

DATE: January 22, 2021**FILE:** 1700-02/2021/500 - 503**TO:** Chair and Directors
Electoral Areas Services CommitteeSupported by Russell Dyson
Chief Administrative Officer**FROM:** Russell Dyson
Chief Administrative Officer*R. Dyson***RE: 2021 - 2025 Financial Plan – Planning Service – Function 500 - 503**

Purpose

To provide the Electoral Areas Services Committee with the proposed 2021 - 2025 Financial Plan and work plan highlights for the Planning service, functions 500 (current planning); 501 (geographical information systems); 502 (bylaw enforcement); and 503 (long range planning).

Recommendation from the Chief Administrative Officer:

THAT the proposed 2021 – 2025 financial plan for the Planning service, function nos. 500, 501, 502 and 503, be approved.

Executive Summary

- The service derives the majority (85 per cent in 2021) of funding from tax requisition. The 2021 proposed budget includes a decrease of \$50,000 in the tax requisition from 2020, from \$1.9 million to \$1.85 million.
- The estimated residential tax rate for this service is expected to be \$0.2597 per \$1,000 of taxable assessed value as compared to \$0.2808 in 2020.
- Four key Rethink CV/COVID-19 Response actions were identified for this service by the board in 2020, including bylaw compliance staff assuming responsibility for water conservation compliance (versus external contractors) and streamlining the development permit area guidelines and process.
- Personnel costs for the service are proposed to decrease by \$44,633 from 2020 stemming from changes to the overall staffing allocations which have led to a 1.41 FTE reduction and reallocation to other services, notably the Regional Growth Strategy service, function No. 512.
- The overall operating budget is proposed to decrease by \$700,619 in 2021, primarily attributable to completion of the Coastal Flood Mapping project and expenditure of the related grant funding in 2020.
- Two capital projects are planned for 2021: purchase of a high resolution laser printer for mapping and replacement of a fleet vehicle.
- The service continues to manage three reserve funds with a combined estimated balance of \$582,608 at the end of 2020.

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Government Partners and Stakeholder Distribution (Upon Agenda Publication)

None	
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Board Strategic Drivers

The Comox Valley Regional District (CVRD) Board has set four strategic drivers to guide service delivery. Not all services will be influenced by all drivers. Table 1 notes the degree of influence the drivers have on projects and work plans.

Table 1: Board Strategic Drivers

<p>Fiscal responsibility:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduction in proposed tax requisition of \$50,000 • Significant grant funding obtained to undertake the Coastal Flood Adaptation Strategy and related implementation projects 	<p>Climate crisis and environmental stewardship and protection:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coastal Flood Adaptation Strategy (503) • Environmental development permit area review (503) • Continued participation in the BC Stewardship Centre’s Green Shores Local Government Working Group
<p>Community partnerships:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agriculture plan work will include significant engagement with community organizations 	<p>Indigenous relations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • K’ómoks First Nation is a partner on the Coastal Flood Adaptation Strategy • Outreach to K’ómoks First Nation and other Nations through the Referral Management Program on natural environment and hazard areas development permit area guidelines and cannabis cultivation, processing and sales and general regulations update within the Zoning Bylaw.

Rethink Comox Valley / COVID-19 Response and Renewal

On May 12, 2020 the board adopted a COVID-19 renewal plan for the review of service levels and all necessary, critical and functional projects slated for the next five years. Recommended actions for the plan were brought forward to the relevant committees, commissions and partners for review over the summer. On August 10, 2020 the Electoral Areas Services COVID-19 Response and Renewal report was presented for 2020 and across the 2021 – 2025 proposed financial plan. The highlights and renewal actions for Planning Services and Bylaw Compliance were as follows;


- Bylaw Compliance to take over enforcement in 2021 on water restrictions from seasonally hired employees under Engineering Services.
- Pursuing the combination of Bylaw Compliance services under two separate services.
- Reduced travel for meetings and conferences for the entire Planning and Development Services.
- Streamlined process of the development permit areas guidelines to be undertaken.

Financial Plan Overview

The 2021 - 2025 proposed five-year financial plan for the Planning service, function Nos. 500, 501, 502 and 503, including service establishment information, the requisition summary and the operating and capital budgets, is available within the full proposed budget binder, provided in both searchable PDF and e-reader formats, located on the CVRD financial plan web page at www.comoxvalleyrd.ca/currentbudget.

Table 2 on the following page summarizes the 2021 proposed budget as compared to the 2020 adopted budget. Significant variances from 2020 adopted budget will be discussed in the financial plan sections that follow.

