

DATE OF MEETING JUNE 3, 2020

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**SUBJECT CLIMATE RESILIENCY PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT WORKING GROUP**

## **OVERVIEW**

### **Purpose of Report**

To provide the Environment Committee with an update on the Climate Resiliency Strategy and establish a public engagement-working group on climate resiliency. ]

### **Recommendation**

That the Environment Committee establish a working group in order to prepare a plan on how the City can communicate and engage with the public on the issue of climate resiliency.

## **BACKGROUND**

Council adopted the Environment Committee Workplan on 2020-APR-06. The workplan includes action to provide input into how the public can be engaged in Climate Resiliency and promote the implementation of the City's Climate Resiliency Strategy.

Staff has recently completed a two-year process to complete a draft City Climate Resiliency Strategy that provides direction on improving Nanaimo's climate resiliency. The strategy focuses on actions to improve City infrastructure and developing policy to improve the City's ability to respond to extreme weather events and prepare for sea-level rise.

The strategy's overarching objective is to identify all climate related vulnerabilities within the City of Nanaimo, identify actions that are currently contributing to building community resiliency and recommend best practices to address or avoid any climate related risks identified that are not currently being addressed.

### **Developing the Strategy:**

The strategy was developed using the Province's *BC Climate Risk Assessment Framework* adapted for local government adaptation planning. The methodology followed four general steps outlined below.

Step 1: Understanding the Context: Review the City's current policy, operating standards and practices that relate to climate adaptation. Identify potential gaps and opportunities to enhance resiliency throughout the City.

Step 2: Identify the Risk: Impact statements were prioritized through a risk assessment completed by staff and community stakeholders.

Step 3: Analyze the Risk: Review climate science projections and generate impact statements on how climate change might affect Nanaimo.

Step 4: Identify Actions: Recommended actions were then developed to address the prioritized impacts. The final list of actions were categorized into themes (Water Supply, Flooding and Drainage, Environment and Parks, Well Being and Preparedness, Corporate Governance) with key objectives under each theme.

City Staff were primarily engaged in developing the strategy, while key community partners and stakeholders were invited to participate and provide their insight and help in crafting the recommendations. The partners and stakeholder represented various community interests that play a key role in the community's resiliency and included; Vancouver Island Health Authority, Nanaimo Port Authority, Regional District of Nanaimo, BC Ferries, Harmac Pacific Pulp Operations, and BC Hydro. Both School District No. 68 and Vancouver Island University were unable to participate at the time. Snuneymuxw First Nation was also unable to participate but their staff have been kept informed as the strategy was developed and on the recommended actions.

## **DISCUSSION**

While the City of Nanaimo is primarily responsible for implementing the Climate Resiliency Strategy, the longer-term success of the City's resiliency will depend on the participation of all Nanaimo residents. A key objective of the Climate Resiliency Strategy is to improve community awareness of future climate impacts and build awareness and capacity among residents, especially the most vulnerable, on how to be more resilient to the expected impacts of climate change. The role of community organizations and local business as sponsors and promoters of any climate resiliency actions that focus on neighbourhoods will be important to any long-term success.

In order to best move forward, the City will need to develop a public communication and engagement plan on climate resiliency. The objectives for this plan are:

- To introduce climate resiliency to the broader community and how the City will be responding to expected climate change impacts.
- Identifying any major community stakeholder projects or initiatives that help build community resiliency.
- Identify resiliency capacity building opportunities among community groups and community stakeholders.
- Identify how residents can support climate resilience in their own daily lives and around Nanaimo.

With the upcoming OCP-plus update (Re-Imagine Nanaimo) initiative in 2020, public participation and input will need to be carefully coordinated to avoid engagement fatigue. Stand-alone engagements on climate resilience may need to be blended with other ongoing engagement programs that tie back to the OCP-plus update.

A focused working group would provide an efficient forum for input into the development of a public communication and engagement plan for the Climate Resiliency Strategy. The purpose of the working group, which should be made up of committee member(s) and staff, would be to

coordinate with the Re-imagine Nanaimo consulting team on short-term foundational public communication and engagement on climate resiliency, while considering recommendations on a long-term and ongoing communication and engagement plan to support implementation of the City's Climate Resiliency Strategy.

## **OPTIONS**

1. That the Environment Committee establish a working group in order to prepare a plan on how the City can communicate with and engage the public on the issue of climate resiliency.
  - The advantages of this option: The climate resiliency engagement-working group will provide direction on how to raise community awareness around climate resiliency and how the public can help improve the City's capacity to limit the impacts of climate change.
  - The disadvantages of this option: The COVID 19 pandemic will limit the options available on how the City could best engage the public.
  - Financial Implications: There are no significant financial obligations to the creation of the working group. Any meetings and hosting requirements will be met within existing budgets. There may be recommendations from the working group that will have additional cost implications. Cost implications of any recommended community engagement on climate resiliency will be considered by Council at a later date.
  
2. That the Environment Committee **not** establish a working group in order to prepare a plan on how the City can communicate with and engage the public on the issue of climate resiliency.
  - The advantages of this option: Short-term cost saving by not engaging the community on implementation of the Climate Resiliency Strategy.
  - The disadvantages of this option: Input from the public, community and business groups will be overlooked, limiting the overall impact and implementation of the Climate Resiliency Strategy. Loss of opportunity to build community capacity and partnerships around climate resiliency.
  - Financial Implications: There are likely to be significant costs in the medium to long-term by avoiding engaging the community on the implementation of the Climate Resiliency Strategy.

## **SUMMARY POINTS**

- The Climate Resiliency Strategy's overarching objective is to identify all climate related vulnerabilities within the City of Nanaimo, identify actions that are currently contributing to building community resiliency and recommend best practices to address or avoid any climate related risks identified that are not being addressed.
- While the City of Nanaimo is primarily responsible for implementing the climate resiliency strategy, the longer-term success of the City's resiliency will depend on participation of all Nanaimo residents.
- Public communication and engagement on Climate Resiliency will be key to successful implementation of the Strategy. A focused working group will provide an

efficient forum for input into the development of a public communication and engagement plan for the City's Climate Resiliency Strategy.

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