

**DATE:** July 22, 2020

**FILE:** 1470-06

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

**FROM:** Russell Dyson  
Chief Administrative Officer

Supported by Russell Dyson  
Chief Administrative Officer

*R. Dyson*

**RE: Public Engagement Strategy for the CVRD's  
COVID-19 Response and Renewal Plan**

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### **Purpose**

To introduce the public engagement strategy for the Comox Valley Regional District's (CVRD) COVID-19 Response and Renewal Plan, with specific attention to the importance of the

- a) renewal plan's four key actions and
- b) interconnectedness of the various CVRD projects that make up renewal.

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

1. THAT the Comox Valley Regional District (CVRD) approve the public engagement strategy for the CVRD's COVID-19 Response and Renewal Plan, as attached to the staff report dated July 22, 2020.
2. THAT a letter be sent to the Comox Valley Economic Development Society reinforcing the importance of the Economic Recovery Task Force to find ways to support community recovery for small businesses, tourism and industry in the Comox Valley and requesting their endorsement of the specific timeline and deliverables as proposed.
3. THAT a letter be sent to the Comox Strathcona Regional Hospital District encouraging a strategic review of future service level needs with the completion of the Comox Valley and Campbell River hospital builds and funding requirements known, with consideration of property tax requisition levels and required reserve balance levels to meet future service objectives.

### **Executive Summary**

- In May 2020 the CVRD Board approved a response and renewal framework to help with the community's recovery in the new normal following the COVID-19 pandemic. The CVRD's Core Services are being reviewed with an aim to assess all tasks through the Board's five key principles including:
  - maintaining core services
  - sustaining stable services
  - adapting to changing community priorities
  - realigning resources to support community renewal initiatives and
  - communicating clearly about our actions.
- This report presents an engagement strategy in response to the principle of communicating clearly about our actions. It has been developed to support the rollout of the renewal plan and provide concise information about how the CVRD will help the Comox Valley to recover and operate during new normal times.

- The plan is focused on four key pillars that will assist directors and staff in explaining, in plain language, the actions the CVRD will undertake and are proposed as:
  - Keep services affordable
  - Streamline processes
  - Protect quality of life
  - Care for the community
- These actions may still be adjusted as the renewal reports are presented to subsequent committee or Board meetings, and also pending the outcome of the September strategic planning session; in order to reflect the Board’s specific direction
- The engagement plan’s milestones include various announcements and supporting materials to describe the CVRD’s renewal actions. Importantly, the plan informs the September strategic planning session, which in turn helps define the next year’s budget. The plan also highlights the importance of connecting the different actions to help deliver CVRD services that meet the Board’s strategic drivers, being fiscal responsibility, community partnerships, responding to the climate crisis and Indigenous relations.
- The plan uses a concise title and tagline that will help to support communications and marketing materials: **Rethink Comox Valley – A thoughtful review of services to support community recovery.**
- The CVRD provides eight core services and partners in the provision of solid waste and hospital capital projects.



These services rely on partnerships and collaboration. The four pillars named above reinforce the importance of that collaboration, for example caring for the community depends on the good work of the Coalition to End Homelessness, the Community Health Network and the Comox Valley Economic Development Society. Delivering a successful renewal plan requires that the CVRD and its partners find common ground and promote outcomes that support shared community goals. The engagement plan activities include regular dialogue between the CVRD, its committees and commission, the Comox Strathcona Waste Management Board, the Comox Strathcona Regional Hospital District Board and others. In addition, the CVRD Directors individually can be champions for this process at their council meetings, with resident groups or in other community settings to promote the renewal plan priorities.

