

**DATE:** June 12, 2020

**FILE:** 7130-20/COVID

**TO:** Chair and Directors  
Regional District Board

**FROM:** Russell Dyson  
Chief Administrative Officer

Supported by Russell Dyson  
Chief Administrative Officer

***R. Dyson***

**RE: COVID Action Team Update**

### **Purpose**

To provide a summary of actions taken and outcomes by the COVID Action Team (CAT).

### **Recommendation from the Chief Administrative Officer:**

For information purposes only.

### **Executive Summary**

At the writing of this report CAT has connected with 22 community groups and has call backs into 14, including reaching out to those organizations that board members suggested. The response from community groups towards the outreach has been very positive and they expressed appreciation for the Comox Valley Regional District (CVRD) reaching out to them. From the information collected, the team identified needs and divided them into the following three categories - financial, resources, and in kind. The team then explored connecting organizations to help one another, and available resources and capacity to support from within our organization, e.g. volunteers, and utilizing specific skill sets of our employees.

On June 4, 2020, the CAT met to review actions taken and direction moving forward for the community outreach initiative. As of this date, the following actions have been taken:

- Food delivery support - Wachiay Friendship Centre (Wachiay), LUSH Valley Food Action Society (LUSH), and Comox Valley Hospice Society were connected to HandyDART through the CVRD transit department. HandyDART has been delivering groceries based on their capacity.
- Donations of goods – Wachiay identified that items for children and various household supplies would be helpful. This was communicated to CVRD staff and drop off box is at the CVRD main office.
- Waived tipping fees at the Comox Valley Waste Management Centre. MARS Wildlife Rescue Centre is currently closed and is conducting a large cleanup of their property and tipping fees were waived.
- Support for community garden at Wachiay – Two CVRD employees volunteered and have been active in this effort. One employee has been asked by Wachiay to provide a couple of informational sessions for the clients and staff based on the employee’s gardening and farming experience.
- Donation of winter socks
  - Salvation Army Homeless Shelter (288 pairs)
  - Women’s Transition Society (72 pairs)

A community need that was clearly identified through the CAT outreach is funding. The pandemic has had a significant financial impact on these organizations. Ten of the 22 groups expressed concern for current and future funding:

- Decrease in donations and increased expenses
- Financial impact of facility/store closures e.g. thrift stores, entry fees
- Looking for alternatives to traditional fundraising

As BC restarts, the CVRD wants to support the community groups, balanced with its own restart and renewal. Moving forward, the CAT efforts are winding down though CVRD continues to encourage and promote volunteer opportunities internally to support local community groups. The final action for the CAT will be to work with the Chamber of Commerce to explore educational opportunities to address the financial challenges our local organizations are facing as a result of the pandemic, e.g. webinars on topics such as the grant application process and fundraising.

Separate, but related to the CAT program, the CVRD has other examples of community outreach and engagements:

- Seventy four recreation user groups were contacted by Recreation Services to check in and provide updates on the facilities. In addition, program department staff are calling 270 community groups (listed in the recreation guide's Community Directory) to inform them about the newly developed Active Comox Valley website and free promotional opportunities. Recreation patrons with memberships were contacted and given the choice of receiving a refund, credit to account or donate the money to a local youth sports group.
- The Board's decision to provide nearly \$150,000 in funding towards supporting the homeless and providing food security for marginalized populations has been very well-received, including attracting additional donations to the Comox Valley Community Foundation. A report on those funds, describing the results from the Foundation, Coalition to End Homelessness and the Community Health Network will be presented at a subsequent Board meeting.
- Community and Planning/Development Services have regular dialogue with non-profit organizations, community halls, and partners developing safe work procedures and effective practices in light of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Prepared by:

***P. Batchelor***

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Concurrence:

***J. Warren***

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James Warren  
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Officer