

**DATE:** June 23, 2017 **FILE:** 6410-20 / CV RGS Five Year Review

**TO:** Chair and Directors  
Electoral Areas Services Committee

**FROM:** Russell Dyson  
Chief Administrative Officer

**RE:** Impacts of the Regional Growth Strategy on Planning Functions for the Electoral Areas

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### **Purpose**

To provide an opportunity for Electoral Areas Services Committee to discuss ideas and concepts on the impacts and opportunities relating to the Regional Growth Strategy (RGS) in the electoral areas, prior to the broader board decision on consideration of a five year review of the RGS, and if further analysis is desirable.

### **Policy Analysis**

Bylaw No. 120, being the “Comox Valley Regional District Regional Growth Strategy Bylaw No. 120, 2010”, was adopted in March 2011.

Part 13, Section 452(2) of the the *Local Government Act* (RSBC, 2015, c. 1) (LGA) requires that a regional district with an approved RGS must consider, at least once every five years, whether the RGS must be reviewed for possible amendment.

### **Executive Summary**

While the board is not required to conduct a five year review, the LGA does require that it consider if a review is warranted. The Comox Valley Regional District Board will consider this decision at its August 29, 2017 meeting as the RGS is a regional service.

Over and above that discussion, staff believe the RGS may have impacted the electoral areas in ways that are different than what has been a primarily positive impact on member municipalities. Options to consider include:

- Significant amounts of land identified as Settlement Expansion Areas are subject to the RGS policy that there shall be a minimum lot size of four hectares. If this policy were expressed as a “should” versus a “shall”, it could be possible, where appropriate, to consider some infill development in areas where parcels are surrounded by lots much smaller than four hectares. This could assist in providing some support for affordable housing initiatives, given that development of much of this land could be held in abeyance for several decades.
- While the RGS effectively protects rural lifestyles and agricultural lands from sprawl, opportunity exists for expanded industrial development and commercial expansion outside Settlement Nodes. Review of the Comox Valley Zoning Bylaw will include recommendations for more flexibility for home occupations, and it is worth considering allowing expansion in existing service centres to allow additional commercial and industrial activities.

It would be useful to conduct an independent analysis, using Planning Services funds, to assess the impact of the RGS in electoral growth, and determine if it would be prudent to reconsider some language in the RGS, should the board determine a review or some revisions are required.

**Recommendation from the Chief Administrative Officer:**

THAT using Planning Function 500 and 503 funds, staff be directed to obtain a comprehensive analysis of how the Regional Growth Strategy (RGS) has impacted residential, commercial and industrial growth and affordable housing options in the electoral areas so that Electoral Area Directors can be informed of these impacts in their discussions and decisions on future revisions to the RGS.

Respectfully:

**R. Dyson**

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Russell Dyson  
Chief Administrative Officer

**Background/Current Situation**Scope of Possible Revisions

The following matters could be reviewed, should the Board, at its August 29, 2017 meeting, determine to either conduct a five year review or carry out some specific revisions. The following proposed areas for revision could address deficiencies that have caused some ambiguity recently, refresh the document with current population projections and clean up places with awkward language.

This could include:

1. Revising wording of section 5.2 (4) “*Minor Amendments*”, to better reflect language, process and intent in the LGA. This would make it clear that the first step in responding to an application for amendment requires a board resolution to initiate the amendment, and only second to that, a board resolution for the Board to determine the amendment is to be processed as a minor amendment.
2. Include lands held by K’ómoks First Nation (KFN) in RGS maps, per the request from KFN to do so. This would result in a more inclusive document that shows where the KFN land interests are.
3. Update and review of population projections, density targets, growth management principles and areas set aside for municipal expansions.
4. Removal of indicators so that indicators to track progress could be included in a separate bylaw along with new indicators for which data is readily available.
5. Revise some language for housekeeping purposes to clarify some sections.

It may also be useful to conduct an analysis using Planning Services funds to assess what this impact has been and if it would be prudent to reconsider some policies. A draft and proposed Scope of Work is attached as Appendix A.

**Options**

1. Direct staff to issue a contract with a Land Economist/Economic Planner to assess impacts in accordance with the draft scope of work.
2. Direct that such a review is not required at this time.
3. Defer this work until a decision is taken by the Board on the need for a five year review.

Staff recommend that option three be considered, pending the outcome of the August, 29 2017 board reconsideration of whether or not to conduct a five year review.

**Financial Factors**

It is expected that current funds in the planning function No. 500 and function No. 503 can support this work.

**Legal Factors**

While the RGS is a shared regional service, Planning Services is exclusively funded by the electoral areas and therefore a funded analysis on the impacts of the RGS on those areas is an appropriate use of planning funds, and does not require input or support from the Board.

