

Attachment 8
Community Engagement Plan



**Regional District of Nanaimo
Bylaw and Policy Updates Project
Community Engagement Plan
July 2015 – November 2015**

This Community Engagement plan has been prepared in accordance with the Regional District of Nanaimo (RDN) Public Consultation/Communication Framework.

The Bylaw and Policy Updates project is a comprehensive region-wide review of all RDN policies and bylaws that could affect agriculture. In response, it is proposed that region-wide public consultation occur during key times throughout the project. This Community Engagement Plan outlines a process to be used to obtain community and stakeholder input on some draft amendments to Bylaw 500 and Bylaw 1285 in relation to the potential introduction of agricultural zones that would apply to land in the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR) and potential Official Community Plan (OCP) amendments to support the issuance of a Temporary Use Permit (TUP) for farmers market.

The following outlines the proposed Community Engagement strategy.

Objectives

Following the previous opportunity for community feedback on the 13 draft obstacles and potential approaches identified in the project discussion paper, the purpose of this process is to seek community and stakeholder input on some draft amendments to Bylaw 500 and Bylaw 1285 and a draft Temporary Use Permit (TUP) policy that would support the issuance of a TUP for Farmers' Market. The draft amendments are in response to community and stakeholder input and seek to introduce a new agricultural zone(s) that apply to ALR lands and related amendments. The community and stakeholder groups will be asked to provide feedback on the content of the draft amendments including the proposed agricultural land use zones, general regulations, definitions, and related changes to RDN zoning.

This process requires broad Community Engagement in all RDN Electoral Areas (excluding Electoral Area B) in a way that provides opportunities for interactions among community members/stakeholders and between community members/stakeholders and the RDN. It requires that information be exchanged between the different parties involved, and that there be some degree of deliberation involving the parties participating.

The RDN will provide an opportunity for those who feel they may be affected to be heard. The RDN will consider all ideas, recommendations, results, and comments that arise throughout the process.

Methodology

A number of different external and internal stakeholders have been identified. This list will evolve as the RDN becomes aware of who is interested/affected by the project. As part of the project, staff will engage the following stakeholders and encourage their involvement.

External Stakeholders

- City of Nanaimo
- City of Parksville
- District of Lantzville
- Town of Qualicum Beach
- Cowichan Valley Regional District
- Cowichan Valley Regional District
- Alberni-Clayoquot Regional District
- Comox Valley Regional District
- Community and Neighbourhood Groups
- Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure

- Ministry of Agriculture
- Agricultural and Aquacultural Organizations
- Agricultural Land Commission
- First Nations (Snuneymuxw, K'omox, Snaw-naw-as, Stz'uminus, Qualicum, and others)
- Islands Trust
- Electoral Area Residents
- Real Estate Industry
- Island Health
- Nanaimo Food Share

Internal Stakeholders

- Agricultural Advisory Committee (AAC)
- Planning Department
- Corporate Services (Communications Coordinator)
- GIS/Mapping

The proposed Public Participation Plan will provide stakeholder groups and individuals an opportunity to contribute and interact with the RDN and each other with respect to the draft amendments. Although an opportunity for all of the stakeholders to actively participate will be provided, it is not anticipated that all stakeholders will actively participate.

The role of internal stakeholders will be to actively participate and/or support the process. The AAC will work with RDN staff to provide input and a recommendation to the Board on the draft zoning amendments.

The following background information is available to inform the process:

- The 2014 - 2016 Agriculture Area Plan Action Plan
- The project Discussion Paper
- The results of the previous community engagement process
- The draft zoning amendments
- RDN staff reports related to the project
- AAC recommendations related to the project
- RDN presentations on project related material
- Board Minutes related to the project
- A document outlining the proposed changes and how it would affect property owners
- Bylaw 500 and 1285
- Maps showing ALR boundaries and current zoning
- The Ministry of Agriculture's Guide for Bylaw Development in Farming Areas and other provincial guidebooks

The above information will be made available through the following methods:

- Project website (www.growingourfuture.ca)
- Hard copies (available for use at the RDN administration building and at RDN-sponsored events)
- A brochure (available in print and online).