Table 2: Financial Plan Highlights

 2021 Proposed Budget		#500 Planning		
Operating	2020 Budget	2021 Proposed Budget	Increase (Decrease)	
Revenue				
Grants In Lieu	4,400	7,500	3,100	
Senior Government Grants	482,500	0	(482,500)	
Requisition	1,900,000	1,850,000	(50,000)	
Sale Services Local Govt	23,000	22,000	(1,000)	
Sale Services User Fees	350	250	(100)	
Applications/Permit Fees	50,700	45,000	(5,700)	
Other Revenue/Recoveries	16,632	16,632	-	
Transfer from Reserve	37,927	0	(37,927)	
Prior Years Surplus	351,492	225,000	(126,492)	
	\$ 2,867,001	\$ 2,166,382	(700,619)	
Expenditures				
500 General Planning				
Personnel Costs	734,041	686,824	(47,217)	
Operating	366,029	292,548	(73,481)	
Contribution to Reserve	120,352	111,365	(8,987)	
	\$ 1,220,422	\$ 1,090,737	(129,685)	
501 GIS				
Personnel Costs	353,267	339,749	(13,518)	
Operating	184,985	161,345	(23,640)	
Contribution to Reserve	15,000	15,000	-	
	\$ 553,252	\$ 516,094	(37,158)	
502 Bylaw Enforcement				
Personnel Costs	147,248	164,785	17,537	
Operating	103,265	90,445	(12,820)	
	\$ 250,513	\$ 255,230	4,717	
503 Planning Policy				
Personnel Costs	172,773	128,140	(44,633)	
Operating	668,378	176,181	(492,197)	
Transfer to Other Functions	1,663		(1,663)	
	\$ 842,814	\$ 304,321	(538,493)	
Total Expenditures	\$ 2,867,001	\$ 2,166,382	(700,619)	
Capital				
Funding Sources				
Transfer from Reserve	15,000	38,000	23,000	
	\$ 15,000	\$ 38,000	\$ 23,000	
Funding Applied				
Capital Projects & Equip	15,000	38,000	23,000	
	\$ 15,000	\$ 38,000	\$ 23,000	

Highlights of the 2021 - 2025 proposed financial plan for function 500-503 include:

Revenue Sources

- The overall Planning service (functions 500 – 503) derives the majority (85 per cent in 2021) of its funding from tax requisition. The 2021 proposed budget includes a decrease of \$50,000 in the tax requisition from 2020.
- In 2021, recoveries from other functions (i.e. Geographic Information System (GIS) services and admin fees) are budgeted similarly from 2020.
- Prior years' surplus at the proposed budget stage is estimated to be \$225,000 or \$126,492 less than in 2020. This figure will be updated once the 2020 year-end has been finalized.

Other revenue sources that contribute to the overall funding of the Planning service include:

Planning (500)

In 2020, Planning Services' development application fees and permits accounted for two per cent of the revenue in the overall service. Application fees are not a significant component of the service's revenue source, consistently ranging between two and three per cent per year. Function 500's work is primarily focused on development applications.

Pursuant to the *Local Government Act* (RSBC, 2015, c. 1) (LGA), a local government can establish planning application fees based on the estimated average costs of processing a given application type. A general principle of the CVRD has been to keep fees low and to create as few barriers as possible to development while still, for example, adhering to the principles of precaution and protecting the natural environment. This means that fees generally do not recover full costs in terms of staff and elected officials' time on individual applications.

GIS (501)

The GIS budget is funded by direct taxation as part of the overall planning budget. Funding for work done for other functions through GIS work requests, revenue from contracts for services with other local governments and direct GIS and map sales to the general public is detailed in Table 3. In 2021 the Alberni-Clayoquot Regional District will be looking at using the CVRD iMap web mapping for their regional district and this will increase the revenue through the sales of the iMap web mapping service.

Table 3: GIS Revenue Sources

2021 Budgeted GIS Revenues from Sale of Service	
Sale of services to other CVRD functions	\$15,000
Sale of services to other local governments	\$22,000
Sale of services to general public	\$250
Total GIS revenue to offset operating budget	\$37,250

Personnel

Current Planning (Function 500) and Long Range Planning (Function 503)

Work within Planning Services is undertaken by a senior manager, manager, long range planner, planner 1, planning and policy analyst and two planner 2s. Support services are provided by staff within the corporate services and engineering services branches. Personnel changes have arisen due to re-allocation of staff time from function No. 503 to the Regional Growth Strategy Service (function No. 512). The proposed budget for personnel is \$91,850 less than in 2020.

