

To: Electoral Area Services Committee

Date: 2020-11-10

From: Katelyn Hipwell, Planner II

File No:

**Subject: Electoral Area Official Community Plans Accelerated Update Strategy**

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## RECOMMENDATION

**THAT** the Fraser Valley Regional District Board direct staff to prepare a comprehensive business plan for further consideration to undertake a complete review and update of all Official Community Plans for the Electoral Areas over the next 4 years.

## STRATEGIC AREA(S) OF FOCUS

- Support Healthy & Sustainable Community
- Provide Responsive & Effective Public Services
- Support Environmental Stewardship
- Foster a Strong & Diverse Economy

## SUMMARY

Electoral Area Directors have asked to see a preliminary plan outlining how all the Electoral Area Official Community Plans (OCPs) can be updated on an accelerated schedule. This report provides a draft strategy to that effect. The estimated cost for consulting services and additional staff required to update all OCPs within a four year timeframe is \$1,365,200. Updating fewer plans would reduce the cost.

## BACKGROUND

During the September 2020 Electoral Areas Priority Setting Workshop, staff were asked to explore options to accelerate the update of the Electoral Area OCPs and present a proposal to the Committee for consideration.

Historically, Electoral Area Planning Staff have undertaken one major update to an OCP update every 2-3 years. A typical major update process involves review and revision of every aspect of the OCP – it is essentially the development of a new official community plan. This typically takes 18-24 months, depending on the scale of the update, the breadth of the engagement strategy associated with the update, and the outcomes of secondary studies undertaken as part of the update process. However, recent OCP updates have taken significantly longer due to delays relating to secondary study results and challenges with engagement due to recent COVID-19 events.

Currently, Electoral Area Planning has one position (Planner II at 0.6 Full Time Equivalent) dedicated solely to policy projects such as OCP updates, and the rest of the Planning Team juggle both policy projects and current development workloads.

The most recent Electoral Area OCP updates undertaken by EA Planning have included the following:

OCP Update	Timeframe
<b>OCP Bylaw No. 30 (Hemlock)</b>	Began 2017 – Ongoing, Anticipated Adoption in 2021
<b>OCP Bylaw No. 200 (Area D)</b>	Began 2014 – Ongoing, Anticipated Adoption in 2021
<b>OCP Bylaw No. 115 (Area E&amp;H)</b>	2010-2011
<b>OCP Bylaw No. 999 (Area F)</b>	2008-2010

Each of the electoral area OCPs contain policy detailing the review and update cycle that should be undertaken. These policies vary between Plans; however, a recommendation for a 5- to 10-year cycle for major updates is average. Major updates involve a reconsideration of objectives and policies; updates to population and development forecasts; reassessment of land use designations; review of community- or Plan-specific issues; examination of the Plan in the context of new regional growth demands and trends; and, extensive consultation.

Typical best practice for the review and update of OCPs can range between 7-15 years, or when a plan update can be substantially justified by new circumstances, e.g. unforeseen population increases or housing demand, or large scale development proposals inconsistent with the established vision of the Plan.

In some rural areas where land use changes occur slowly, less frequent updates may be appropriate. The rate of change in electoral area communities is traditionally relatively slow. For context, the table below shows population and dwelling counts from the last three censuses. Statistics Canada census figures for small communities should be read as an indication of the magnitude of change, not as precise measures of change.

Electoral Area	2016		2011		2006
	Population	Dwellings	Population	Dwellings	Population
<b>A</b>	405	316	442	272	478
<b>B</b>	915	726	721	641	796
<b>C</b>	1023	929	973	1062	952
<b>D</b>	1529	596	1346	495	1290
<b>E *</b>	1540	738			
<b>F</b>	1293	754	1303	754	1339
<b>G</b>	1776	991	1764	1015	1914
<b>H *</b>	1847	1391			

\* Areas E and H were formerly a single electoral area so no data is provided from previous census years

Population and dwelling counts are only a part of the picture of change in EA communities; many other factors influence our perceptions of change and the need to update OCP policies. For example, the

introduction of new land uses (such as cannabis production or secondary dwellings) or new information about community environmental, economic or social well-being could warrant OCP updates.

## DISCUSSION

### Project Overview and Scope

The FVRD is in the process of updating the OCPs for Area D and Hemlock Valley (Area C). As such, these particular plans have not been included in the proposed draft workplan for this project.

