

## Combined Summary of Area E Community Conversations

### Sahtlam Firehall and Glenora Hall

May 2024

Host: Alison Nicholson, Director Area E

Facilitator: Isabel Rimmer

Note Taker: Susan Kaufmann

CVRD Staff:

Sahtlam:

- Ilse Sarady, Senior Manager of Recycling and Waste Management
- Darcy Mooney, General Manager Operations
- Lea Berscheid, Environmental Technologist

Glenora:

- John Elzinga, General Manager Community Services

### Welcome

- Alison welcomed community members and delivered the land acknowledgement.
- Isabel identified her role in the meeting and let the participants know the expectations of the evening and hoped that the meeting would proceed in a thoughtful and safe way for all.
- Alison introduced staff and commission members in attendance including, in Sahtlam:
  - Laurel Circle, Area E Parks Commission
  - Susan Kaufmann Chair, Area E Advisory Planning Commission
  - Mike Lees, Area E Parks Commission;

and in Glenora:

- Frank McCorkell, CVRD Board of Variance Commission
- Greg Schoop, Chair, Area E Parks Planning Commission
- Marianna Terauds, Area E Advisory Planning Commission
- Susan Whitman, Area E Advisory Planning Commission
- Susan Kaufmann Chair, Area E Advisory Planning Commission

Attendees then introduced themselves

### **General Update – Alison Nicholson**

- Reasons for the meetings were to update the community on CVRD related matters and to connect and hear what is on the mind of community members.
- As your Electoral Area Director I am one of 16 directors who guide the delivery of regional district services.
- Regional district services are more limited than municipalities and focus on emergency management, recreation, CVRD parks and trails, land use planning in electoral areas, and waste management. Water licensing, roads, Agriculture Land Reserve and Private Management Forest Land are managed by the province.
- I am extremely grateful to live in the Cowichan Valley for many reasons such as:
  - the new hospital that should open in 2027,
  - many events such as Windfest, 39 days of summer, Folkfest,
  - Cowichan Performing Arts Centre,
  - Hiking trails and so on
- I am particularly grateful for our community of volunteers – it amazing how much good work is done by not for profit organizations to support our community – the Clements Centre is a good example the cookies we have tonight were baked by the Clements Centre
- Since covid I have noticed that the scale and pace of change is growing and if we want Cowichan to remain a great place to live we need to pay attention and respond to those changes in a good way - and it can be challenging to adapt at both a personal level and as a community.
- The changes affecting the community are big and interconnected:
  - Rising cost of living (particularly housing) is affecting residents and has also put budget pressures on the cost of services the CVRD provides
  - Supply of affordable housing is a national crisis – the rural electoral areas are experiencing a growing number of people living year round in RVs and tiny homes which are not a safe solution as they do not meet the building code.
  - Related to housing, is growing homelessness and the related pressures on RCMP, health care and extreme weather shelters
  - Importance of planning for heat and water scarcity as drought and water issues related to climate change and land use grow
  - Growing food insecurity
  - Concern about growing wildfire risk and smoke impacts – please take advantage of CVRD’s FireSmart program to help protect your home and learn how to make your own air filter using a fan and furnace filter

- I remain buoyed by a community that cares and their ability to adapt.

### **Waste Management Presentation (Sahtlam) – Ilse Sarady**

- Provincial government requires all Regional Districts to reduce waste and have a waste management plan. CVRD has identified 13 strategies.
- For example, we are introducing three stream collection (garbage, recycling, organics) in 2025.
- Trucks will continue to be automated using totes; grants have been obtained to help offset costs.
- The reason it is necessary to move to three stream collection across the CVRD is to reduce the amount and therefore cost of shipping our garbage to Washington State. We do not have a local landfill or other Vancouver island solution for our garbage although we are working with other jurisdictions to plan for a future BC/island solution.
- By diverting organics from the garbage, we have determined 1/3 of waste could be diverted from the waste stream.
- We understand that many residents compost and therefore do not see the need for organics pick up, however for the region as a whole it was determined to be the best option for managing our waste.
- Once the 3 stream residential system is in place; we plan to bring businesses, health care facilities, multi residential buildings into program.
- Monthly glass pick up is also being introduced in 2025.
- Saturday pick-ups are being discontinued as soon as the new replacement trucks arrive.

