportunities to seek additional community partnerships.

The Regional Growth Strategy technical advisory committee (TAC) and steering committee (SC) may be explored to establish a more comprehensive, Valley-wide approach to evaluate and consider some of the development and growth pressures. The TAC and SC are uniquely established to facilitate long-range planning discussions, while drawing on the specific expertise of engineering, public safety, parks and recreation or financial staff when needed.

Intergovernmental Factors

- **Emergency Operations Centre:** The CVRD has been actively participating in the virtual, level 2 EOC alongside the Village of Cumberland, City of Courtenay and Town of Comox. Regular attendees and participants at EOC briefings include representatives from other groups including the RCMP, K'ómoks First Nation, Island Health and Comox Valley School District and community partners such as the Comox Valley Coalition to End Homelessness. The EOC purpose to date has been to coordinate public communications and align local efforts in supporting the Federal and Provincial health authorities to control the coronavirus spread. The EOC has helped facilitate collaboration in communications, recreation, bylaw compliance, public works, finance and resource acquisition.
- **CVRD Services and Partners:** In consideration of CVRD services, and activities that CVRD Board members have an active role, collaborating with partner agencies through the response and renewal will be important. Where cost savings, operational efficiencies or service delivery changes are identified that also involve other parties, for example at the Comox Strathcona Regional Hospital District or Vancouver Island Regional Library, CVRD Directors may need to collaborate to effect change. Regular and ongoing dialogue, at both political and administrative levels, will be important to advance changes. As noted in the framework, Chair Ketler may opt to engage directly with individual Mayors and Chairs while also holding regular meetings, virtually or otherwise. Further, correspondence should be directed to the CVRD's partners to provide the foundation for change, where warranted. The reason for such direct and regular contact with partners is that the CVRD's adopted financial plan, which is the final responsibility of the Board of Directors, is contingent on many other committees, commission, boards and corporations, which can be influenced by Board members.

- **Advocacy:** The CVRD Board may not have the levers of control to make real changes for the Comox Valley. Many of the CVRD's services are driven by senior government regulations and the CVRD finds itself having to implement services that meet or exceed those standards. In certain cases, where public health or the environment would not be jeopardized, the CVRD may opt to advocate for change. Maintaining an awareness of other jurisdictions that are similarly facing reduced revenues but high regulatory standards, the CVRD may find success in partnering on lobbying efforts.

One advocacy focus area for the Board should be aligning with the FCM's efforts to protect vital local government services. Appendix C contains an FCM publication dated April 23, 2020 that describes some of the municipal response to COVID-19, fiscal impacts resulting from COVID-19 and a few recommendations and a model for emergency operating funds. This report includes a recommendation to support the FCM publication by writing letters to the Government of Canada and both the UBCM and the FCM (Schedule 1 lists the different responsibilities across governments).

Interdepartmental Involvement

In addition to the regular collaboration that is ongoing within the CVRD, staff have increased their attention across branches to assess existing work plans to identify means of adjusting service delivery to respect fiscal constraints and comply with physical distancing obligations.

One activity that the Board provided direction for early on during the COVID-19 pandemic was the use of CVRD resources to assess and support community groups that are similarly impacted by the current situation. Since mid-March, the CVRD Board has directed more than \$200,000 in grant funding to the Comox Valley Community Foundation, Comox Valley Community Health Network, the Comox Valley Coalition to End Homelessness and other community non-profit organizations to promote food security and support the homeless and offer other benefits during the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, a CVRD COVID -19 Action Team was also formed to reach out to community groups and help identify where gaps exist or coordinating efforts may help. More than 30 community groups have been contacted and practical ways in which the CVRD can support those groups are being collected. Assistance with deliveries, fund raising and volunteer coordination are some of the ways in which help is needed for community groups to continue delivering their services. The CVRD response and renewal framework embraces the COVID Action Team concept and will continue to see supports offered (Schedule 3).