The following electoral area OCPs could be considered for a major review based on their individual update cycle policies and will be considered within the scope of this project for the purposes of this discussion:

Plan Area/Electoral Area	OCP
<b>Electoral Area A</b>	OCP Bylaw No. 804
<b>Electoral Area B (Canyon)</b>	OCP Bylaw No. 150
<b>Electoral Area B (Laidlaw)</b>	OCP Bylaw No. 800
<b>Electoral Area C (Morris Valley/Harrison Mills/Lake Errock)</b> *Update already included in 2021-22 Workplan	OCP Bylaw No. 20
<b>Electoral Area E</b>	OCP Bylaw No. 1115
<b>Electoral Area H</b>	NEW for Electoral Area H
<b>Electoral Area F</b>	OCP Bylaw No. 999
<b>Electoral Area G</b>	OCP Bylaw No. 866

Given there are eight plans to update, a reasonable timeframe is to extend the project over a four year period – or roughly two Plan updates per year. An example workplan for accommodating these updates is illustrated in **Appendix 'A'**; however, the specific timing of each update is flexible and can be altered to facilitate a different plan order. As a typical Plan update can extend beyond 12 months, it is expected to see overlap between Plan updates on an accelerated schedule, which can be more easily managed by engaging consultants and dedicating EA Planning project staff.

### Keeping OCPs Up-to-date into the Future

Existing EA Planning staffing and resources allows for, on average, an 18-20 year review cycle of each electoral area OCP. This is based on the number of adopted OCPs; the approximate length of time to complete an update; and, staff resources and availability. Keep in mind that major development proposals or other policy priorities often affect this timeline as they draw resources away from regular workplan scheduling, lengthening the planned update schedule.

Development of a sustainability strategy as part of a detailed business plan is a key component to ensuring the FVRD is allocating the appropriate resources to ensure proactive and timely OCP updates into the future. The intent is to avoid a situation in the future where OCPs become out-of-date by developing a strategy to keep the plan current once the four year update plan is completed.

### Estimated Consulting Costs

The FVRD Electoral Areas range from populations of approximately 500 to 2,200 and contain a diverse range of community typologies, from sparsely populated rural landscapes to relatively dense suburban residential neighbourhoods and historic hamlets. Accordingly, OCP updates for each electoral area will vary in scope and scale; and resultantly, in cost. Excluding recent or in progress OCP updates, staff anticipate undertaking 8 Plan updates over the 4 year project timeline.

Staff have reviewed recently awarded contracts in BC for professional planning services specific to an OCP review process, inclusive of an extensive engagement strategy, and a finalized Plan. Consulting budgets for these projects range from \$75,000 to \$125,000 in jurisdictions with similar population profiles to a number of FVRD electoral areas. These costs are consistent with our own observations.

Further detailed business planning can better determine budgetary requirements by electoral area, or OCP area, based on the scope and scale of each update and the nature of anticipated engagement. For the purposes of this preliminary cost estimation, staff have taken the median contract value of \$100,000 and included a 25% discretionary allowance for a total estimate of \$125,000 per OCP update. This discretionary allowance accounts for variations in:

- project scale and scope;
- engagement activities;
- supplementary costs frequently encountered during an OCP update process
  - E.g. Geohazard overview studies, environmental assessments, transportation-related studies, etc.; and
- potential inflation over the course of the project timeframe.



Further exploration of funding options is required to determine what resources are available to accommodate this project. This can be explored in a detailed business plan, with detailed financial analysis provided from the EA Planning and Finance. **Community Works Funds are a potential source of funding for this project.**

#### Estimated EA Planning Staff Costs

In addition to professional planning consulting costs for the OCP updates, EA Planning staff resources must also be considered as part of the overall project cost.

Current staffing of one Planner II (0.6 Full Time Equivalent – i.e. 3 days/week) will require supplementation to feasibly administer the proposed project without impacting regular EA Planning workplans and day-to-day operations. The following are examples of FVRD staff tasks throughout a typical OCP update process when engaging a consultant:

- Request for Proposals process and contract awarding;
- Regular and continued interaction with consultant to provide supervision and guidance;
- Provision of local knowledge, mapping, and records;
- Frequent review and approval of consultant's deliverables;
- Coordination and facilitation with key affected parties and the general public for engagement activities;
- Reporting to Committee and Board on project progress; and,
- Advertising and information coordination through FVRD platforms.

A temporary contract for the length of the project timeframe (4 years) for a Planner 1 (1.0 Full Time) is a reasonable supplementation to the current staffing level. Salary plus benefit costs for this time-durated position is approximately \$83k annually based on the 2019 pay rate.

