

WHAT WE HEARD engagement summary report

BUDGET 2026

February 27, 2026

BACKGROUND

Section 166 of the Community Charter requires local governments to “undertake a process of public consultation regarding the proposed financial plan before it is adopted.” North Cowichan has gone one step further with budget engagement in order to share information, involve people in the decision-making process, provide opportunities for meaningful conversations, and create a more transparent and trustworthy relationship.

Engagement planning for the 2026 budget has been impacted by deviations to processes and timelines, most notably a revision to Council’s strategic goals that were adopted in August 2025, the direction provided in August that the provisional budget increase of 9.24% be reduced to 5%, and then finally the December announcement of the permanent closure of the Crofton pulp mill. These impacts included staff reports on implementation of new strategies, the reduction in services, and new revenue generating options for Council’s consideration for additional budget funding or implementation.

Council directed staff to provide an in-person opportunity for residents, similar to community events held for the 2025 budget. Given the unusual timing for the 2026 budget planning, it was determined that just one open house be scheduled.

WHAT WE DID

Engagement on the budget was at the ‘inform’ level on the IAP2 spectrum of public engagement, recognizing that most information will be to keep people informed, however there will be opportunities for feedback and concerns to be heard.

A project page at ConnectNorthCowichan.ca/budget was launched, with all background information, documents, meeting dates, etc. as well as the question-and-answer tool.

An open house and question and special committee of the whole meeting was scheduled for Tuesday, February 24, 2026, at municipal hall. The hour-long open house was an opportunity for attendees to read information boards, speak directly with staff and council members in attendance, and learn more about specific projects or budget drivers. This was followed by a public input session in Council chambers that followed a similar format to a public hearing, by providing attendees an opportunity to address Council with their concerns. A total of 19 people attended the in-person event and a further two people attended the Council session virtually.

HOW WE CONNECTED

The opportunity to provide input on North Cowichan’s 2025 budget was communicated by:

News release (for media) (February 18): The news release garnered news articles or stories in local media outlets:

- Cowichan Valley Citizen, [North Cowichan to host open house on 2026 budget](#), February 19, 2026
- My Cowichan Valley Now (SunFM), [North Cowichan residents invited to share feedback on 2026 budget](#), February 19, 2026

In addition, numerous media stories carried information on progress toward the budget during the fall and winter, leading up to the open house event.

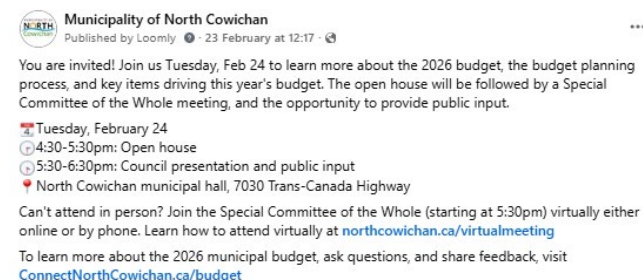
Subscriber emails:

- February 20, News + Updates (1,095 recipients)
- February 23, Council Matters newsletter (budget open house mentioned) (839 recipients)
- February 23, Connect North Cowichan – newsletter to project followers (116 recipients)

Paid advertisements: One advertisement was placed in the Cowichan Valley Citizen (February 18, 2026)

Social media: February 23, 2026

In addition, ongoing budget conversations that took place during Council or Committee of the Whole meetings were communicated through meeting-specific channels including agenda notifications, Council Matters, and regular media coverage on proceedings.



Budget open house

February 24 | 4:30pm



WHAT WE HEARD

The budget page on Connect North Cowichan received 493 views and three contributions between October 1 and February 28. The questions asked about the lack of formal department business plans, context needed for the tax comparison report, and information about the five-year financial plan.

A total of 19 people attended the open house and Council input session on February 24. A further two people attended the Council portion of the event virtually. A total of seven people provided input and nine questions were asked. These questions were answered after the meeting and published on the Connect page and included in the March 4 report to Council.

NEXT STEPS

A report to Council is scheduled for March 4, 2026 that will introduce the draft financial plan for Council's discussion. The financial plan will then return to Council for adoption at a subsequent meeting.

APPENDIX

Newspaper ad, Cowichan Valley Citizen, February 17, 2026

Budget 2026

Join us to learn more about North Cowichan's 2026 budget and to share feedback on municipal services and capital projects.

Attend the open house to ask staff and council questions, learn about key drivers of the 2026 budget, and more.

Information session and public input

- Tuesday, February 24, 2026
- North Cowichan Municipal Hall, 7030 Trans-Canada Highway
- 4:30 - 5:30pm: Open house
- 5:30 - 6:30pm: Presentation and public input

Unable to make it in person? Learn more, ask questions, and provide feedback online at [ConnectNorthCowichan.ca/budget](https://connectnorthcowichan.ca/budget)

MUNICIPALITY OF
NORTH
Cowichan

Social media post, February 23, 2026

Municipality of North Cowichan
Published by Loomly · 23 February at 12:17 · 🌐

You are invited! Join us Tuesday, Feb 24 to learn more about the 2026 budget, the budget planning process, and key items driving this year's budget. The open house will be followed by a Special Committee of the Whole meeting, and the opportunity to provide public input.

📅 Tuesday, February 24

- 🕒 4:30-5:30pm: Open house
- 🕒 5:30-6:30pm: Council presentation and public input

📍 North Cowichan municipal hall, 7030 Trans-Canada Highway

Can't attend in person? Join the Special Committee of the Whole (starting at 5:30pm) virtually either online or by phone. Learn how to attend virtually at northcowichan.ca/virtualmeeting

To learn more about the 2026 municipal budget, ask questions, and share feedback, visit [ConnectNorthCowichan.ca/budget](https://connectnorthcowichan.ca/budget)

Budget open house

February 24 | 4:30pm

NORTH
Cowichan

Connect North Cowichan summary

