

# Report

Date

April 5, 2022

File:

Subject

Crofton Fire Hall Redevelopment Project Communications & Engagement Strategy

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## PURPOSE

To consider the communications plan on how the Municipality proposes to inform and engage with the public regarding the Crofton Fire Hall Redevelopment Project.

## BACKGROUND

At the March 16, 2022 Council meeting the following motions were passed:

THAT Council:

- (1) Approve the change in the scope of the Crofton Fire Hall Building Replacement Project from a 2,150 square foot building to a 3,636 square foot building; and,
- (2) Direct staff to amend the Financial Plan to increase the budget for the Crofton Fire Hall Building Replacement Project from \$3.5 million to \$4.8 million.

THAT Council direct staff to:

- (1) Proceed with an alternative approval process to seek elector approval for the Crofton Fire Hall redevelopment; and,
- (2) Develop a communications plan for informing residents about the Crofton Fire Hall redevelopment for Council's approval.

## DISCUSSION

In order to complete this project, elector approval, in support of adopting the loan authorization bylaw is required. Once the bylaw receives the first three readings, a signed, certified copy of the bylaw at third reading, along with all required supporting information is emailed to the provincial government. Provincial staff review the bylaw for legislative compliance and financial viability. Once the initial review is complete, the bylaw is sent to the Inspector of Municipalities for final approval and issuance of a statutory approval certificate. Once that approval certificate is received, the statutory process to seek elector approval will begin.

Although we have begun to inform the public of this project through the budgeting process, it is important that North Cowichan prepare and implement a communications plan that informs the public of the need for the Crofton Fire Hall to be rebuilt, as well as the benefits to the community, as they will ultimately be determining if the project moves forward. That (elector) approval may be received in response to the alternative approval process (AAP) which Council has authorized municipal staff to proceed with once the Inspector has approved the bylaw.

For electors to be sufficiently informed about the project, in order to decide if they support it or not, it is imperative that the Municipality is transparent with residents regarding the need and costs of the project, and provides key educational information and materials to the desired audiences. The Crofton Fire Hall Communication and Engagement Strategy (Attachment 1) describes how North Cowichan

intends to inform the public on the Crofton Fire Hall Redevelopment project and to seek elector approval to proceed with adoption of the loan authorization bylaw. The goals of the communication plan are as follows:

- (1) To *inform* the public about the need for a new fire hall, what the benefits of the new fire hall are, the need to replace the fire hall, and the implications of not moving forward with it
- (2) To *inform* the public about the fiscal impacts of a new fire hall
- (3) To *inform* the public about the elector approval process

In order to ensure the correct information reaches the intended audience, the following tools will be used:

Tool	Method
Municipal website	Statutory notices Link to ConnectNorthCowichan.ca project page
ConnectNorthCowichan.ca	Project page on North Cowichan's engagement platform Project background Project timeline Question and Answer tool (for the public to ask questions)
Notice board	Statutory notices on the Municipal Hall notice board
Newspaper ads	Statutory notices in the Cowichan Valley Citizen and Chemainus Valley Courier
News releases	Advising of project status and how elector approval can be given
Site signage	4x8 vinyl printed sign at site with rendering, link to website
Social media	Key dates
Subscriber email	Updates on the process

## OPTIONS

1. **(Recommended Option)** THAT Council approve the Crofton Fire Hall Communications and Engagement Strategy as presented in Attachment 1 of the Director of Operation's report dated April 5, 2022.
  - The Communications and Engagement Strategy targets all eligible resident electors and non-resident property electors, using a variety of tools to reach those target audiences so that they are informed well before the statutory process to seek their approval begins.
2. THAT Council approve the Crofton Fire Hall Communications and Engagement Strategy, as presented in Attachment 1 of the Director of Operation's report dated April 5, 2022, subject to the following changes (*Council to identify changes*).
  - This option enables Council to amend the target audiences and/or methods for informing residents of the status of this project.

## IMPLICATIONS

The cost to implement the communication plan, including newspaper ads and site signage, is estimated at \$1,620. There is sufficient funding in the existing Crofton Fire Hall Redevelopment project preliminary design capital budget to cover this cost.

## RECOMMENDATION

THAT Council approve the Crofton Fire Hall Communications and Engagement Strategy as presented in Attachment 1 of the Director of Operation's report dated April 5, 2022.

Report prepared by:

*Shawn Cator*

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Shawn Cator  
Director, Operations

Report reviewed by:



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George Farkas  
General Manager

## Approved to be forwarded to Council:



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Ted Swabey  
Chief Administrative Officer

Attachment(s):

(1) Communications and Engagement Strategy