### **Regional Recreation Presentation (Glenora) – John Elzinga**

- Nine biggest recreation facilities throughout the region are now being managed regionally (Kerry Park, Shawinigan Rec. Centre, Cowichan Community Centre, Cowichan Aquatics Centre, Cowichan performing Arts Centre, Cowichan Sportsplex, Lake Cowichan Arena, Frank Jameson Rec Centre, Fuller Lake Arena)
- Also noted that some of the rec centres including the Community Center are used by Emergency Management Cowichan for emergencies shelters.
- In 2022 a Regional Recreation referendum was held as part of local elections. Residents approved a more equitable “regional” funding model based on usage.
- A new function was created in the CVRD budget and maximum funding limits established.
- CVRD contracted an outside company to determine usage in 2017, 2019, 2022 and it will happen again in 2027.

- A rolling average of the most recent three usage surveys is used to establish how much each jurisdiction contributes to a facility.
- With respect to Area E, 5 of the centers, Area E does not pay for. However, for example we are now contributing 8.5% of Fuller Lake costs as usage of that facility is about 8.5% by Area E residents.
- Costs for recreation in general are increasing because many of the buildings are aging out 60s and it is expensive to maintain them.
- The costs of transitioning to the regional recreation model are being phased in over three years; 2024 is the second year so Area E can expect a further increase due to the transition again in 2025 after which it should level off.

## **Questions/Comments**

### Waste Management

- Where does compost go? Currently electoral area generated organics goes to Fisher Road Recycling on a five-year competitive bid. There are 3 organic collection sites within the Cowichan Valley. The CVRD has to go out to the market to secure a competitive bid after 5-7 years. The CVRD will go out to market in the near future to secure a new bid. Organics material is turned into compostable materials that are sold to Soil Marts, etc.
- Is the CVRD receiving organics from other areas? No.
- Where in Washington State does the garbage go? Regional garbage goes to the Republic's Landfill in the Roosevelt Region.
- Are you/ will you be collecting soft plastics at curb side? No, it causes problems with equipment and creates fly a ways.
- Can you identify what are soft plastics? Anything that is squishable, including soft foam and produce netting.
- If hard plastic such as peanut butter jars are contaminated are the plastics incinerated? No, they are sorted and washed by receiver.
- Organics contamination? Education is important. Example of contamination is a rotten avocados contained in a netted bag. They must be separated from the bag before going into organics bin.
- Will there be a locking mechanism on organic bins? Yes, however, you will also need to secure the bins to stop the bears from dragging the bins away.
- Are there any incinerating facilities on Vancouver Island? No. It is important to note that while incineration can be effective it is preferable to pursue sustainable a circular economy with zero waste.

- Is there a plan for island wide waste management? Association of Vancouver Island and Coastal Communities (AVICC) has been in discussions but, no capacity without provincial funding.
- Concerns regarding carbon impact of offering weekly and bi-weekly pickups, multi truck trips? New trucks will have 3 stream capabilities and there will be fewer trips generated than private vehicles.
- Does the CVRD get money from recyclables. Yes, Recycling BC (the organization responsible for providing financial incentives to collectors of curbside recyclables, such as the CVRD) provides a rebate to the CVRD which goes towards reducing collection fees.
- When will Saturday pick ups end? as soon as possible. New trucks on order.
- Can organics collection bypass Glenora? Most of us don't want organic pickup. (show of hands indicated all present do own composting). No, it is not possible to have an economically viable program without full participation.
- What will the costs be? The total and detailed costs will be available once the 2025 curbside budget has been established and published on the CVRD's website. The three-stream curbside collection service (organics, garbage and recycling, including monthly glass collection) will be provided to all eligible residents in CVRD Electoral Areas and the Malahat First Nation in spring/summer of 2025. (The exact date has not been confirmed as there are several pending components that will determine the actual date) The service will be provided to residents at cost and charged through annual utility fees. The CVRD is currently evaluating the cost and options of several service components, including but not limited to curbside totes, bear-resistant hardware, truck software, etc. In addition, Recycle BC is currently conducting a cost study. The cost study aims to determine if the cost incentives are sufficient or need to increase. If incentives increase, the cost of providing the recycling service will decrease, and residents will see a decrease in utility fees. Based on this, the CVRD does not have a firm number for the service yet; however, the utilities are anticipated to match the range that the CVRD consulted with the public on in 2023, which is \$310-\$345/year (note that this range includes the \$20/year glass collection)

### Regional Recreation

- Pickleball courts at Cowichan Sportsplex? Yes, within the existing lacrosse box. Lines will be painted in for pickleball.
- Will our tax bill increase for 3 years? Yes, bump for regional recreation part of Area E's 16% tax increase in 2024. The final phase in budget increase for regional recreation will be in 2025.

