

REGIONAL DISTRICT OF NANAIMO

**COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE
TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 13, 2007**

**CIRCULATED REPORT
FOR AGENDA**

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DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

PLANNING

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Request for Additional Staff Position – Sustainability Coordinator.

TO: Carol Mason
Chief Administrative Officer

DATE: February 9, 2007

FROM: Paul Thorkelsson
GM Development Services

FILE: 2735 01 Sust

SUBJECT: Request for additional staff position - Sustainability Coordinator

PURPOSE

To consider establishment of a new position to review the environmental impacts of development and coordinate regional sustainability initiatives.

BACKGROUND

At the June 27, 2006 Board meeting, the Regional District of Nanaimo (RDN) Directors passed a resolution:

MOVED Director Westbrook, SECONDED Director Holme, that staff investigate the possibility of hiring an Environmental Officer position within the Regional District budget or in conjunction with member municipalities.

This resolution grew out of concerns regarding development within previously unidentified environmentally sensitive areas. Since that time, the Provincial Government has introduced the Riparian Areas Regulation (RAR) under the Fish Protection Act to provide a consistent approach to addressing the potential impact of development activities on riparian fish habitat. The RDN Board subsequently adopted on January 23, 2007 Official Community Plan (OCP) amendment bylaws consistent with the provincial RAR legislation.

In addition to the environmental science and planning issues surrounding development approval and RAR legislation, the Board has placed importance upon sustainability and the development of sustainable communities as the primary goal of the Board's strategic plan. The Board's sustainability priority is far reaching and has rightly impacted the work plans, projects and activity of all service areas of the RDN. In the particular case of Development Services, a number of plans and investigations have grown out of the Board's sustainability priority including:

- Adoption of Regional Growth Strategy (RGS)
- Current review of RGS (2007)
- State of sustainability project
 - Indicators Report
 - Sustainability work shops
 - Awards program (2007)
 - Report on improving sustainability (2007)

- Green Buildings Project
 - Green Buildings Tour
 - Review of other municipal programs
 - Green Building action plan (2007)
- Corporate climate change plan (Environmental Services)
- Community climate change plan (Environmental Services)

In the face of the growing importance of environmental issues and sustainability, many organizations, both public and private, have adopted a model of staffing which includes an environmental or sustainability coordinator to manage the various policies, planning and programs adopted to support sustainability within and outside the respective organization.

ALTERNATIVES

1. That the Board support establishment of a new position to review the environmental impacts of development and coordinate regional sustainability initiatives.
2. That the Board not support the additional position.

DEVELOPMENT / ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

The past five years have seen development activity and pressures in the region which are unprecedented. Managing this development pressure, protection of the environment and the goals for sustainability has become a growing concern in the community. Community support and involvement in the Regional Growth Strategy and the State of Sustainability project are examples of this interest. Growth management through out the Regional District is recognized as one of the more important aspects of building a sustainable community. The sustainability project has taken a further step in defining the qualities that are important in a sustainable community and indicators which can measure the community's movement towards sustainability. The recently completed indicator report outlines the region's performance, good and poor; in each of the indicators. The RDN now has a good sense of the baseline of sustainability in the region. The next step is to determine definitive actions that can be undertaken to improve the regions "Sustainability Scorecard". A staff position dedicated to the coordination and management of 'green' initiatives is an important potential step in taking the RDN's sustainability priorities from beyond indicators to actions.

In addition, the Sustainability Coordinator position will play a significant role in the critical review of current development applications and regulations, with the goal of revision to strategies, plans and regulations which will further support and promote sustainable practices in the region and the protection of the environment.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

If the Board supports the establishment of a new position to review the environmental impacts of development in sensitive areas, along with playing a key role in assisting the Regional in achieving its sustainability goals, the annual cost of this position would be \$70,000. It is proposed that funds for this position would be cost shared; 50% to Electoral Area Planning and 50% to Regional Growth Management. Assuming the position would be filled in September 2007. The cost impact will require an increase of \$6500 to the Electoral Area Planning Budget and \$11,500 to the Regional Growth Management budget. At this point with recent updates in the 2007 budget process these changes result in no noticeable change to the overall 2007 budget. The additional amount for the full time position (2008 budget onward) represents an increase of \$1.20 per \$200, 000.00 assessed home value in the electoral areas.

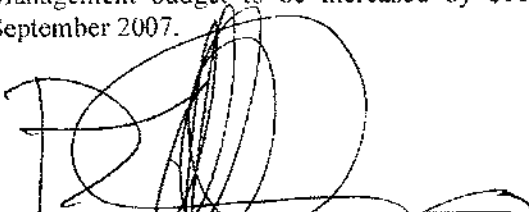
Currently, the Growth Management Function does not include Electoral Area 'B'. The Islands Trust oversee land use planning in Electoral Area 'B' and therefore, this area has not been a participant in the function. As the Growth Strategy evolves and moves beyond land use planning towards broader sustainability initiatives, it is recommended the Electoral Area 'B' become a participant in this function.

CONCLUSION

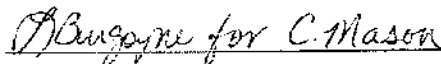
Sustainability was first defined in a United Nations report as: "Meeting the needs of the present without endangering the ability of future generations to meet their needs". The Regional District of Nanaimo has adopted a Strategic Plan and vision following this definition and based on the characteristics of a sustainable region developed by the Regional Growth Monitoring Advisory Committee. At this point in time the RDN is well positioned to fully initiate the process of moving from 'planning' to 'action' in terms of initiatives and actions that support the RDN's position as a leader in developing a sustainable region. Given the established priorities and current staffing, the strategic goals of the RDN would be best served by the addition of a Sustainability Coordinator tasked with developing, implementing and managing initiatives in support of the region's sustainability objectives.

RECOMMENDATION

1. That the Regional District Board approve the establishment of a Sustainability Coordinator position.
2. That the Electoral Area Planning budget be increased by \$6,500 and the Regional Growth Management budget to be increased by \$11,500 to provide funds to establish this position in September 2007.



General Manager Concurrence



CAO Concurrence

COMMENTS:

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