Citizen/Public Relations

Delivering public services to the Comox Valley continues to be a CVRD focus. Applying that focus to the core services through the strategic drivers' lenses ensures the Board's interests are being met. And during the COVID-19 response and renewal, a heightened attention on the Board's principles is paramount. Schedule 1 provides some perspective on the role of local government and how it compares with other levels of government as well as taxation and service delivery. This is not meant to downplay the importance of respecting property owners, renters and business owners and the impacts they are facing from COVID-19, rather, Schedule 1 helps to set the stage for where local government services fit in comparison to senior government roles.

Public communications will be important throughout the response and renewal. The framework enables the CVRD to issue press releases where appropriate, seek earned media and dedicated interviews and promote important changes through social media and traditional media. Dedicated information sharing during the renewal phase will also be important to communicate service levels as the CVRD moves into the 2021-2025 financial planning process in the fall. Finally, the CVRD's website will list the various ways in which services are adjusting to the COVID-19 pandemic (<https://www.comoxvalleyrd.ca/strategic>).

Should the CVRD Board approve the recommendations contained in this report, a press release will be issued describing the framework.

Attachments:

Appendix A – Board Feedback - April 7, 2020

Appendix B – Response and Renewal Framework

Appendix C – Summary of FCM Recommendations - Protecting Vital Municipal Services.

Appendix D – Reviewing CVRD Services and Functional Tasks

Schedule 1 – CVRD Services and Necessary and Critical Tasks

Schedule 2 – Financial Impacts Associated with COVID-19 and CVRD

Schedule 3 – COVID Action Team status

COVID-19 RENEWAL - BOARD FEEDBACK

On April 7, 2020, Russell Dyson, Chief Administrative Officer, and James Warren, General Manager of Corporate Services, met with directors to gather input about COVID-19 renewal planning. In this session several themes emerged and feedback has been grouped accordingly.

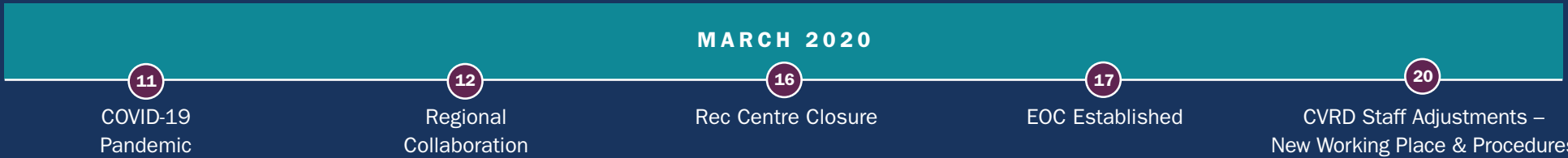
The chart below organizes comments from Directors under six key themes with describing words attached to each. This brainstorming exercise was developed by staff to create a more concise picture of the boards' priorities. The end goal was to establish some overarching criteria that would form the foundation of a renewal framework.

The following five key principles will guide the Comox Valley Regional District's actions moving forward.

- ✓ **Maintain** core services at an affordable cost
- ✓ **Sustain** stable services in support of the local economy
- ✓ **Adapt** to changing community priorities
- ✓ **Realign** resources to support community renewal initiatives
- ✓ **Communicate** clearly about our actions

What You Told Us (Themes)	What We Heard (Describing Words)	Key Principles (Framework)
<p>Fiscal Responsibility</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the potential for cost savings? • What is the bottom line for our services? • Maintain the hiring freeze • Financial resources are the same or less • Don't foresee more resources needed • Focus on essentials • Recognize challenge for business • Will need to look for cuts somewhere • Demonstrate we are looking at ways to reduce • Are there capital projects to put off? • See changes coming • Don't expand service levels 	<p>Savings Finances Bottom Line Cuts Hiring Freeze Service Levels Pause Delay Reduce Essential Economy</p>	<p>Maintain core services at an affordable cost</p>
<p>Stability</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep staff employed but be diligent • Reduce workforce as a last resort • Must have stability for core services • Concern for morale • Provide support for staff, especially if reducing the work force • Keep people that can work working 	<p>Jobs Employment Core Services Responsibility Efficiency Morale Workforce</p>	<p>Sustain stable services to support the local economy</p>