- Comment: About 40% budget is for recreation while people are facing a housing crisis – what can be done? John spoke to challenge of asset management. Federal money in 1967 allowed for building of recreation facilities, they are aging, financial struggle. Costs also related to increased standards. Alison added that \$23 per \$100K of assessed value was the tax increase in 2024 for Area E; \$10 of that \$23 was for the second transition year for regional recreation. Hopeful that a regional recreation program will serve the community better moving forward. Need a good plan for asset management. John also noted that there will be greater consistency in how recreation programs are accessed throughout the region.

### Parks and Trails

- Comment: At Cowichan Trails annual meeting we learned that since COVID, there has been a large increase in use of outdoor recreation trails. Response: the CVRD learned that outdoor recreation is a high priority for residents through a recreation survey conducted in 2019. The CVRD is in the process of establishing a community advisory committee to assist with a review of regional parks and trails acquisition and programming. This review will inform future recreation investments.
- Concern was expressed about the lack of accessibility for wheelchairs at Curry Park, gravel driveway? CVRD has launched a community accessibility advisory committee and this concern will be forwarded to them for consideration.
- Comment: Concern was expressed about the breakdown of the Parks Advisory Commission and loss of autonomy to contribute meaningfully to parks and trails.
- How much does it cost to provide the under used Cloverdale Park washrooms in Cowichan Bay? That is an Area D community park and therefore I am not familiar with the budget, however, it does not affect your taxes - only Area D residents pay for it.

### Emergency Management

- Comment: Glenora Hall is apparently a secondary emergency management facility and has CVRD owned generator and water tanks; the generator is diesel and fumes would potentially harm people in the hall and the Duncan Fire Chief requested that the tanks be painted. Who should I speak to at the CVRD to have these issues dealt with? John will follow up with Frank.
- Sahtlam Firehall –The community built the firehall in 1982 and it was given to the CVRD in 1992. What is happening about determining the future of the firehall and fire services for Sahtlam? Currently staff are waiting to initiate a fire service review. It is a high

priority but is linked to the Paldi development and fire service review consultants are also hard to get. Have been putting money aside for new hall.

### Land Use Planning

- What are the planning challenges faced by CVRD residents? Water shortages, and related, forestry, agricultural and residential land use. For example there was an 85,000 steelhead fish kill in the Cowichan last summer related to low flows, high water temperatures and nutrient loading from the Town of Lake Cowichan's sewage. We are working on modernizing and strengthening zoning regulations.
- Provincial zoning changes? Bill 44 and bill 35 have resulted in some changes in electoral areas to minimize short term rentals and increase detached suites. Check out <https://www.planyourcowichan.ca/> for more information.
- Read in the paper CVRD will not be doing public consultation or Public Hearings is that true? Alison: It is very important hear from the community about land use matters. However, to speed up densification, the province has dropped the requirement for public hearings for rezoning applications that are consistent with the official community plan.
- What can you tell us about RVs and tiny homes in rural areas? Alison: living year round in RVs and tiny homes on wheels is not allowed because they do not meet the building code. Sympathetic to those living in that situation because of the housing crisis. CVRD Bylaw enforcement is complaint based; in these situations when a neighbour complains officers work to achieve compliance in as compassionate a way as possible.
- How can we get more parks to accommodate RVs and mobile homes? No longer called mobile home parks but modular homes. The property on Culverton is zoned for modular homes. RV's not permitted for long term use as per provincial regulations.
- Comment: Concern about Elkridge development at Paldi. Culverton Road development as well. Impacts on water resources. Increased traffic. Paldi is in Area F so questions should be directed to Director Morrison. Culverton Road has zoning for modular home park. Recognize the concerns; there are no monitoring wells in Sahtlam so development needs to proceed cautiously.
- Rainwater capture and gray water use? Gray water usage has been included in recent changes to BC Building Code.
- Comment: Concerned about health of aquifers? Aquifers and surface water are connected. Concerned about water used for JUB and sewage outfall going into the rivers or ocean. The JUB is managed by North Cowichan and Duncan and outside the CVRD's jurisdiction.