- The following notes describe the value in directly engaging with the Comox Valley Economic Development Society (CVEDS) and the Comox Strathcona Regional Hospital District (CSRHD) as significant partners to the CVRD.
  - Community recovery is dependent on finding solutions to revive the local economy. This will not be possible without a successful partnership between the CVRD and CVEDS. The board has appointed CVEDS to act in a secretariat role to guide the economic recovery task force, and the CVRD can be supportive by providing leadership to the task force members. A successful task force means that clear and demonstrated opportunities for community economic recovery can be communicated to businesses, homeowners and the public, both in the Comox Valley and beyond. As noted in the recommendation, providing a letter to CVEDS can help focus the CVRD’s efforts for successful outcomes by the task force.
  - Property taxes in the Comox Valley are directly influenced by CVRD services, as well as by other agencies including the CSRHD. It has previously been identified that that CSRHD current requisition levels are resulting in significant contributions to the reserve account that are currently un-allocated to capital projects or other initiatives. With the Comox Valley and Campbell River hospital project completed with known funding commitments, the Commission could undertake a strategic planning session to identify future service needs in the region and determine appropriate future funding needs for this service and possibly identify some cost savings or future service needs for current funding levels.

Prepared by:

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James Warren  
Deputy Chief Administrative Officer

**Government Partners and Stakeholder Distribution (Upon Agenda Publication)**

Comox Valley Economic Development Society	✓
Comox Strathcona Regional Hospital District	✓

Attachments: Appendix A – “COVID19 Renewal Plan”

## COVID-19 Renewal Plan

### OVERVIEW

In March 2020, a State of Emergency was declared in British Columbia as the world responded to the COVID-19 outbreak. Following a two-month response period the province announced its restart strategy in May. Leading up to this, the Comox Valley Regional District (CVRD) had already begun planning for its transition away from responding to the pandemic in order to focus on the renewal of local government services in the Comox Valley.

In May 2020, the CVRD announced a framework that would be applied in developing a COVID-19 Renewal Strategy. Staff are now using the framework as a lens to review the relevance and priority of projects for the CVRD’s eight core services – Regional Growth Strategy (RGS), sewage treatment, water supply, finance and administration, transit, emergency programs, recreation and electoral areas services. Financial impacts, cost savings and new ways to enhance partnerships for service delivery will also be proposed.



In September 2020, the Board will confirm which actions will proceed as part of the Renewal Strategy and the final plan will be adopted in October. This engagement plan provides an outline of the Renewal Plan and a rollout for its introduction into the community. The plan will directly impact the 2021-25 budget planning process and feed into the development of the 2021 Corporate Plan. This strategy considers milestones, tools and tactics for the timeframe from June 2020 through March 2021.

**OUTLINE**

The branding for the CVRD’s COVID-19 Renewal Plan provides a concise title and tagline that will be used in communications and marketing materials. Four key commitments will form the pillars of the plan in easy to digest segments.

**Title:** Rethink Comox Valley

**Tagline:** A thoughtful review of services to support community recovery.

**Commitment to 4 Key Actions for our core services:**



1. Keep Services Affordable
  - a. Budget cuts for 2020 and cost reductions through 2025
  - b. Wage freeze for exempt employees in 2020
  - c. Explore efficiencies and streamlining service delivery methods
  - d. Strategic review and rethink of future service needs to meet community priorities
  
2. Streamline processes
  - a. Moving services online
  - b. Proposed Annual Assent Process
  - c. Blending traditional public engagement with methods used through the COVID response
  - d. Provide efficient and cost effective communications on:
    - i. Decisions that impact the daily lives of residents - including CVRD programs, facilities, services and health and safety issues.
    - ii. Progress about major infrastructure projects that require borrowing or large investments of public dollars.
  - e. Consider ways to Reduce number of Board, Advisory and Committee meetings
  
3. Protect Quality of Life
  - a. Asset Management for key infrastructure to manage costs, today and in the future
  - b. Deliver clean, safe drinking water
  - c. Protect the environment (Liquid Waste Management Plan – Willemar Bluffs, regional solution for sewer)
  - d. Maintain parks and recreation facilities to keep residents healthy and active

4. Care for the Community
  - a. Support economic recovery (employment, small business – Comox Valley Economic Development Society (CVEDS))
  - b. Enhance community grant programs that support residents and businesses through recovery
  - c. Health and Safety
  - d. Food Security
  - e. Affordable Housing
  - f. Homelessness
  - g. Social Procurement (includes support for a Living Wage)

*\*The proposed key actions will form the outline of the Renewal Plan, however the described actions or details may be adjusted pending the outcome of renewal staff reports to be presented to the board in July and August 2020.*

