

Report

Date October 8, 2024
Subject Asset Management Update

File:

PURPOSE

To provide an update on the status of North Cowichan's asset management program and to provide a roadmap of planned asset management deliverables.

BACKGROUND

Over the last decade, asset management has become a key topic among governing bodies. Senior levels of government have expressed the urgency of being prepared for the long-term renewal of assets through the influx of grants available for asset management, grant conditions to demonstrate asset management practices, and reporting requirements on infrastructure. Asset management has also become a recurring topic within North Cowichan from both staff and Council, resulting in a Manager of Asset Management two-year term position to assist in administering an asset management program.

There are two perspectives to an asset management program which are equally important to implementing good practice in an organization:

1. Asset management and day-to-day operations
2. Asset management and long-term planning

Operations staff manage North Cowichan's assets daily to ensure they reach or exceed their expected useful lives. The information that front-line staff can collect and provide is essential to understanding where assets are in their lifecycle and, when communicated to engineering staff, can allow for efficient planning for asset renewal. Asset management through day-to-day operations includes responding to calls for service and planning for and performing routine maintenance.

A formal Asset Management Plan (AMP) looks at the long-term investment required by North Cowichan. This compiles all information known about all assets and fills data gaps with assumptions based on the professional judgement of subject matter experts. An AMP is meant to be attention-directing to identify future funding gaps and develop strategies.

DISCUSSION

North Cowichan has made progress in both perspectives of asset management. The next steps towards efforts in these areas include investigating the benefits of asset management software and the development of a formal AMP.

Asset Management Software Consideration

As the inventory of municipal assets is expanding, it is becoming increasingly difficult to track routine maintenance required on assets, delegate work orders, and communicate information between operations and planning staff. Departments have developed asset management practices; however, the data is stored in various locations and utilizes multiple software. Asset management software will allow for a single asset information repository accessible to all departments. It provides department resiliency by recording all repairs, maintenance, and replacements.

Currently, North Cowichan's Parks and Recreation department is undergoing a pilot program for asset management maintenance using a new module of existing software. This will attach work orders and maintenance schedules to an asset and automate the workflow process of these tasks. Employees can add notes, pictures, and other helpful information to a specific asset, assisting in planning future maintenance activities, work orders, and infrastructure replacement planning. The documentation can also be useful for other purposes, such as insurance purposes or public inquiries.

While the pilot project is underway, information is being collected to determine each department's asset management needs. A business case will then be prepared to assess the benefit of deploying asset management software across the organization. Staff plan on returning to Council with the findings of this business case and results of the pilot program and receive direction on a corporate asset management software solution.

Preparation of an Asset Management Plan

In 2019, Urban Systems prepared an asset management plan for North Cowichan's underground utilities (drainage, water, sewer), which was presented to Council in 2020. The information on water and sewer was updated and presented to Council in November 2023 and January 2024 along with recommendations for increases in parcel taxes to address the backlog. Although this is a great start, there is an abundance of information North Cowichan has collected on other asset categories and some areas which require more attention. These other asset groups include facilities, drainage, roads, non-linear sewer and water, and parks and recreation.

Staff plan to return to Council in the upcoming year with an asset management update, which will layer on some of these additional asset categories. This will provide a more comprehensive picture of North Cowichan's future asset renewal obligations.

RECOMMENDATION

This report is for Council's information only.

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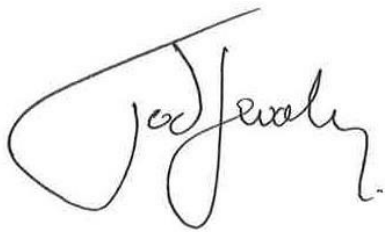
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Attachment
(1) Asset Management Presentation