

DATE: June 12, 2020

FILE: 1700-02/2020Renewal

TO: Chair and Directors
Board

FROM: Russell Dyson
Chief Administrative Officer

Supported by Russell Dyson
Chief Administrative Officer

R. Dyson

RE: COVID-19 Response and Renewal – Finance and Administration

Purpose

To provide the CVRD Board of Directors with

- a) The COVID-19 Finance and Administration Response and Renewal report;
- b) A list of the services that are not subject to this renewal process; and
- c) The schedule for the future core service renewal reports.

Recommendation from the Chief Administrative Officer:

THAT the COVID-19 Response and Renewal plan for the Finance and Administration core service, as included with the staff report dated June 12, 2020, be approved;
AND FURTHER THAT the plan be included in the September 2020 strategic planning session.

Finance and Administration Renewal Plan

As part of the CVRD Board's COVID-19 Response and Renewal Framework, more fully described at www.comoxvalleyrd.ca/renewal, an assessment of the CVRD's Core Services is being conducted and is based on five principles:

- Maintaining core services at an affordable cost
- Sustaining stable services in support of the local economy
- Adapting to changing community priorities
- Realigning resources to support community renewal initiatives
- Communicating clearly about actions.

This report considers the various tasks for the Finance and Administration core service and identifies certain changes that could be implemented, supporting the five principles above. Subsequent reports will describe the various Core Services, consider service levels for functions such as water supply, sewer treatment and transit and may drive the need to reassess or add to the renewal actions named later in this report. A timeline for presenting the remaining core service renewal reports is attached as appendix A. A subsequent report may also assess personnel considerations, as a summary of the various Core Service reports. Of note, many CVRD services are minor in scope, range of impact on the public or have regulatory requirements that limit CVRD opportunities to find change. Those services will not be considered in subsequent reports, and are named in Appendix B.

Operational and Capital Work Plan Modifications

The CVRD's COVID-19 Renewal Framework includes evaluating CVRD services for fiscal efficiencies and assessing tasks and work plans. The following table lists the necessary and critical tasks, which are those that must continue to be provided to the community in order that water supply, sewer treatment, parks and waste management (as examples) are delivered. The functional tasks include actions that may be paused, deferred or cancelled outright. Finally, the renewal actions describe tangible and/or systemic changes to deliver renewed public services.

Necessary Tasks
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Finance: process payments, bank deposits, issue billings, grant claims, provincial reporting, procurement <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>Status quo required for financial services with consideration for electronic / remote opportunities and automation</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Human resources: Labour Relations, WorkSafeBC, employee standards, employee support, payroll and benefits <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>Supports continue to be required for operational requirements with modest adjustments through functional review and renewal actions. Updates are specific to COVID response and implementing safe work procedures.</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Corporate Services: maintain supports to necessary and critical tasks, including support for elected officials and executive management (IT, communications, legislative services) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>Continued shift to a largely digital environment during COVID-19 pandemic, including video conferencing meetings for elected officials, staff and the public, online and telephone customer service, support for telework arrangements, and refined public engagement approaches.</i> ○ <i>Structural change to establish deputy chief administrative officer role supports elected officials, projects and partners, and includes modest cost savings (approx. 2020 savings \$15,000)</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● North Island 9-1-1 Corporation and Comox Strathcona Regional Hospital District administration <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>Status quo required for NI911 due to contractual and regulatory obligations.</i> ○ <i>Reduction in the requisition level for CSRHD could be a topic for the CSRHD Board.</i>
Critical Tasks
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Comox Valley Economic Development Society contract review (2020) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>Negotiations underway, anticipating outcome to be determined by July 31, 2020; economic recovery task force enabled through CVEDS as secretariat</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Regional office project <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>Harmston office move fully complete, building systems and processes being commissioned; some potential exists for additional costs to equip facilities with COVID-19 physical separation measures such as signage, Plexiglas barriers, etc.</i>
Functional Tasks Highlights
<p>Majority of activities related to Finance and Administration support other services and departments at CVRD. Overarching changes have included pausing or rescheduling public engagement, adjusting public meetings to livestream and enable participation remotely, providing more than \$200,000 in grant funding to community organizations to assist with homelessness supports and food security and creating COVID Action Teams. Additional changes/improvements are noted at www.comoxvalleyrd.ca/renewal.</p> <p>The CVRD Corporate Plan references asset management, systems improvement and strategic planning as key projects for Finance and Administration in 2020. As noted below as renewal action, asset management and systems improvement are recommended for adjustments.</p>

Strategic planning continues as a key project for 2020, and is the basis on which the Board will consider its Renewal Plan in fall 2020.

Already underway based on Board direction is a review of recreation, heritage, arts, culture, community halls and other granting opportunities; a report will be presented to subsequent Board and committee meetings to consider granting principles and synergies. That report will apply the renewal principles as options are developed.