GIS (501)

- Personnel costs for GIS are budgeted to decrease by \$13,518 from 2020 and reflect regional water paying for five per cent of two GIS staff for regular day to day water GIS work and work with their new computer aided maintenance management system.
- The GIS department is managed by the Senior Manager of Information Systems and GIS, 30 per cent of the position time is assigned to the department.
- The GIS department has three full time staff positions - two senior GIS analysts and one GIS analyst.
- The GIS department is presently operating at capacity with the inclusion of the contract service work with the Village of Cumberland, qathet Regional District and Mount Waddington Regional District.

Bylaw Enforcement (502)

- The personnel costs for the Bylaw Compliance department includes an allocation of time and expenses for the Manager of Bylaw Compliance as well as two fulltime Bylaw Compliance Officers, and one seasonal Bylaw Compliance Officer.
- One of the fulltime Bylaw Compliance Officer positions is dedicated in part to administer the Illegal Dumping program, which is a function through the Comox Strathcona Waste Management service.
- This staffing level is appropriate and provides for a consistent staffing allocation as in 2020. Bylaw compliance budgets include personnel costs currently allocated to services based on an estimate of time spent. The Bylaw Compliance department's wages are also funded from the unsightly, noise, animal control and fireworks regulations services.
- Personnel costs for bylaw compliance are budgeted to increase by \$17,537 from 2020, to accommodate a new seasonal bylaw compliance position that will be cost shared with Parks, and to accommodate salary changes arising through the collective agreement and changes to employee benefits.

OperationsPlanning (500)

- The operating budget has decreased due to a reduction in expenditures relating to support services, training and development and travel (i.e. ongoing impacts of Covid-19). The overall decrease in the operating costs is approximately \$73,481.
- Public relations costs have been included in the 2021 budget year to continue with the objective of increasing outreach and community engagement. The amount is broken down as follows: video tutorials on Farmland Development Permit and Tiny Homes (\$1,500). The funds have been allocated to address requests for increased public consultation and outreach for these key projects.
- Funds have also been allocated in the budget to create an orientation guidebook to support the members in the Advisory Planning Commission (e.g. provide members with policies and procedures and members responsibilities): Advisory Planning Commission Orientation Guidebook (\$8,500).

GIS (501)

- The operating budget for GIS for 2021 is proposed to decrease by \$23,640 over 2020.
- Decrease in operating budget are due to costs for GIS portion of two digital air photos only happen every second year as per the five year financial plan and there is a decrease in staff travel and conference attendance for 2021.

- The largest expense of the GIS department, other than staffing is the GIS software site licenses and minor capital costs required to remain current in GIS technology.
- The GIS software license is negotiated in three year terms and will be renewed and signed in 2021.

Bylaw Enforcement (502)

- Operating costs are budgeted to decrease by \$12,820 over 2020. This is due primarily to a reduction in staff travel allowances and other professional fees.

Planning Policy (503)

- The 2021 operating budget for planning policy has been decreased by \$538,493 over 2020, primarily arising from the Coastal Flood Mapping project (\$500,000 in senior government grant funding awarded in 2020 to undertake coastal flood mapping). With coastal flood mapping and modelling almost complete, staff have secured funding to begin work on the electoral areas Coastal Flood Adaptation Strategy (\$150,000 in grant funding to be included in budget once received). Final mapping findings will be presented to the board along with the scope of the Coastal Flood Adaptation Strategy project in early 2021 (see project description in Appendix A).
- Additional work items proposed for 2021 include:
 - Gartley Beach Green Shores™ For Homes Incentive pilot project in partnership with the BC Stewardship Centre, including a community Level 1 Green Shores™ training workshop (report to board in early 2021). \$10,000 is proposed in “other professional fees” to be drawn from requisition to support this primarily grant funded project (grant awarded to BC Stewardship Centre).
 - Agriculture Planning project (see project description in Appendix A). This project requires \$35,000 in “other professional fees” drawn from tax requisition. Work on a Regional Food Hub will be potentially funded by the Ministry of Agriculture (up to \$50,000). This project is discussed in a separate staff report, scheduled for the January 26, 2021 Board meeting.

Capital

GIS (501)

There will be a small capital project for GIS in 2021 in the purchase of a new high resolution colour laser printer to handle high quality map production for maps up to 12” x 18”.

Reserves

There are three reserve funds in the Planning service (functions 500 - 503):

Reserve	Estimated Balance as at December 31, 2020	Estimated Balance as at December 31, 2025
Future Expenditure Reserve	\$458,278	\$242,284
Capital Works Reserve	\$70,897	\$73,397
GIS Future Expenditure Reserve	\$53,433	\$53,433

Tax Impacts

- Based on the 2021 completed assessment roll, the estimated residential tax rate for this service is expected to be \$0.2597 per \$1,000 (2020 - \$0.2808) of taxable assessed value.