**Regional Growth Strategy Implications**

The RGS includes eight goal areas as follows:

- Housing: to ensure a diversity of housing options to meet evolving demographics and needs;
- Ecosystems, natural areas and parks: to protect, steward and enhance the natural environment and ecological connections and systems;
- Local economic development: to achieve sustainable, resilient and dynamic economy that supports businesses and entrepreneurship;
- Transportation: to develop accessible, efficient, affordable and connected multi-modal transportation network;
- Infrastructure: to provide affordable, effective and efficient infrastructure that conserves land, water and energy resources;
- Food system: to support and enhance the agriculture sectors and increase local food security;
- Public health and safety: support a high quality of life through the protection and enhancement of community health, safety and well-being; and
- Climate change: to minimize regional greenhouse gas emissions and plan for adaptation.

**Intergovernmental Factors**

No intergovernmental consultation or impacts are anticipated at this time as the initiative involves the gathering and assessment of facts.

**Interdepartmental Involvement**

The proposed analysis will assess the impacts on electoral areas primarily in terms of land development and growth but some consideration may be given to other department functions such as parks, engineering and legislative services, and to that extent, though branches will be consulted.

**Citizen/Public Relations**

No input from citizens, or public communications are recommended at this point, as staff propose to gather and assess facts.

Prepared by:

***A. MacDonald***

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Attachments: Appendix A – “Draft Proposed Scope of Work”



## Analysis of Comox Valley Regional District Regional Growth Strategy in Three Electoral Areas

### Scope of Work

May 24, 2017

#### **Purpose of the Study:**

The Comox Valley Regional District (CVRD) adopted Bylaw No. 120, Regional Growth Strategy (RGS) in March 2011. Subsequently the City of Courtenay (2013), Town of Comox (2011), and Village of Cumberland (2014) developed and adopted Regional Context Statements as amendments to their Official Community Plans.

In keeping with Part 13 of the *Local Government Act* (RSBC, 2015, c. 1) (LGA) the strategy is intended to encourage future growth in a way that is socially, economically and environmentally healthy, and that makes efficient use of public facilities, services, land and other resources. The RGS also contains a number of policies, actions and targets that will lead to the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions.

The LGA, Part 13, Section 452, states that a regional district with an approved RGS must, at least once every five years, consider whether the RGS must be reviewed for possible amendment and provide opportunity for input on the need for review to citizens, affected local governments, First Nations, school board and senior government agencies.

In order to assist the Electoral Areas Services Committee in assessing the impact that the RGS has had on growth within the three electoral areas, a trend analysis is desirable. This will include an analysis using an economic lens to assess growth patterns and trends in the three electoral areas of Area A, B and C within the CVRD since the adoption of the RGS. The analysis is proposed to include a forecast of likely future growth patterns if the RGS remains unchanged, and an assessment of what changes could be considered to address this pattern, should it be deemed to be undesirable. It is intended that this work will assist the electoral area directors in their decisions going forward to the larger CVRD board on the consideration of a Five Year Review, and if any specific revisions are required. This analysis could include, among other things, a review of the amount of land set aside for future expansion of municipalities as well as growth patterns in the three settlement nodes.

#### **Deliverables:**

- Significant land identified as *Settlement Expansion Areas* is subject to the RGS policy that there shall be a minimum lot size of 4 hectares, (versus should). It may be appropriate to consider some infill development, in these areas parcels are surrounded by lots much smaller than 4 hectares.
- Limited new or expanded industrial development and commercial expansion opportunities now exist outside Settlement Nodes. The review of the Comox Valley Zoning Bylaw, now underway, will bring forward recommendations for more use of rural lands for home occupations; however, there is value at looking at allowing expansion in those existing

service centres to allow more and additional commercial and industrial activities, based on an analysis.

- Part 2 of the RGS includes a number of population and household projections and employment forecasts. This includes fertility rates, and birth vs. death rates since 2005, senior's population rate, among other trends. Population projections in the strategy growth forecast as much as a 50 per cent population increase over 20 years, and time has shown actual population growth figures to be closer to 29 per cent. An objective assessment of projections and targets as measured against actual trends is desirable given that many of the growth management policies, objectives, targets and measures were based on these projections.
- Part 3 contains specific targets regarding densification, changes to housing types and density in the three settlement nodes of Union Bay, Saratoga Beach and Mount Washington. Specifically, a re-assessment of the targets included in Objective 1-A and 1-C would be helpful given the actual growth patterns.
- As reflected in annual reports completed each year between 2011 and 2015, growth in the rural areas has reduced substantially by way of subdivision. Zoning provides for secondary dwelling and/or secondary suites in most areas of the electoral areas and an assessment of progress in this area is required. This in turn, can help inform the board of progress towards its goal of directing 90 per cent of all new growth goals to municipal areas and settlement nodes, leaving only 10 per cent of future growth in the areas defined as rural. An assessment of the volume of lands set aside for future municipal expansion would be useful, expressed in terms of the amount of land set aside for municipal expansion relative to actual municipal growth, expansion and densification over the past five years. The assessment should also consider future population and growth projections and the expected growth rates linked to any future municipal expansion.

Therefore, it would be useful to conduct an independent analysis, using Planning Services funds, to assess the impact of the RGS on electoral growth and planning needs to determine if it would be prudent to reconsider some language in the RGS, should the Board determine a review or some revisions are required.

**Timelines:**

The analysis is expected to take between three to four months.