



THE CORPORATION OF THE CITY OF COURTENAY

STAFF REPORT

To: Council
From: Manager of Legislative Services
Subject: Comox Valley Accessibility Framework

File No.: 0135
Date: October 11, 2023

PURPOSE: To seek Council approval of the Comox Valley Accessibility Framework.

BACKGROUND:

In April 2023, Council directed staff to meet the City's obligations under the *Accessible BC Act* by proceeding with the development of a Comox Valley Accessibility Framework in partnership with the Comox Valley Accessibility Committee (CVAC), Comox Valley Regional District (CVRD), Town of Comox and Village of Cumberland.

Legislative Services collaborated with the CVAC, CVRD, Town of Comox and Village of Cumberland in spring and summer 2023 to establish the agreement and governance to work collaboratively, and draft a Comox Valley Accessibility Framework. This framework establishes shared accessibility principles to support a consistent approach to accessibility in the Comox Valley. Each municipality can continue the work with individual action plans and projects.

The accessibility framework is now ready for adoption. It has been reviewed and endorsed by the Comox Valley Accessibility Committee and CVRD, and is scheduled for review by Cumberland and Comox this month.

DISCUSSION and POLICY ANALYSIS:

The *Accessible BC Act* was brought into law in September 2022. It requires that local governments establish an accessibility committee, develop an accessibility plan, and establish a process for receiving public feedback on accessibility. The City is meeting the requirement to have an accessibility committee, and has made progress toward an accessibility plan with the accessibility framework. As the framework is a collaboration between four local governments, it was not meant to include requirements or specific actions for Courtenay. The Accessibility Framework establishes a three-year timeframe for individual local governments to begin or continue assessments, and create action plans.

While the framework broadly discusses equity and inclusion, the legislation has a narrower focus. Future work on accessibility plans may include equity and inclusion, but must be focused on accessibility for people with disabilities.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

The CVRD contributes \$20,000 to the Social Planning Society per year for administration. At this time, there are no direct financial implications for the City of Courtenay. Additional work required for planning and

implementation of a Courtenay-specific Accessibility Action Plan will be addressed through department submissions to the 2024 or future financial plans.

ADMINISTRATIVE IMPLICATIONS:

Legislative Services worked with the CVAC, CVRD, Town of Comox and Village of Cumberland in spring and summer 2023 to establish the agreement and governance. Now that the governance structure and framework is complete, accessibility work will continue with projects and planning through all City departments.

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT:

Public engagement is a mandated part of the *Accessible BC Act*. Part of the engagement is through the accessibility committee, and the City must also establish a process for receiving comments from the public on its accessibility plan, and barriers to individuals in or interacting with the City. The CVRD, Comox, Cumberland and Courtenay will continue to coordinate to develop feedback mechanisms that are consistent across the valley. Input from the accessibility committee will be sought on engagement strategies. Communication will also continue on specific projects, and items will continue to be referred to the CVAC for input through staff or Council.

OPTIONS:

1. THAT Council approve the Comox Valley Accessibility Framework and direct staff to execute the Agreement with the Comox Valley Social Planning Society.
2. THAT Council direct staff to request the following changes to the Comox Valley Accessibility Framework: [list changes here].
3. THAT Council provide alternative direction to staff.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Comox Valley Accessibility Framework
2. Letter of Support from Betty Tate, President, Comox Valley Social Planning Society
3. Agreement with Comox Valley Social Planning Society

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Reviewed by: Kate O'Connell, MPP, Director of Corporate Services

Concurrence: Geoff Garbutt, City Manager (CAO)