- For a residence with an assessed value of \$500,000, the total tax impact is estimated to be \$130.00.

Citizen/Public Relations

Planning (500) and Planning Policy (503)

The work plan items identified in the 2021 - 2025 financial plan will include public consultation in accordance with the requirements of the LGA. Through project/application-specific reports, planning services will develop consultation strategies with assistance from communications staff and report to the board on the process, timing and method of citizen consultation. Statutory consultation costs related to site-specific development proposals are either included in planning application fees or billed separately to the development proponent. Consultation costs arising from CVRD-initiated projects and bylaw amendments (e.g. Coastal Flood Adaptation Strategy project) are borne by the CVRD and primarily pertain to the cost of staff time. Advertising expenses are included in the 2021-2025 financial plan.

Attachments: Appendix A – “Function 503 project plans”

CVRD Long Range Planning Project Plan (Function 503)

Project: Coastal Flood Adaptation Strategy

The Coastal Flood Adaptation Strategy (CFAS) will explore strategies to mitigate and adapt to climate change impacts including coastal flooding, storm surge and coastal erosion. The goal of the CFAS is to understand the risks from flood hazards, inform decision-making on asset management, corporate infrastructure and updates to regulatory framework including land use policies and bylaws in order to align with recently amended provincial flood guidelines.

Objective:

Long-term: To work towards implementing Goal 2 of the Regional Growth Strategy: “Protect, steward and enhance the natural environment and ecological connections and systems”; Goal 5: “Provide affordable, effective and efficient services and infrastructure that conserves land, water and energy resources”; Goal 6: “Support and enhance the agricultural and aquaculture sectors and increase local food security”; and Goal 7: “Support a high quality of life through the protection and enhancement of community health, safety and well-being”; and Goal 8: “Minimize regional greenhouse gas emissions and plan for adaptation”.

Medium-term: To prepare a coastal flood adaptation strategy based on the findings from the Coastal Flood Mapping Project (2019-2021) to understand the risks from flood hazards, inform decision-making on asset management, corporate infrastructure and updates to regulatory framework including land use policies and bylaws in order to align with recently amended provincial flood guidelines.

Short-term: To undertake an assessment of coastal flood risk in order to identify priority locations for specific adaptation strategy development.

Budget: \$160,000 (\$150,000 secured through grant funding and \$10,000 from tax requisition).

Projected Start Date: December 2020

Projected Completion Date: September 2021

Year	Task	Budget
2021	Coastal flood risk assessment	\$25,000
2021	Public engagement	\$35,000
2021	Adaptation option development	\$50,000
2021	Strategy development	\$50,000

Next Steps: The CFAS project is underway. A consultant was retained in early December 2020. The project will include a robust public engagement process beginning in early 2021. The project must be completed within one year from the date of grant approval (September 2021).

Background: Building on the results of the Coastal Flood Mapping project, the CFAS project will develop and prioritize adaptation strategies with phasing. Strategies will be evaluated against criteria such as urgency, cost, funding and partnerships. The Coastal Flood Adaptation Strategy will provide the strategy's objectives, key activities, timelines and roles and responsibilities.

Connection to Board's Strategic Drivers:

Community Partnerships: regional initiative with key community partners including, K'ómoks First Nation and key stakeholders including City of Courtenay and Town of Comox.

Climate Crisis and Environmental Stewardship and Protection: CFAS accounts for climate change and future sea level rise by using sea level rise modeling and updated coastal flood mapping to identify priority risk areas in order to develop adaptation strategies to guide planning policy and regulations, asset management and capital investments decision-making and emergency preparedness planning.

Indigenous Relations: project involves K'ómoks First Nation as a project partner in the early stages of project design and development.

Fiscal Responsibility: Affordability for citizens is at the core of this driver. This project is grant funded, with an efficient and cost-effective process to work towards coastal flood adaptation for citizens.

Project Lead: Planning Services lead with support from Communication Services, Information Services and GIS, Financial services and key community partners.

CVRD Long Range Planning Project Plan (Function 503)

Project: Agriculture Planning

The Agriculture Planning project includes the following components, each described in the chart below:

- Explore feasibility of a Comox Valley agriculture extension service (Year 1);
- Undertake a Regional Food Hub feasibility study (Year 1);
- Act on findings of agriculture extension service feasibility (Year 2); and
- Update the 2002 Comox Valley Agricultural Plan (Year 2 and Year 3).

This project aligns with the direction set in the November 2020 Ministry of Agriculture’s mandate letter, specifically: increasing greater food security, supporting regenerative agriculture, and identifying opportunities for partnership (e.g. producers, school district, service providers).

