

DATE: April 1, 2020

FILE: 5330-20/CVSS LWMP

TO: Chair and Members
Comox Valley Sewage Commission

FROM: Russell Dyson
Chief Administrative Officer

Supported by Russell Dyson
Chief Administrative Officer

R. Dyson

RE: Schedule Impacts of COVID-19 on Comox Valley Sewerage Service Liquid Waste Management Planning Process

Purpose

To provide an update on the schedule impacts to the Comox Valley Sewerage System Liquid Waste Management Planning (LWMP) process in response to the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

Recommendation from the Chief Administrative Officer:

THAT the Comox Valley Sewage Commission endorse the delay, and updated schedule for public consultation for the LWMP approved shortlist of conveyance options as provided in this April 1, 2020 staff report.

Executive Summary

In March 2020, the Comox Valley Sewage Commission approved the shortlist of conveyance options as recommended by the technical and public advisory committees (TACPAC). With that approval, Comox Valley Regional District (CVRD) staff initiated the next phase of public consultation, focusing on the shortlisted conveyance options.

This public consultation was intended to include engagement through open houses and an online survey through April and May. The input from the public would then have been brought back to the TACPAC for review and consideration in their decision and recommendation of the preferred conveyance option, and treatment level at the Comox Valley Water Pollution Control Center (CVWPCC) by June 2020.

Following the advice of the Public Health Agency of Canada and the Provincial Health Officer, CVRD staff have cancelled the two open houses scheduled for early April. The online survey has been paused until a path forward is identified. Continuing consultation exclusively online is possible but not recommended during this phase of the pandemic, as it is unlikely the community will be engaged in sewer planning during a state of emergency. Given that public engagement is a cornerstone of the LWMP process, continuing a consultation with low participation would compromise the integrity of the LWMP process.

Completion of the shortlist phase of the LWMP public consultation process is now planned mid-August to the end of September with the final two TACPAC meetings occurring in September and October. A recommendation for the preferred conveyance and treatment solutions will be brought forward to the November 16, 2020 Comox Valley Sewage Commission meeting.

Although virtual formats are available to host meetings and complete consultation, a schedule delay until the fall is preferable due to the large amount of distraction and uncertainty surrounding COVID-19. Should social distancing protocols continue into the fall, staff will proceed with public engagement and TACPAC meetings in a virtual format to avoid further delays, as by that time the public should be less distracted and potentially more familiar with virtual formats for consultation and meetings.

Prepared by:

Z. Berkey

Zoe Berkey, EIT
Engineering Analyst

Concurrence:

K. La Rose

Kris La Rose, P.Eng
Senior Manager of Water/
Wastewater Services

Concurrence:

M. Rutten

Marc Rutten, P.Eng
General Manager of
Engineering Services

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