Feedback will be solicited through the following methods:

- Email (preferably to agriculture@rdn.bc.ca)
- One-on-one meetings with staff
- Telephone
- RDN-Sponsored events
- Written submissions
- Meetings with community members, stakeholder groups, and the AAC
- Social media (Facebook and Twitter)

Tools and Tasks

A number of different tools will be used to obtain feedback that will be considered in making additional recommendations to the Board on how to proceed:

Project Promotion/Earned Media

Promotional material will be developed as well as a news release. Staff will approach local media outlets to assist in promoting the project and encouraging the community to participate. Staff will target local newspapers, Shaw cable, and local radio stations to determine the level of interest in assisting with the project.

An informational brochure and/or other promotional material will be developed that includes information about the project, the draft amendments, and how to get involved. The brochure will be made available online and in print. It will be available in print at the RDN Offices and at all RDN-sponsored events. Copies may be made available to community groups looking to assist with project promotion.

Meetings with the AAC

The AAC will play a key role and will provide input that is intended to compliment, but not replace, broad community input.

Staff will arrange to meet with the AAC meeting to focus on the draft zoning amendments. The purpose of the meeting will be to obtain AAC input and a recommendation to the Board on how to proceed. The AAC may be involved before and after broader community and stakeholder input has been received.

The AAC will be requested to provide a recommendation to the Board which will be included as part of the staff report which presents the findings of the Community Engagement process.

Meetings with Local Agricultural Organizations

Staff will request to meet with the Cedar Farmers' Institute and Coombs Farmers' Institute to provide information about the project and to obtain feedback. Staff will tailor the approach to meet the needs of the institutes. This could range from a brief presentation at a regular monthly meeting to a more detailed and in-depth discussion/focus group session to discuss the draft amendments.

Staff will also contact other external stakeholders that are directly involved in agriculture or aquaculture to determine their level of interest in the project and provide an opportunity to participate.

The results of the meetings will be summarized and presented to the AAC and the Board at a later date.

Farmers' Working Group

A farmers' working group will be established and will generally consist of farmers representing different commodity types and agricultural practices such as beef, berry production, organic farming, forage, poultry, value-added, and market gardening. Staff will identify and contact farmers involved in these activities and will organize a meeting to discuss the draft amendments. Additional meetings may be scheduled to meet the needs of the group.

Due to the timing of the process, during a busy farming time, it may not be practical to convene this group of individuals at one time. If this is the case, staff will reach out on a one on one basis to obtain input.

The result will be a set of comments and recommendations that will be used in making staff recommendations to the Board on how to proceed with the draft amendments.

RDN-Sponsored Open Houses and Presentations

The RDN will host six open houses where information about the project will be provided along with a staff presentation. One open house would be held in each Electoral Area.

The purpose of the open houses is to provide information about the project and an opportunity to obtain community feedback. Information will be provided in the form of displays and a presentation. In addition, the open houses also provide a chance for people to ask questions, have discussion, and debate the draft amendments. Community feedback will be collected using methods such as a questionnaire, dotmocracy, and small group discussion.

Following the completion of the open houses, staff will consolidate the results in a brief report to be presented to the AAC and the Board at a later date.

Attendance at Farmers' Markets

RDN staff will attend each local farmers' market (Cedar, Errington, Nanaimo, and Qualicum Beach) once during the spring/summer 2015 market season. The purpose of attending the farmers' markets is to raise awareness about the project and to direct attendees to the project website, or to attend one of the scheduled events. Staff will develop a display, a questionnaire, and other ways that attendees can provide input.

Following attendance at the farmers' markets, staff will consolidate the results in a brief report to be presented to the AAC and the Board at a later date.