What You Told Us (Themes)	What We Heard (Describing Words)	Key Principles (Framework)
Responsibility <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need to show we understand • We may need time to see a clear path moving forward • Don't make hurried decisions • Understand the impact of decisions • Need to be nimble and strategic 	Understand Comprehend Thoughtful Nimble Strategic Flexibility	Adapt to changing community priorities
Innovation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be shrewd • Provide stability in service delivery but show adaptation • What can we change • Do we look at new and different types of recreation – less facility based • Need to do things differently, seek partnerships 	Judgement Change Innovate Adapt Change Partnering	
Community <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If extra capacity perhaps we can help • What can we provide outside of rec facilities • Reach out to rec users for programming • How can we adopt the good things from this experience? • Food policy, air quality and homelessness coalition all important groups to support • Create action teams to support the community during the recovery 	Help Support Re-align Positive Action Coalition Sustainable Teams Recovery Adapting	Realign resources to support community renewal initiatives
Perception <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Caution of public sentiment toward government • We sometimes struggle to get the story across • Public perception is important • Community connection is important to avoid anger • The need for communications • Keep staff employed if possible but be careful of optics 	Sentiment, Connection Communication Messaging Community Optics Opinion Awareness Transparent	Communicate clearly about our actions



CVRD COVID-19 Response & Renewal Framework (May 2020)

This framework is the guideline for defining the response and renewal actions to deliver CVRD services to the Comox Valley, in light of the COVID-19 pandemic.





IMMEDIATE

- Assessing 2020 functional tasks and work plans across all services
- Evaluating all CVRD services for fiscal efficiencies
- Adjusting priorities to align with the Board's COVID-19 lens
- Specific actions noted online at www.comoxvalleyrd.ca/strategic and www.comoxvalleyrd.ca/covid
- Regional Emergency Operations Centre (EOC)
- COVID Action Teams (supporting community partners)
- Engaging with Comox Strathcona Regional Hospital District, Comox Strathcona Waste Management, sewage commission, water committee, Vancouver Island Regional Library, North Island 9-1-1 and other partners

RENEWAL PHASE (MIDDLE & LONGER TERM)

- Assessing services for updates, improvements - with regular reports to CVRD Board, partners and stakeholders
- Regular Comox Valley community leader engagement (mayors, CFB Comox, RCMP, KFN Chief and Council, SD71, Island Health)
- Fall 2020 session with CVRD Board to ratify the strategy

INFORMING THE COMMUNITY

- Social media
- Online and web
- Media
- Board/committee/commission meetings online www.comoxvalleyrd.ca/agendas
- Virtual public meetings
- Paid advertising
- Connecting with stakeholders



FEDERATION OF CANADIAN MUNICIPALITIES

FCMs report titled [Protecting Vital Municipal Services](#) is their input and insight into the COVID-19 crisis.

The **Summary of Recommendations**, pulled from their report, are listed below:

Immediate Action

- 1. Deliver at least \$10 billion in targeted emergency operating funding to all local governments as direct allocations—with a new hybrid formula modelled on both the proven federal Gas Tax Fund (GTF) and a ridership-based allocation for municipalities that operate transit systems.**
 - ▶ Specifically, allocate at least \$7.6 billion of the fund using a GTF-style allocation formula for all local governments, and \$2.4 billion based 100% on transit ridership.
 - ▶ For municipalities that operate transit systems, provide a single blended transfer.
 - ▶ Immediately provide advance payments to municipalities facing urgent liquidity issues.
 - ▶ Leverage the administrative infrastructure of the federal Gas Tax Fund, where possible, to expedite the rollout of dedicated emergency operating grants.
- 2. Deliver additional emergency operating funding to individual local governments facing unique financial pressures related to COVID-19 that are not fully met by the hybrid formula above.** Our largest urban centres face distinct challenges supporting self-isolation, sanitation and good health among populations struggling with homelessness and mental health challenges. Smaller communities face unique challenges, starting with access to health care services that can support isolation requirements and urgent care. These and other unique cost drivers will continue to require targeted supports for the full duration of this crisis.