**AUDIENCES**


<p><b>Primary</b> Who do we want to tell about plan?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mayors and Councils – Comox, Courtenay, Cumberland</li> <li>• Ratepayers within the CVRD</li> <li>• Business Owners within the CVRD                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Chamber of Commerce</li> <li>○ Courtenay and Comox Business Improvement Association</li> <li>○ Cumberland Economic Development Coordinator</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Community Partners                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ K’ómoks First Nation (KFN)</li> <li>○ Comox Valley Community Foundation</li> <li>○ Comox Valley Coalition to End Homelessness</li> <li>○ Community Health Network.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p><b>Secondary</b> Who will help to get our message out?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local Media</li> <li>• Already engaged residents</li> </ul>
<p><b>Internal</b> Who do we need to implement the plan effectively?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CVRD Staff</li> <li>• CVRD Board</li> <li>• Hospital Board, Comox Strathcona Waste Management (CSWM) Board, NI911</li> <li>• Advisory Committees (Water, Sewer, CSWM, RGS Tech Advisory Steering Committee )</li> <li>• Comox Valley Economic Development Task Force</li> </ul>

**ENGAGEMENT GOALS**

The International Association of Public Participation (IAP2) spectrum of public participation was used to define the **public engagement** goals of “**inform**” for this project.

- ✓ This goal is about providing information on a plan that has been approved by the board for implementation as opposed to seeking direction from the public.
- ✓ The Renewal Plan will be finalized once the budget planning cycle has already commenced.

“**Consult**” will be utilized as a tool for **internal audiences** leading up to the public rollout of the Renewal Plan.



INFORM	CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE	EMPOWER
Provide balanced and objective information to residents.	Obtain feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions from residents	Work directly with residents to address concerns	Partner with residents to develop a preferred solution	Place final decision making in the hands of residents

**Goal #1: Inform primary and secondary audiences about the CVRD Board’s direction for renewal**

- Provide factual and clear information using a variety of tools, to explain the CVRD’s plan for community renewal following the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Timing of the announcement will be November 2020 with the summer period utilized for planning and rolling out information that will support the Board’s direction leading up the public announcement. These include:
  - Economic Development Task Force – announcement of the membership, scope and timeline for delivery of plan
  - Release of Collaboration Video #2 to outline the process and the need for support from elected officials for Renewal Planning and implementation
  - CVRD Board Strategic Planning Session in September 2020
- The rollout of the plan will include a media announcement, high level marketing plan, presentations to mayors and councils and direct outreach to KFN, the business community and charitable organizations.

**Goal #2: Consult with internal audiences prior to board adoption of the Renewal Plan**

- Understanding that internal audiences will be key to implementation for the Renewal Plan, reach out early on in the process to seek input on the framework for the Renewal Plan and ensure that municipal staff are engaged throughout the process.
  - Meetings and correspondence from the CVRD Chair to CSWM, North Island Hospital, North Island 911.
  - Presentation of reports through staff Advisory Committees and CVRD Committees, Commissions and the CVRD Board.

**Goal #3: Inform primary and secondary audiences about how the Renewal Plan influenced the budget process through rollout of the Corporate Plan**

- Issue a press release once the budget is adopted and incorporate the pillars of the Renewal Plan.
- Develop an engagement strategy for rolling out the corporate plan, which will be supported by a public open house to inform the community about CVRD’s key projects, including highlighting the renewal process that fed into the 2021 priorities and beyond.

**MILESTONES**

The CVRD’s Renewal Plan will be adopted in October 2020, after which time the engagement strategy will be launched to rollout the plan to the public. Several milestones preceding and following the board’s adoption of the plan will support the rollout of this strategy and are listed in the chart below. A public engagement plan for the corporate plan rollout, including an annual open house, will be developed in 2021.