Online Questionnaire

An online survey will be developed to obtain input on the draft zoning amendments. Staff will seek input on which permitted uses the community would support on ALR land, the draft general regulations, and definitions.

Following completion of the questionnaire, staff will consolidate the results in a brief report to be presented to the AAC and the Board at a later date.

Project Referral

A referral will be sent to adjacent local governments, First Nations, and Provincial Ministries involved in agriculture. The purpose of the referral will be to raise awareness of the project and request staff comments on the draft amendments. If the draft amendments are considered for 1st and 2nd reading at a later date, formal referrals will be sent asking for formal comments which represent each organizations opinion.

Any comments received will be considered and consolidated in a brief report to be presented to the AAC and the Board at a later date.

Social Media Presence

Following the preparation of a news release, the RDN will use social media including Facebook and Twitter to promote the project. Staff will monitor social media and respond to any questions, comments, or concerns that arise.

Staff availability for meetings with community groups and individuals

Staff will make themselves available to meet with interested community groups and individuals during regular office hours. This may be through a number of different means including:

1. A request to have staff attend one of the interested groups regular meetings;
2. A request to participate in and/or help organize a neighbourhood coffee table meeting;
3. A brief drop in discussion with staff at the front counter (time and availability permitting); and
4. A arranging a meeting with staff at the RDN offices.

RDN/Project Website and Email Alerts

The RDN Get Involved, Highlights, and homepage thumbnails may be used to promote the project and direct website users to the Bylaw and Policy Update Project Website.

The project website will be used to provide up to date information about the project including upcoming events, results from past events, as well as information related to the draft amendments.

In addition, the RDN email alert system will be used from time to time to inform participants by email about upcoming events and key topics throughout the process.

Outcomes

The desired outcomes of this process include the following:

1. A report outlining the community’s perspective on the draft amendments;
2. A sense of the level of community support for the draft amendments;
3. A recommendation from the AAC with respect to how to proceed with the draft amendments; and,
4. A better informed community and stakeholder group who is well-positioned to participate in the process.

The above outcomes will be used to inform staff recommendations to the Board on how to proceed with the draft amendment. This may include a recommendation to approve, approve with amendments, or abandon the draft amendments. Also it is entirely possible that this process may identify other options that have not been considered at this time.

Schedule

The Community Engagement strategy is proposed to be initiated in early July 2015 and run through to the end of November 2015. It should be noted that community outreach activities will be limited during the months of July and August to avoid the busy agricultural and summer holiday season. The following is the proposed schedule (subject to change in response to community needs).

Activity	July	August	September	October/November
Project Promotion/Earned Media				
Project referral				
Social media presence				
Meeting with the AAC				
Meetings with local agricultural organizations				
RDN-sponsored Open Houses				
Farmers Working Group				
Attendance at farmers’ markets				
Online questionnaire				
Staff available to meet with groups and individuals				

As shown in the diagram above, it is proposed that the Community Engagement process be finalized by the end of November 2015. It is intended that the results will be presented in a report to the Board with staff recommendations on how to proceed with the draft amendments in November 2015.

It is recognized that the timeline is not be well-aligned with the farming off season. In response more lead time and customization of opportunities to participate in the process may be required to accommodate participation by the farming community.

Resources

The Community Engagement process will be led by a Senior Planner with assistance from other planning staff. All work required to undertake this Community Engagement process will be done with existing staff resources.

The Senior Planner will coordinate with the RDN Communications Coordinator with respect to the preparation of a news release and promotional material. The Senior Planner will also coordinate with the GIS Department for assistance with the preparation of mapping material, property analysis, and large format printing.

Budget

All costs associated with this Community Engagement process have been accounted for in the 2015 Community Planning Budget.

Monitoring and Evaluation

The success of the process will be evaluated. The process will be deemed successful if it results in meaningful input, increased awareness of the project, and an indication of the level of community and stakeholder support for the draft amendments.