- What is the status of the Modernized Official Community Plan and Zoning Bylaws? Expect MOCP will be completed early in 2025 followed by a comprehensive zoning bylaw and the local area plans in 2025.
- Was there a consensus of purpose to amalgamate the 8 zoning bylaws? Keep it rural? Everyone agreed that one standardized official community plan and zoning bylaw would make it easier for staff and the public to understand. Separate local area plans are being done in growth containment areas to ensure communities retain their identity. In Sahtlam there will be growth pressures as Paldi develops however, the intention is to remain rural larger lots.
- Is there an update on the Agricultural Policy following the Uplands report? Budget restrictions have delayed formation of an agriculture committee. Anticipate there will be consultation in the fall with the agriculture community regarding zoning regulations.
- Is there special professional development training for planning staff and directors regarding the changing environment and rural land use planning? Elected officials attend workshops at their own discretion through UBCM and AVICC. Staff have individual training plans.
- Comment: Concern re impacts of development on wildlife. High fencing encompassing all of property.

## Roads

- Concerned about road safety, speed, multiple accidents? Many offenders are our neighbours. MOTI is agency of jurisdiction and focused on vehicle movement. RCMP on enforcement. Both organizations are resource constrained and in my experience the squeaky wheel is more likely to be greased so please send road maintenance and safety concerns directly to the following and cc me so I can follow up with them as well)
  - Shawn.Haley@gov.bc.ca, Operations Manager, South Vancouver Island
  - [Ryan.Gerow@gov.bc.ca](mailto:Ryan.Gerow@gov.bc.ca), Area Manager Roads (Sahtlam area)
  - [Francois.Laurent@gov.bc.ca](mailto:Francois.Laurent@gov.bc.ca), Area Manager Roads (Cowichan Station and Glenora area)
  - Darryl Slater [dslater@emconservices.ca](mailto:dslater@emconservices.ca)
  - 24/7 road reporting line 1-866-353-3136 or <https://www.emconservices.ca/hazard-reporting/>
- Miller Road, Allenby Road update? MOTI and Cowichan Tribes (the road and slide are on reserve land), are working to resolve the slope stability issue. No timeline yet.



## Budget

- If housing values go down, do taxes go down? No because the amount of money required to pay for the services does not change. This video explains how it works <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EeaBJXB55BM>
- Comment: CVRD needs to stop spending so taxes can go down.
- Is it legal to increase wages by 32%? Negotiated union contracts set wage increases for unionized staff, management staff receive increases commensurate with unionized staff and the cost of living and elected officials set their own remuneration. The wages of electoral area directors was recently increased to provide a more reasonable living wage for the amount of time required to do the job.
- How is the cost of the Board room expansion justified? Who uses it, is it necessary? The boardroom will have a slight increase in size because currently with 16 directors it is tight and we expect there will be First Nation representatives joining the table in the future. Costs also include replacement of our failing technology system.
- Comment: my taxes up 125-150% since 2014 when Alison was elected
- 16% tax increase is not sustainable. How can this be fixed? CVRD is faced with increasing costs to maintain the existing level of service. If taxes are to decrease then we would need to reach agreement on what services we are willing to do without.

## Other

- Sahtlam cell tower update? Telus representative has advised that construction of the Tipperary tower is tentatively planned for 2025.
- What are the plans for the current hospital high school sites? It is not known and will be determined by Island Health and the School District; Island health is planning a community consultation about the old hospital in the fall.
- Is there a movement to close meetings to the public? No, however the Board has identified a need for a safe, respectful spaces policy to guide the management of inappropriate behaviour in CVRD public spaces.
- How were resident informed about tonight's meeting? Alison notifies on her community email list and posts on facebook at all the neighbourhood pages in Area E. I used to advertise in the newspaper and will look into doing that again in future.

More information on various projects can be found at Plan Your Cowichan <https://www.planyourcowichan.ca/>