In addition to salary costs of staffing, administrative/overhead costs are estimated at approximately 10% of staffing costs. Overhead costs include administrative impacts to other FVRD departments (payroll, IT support, building maintenance, etc.). This cost is approximately \$8,300 annually. This is a direct cost from the EA Planning budget.

#### **COST**

Costs associated with the proposed project are highly variable but have been estimated by staff based on review of recently awarded contracts for OCP updates throughout the Province and recent internal experience with professional planning consulting services and various supplementary study costs.

Estimated Project Costs		
Professional Planning Services	Additional FVRD Staffing (2019 Salary + Benefits)	Overhead
<i>Per Plan (/plan)</i>	<i>Per Year (/year)</i>	<i>Per Year (/year)</i>
\$125,000	\$83,000	\$8,300
<i>Project Length (8 Plans)</i>	<i>Project Length (4 years)</i>	<i>Project Length (4 years)</i>
\$1mil	\$332,000	\$33,200
Estimated Total Costs for Project Length		\$1,365,200

These costs are not included in the 2021-2025 Financial Plan for the EA Planning service.

An early estimation of the potential total project cost is \$1,365,200 over four years. Costs could be reduced by updating fewer plans and potentially by lengthening the update cycle.

Further detailed analysis is required to more accurately determine costs and sources of revenue. Community Works Funds (Gas Tax) could potentially be used to cover a significant portion of costs. More investigation is required to determine the feasibility of using Community Works Funds and to identify other sources of revenues. This level of investigation would occur through the development of a detailed business case, should EA Directors wish to proceed to that step.

## CONCLUSION

Current staffing and resource levels in the EA Planning Department have typically allowed for the review and update of one electoral area Official Community Plan every 2-3 years. However, recent discussions by the Electoral Area Services Committee have resulted in staff exploring options for an accelerated review and update of all electoral area OCPs. Staff have explored preliminary work planning and budgeting for undertaking the review and update of all OCPs within the next four years for the Committee's consideration. Should the Committee agree to the approach presented, they may direct staff to prepare a comprehensive business plan for further detailed consideration. Alternatively, the Committee may consider an alternate approach as noted below:

### Options for Consideration:

- A. Accelerated review and update of all eight electoral area OCPs overdue for updates within a four year timeframe. This approach includes the use of consulting services and time-durated Planning staff to complete the project. A comprehensive business plan and detailed financial analysis is the next step in considering the viability of this option.

**Resolution:** THAT the Fraser Valley Regional District Board direct staff to prepare a comprehensive business plan for further consideration to undertake a complete review and update of all Official Community Plans for the Electoral Areas over the next 4 years.

- B. A modified approach to the accelerated review of the electoral area OCPs. This approach would explore a more modest Plan update schedule over the next 10 years, followed by a 10-12 year update cycle for all Plans. A comprehensive business plan to determine the required changes to current EA Planning resources to ensure sustainability in the long term is required.

**Resolution:** THAT the Fraser Valley Regional District Board direct staff to prepare a draft strategy for further consideration to undertake a complete review and update of all Official Community Plans for the Electoral Areas over the next 10 years.

- C. Maintain current resource and staffing levels for OCP review and updates. This approach would maintain an approximate update cycle of 18-20 average for major updates to all Plans. Some plans would be updated more frequently, but the average timeframe would be 18-20 years. Major development proposals or other policy initiatives affect this timeline by drawing resources away from regular workplan scheduling, lengthening the planned update schedule.

**Resolution:** THAT the Fraser Valley Regional District Board reject the draft strategy outlined in the staff report and direct staff to maintain the current resource allocation and update schedule for the review and update of all Official Community Plans for the Electoral Areas.

In conjunction with options outlined above, the Committee could explore:

- More frequent minor OCP updates to address narrow policy issues affecting electoral area communities. This would involve a greatly reduced scope of work (compared to major OCP updates), including more streamlined public consultation. A recent example of a minor update is the amendment to the OCP for Areas E & H to incorporate new information about Chilliwack River erosion hazards.
- Setting out Board policies through means other than OCPs. This approach was used recently to address cannabis and second dwellings. Ultimately, these stand-alone policies need to be incorporated into OCPs and well-integrated with land use planning but they may serve adequately in the interim.

#### **COMMENTS BY:**

<b>Graham Daneluz, Director of Planning &amp; Development:</b>	Reviewed and supported.
<b>Kelly Lownsbrough, Chief Financial Officer/ Director of Finance:</b>	Reviewed and supported.
<b>Jennifer Kinneman, Chief Administrative Officer:</b>	Reviewed and supported.

