

**DATE:** March 5, 2019**FILE:** 1470-06**TO:** Chair and Directors  
Electoral Areas Services Committee**FROM:** Russell Dyson  
Chief Administrative OfficerSupported by Russell Dyson  
Chief Administrative Officer*R. Dyson***RE: Public Engagement Strategy – Electoral Areas****Purpose**

To propose a public engagement strategy plan for the Electoral Areas in order to help increase Comox Valley Regional District (CVRD) general awareness and knowledge of services, projects and goals.

**Recommendation from the Chief Administrative Officer**

THAT a public engagement strategy be initiated in Electoral Areas A, B and C;

AND FURTHER THAT the range of electoral area engagement methods be identified by individual Electoral Area Directors on an annual basis;

AND FURTHER THAT the engagement methods include

- general awareness for the public regarding Comox Valley Regional District services; and
- projects and outreach initiatives that are specific to the communities

AND FINALLY THAT funds for the public engagement come from a combination of the electoral areas administration and those individual services that have projects and outreach initiatives in specific communities.

**Executive Summary**

Following the November 2018 CVRD elections, there was interest from an Electoral Area Director to update the community on the work of the CVRD and priorities for the coming term. The public engagement approach would create opportunities for the Electoral Area Directors to inform and involve residents via a series of in-person engagement events, supported by optional mailed newsletters.

The public is often unclear about the services the CVRD provides and may be uninformed about the priorities and strategies outlined by their Electoral Area Director. The purpose is to develop a community specific public engagement strategy and materials in order to help increase knowledge, awareness and ongoing communication with area residents.

- Use of local open houses and newsletter tailored to each electoral area are proposed.
- The cost for implementation varies depending on the level of engagement each area director wishes to participate.
- To support this initiative, funds are available in service 130 (Electoral Areas Administration) for 2019.
- Open, transparent communication with residents regarding services, projects and priorities increases CVRD knowledge, awareness and understanding within the community.

- Effective, open community engagement builds trust and improves understanding of CVRD's goals and services.

Prepared by:

***J. Steel***

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Jennifer Steel  
Manager of  
Corporate Communications

Concurrence:

***J. Warren***

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James Warren  
General Manager of  
Corporate Services

### **Background/Current Situation**

The CVRD is a diverse, complex organization. The public is often unclear about the services the CVRD provides and may be uninformed about the priorities and strategies outlined by their Electoral Area Director. The purpose is to develop a community specific public engagement plan and materials in order to help increase knowledge, awareness and ongoing communication with area residents.

Following the CVRD elections in November 2018, interest was received from an Electoral Area Director to update the community on the work of the CVRD and priorities for the coming term. The engagement approach would create opportunities for the Electoral Area Directors to inform and involve residents via a series of in-person engagement events, supported by optional mailed newsletters in order to help build knowledge, understanding and community relationships.

By investing in community relationships, Electoral Area Directors will be able to have open discussions with residents regarding the CVRD's goals laid out within the strategic plan and help residents be part of the process.

### **Policy Analysis**

The CVRD Board approved a Public Engagement Policy on November 29, 2016 in order to ensure engagement initiatives are genuine, and have purpose and value to the community. The proposed plan follows the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) spectrum laid out within this engagement policy and allows Electoral Area Directors to inform and consult on priorities within each community.

### **Options**

Following approval of this approach, the Chief Administrative Officer along, with staff from Corporate Communications, will meet with the Electoral Area Directors to discuss a personalized engagement approach. Open houses require adequate time to strategize and plan with costs of approximately \$5,000 per event. Newsletters are more cost effective and can achieve similar results when the goal for the outreach is to inform the public. A combination of open houses and newsletters would be a preferred approach.

To help support the CVRD strategic plans, effective public engagement will help increase knowledge, trust and reputation within the community.

### **Financial Factors**

Costs will vary depending on the number of community open houses and newsletters completed.

The cost for this initiative for 2019 could be funded by way of a portion of the 2018 surplus carried forward in service 130 (Electoral Areas Administration) in addition to contributions from those specific services that are included in the open house.

This initiative is a new approach for the CVRD to undertake. Historically, engagement initiatives have been focussed on individual projects that required open houses and outreach for those specific projects. The proposal in this report contemplates a more generic approach where multiple projects and services can be described and communicated to the public when timing aligns. It is important Electoral Area Directors understand that up to this point no formal community engagement initiatives of this nature have been completed. When evaluating the approach and next steps, consider future year's budgets and whether this approach will be ongoing. Developing effective community relationships and transparent communication takes time, dedication and is ongoing.

### **Legal Factors**

The proposed public engagement is beyond any statutory or legally required engagement. All legally required advertising will continue to be delivered as per requirements under statute.

### **Regional Growth Strategy Implications**

Effective community engagement will build awareness, knowledge and understanding of CVRD services, projects and priorities including the Regional Growth Strategy. Having another mechanism to gather feedback, have ongoing discussions with residents and the ability to answer questions builds transparency, community partnerships and regional understanding.

### **Intergovernmental Factors**

There are no foreseen intergovernmental factors to consider as this proposal will be focusing on CVRD Electoral Areas Services.

### **Interdepartmental Involvement**

This initiative will require CVRD staff involvement to implement in order to ensure proper messaging, program details and consistency across all areas. Each Electoral Area Director will have an engagement strategy developed with messaging customized to their particular area. This customization will require key departments to be involved.

A contractor will be hired to assist with the engagement project and implementation. Corporate Communications will oversee the project and manage the contractor. Required resources from other departments will need to be identified once scope and engagement strategy are confirmed.

### **Citizen/Public Relations**

Upon approval to move forward, personalized engagement strategies will be created for each electoral area. Execution of the plan will occur within 2019.