Medium-term action

- 3. Commit to revisit the need for additional operating funding within four months.**
 - ▶ Monitor trends in property tax delinquencies and consider additional supports for individuals and businesses that may not be able to pay property taxes after the expiry of short-term municipal deferral programs.
 - ▶ Depending on the duration and severity of the COVID-19 crisis, prepare for possible additional operating funding assistance in both 2020 and 2021.
- 4. Provide local governments with the ability to transfer unused allocations to the federal Gas Tax Fund program for capital expenditures as part of Canada's COVID-19 economic recovery plan.**

REVIEWING CVRD SERVICES AND FUNCTIONAL TASKS

CVRD staff are in the process of evaluating the over 325 functional tasks on the 2020 work plans across the 97 services. Consideration is being given to:

- The relevance and priority of the project under the circumstance
- The dependence on public input, stakeholders and regulatory agencies that may not be at capacity to support the project.
- The need for the project, relative to service delivery, strategic priorities and regulatory requirements
- Whether proceeding with the project is a positive opportunity

The evaluation results may include:

- continue with the project or service
- stop or diminish service levels and timelines or
- evaluate the overall concept.

The criteria for the evaluation of each of the 97 services within the proposed framework would be as follows:

- Consider the results of the above and what is the impact on the bottom line for 2020
- Manage the potential for surplus that may provide for tax relief in 2021 but be mindful of the transition to 2022
- Consider matters in the context of the five year plan, meaning that making changes now may induce other requirements or changes in the future
- Review budgets line-by-line for efficiencies
- Evaluate procedures and processes that will change as a result of COVID-19
- Consider new processes and procedures that will support the community moving forward
- As with the 2020 functional projects review generally the dependence on public input, stakeholders and regulatory agencies that may not be at capacity to support the service.







Applying the potential results of the review could include:

- Amendments to financial plan to provide some form of relief to ratepayers
- Streamlined procedures and processes to support the community
- Changes to CVRD regulations, bylaws or policies
- Identification of possible regulatory changes or processes of other levels of government to support CVRD services for consideration of the Board
- Consulting on updates and changes as part of the consideration also rests on partnerships and collaborating with external parties. Island Health, for example, is wholly focused on responding to the pandemic and the CVRD must then be mindful about any of its projects that require Island Health participation.

Assisting this review will be **a response and renewal timeline** that identifies key considerations and meeting opportunities for advisories / Committees / Commissions and the Board, including:

- Chair Ketler reaching out to the various chairs
- A CAO letter to key CVRD managers with tasks and timing describing this review
- Specific consideration for the RGS, recreation, water, sewer, transit and electoral areas services

LOCAL, PROVINCIAL AND FEDERAL GOVERNMENT RESPONSIBILITIES

Local Government	Provincial Government	Federal Government
Comox Valley Regional District	Province of British Columbia	Canada
<ul style="list-style-type: none">  Electoral Area Services  Emergency Programs  Finance & Administrative  Recreation  Regional Growth Strategy  Sewage Treatment  Transit  Water Supply 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">  Schools  Hospitals  Social Services  Supports for Employees and Employers  COVID-19 Testing  Justice  Post Secondary  Highways  Property Taxes (Provincial portion) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">  Income Tax  Employment Insurance  Mortgages  Borders  RCMP & Military  Child Benefits  Student Loans  Airports  International Travel  Safety Enforcement

CVRD CORE SERVICES

97 Services (does not include Comox Strathcona Waste Management, Comox Strathcona Regional Hospital District, North Island 9-1-1 Corporation)



Electoral Area Services

- Black Creek Community Hall Contribution
- Building Inspection
- Comfort Station Service
- Comox Valley Animal Control
- Courtenay Flats Drainage
- Denman Island Community Hall
- Denman Island Garbage Collection
- Economic Development - 2
- Electoral Areas Arts & Culture Grant Service
- Feasibility Studies - 5
- Fireworks Regulation Extended Service
- Garbage Collection - Royston
- Grant In Aid - 5
- Heritage Conservation - 5
- Hornby Island Comfort Station Local Service Area
- Hornby Island Community Hall
- Hornby Island Garbage Disposal
- House Numbering - 3
- Liquid Waste Management
- Noise Control
- Hornby/Denman Recreation Complexes Contribution
- Planning
- Streetlighting Specified Areas - 11
- Unsightly Premises Extended Service
- Weed Control