Milestone	Jun 2020	Jul 2020	Aug 2020	Sept 2020	Oct 2020	Nov Dec 2020	Jan-Feb 2021	Mar 2021	Apr 2021	May 2021	Jun 2021
Outreach to local elected officials, Hospital Board, CSWM Board, NI911											
Decision: Water, RGS, Transit, Recreation staff reports											
<b>Decision: CVRD Board Approval of Public Engagement Plan</b>											
Decision: BCOB, EASC, Sewage, Emergency staff reports											
Release Video 2: Collaboration											
CVRD Board Strategic Planning Session											
Decision: CVRD Renewal Plan Adoption											
<b>Announcement: CVRD Renewal Plan Rollout public engagement strategy</b>											
Budget Planning											
<b>Announcement (TBC): CVEDS Task Force Release Economic Recovery Plan</b>											
Decision: 2021-25 Budget Adoption											
<b>Announcement: 2021 Budget adopted with projects requiring assent for borrowing</b>											
Announcement: 2021 CVRD Corporate Plan Rollout public engagement strategy											
CVRD Open House – key projects											



## TOOLS

<b>Project Webpage</b>	Provide accurate and timely resources for all audiences to learn more about the Renewal Plan and review background information
<b>Report and infographics</b>	Provides a concise overview of the CVRD's planned actions, with infographics to assist in telling the story and explaining the process followed to develop the plan
<b>Video</b>	Summarizes the CVRD's plan for renewal in a visual format that can be shared via social media.
<b>Social Media Advertising Campaign</b>	Digital advertising campaign aimed at driving residents to view the Renewal Plan video.
<b>Print Advertising</b>	Paid advertising will assist in raising awareness about the Renewal Plan.
<b>Press Releases</b>	Local earned media can help to raise awareness about the Renewal Plan
<b>Direct Mail to partners and stakeholders</b>	Letters to partners and stakeholders to raise awareness about the Renewal Plan and build support for these actions in the community.
<b>Presentations/Meetings</b>	Presentations to Mayors and Council and business groups provide further opportunity to review the CVRD's planned actions, respond to questions and to participate in a dialogue.
<b>Briefing Notes</b>	Consistent messaging for board members and key staff ensures effective project communications.

## TIMELINE AND ACTIVITIES

### June 2020

- Meetings and follow-up correspondence from the CVRD Chair to CSWM, North Island Hospital and North Island 911 boards.
- Release Collaboration Video #1 to elected officials
- Staff reports: Administration and CSWM
- Establish Renewal Plan concept and branding
- Draft Public Engagement Plan

### July 2020

- Staff reports: Water, Transit, RGS and Recreation
- Script and record Collaboration video #2
- Present Public Engagement Plan to CVRD Board
- Develop budget and marketing plan

### August 2020

- Staff reports: Sewer, Emergency, Black Creek Oyster Bay and Electoral Areas
- Draft outline of Renewal Plan based on staff reports
- Develop report creative including infographics and report cover

**September 2020**

- Release Collaboration Video #2 for Elected Officials
- First draft of Renewal Plan in preparation for strategic planning session
- Develop social media creative and video
- CVRD Board Strategic Planning Session

**October 2020**

- Draft Renewal Plan complete
- CVRD Board meeting – Renewal Plan adopted

**November – December 2020**

- Issue press release announcing renewal actions with links to the plan, infographics posted to project page
- Correspondence from the Chair to Mayors and Councils, business groups and charitable organizations
- Update provided to KFN via Chief Administrative Officer to Band Administrator and Chair to Chief and Council
- Post video to renewal project page and share via email to Mayors and Councils, CVRD Board, CVRD staff and distribute to public via paid social media campaign
- Presentations by the Chair at Comox, Courtenay and Cumberland Councils
- Presentation by the Chair to the Chamber of Commerce and CVEDS boards

**January – Feb 2021**

- Budget Planning

**March 2021**

- Budget adopted
- Press release issued for budget adoption

**April – June 2021**

- Implementation of public engagement strategy for the CVRD Corporate Plan, including the concept of an Annual Open House.\*

\* *Strategy to be developed as part of the next phase of work in 2021.*

**EVALUATION**

The summary report for this engagement will include an overview of the tools that were used and the feedback collected. This will include a highlight of themes from the responses and metrics of results.

Measures to be included in this summary to describe the process and its outcomes include:

- Direct feedback from primary audiences
- Number of hits on the project page
- Tone of dialogue on social media
- Tone of media coverage
- Analytics from online marketing campaign