

DATE OF MEETING September 25, 2024

AUTHORED BY TING PAN, MANAGER, SUSTAINABILITY

SUBJECT TERM POSITION – SUSTAINABILITY SECTION

OVERVIEW

Purpose of Report

To seek Finance and Audit Committee’s approval to fund a term position in the Sustainability Section.

Recommendation

That the Finance and Audit Committee recommend that Council direct Staff to fund a temporary, full-time position for approximately 12 months in the Sustainability Section with up to \$145,000 in funding as follows:

- Reallocate \$70,000 from the 2024 budget for the Building Retrofit Roadmap project;
- Reallocate \$40,000 from the 2024 budget for the E-Mobility Strategy project; and,
- Allocate \$35,000 from the Climate Action Reserve Fund.

BACKGROUND

The Sustainability Section was established in January 2022 with one Manager of Sustainability and one Environmental Planner. This Section oversees community-wide energy management, climate mitigation and adaptation through the development and implementation of plans, policies, programs, and collaboration across the organization and with the broader community. The Section currently also leads the development of the City’s *Monitoring Strategy*.

The Sustainability Section in conjunction with the Finance department coordinates the annual sustainability reporting required to receive the provincial Local Government Climate Action Program funding. As well, the Sustainability Section administers the following ongoing programs:

- Acting for Climate Together volunteer program
- Home Retrofit Support (Home Energy Navigator) Program
- Cool it! Climate Leadership Program for schools
- Community Sustainability Project Grant
- Home Energy Assessments, Woodstove Exchange, and Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Rebate Program

The Sustainability Section received capacity support from co-op students during summer months and consultants on an as needed contract in 2023 and 2024 to carry out background research, policy scan, public engagement activities, as well as more complex and technical analyses and research according to their knowledge and skill levels. This expanded capacity enabled the Section to carry out many actions in the *Integrated Action Plan (IAP)*, including the

priority initiatives listed below, as well as capitalize on funding and collaborative opportunities to tackle emerging relevant issues:

- Complete an inventory of energy use and greenhouse gas emissions of all community buildings and a home energy retrofit financing study and submit a grant application to develop a financing program (Priority Action #2).
- Confirm final steps with respect to Nanaimo's BC Energy Step Code and Zero Carbon Step Code implementation (Priority Action #3).
- Contribute to the updated development permit requirements (Priority Action #4).
- Complete an E-Mobility Technical Study (part of Priority Action #7).

DISCUSSION

Although the capacity support from co-op students and consultants have been valuable, they also come with some constraints such as the seasonal nature of the co-op term; the relatively high cost of consulting time; and, the time burden on the small team of staff to provide necessary orientation, training, and access to key resources. As such, they have been primarily relied on for short-term, specific, and strategic tasks.

Several planned key initiatives are anticipated to require additional staff capacity that cannot be met by existing staff with the occasional support from students or contracted consultants effectively or cost efficiently in 2025. These include:

- Launch a Home Energy Retrofit Financing Program, subject to a successful grant application (part of Priority Action #2)
- Identify key actions to address critical barriers to e-mobility which could include a program to encourage e-bike adoption (Council motion and Priority Action #7)
- Develop a Green Shores Strategy (Priority Action #9)
- Develop a Sea Level Rise Management Plan, subject to a successful grant application (Priority Action #11)
- Contribute to Climate Hazard Assessment and Mapping (part of Priority Action #93)
- Establish a short-term grant program to encourage low-carbon multi-plex and infill housing as part of the Housing Accelerator Fund Action Plan, subject to a successful grant application (Council motion)
- Develop a building retrofit roadmap (IAP C1.1.23)

Staff propose to fund a temporary full-time position in the Sustainability Section by reallocating some of existing project budgets and topping it up with funds from the Climate Action Reserve Fund. This is to maximize the value of the City's resources and ensure priority sustainability initiatives are carried out as planned in 2025, while minimizing impact on property tax.

OPTIONS

1. That the Finance and Audit Committee recommend that Council direct Staff to fund a temporary, full-time position for approximately 12 months in the Sustainability Section with up to \$145,000 in funding as follows:
 - Reallocate \$70,000 from the 2024 budget for the Building Retrofit Roadmap project;
 - Reallocate \$40,000 from the 2024 budget for the E-Mobility Strategy project; and,
 - Allocate \$35,000 from the Climate Action Reserve Fund.

- The advantages of this option: Reducing the budgets of Existing Building Retrofit and E-Mobility Strategy projects to help fund a temporary full-time position in the Sustainability Section will allow these projects and some planned initiatives to be accomplished mostly in house by a temporary staff member with adequate skills and experience. The remaining project budget could be used specifically for defined technical analyses that may require expert knowledge and proprietary tools. Having an in-house project manager may alleviate some pressure on City’s procurement demand and allow more flexibility to respond to emerging needs or pursue opportunities such as external grants.
 - The disadvantages of this option: Funding a term position of about a 12-month duration would require funds from the Climate Action Reserve Fund in addition to the reallocated project budgets.
 - Financial Implications: The 2024-2028 Financial Plan will be amended to allocate \$35,000 from the Climate Action Reserve Fund to support a term position. If approved, the projected 2024 closing balance of the Climate Action Reserve Fund is \$868,925. There will be no impact on 2025 property taxes.
2. That the Finance and Audit Committee deny support to fund a term position in the Sustainability Section.
- The advantages of this option: The \$35,000 from the Climate Action Reserve Fund could be directed towards other eligible uses.
 - The disadvantages of this option: The planned initiatives will be delayed or need to be reduced or removed.
 - Financial Implications: There will be no financial implications.

SUMMARY POINTS

- The Sustainability Section carried out many key actions in 2023 and 2024 with capacity support from co-op students and consultants on an as needed contract.
- Planned initiatives assigned to the Sustainability Section will require additional staff capacity in 2025.
- Staff recommend funding a temporary full-time position with up to \$145,000 through reallocating existing project budgets and adding an additional \$35,000 from the Climate Action Reserve Fund.

Submitted by:

Ting Pan
Manager, Sustainability

Concurrence by:

Jeremy Holm
Director, Planning & Development

Wendy Fulla
Director, Finance

Laura, Mercer
General Manager, Corporate Services