Emergency Programs

- Comox Valley Emergency Program
- Emergency Program - A, B, C
- Fire Protection Areas - 8
- Search and Rescue - Comox Valley



Recreation

- Community Parks & Greenways - 3
- Comox Valley Exhibition Grounds
- Comox Valley Recreation Complexes
- Comox Valley Track & Fields
- Denman Island Recreation
- Hornby Island Recreation
- Recreation Grants



Finance and Administration

- 911 Answering Service
- Administration and General Government
- Cemetery
- Comox Valley Airport Service
- Comox Valley Homelessness Support Service
- CV Community Justice
- Economic Development – Comox Valley
- Electoral Areas Expenditure & Election Services
- Emergency Shelter Land Acquisition
- Feasibility Studies - Regional
- Member Municipality Administration
- Member Municipality Debt
- Vancouver Island Regional Library
- Victim Services Program / Crime Stoppers Grant



Regional Growth Strategy

- Regional Growth Strategy



Sewage Treatment

- Comox Valley Sewerage Service
- Jackson Drive Sewer
- King Coho Sewer



Transit

- Transit - Comox Valley



Water Supply

- Black Creek/Oyster Bay Water
- Denman Island Water
- England Road Water
- Greater Comox Valley Water LSA
- Greaves Crescent Water
- Royston Water
- Sandwick Water

CVRD Work Plan and COVID-19

1. **Necessary** services that must continue to be provided to the community,
2. **Critical** services or projects that are now critical because of their scope or benefit to the community and our response to the COVID-19 pandemic.
3. **Functional** projects and activities to continue to be worked on.

Necessary: tasks and services that are vital to community and public health and must be provided; requires a realignment of resources if necessary to maintain service delivery	
1. EOC Support	All
2. CSWM Landfill Operations	CSWM Services
3. Fire Protection	Electoral Areas
4. Finance (process payments, bank deposits, issue billings, monitor cash flow daily, grant claims, provincial reporting)	Finance and Administration
5. Human resources: collective agreement, WorkSafe BC, employee standards, employee support, payroll and benefits	Executive Management
6. Corporate Services (to maintain supports to essential and critical tasks, including support for elected officials and executive management - IT, communications, legislative services)	Finance and Administration
7. Sewer Conveyance and Treatment	Sewage Treatment
8. Transit operations (* - task is not within CVRD control and service levels may be reduced based on volume and serviceability through BC Transit)	Transit
9. Water Supply and Treatment	Water Supply
10. North Island 911 Administration	Finance and Administration

Functional: Functional projects and activities to continue to be worked on.	
More than 325 functional tasks are identified in any given year. Some tasks have more potential to be changed, delayed or canceled, thereby creating cost savings. Other tasks are guided by senior government regulations or operate on very tight margins, offering fewer opportunities for changes. Renewal assessments are to give consideration to continue, stop diminish service levels/timelines or evaluate the overall concept.	
COVID-19 response and renewal actions are noted online at www.comoxvalleyrd.ca/strategic	

Critical: tasks and services that are advanced to significant stage where continuing with project is preferred over pausing project and restarting at later date; significant losses (financial, capital, public trust) would occur if project is paused; tasks have significant opportunity to provide community supports in responding to COVID-19	
1. CRWMC Closure	CSWM Services
2. CVWMC Cell 2 Design	CSWM Services
3. Regional Organics	CSWM Services
4. CVWMC Cell 1 Progressive Closure	CSWM Services
5. Rural roadside garbage, recycling and organics collection	Electoral Areas
6. Building permit processing	Electoral Areas
7. Community Parks (Maintenance)	Electoral Area
8. Completion of the new Regional Emergency Operations Centre	Emergency Programs
9. Merville Fire Hall Project	Emergency Programs
10. CVED Society Contract review (2020)	Finance and Administration
11. Regional office project	Finance and Administration
12. Maintenance and upgrades of closed recreation facilities	Recreation
13. Partnerships with KFN	RGS
14. LWMP - conveyance solution; treatment level for CVWPCC; resource renewal opportunities	Sewage Treatment
15. Upgrades and equipment at the CVWPCC (odour control)	Sewage Treatment
16. South Sewer	Sewage Treatment
17. King Coho capital upgrades	Sewage Treatment
18. Completion of the Water Treatment Project	Water Supply
19. CSWM CV bin wall improvements	CSWM

