



Governance & Services Committee

TO: Governance and Services Committee

FROM: Jodie Foster
Director of Communication and Information Services

DATE: January 6, 2021

SUBJECT: North Westside Community Communications

Purpose: To provide an update on current community communications activities resulting from the 2017 North Westside Services and Community Issues Review and to review the goals, objectives and activities for future communications in the Electoral Areas.

Executive Summary:

An Electoral Area Communications Strategy has been developed to address the considerations outlined in the 2017 North Westside Services and Community Issues Review.

Goals of the strategy include:

- Residents feel they receive clear, correct and truthful information from the RDCO
- Residents understand what services the RDCO provides and which are provided by other agencies
- Residents feel Board decisions are transparent and understand how decisions are made
- Residents value the services they receive from the RDCO
- The Electoral Area Director and the Regional Board are aware of and feel supported through issues arising in the area
- Residents feel they have the information and direction they need during a crisis

RECOMMENDATION:

THAT the Governance and Services Committee receive for information the North Westside Community Communications report from the Director of Communication and Information;

AND FURTHER THAT the Governance and Services Committee recommend the Regional Board endorse the 2021-2022 Electoral Area Communications Strategy.

Respectfully Submitted:

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jodie Foster".

Jodie Foster
Director of Communication and Information Services

Approved for Committee's Consideration

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Brian Reardon".

Brian Reardon, CAO

Background:

In October 2017, the Regional Board received a report entitled "North Westside Services and Community Issues Review". The report was completed by consultants EcoPlan International and it concluded that:

- An erosion of trust is impacting working relationships among and between community and RDCO personnel.
- Misinformation is prevalent within the community and may be exacerbated by difficulty in locating information.
- There is a persistent feeling among community members that the community's interests are not represented by RDCO Board or staff.
- Community members feel that the service costs, including administrative overheads are too high.

The report provides considerations to address the issues described and with respect to community communications includes the following considerations:

1. To improve communications – Dispelling misinformation, disseminating accessible, factual and timely information and collaboratively developing a communications strategy.
2. Establish a platform or channel for regular dialogue between North Westside residents and the RDCO.

In January 2018, staff brought forward "Next Steps" report to the Regional Board.

More recently the RDCO Chief Administrative Officer was before the Regional Board in June of 2020 with a request from the North Westside Communities Association for a letter of support for a Provincial Restructure Planning Grant.

Resolutions from the 2020 meeting are as follows:

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THAT the Regional Board receive the June 24, 2020 CAO report entitled NWCA Request for Letter of Support for a Provincial Restructure Planning Grant:

AND FURTHER THAT the Regional Board approve the North Westside Community Association request for a letter of support for a Provincial Restructure Planning Grant.

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THAT the Regional Board proceed with considerations 1 and 2 in the EcoPlan International report of October 13, 2017 and direct staff to formulate an approach to develop a communication strategy and advance workplans and budget submissions for 2021 and 2022.

2021-2022 Electoral Area Communications Strategy

In parallel and to support the process for the Provincial Restructure Planning Grant, it continues to be important to have solid community communications in place. While many communications activities for Electoral Areas have been added or refined since 2017, included in this report is a more formal communications strategy which has been developed in collaboration with the Electoral Area Directors.

It should be noted that while this work was initiated in response to concerns in the North Westside, purposeful community communications in both Electoral Areas is beneficial and the same goals, objectives and activities are proposed for both areas. Small changes may be required to accommodate a unique stakeholder groups in one area or the other.

The goals and objectives of the 2021-2022 Electoral Area Communications Strategy are as follows:

Goal 1: Residents feel they receive clear, correct and truthful information from the RDCO

Objectives:

- a) To address residents directly through RDCO channels (we break our own news)
- b) To correct misinformation when it exists
- c) To provide consistent messaging through RDCO and Area Director's channels
- d) To know what information residents want most
- e) To know where residents most often get their RDCO information

Goal 2: Residents understand what services the RDCO provides and which are provided by other agencies

Objectives:

- a) To ensure all RDCO services, programs, events, infrastructure and facilities are RDCO branded
- b) To use consistent visual identity guidelines
- c) To assist residents in understanding which services are RDCO and which are provided to them via other organizations / levels of government.

Goal 3: Residents feel Board decisions are transparent and understand how decisions are made

Objectives:

- a) To provide live access (in person or remote) to Regular Board meetings as well as Governance and Services meetings
- b) To provide a summary and recording of Board meetings available to residents anytime

Goal 4: Residents value the services they receive from the RDCO

Objectives:

- a) To know what services residents value
- b) To understand resident priorities for their area
- c) To provide information and opportunities for input on issues of concern in the area

Goal 5: The Electoral Area Director and the Regional Board are aware of and feel supported through issues arising in the area

Objectives:

- a) To notify the Electoral Area Director and the Board of emerging issues and provide communications support
- b) To take a coordinated approach in advocating for services (not administered by the RDCO) within the Electoral Area
- c) To provide opportunities for the Area Director to speak to residents on behalf of the RDCO re: Electoral Area services and projects (*Note: RDCO Board Chair will remain the spokesperson for the Board on all Board decisions so this will require some balance).

Goal 6: Residents feel they have the information and direction they need during a crisis

Objectives:

- a) To provide residents with emergency information when the Central Okanagan Emergency Operation Centre is activated
- b) To provide residents with information when local issues / crisis arise (i.e. water notices)

Additional Community Communications

See the full communications strategy attached for a description of current and proposed activities in the Electoral Areas.

Current activities (shown in black starting on page 9 in the attached communications strategy) include regular advertising, media relations, social media channels, rdco.com website pages specifically for the Electoral Areas, Regional Board meeting summaries, bi-annual water utility newsletter, project specific engagement etc. These activities as listed will continue.

Planned or recently added activities include:

- A new rdco.com website to be delivered in Q3 2021
 - Enhances the ability to provide residents the information they want through e-newsletters subscription with the topics they chose (i.e. Electoral Area or Regional news, Economic Development, Parks, Water, Waste etc.)
 - Allows residents to more easily access information as the search function and site architecture will be improved
- Live and recorded video of the Regional Board and Governance and Services meeting which began in Q4 2020
- Undertaking Citizen survey to better understand and measure what services residents value and what issues exist in the community

New proposed activities include:

- Developing a coordinated approach in advocating for residents for services not delivered by the RDCO
- Annual open house (in person or digital as Provincial Health Orders allow)
- Annual newsletter with budget focus delivered to households
- Service Directory for each Electoral Area developed and mailed with annual newsletter in addition to regular updates in digital version
- Attendance as needed at the North Westside Community Association meetings (at least two times annually)
- Investigating an online engagement platform

Financial Considerations:

Most of the communications activities outlined in the strategy are already in place and accommodated in existing budgets. Any additional or refined activities in 2021 will also be undertaken within current budgets. If communications activities require further funds, these will be addressed in operating budgets for 2022 and onward.