Note that in the context of this project agriculture extension is understood to mean relationship and capacity building with producers, including the provision of coordination and knowledge transfer on locally significant agriculture-related topics, projects and programs, such as technical resources, regional and resource planning, certifications, farming methods, and emerging issues.

The work in 2021 will be entirely consultant driven. Planning staff have very limited ability to oversee this project.

Objective:

Long-term: To work towards implementing Goal 3 of the RGS: “Achieve a sustainable, resilient and dynamic local economy that supports businesses and the region’s entrepreneurial spirit”; Goal 6: “Support and enhance the agricultural and aquaculture sectors and increase local food security”; and Goal 8: “Minimize regional greenhouse gas emissions and plan for adaptation”.

Medium-term (Years 2 and 3): To update the Comox Valley Agricultural Plan and implement work undertaken in year 1.

Short-term (Year 1): To assess feasibility of an agriculture extension service and a regional food hub including clarifying the role of the Comox Valley Regional District (CVRD). To lay the groundwork for broad, informed community engagement prior to embarking on an update to the Comox Valley Agricultural Plan.

Year 1 Budget: \$35,000 (agriculture planning coordinator and honoraria to citizen advisory committee members) + \$50,000 provincial grant funding (regional food hub feasibility and business planning). Will seek out additional grant funding opportunities as they arise.

Projected Start Date: January 2021 (food hub feasibility); agriculture extension service feasibility timing to be determined (relative to board’s direction on other projects)

Projected Completion Date: Early 2023 (with ongoing implementation)

Year	Task	Budget
1	Establish an agriculture extension service advisory committee (e.g. producers, Ministry of Agriculture Regional Agrologist, Farmers' Institute(s) representatives, Agricultural Advisory Planning Commission, Food Policy Council representative, CVRD staff, etc.) to scope project and explore feasibility of agriculture extension. Retain agriculture planning coordinator services to assist with outreach and overall project scoping. Scope Agriculture Plan project with coordinator and advisory committee.	\$30,000 (to engage an agriculture planning coordinator) \$5,000 (honoraria for citizen members of advisory committee) Staff time
1	Retain consulting services to undertake a Regional Food Hub feasibility assessment.	\$50,000* (Ministry of Agriculture funding) Staff time
2	Act on findings of extension service feasibility.	\$30,000 (to engage agriculture planning coordinator/extension worker)**
2	Retain consulting services to update the Comox Valley Agriculture Plan. Continue agriculture coordinator/extension worker services.	\$75,000** (agriculture plan consultant) \$30,000** (agriculture coordinator/extension worker) Staff time
3	Finalize Comox Valley Agriculture Plan	*

*Provincial contract negotiation and potential funding underway

**Estimates to be confirmed through future financial planning processes.

Next Steps: Develop a terms of reference for an agriculture extension service advisory committee and advertise opportunity. Prepare a scope of work for an agriculture planning coordinator. Issue a request for proposals. Hire an agriculture plan implementation coordinator.

Relevant Background: CVRD Committee of the Whole recommendation (January 14, 2020):

“THAT staff report back to the Committee of the Whole regarding the request for funding from the Comox Valley Food Policy Council to complete a Comox Valley Agricultural Plan.”

September 2020 Board Strategic Planning Session: agricultural planning identified as a priority item for the electoral areas.

Economic Recovery Task Force response: agricultural planning, including food hub and food security, along with agricultural producer support and advocacy identified as priorities.

Connection to Board's Strategic Drivers:

Community Partnerships: opportunity to work with K'ómoks First Nation, Farmers' Institutes (2), Ministry of Agriculture, Agricultural Advisory Planning Commission, Island Health, School District No. 71, non-profit service providers (e.g. Young Agrarians, Lush Valley Food Hub).

Climate Crisis and Environmental Stewardship and Protection: project presents an opportunity to implement findings and recommendations of the provincial Climate Action Initiative's Regional Adaptation Strategy. As well as the opportunity to address climate crisis in the Agricultural Plan. Finally, the project will assist in addressing environmental stewardship by connecting with emerging regenerative agricultural network.

Indigenous Relations: project presents an opportunity to recognize past food-related uses of land by Indigenous peoples. Engagement with K'ómoks First Nation is necessary in the design of the project relative to K'ómoks First Nation's economic development, food security and community health objectives.

Fiscal Responsibility: the project will benefit from use of a specialized advisory committee and consultant to achieve better value for funds. The project will be phased over three budget years and grant funding opportunities will be sought as they arise.

Project Lead:

Planning services lead with support from CVRD Corporate and Community services.

Last updated: January 19, 2021