FINANCIAL IMPACTS ASSOCIATED WITH COVID-19 AND THE CVRD

- Finance's focus in the early response period has been to ensure payments to vendors are made on a timely basis. To facilitate this in part, a review of staff purchasing card limits was undertaken with transaction and monthly credit limits increased for key personnel with Chief Administrative Officer approval.
- March annually represents the largest utility billing of the year which has been completed successfully, in part remotely, with water technicians abiding by their new safe work protocols.
- Continuing to provide procurement support for the organization. Several projects recently out for competitive bids with others in the evaluation stage. Procurement processes adapted regarding site visits to ensure physical distancing where possible or drone footage or 3D modelling where physical distancing is not practical and to minimize contractor travel.
- Finance is working with the various budget managers to create COVID-19 budget scenarios, reviewing the impacts of reduced revenues, potential deferment of operating and capital projects, expense projections.
- Reaching out to municipal finance officers regarding stay-the-course budgets for 2020 with a lens on the future renewal period.
- Reaching out to not for profit service providers to review work plans and funding requirements (arts and culture organizations, community halls, parks, recreation groups and refuse)
- Received confirmation from the province that the rural tax requisition for the regional districts and regional hospital districts will be paid by August 1 as legislated
- Province has provided some flexibility to the municipalities in delaying the submission of the school taxes until the end of 2020. This is to provide the ability for the municipalities to remit their third party requisitions by August 1, including to the regional districts.
- Province has implemented an online application process for their two property tax deferral programs – regular deferral program for those 55+ and those with disabilities and also a families with children program.
- Province has approved the ability for local governments to borrow from their capital reserve funds for temporary operating revenue shortfalls with up to five years to repay the funds with no interest. For regional districts, careful financial planning needs to be done to ensure the service providing the reserves won't need the funds within the repayment timeframe.
- Province has extended the term for repayment of the revenue anticipation borrowing to two years. In December, the CVRD board adopted the annual revenue anticipation bylaw, increasing the limit for 2020 to \$25M from \$10M and also adopted a grant revenue anticipation bylaw for the water treatment project of \$55.5M.
- Budget managers are monitoring 2020 expenditures to maximize surplus carry forwards to assist in reducing tax impacts in future years.

COVID-19 ACTION TEAMS SUMMARY

On April 15, 2020 the concept of COVID-19 Action Teams (CATs) was brought forward to the Executive Management Team in response to direction from the Board of Directors inquiring into how the Comox Valley Regional District (CVRD) could provide additional community support specific to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The purpose of CATs is to explore opportunities to support our community's non-profit groups and associations during the COVID-19 crisis. CVRD managers were asked to identify individuals within their department that would have capacity to provide support for this initiative either directly on CATs or through the action plans. Currently there are 25 CVRD personnel on the CATs resource list. On average these individuals may provide up to three to four hours per work week. Communication to all staff was also distributed highlighting the purpose of CATs and to solicit feedback/suggestions on possible community support.

CATs officially kicked off the week of April 27 with the group identifying the scope of CATs, compiling a comprehensive list of community groups to contact, and developing key messaging and scripts. From this it was determined that CATs have a three-stage approach:

1. Identify potential gaps between existing local/Provincial/Federal supports and the community group's needs;
2. Identify, develop, and recommend action plans to support where feasible; and,
3. Coordinate internal resources to support Stage 2.

At the time of writing of this report CATs had connected with 25 community groups. The overall message is clear from the groups contacted that they are very happy we are reaching out to them and many have said that they appreciate the support the CVRD has already provided.

CATs will continue to expand the list of community groups but will develop potential action plans given the information gleaned from the community groups contacted to date. Resource allocations will be considered by the Chief Administrative Officer and the manager responsible to ensure resources are applied appropriately without compromise to our services.