Renewal Actions

Immediate and Tangible Actions

1. Reduce the 2020 budget for Finance and Administration by 4% (approx. \$300,000)
 - Based on work plan modifications and reducing certain budgeted items either because of COVID-19 or conducting business in a leaner manner, the expenditures in 2020 for functions 100 to 131 is projected to be 4% below the 2020 budget, which equals approximately \$300,000 in savings for the year (general administration, member municipality and electoral area administration – includes legislative, financial, information, communications, human resources and corporate office building services). This is an estimate and serves as an annual goal for future budgets. Unforeseen events and uncertainties may add to or reduce savings. Reduction examples include:
 - Reduced employee benefit contributions
 - Reduced professional training opportunities
 - Reduced meeting schedule and expenses
 - Reduced travel for meetings and conferences, such as the UBCM and FCM events
 - Reduced professional fees for projects deemed non-critical (software upgrades, consulting on systems improvements)
2. Provide effective and long-lasting capital infrastructure at sustainable levels
 - Sustainable Service Delivery Policy will introduce a coordinated approach to asset management, aligning public and Board interests with long-term, cost-effective service delivery. Policy was intended for adoption in March/April 2020 and will be presented to the Board over next two to three months.
3. Ensure greater transparency and less red-tape through better processes
 - Adjustments and updates to corporate policies and bylaws ensure alignment with response and renewal framework principles, reducing internal and external bureaucracy (red-tape), increasing transparency and promoting accountability. For example, the GIS fees bylaw can be adjusted to streamline internal administrative processes.

Longer Term and Systemic Change Opportunities

4. Position the CVRD to better respond to crises and changing public expectations
 - Drawing from the immediate and tangible actions through the COVID-19 experience, cost savings will be analyzed to identify in future years the optimal balance of transparent, accessible and efficient services with systems that can respond to changing community dynamics and embrace opportunities to promote resilience. Assessments to include:
 - a) Support services policy
 - b) Remote working opportunities
 - c) Software and hardware including in finance, information technologies, human resources and legislative services.
5. Connect with the public in clearer, direct and more consistent ways to obtain better feedback, increase awareness and inform better decisions.
 - A specific action is developing a common, annual assent period to focus public engagement, particularly with key public members, that empowers the public through approval processes that always occur during a specific timeframe.
 - The continued use of online forums as well as more traditional public meetings.

6. Coordinating with certain local government services have been shown to benefit from a Comox Valley-wide approach during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Certain parks and recreation actions, emergency operations centre communication roles and joint procurement and financial reporting illustrate coordinated service delivery. Many local government services, including those delivered by other agencies such as improvement districts and other public organizations, are delivered independently but could benefit from stronger collaboration. Staff will report back to the Board in spring 2021 or as opportunities are identified.

Summary

- Finance, human resources, information technology, communications and legislative services play a necessary and critical role in delivering water supply, sewer treatment, parks, recreation, land use planning and emergency services to the Comox Valley.
 - This includes the ongoing supports for the economic development function, North Island 9-1-1 Corporation and the Comox Strathcona Regional Hospital District.
- Maintaining existing infrastructure and services is key to ongoing stable service delivery – water and sewer mains must be supported to promote quality services.
- Reducing bureaucracy and administrative controls will ease processes and enable greater civic involvement. Merging certain activities, which do not necessarily follow administrative boundaries, can result in savings and efficiencies.
- A more lean way of conducting government business results in cost savings.
- Local governments are responsible for working together and finding ways to collaborate on meaningful service delivery.

Citizen/Public Relations

Any actions which result in a change to how services are delivered to the public will require a communications plan to be developed to determine the appropriate level of public engagement, which includes important face-to-face opportunities. Initiatives requiring public engagement would include any resulting changes to how the assent process or in-person services are delivered to the public. For example, all online public meetings require clear communication to residents about how they can participate in the process and include instructions on how to use the tools provided. Staff training has been provided and procedures developed, to ensure online sessions are facilitated effectively and the privacy of participants is protected.

Prepared by:

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Attachments: Appendix A – “CVRD Renewal Plan Timeline for Core Services”
Appendix B – “CVRD Services Not Subject to Renewal Review”

Appendix A – CVRD Renewal Plan Timeline for Core Services

Core Service	Meeting	Date	Topics
Finance and Administration	Board	June 16	CVEDS, Asset Management; KFN/Indigenous Relations; advocate to FCM, UBCM, senior government; Harmston office update; include a schedule of services that receive little or no change (so won't be included in other Core Service reports)
Sewer	Sewage Commission	August 11	CVWPCC (Brent Road), LWMP, Governance (re south), odour
	EASC	August 10	RUBSE
Water	Water Committee	July 14	Water Supply System, watershed protection
	EASC	August 10	Water Distribution Systems
	BCOB	August 10	BCOB
RGS	Board	July 14	Education, Review, Poverty Reduction, Air Quality, Food Security, Agriculture, Homelessness, Housing
Transit	Board	July 14 (or 28)	Transit service, transit improvement, transit future action plan
Emergency Programs	Board	August 25	Regional program, fire smart, Fracture on Fifth
	EASC	August 10	EAs program, fire departments, flood mapping
	BCOB	August 10	Fire department
Recreation	Sports Commission	July 14	Recreation complexes, playing fields
	EASC	August 10	Parks and Ag grounds
Electoral Areas	EASC	August 10	Planning, building inspection
*Partners	Board		CSRHD CSWM NI911 VIRL

Board Strategic Planning Session: September 17 and 18

Appendix B - CVRD Services Not Subject to Further Renewal Review

	Function #	Function Name
1.	120 – 124	Grants-in-Aid services (5)
2.	150 – 155	Feasibility Studies services (6)
3.	190 – 194	Member Municipality Debt
4.	200	Victim Services / Crimestoppers
5.	205	Comox Valley Community Justice
6.	265	Comox Valley Search & Rescue
7.	330	Jackson Drive Sewer
8.	331	King Coho Sewer
9.	450	Emergency Shelter Land Acquisition
10.	530 – 532	House Numbering services (3)
11.	607	Part Area A Hornby/Denman Recreation Complexes Contribution service
12.	710 – 750	Streetlighting services (11)
13.	791	Courtenay Flats Drainage
14.	795	Comox Valley Airport Service