

DATE: December 8, 2020

FILE: 1700-02/2020/451

TO: Chair and Directors
Regional District Board

FROM: Russell Dyson
Chief Administrative Officer

Supported by Russell Dyson
Chief Administrative Officer

R. Dyson

RE: Homelessness Supports Service Bylaw Review

Purpose

To provide the Comox Valley Regional District (CVRD) Board with an update on the Homelessness Supports Service Bylaw review.

Recommendation from the Chief Administrative Officer:

THAT the Comox Valley Regional District Board receive this report for information.

Executive Summary

- Bylaw No. 389, being the “Comox Valley Homelessness Supports Service Establishment Bylaw No. 389, 2015”, enables the CVRD to provide funds to one or more local non-governmental organizations based on a board approved five-year action plan prepared by the Comox Valley Coalition to End Homelessness (the Coalition) to address homelessness in the Comox Valley.
- The service’s establishment bylaw requires a service review to be undertaken in 2020. In November, a consultant was retained and the review is currently underway, including engagement with the Coalition. The scope of work includes a review of:
 - Revenue relative to the goals and objectives of the Five Year Strategic Plan;
 - Findings of the Regional Housing Needs assessment;
 - Long-term sustainability of the service delivery model (e.g. reliance on the Coalition’s Leadership Team and Coordinator);
 - Contributions to project capital versus operating costs; and
 - Best practices in this type of service model.
- Findings of the review will be presented to the Board in January/February 2021.

Prepared by:

Concurrence:

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Government Partners and Stakeholder Distribution (Upon Agenda Publication)

City of Courtenay	✓
Village of Cumberland	✓
Coalition Against Homelessness	✓

Background/Current Situation

For many years, the Comox Valley has engaged in discussions regarding homelessness. In 2014, the CVRD held a non-binding, public opinion poll wherein 71 per cent of voters supported at least a \$5 per year property tax (on a home that is assessed at \$300,000) to reduce homelessness. A survey was conducted in May 2015 of municipal councils and electoral area directors to determine parameters for such a service. At its June 30, 2015 meeting, the CVRD voted to hold a referendum. Following the results of the 2015 referendum seeking electoral approval to establish a new service to address homelessness in the Comox Valley, the Homelessness Supports Service was established to provide funds to one or more local non-governmental organizations based on a board approved five-year action plan to address homelessness in the Comox Valley.

The service includes the City of Courtenay, Village of Cumberland, Electoral Area A (excluding Denman and Hornby Islands), B and C. The Town of Comox opted not to participate in the service and provides funds on its own accord to service providers. The Town of Comox directors do not participate in decisions related to policy development or financial planning for the homelessness supports service.

The service's main revenue source is tax requisition. The maximum amount that may be requisitioned annually for the cost of this service is the greater of \$165,000 or \$0.02 per \$1,000 applied to the net taxable value of land and improvements for regional hospital district purposes.

There are no personnel costs attributed to this service. A management fee of \$1,000 is transferred annually to the Regional Growth Strategy service (previously allocated to the electoral areas planning service to reflect staffing) in order to administer the Homelessness Supports service. A part-time coordinator is employed by the Coalition, however, revenue from the CVRD Homelessness Supports service is not presently used to fund the coordinator position. In 2020, the City of Courtenay provided funding to assist with funding the coordinator position.

Since 2015, the service has contributed funding towards a variety of projects, including single detached dwellings, supportive housing, condominium units, and more recently for capital improvements to the Connect Warming Centre and pre-construction development costs. Funding recipients are coalition members and include the Wachiy Friendship Centre, Comox Valley Transition Society, Dawn to Dawn Action on Homelessness Society, John Howard Society and Habitat for Humanity Vancouver Island North. To date, 78 affordable housing units have been partially funded through the service.

Bylaw Service Review

The service establishment bylaw requires a service review every five years measured from the year of service establishment. The first review is underway. The service review scope of work includes:

- Consideration of the maximum requisition and options for an increase in requisition and other revenue sources in order to meet the goals and objectives of the Coalition to End Homelessness's Five Year Strategic Plan (2020 update);
- Use of funding for project capital and operating funds;
- Consideration of the long-term sustainability of the service relative to its delivery (e.g. reliance on the Coalition's Leadership Team and coordinator);
- Targeted review of best practices in this type of service model;
- Engagement with the Leadership Team of the Coalition to End Homelessness, recipient service providers of service funding, and service participants; and
- Final report, key findings and recommendations presented to the CVRD Board

Policy Analysis

A CVRD may operate any service the board considers necessary or desirable for all or part of the regional district, under section 796 of the *Local Government Act* (RSBC, 2015, c. 1) (LGA). The approval of the inspector of municipalities has been obtained under Section 801 of the LGA and the approval for the participating areas was obtained by assent of the electors under Section 801.2 of the LGA.

The recently completed regional housing needs assessment and the 2020 Point in Time homelessness count affirm the ongoing need for this service.

Options

This report is presented for information only.

Financial Factors

This service has been primarily funded by requisition save for a one time community amenity contribution of \$250,000 in 2017. The maximum amount that may be requisitioned annually for the cost of this service is the greater of \$165,000 or \$0.02 per \$1,000 applied to the net taxable value of land and improvements for regional hospital district purposes. There are no personnel costs associated with this service. A management fee of \$1,000 is applied to administer the service.

In 2019, the board opted to provide funding of \$245,000 (representing 99 per cent of the maximum requisition in 2019). This amounted to \$6.76 for a home assessed at \$400,000. Funding options for the service will be presented to the board through the financial planning process; the service review may provide context for the board in its consideration of the service's Five Year Financial Plan.

Legal Factors

The establishment bylaw requires review of the service. The purpose of the review is to promote accountability, as well as to enable an assessment of the effectiveness of the service relative to the goals of the board approved Five Year Plan to End Homelessness (updated annually).

Regional Growth Strategy Implications

Funding housing and supports for people experiencing, or at risk of, homelessness relates directly to ensuring a diversity of housing options to meet evolving demographics and needs (Goal 1: Housing) and supporting a high quality of life through the protection and enhancement of community health, safety and well-being (Goal 7: Public Health and Safety).

Intergovernmental Factors

The City of Courtenay, Village of Cumberland, Electoral Area A (Vancouver Island portion of Baynes Sound – Hornby / Denman Islands), Electoral Area B (Lazo North) and Electoral Area C (Puntledge – Black Creek) are service participants. CVRD staff administer the service and work closely with the coordinator and coalition leadership team. This partnership has enabled other important initiatives including the Regional Housing Needs Assessment and the Regional Poverty Reduction Strategy (underway).

Interdepartmental Involvement

Planning Services (Sustainability and Regional Growth Strategy Planning) with support from Corporate Services (Finance) administers the service. Planning Services is also leading the bylaw review process.

Citizen/Public Relations

This Homelessness and Supports service provides grants to fund local housing initiatives. The public interest is significant. The CVRD website has a page dedicated to sharing information about the service, including the Five Year Strategic Plan:

<https://www.comoxvalleyrd.ca/services/homelessness-support>