

DATE: March 18, 2020**FILE:** 1700-02**TO:** Chair and Director
Regional District Board**FROM:** Russell Dyson
Chief Administrative OfficerSupported by Russell Dyson
Chief Administrative Officer*R. Dyson***RE: COVID-19 emergency funding options to support key community agencies**

Purpose

To provide Directors with some potential emergency funding options to support critical community / social support agencies in the Comox Valley in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Recommendations from the Chief Administrative Officer:

THAT strategic allocations of the combined \$201,846 currently earmarked in 2020 within the five electoral area Grant-in-Aid services, functions # 120 – 124, be undertaken in a timely manner with consideration given to provide emergency financial assistance to community / social support agencies, that provide vital supports to the most vulnerable individuals and/or groups in the Comox Valley in response to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

AND FURTHER THAT unallocated surplus in the amount of \$93,179 available to the Administration and General Government service, function #111, be redirected on an interim basis to provide emergency financial assistance to community / social support agencies, on an application basis, that provide vital supports to the most vulnerable individuals and/or groups in the Comox Valley in response to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

Executive Summary

Electoral Area Directors have indicated a desire to identify options to enable the Comox Valley Regional District to provide some emergency financial support to enable essential community / social support agencies throughout the Comox Valley to continue serving the most vulnerable individuals and/or groups in response to the ongoing COVID-19 crisis.

As events continue to unfold with respect to the current COVID-19 pandemic, many community and social support agencies may find themselves in a position of having insufficient or vastly depleting resources available to support those most vulnerable individuals and/or groups throughout the Comox Valley that could be severely impacted or put at risk as a result of this evolving crisis.

Key points for consideration are:

- At this late stage of the annual financial planning process, with the 2020 - 2024 financial plan and capital expenditures bylaw to be considered and potentially adopted at the March 19, 2020 Board meeting, providing additional resources by way of increasing tax requisitions is not a recommended option.

- Rather than at the local government level, senior governments are far better equipped to put in place more far reaching interim measures and/or support initiatives such as:
 - Delaying the property tax payment deadline
 - Expansion of the provincial property tax deferral program
 - Expansion of the provincial home owner grant program
 - Providing one-time increased funding to essential services already directly supported such as homeless and women’s shelters, food banks, social service agencies, etc.
- While the provision of emergency relief to such agencies may prove prudent, we should also make efforts to stay the course as appropriate and ensure not to lose sight of the long-term implications of providing any short-term funding initiatives.

Options

Staff have identified the following available funding options that could be accessed without increases to 2020 tax requisitions and which could be expedited fairly quickly:

- Consideration to the allocation of the combined \$201,846 currently earmarked within our five electoral area Grant-in-Aid services as part of an assessment of those applications already received but that may no longer require funding due to COVID-19 impacts;
- Interim redirection of \$93,179 in unallocated prior years surplus available to function #111 which has been reserved for potential legal / insurance provisions;

A targeted community outreach and intake effort could be undertaken immediately upon adoption of the 2020 – 2024 financial plan, and subsequently Electoral Area Directors could be convened to review solicited applications from essential local community / social support agencies to ensure funding is made available and distributed as quickly and prudently as possible.

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Intergovernmental Factors

In light of the provincial state of emergency declaration on March 18, 2020, the CVRD should conduct ongoing communication as warranted with the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing to ensure “the delivery of federal, provincial and local resources in a co-ordinated way” as stated by Solicitor General Mike Farnworth who also stated “this is an all-hands on deck approach”.

Citizen/Public Relations

A targeted community outreach and intake effort is recommended to be undertaken with the support of the Corporate Services Branch in order to distribute approved emergency support funds in a timely and prudent manner.