

**DATE:** June 2, 2022

**FILE:** 8160-01

**TO:** Chair and Members  
Comox Valley Recreation Commission

**FROM:** Russell Dyson  
Chief Administrative Officer

Supported by Russell Dyson  
Chief Administrative Officer

*R. Dyson*

**RE: Recreation - Studies and Assessments**

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### **Purpose**

To provide the Comox Valley Recreation Commission (Commission) with an update on current recreation initiatives and studies and describe how these will help to inform future programming and infrastructure planning for recreation facilities in the Comox Valley Regional District (CVRD).

### **Recommendation from the Chief Administrative Officer:**

This report is for information only.

### **Executive Summary**

In 2019 the Commission identified a long-term plan for recreation infrastructure and sustainable delivery of these services as a strategic priority for the CVRD Recreation Department. There are four initiatives currently underway that will inform the identification of priorities for future investment by the Commission.

- 1) Comox Valley Exhibition Grounds (CVEG)/Stonehenge Site Conceptual Site Study: Working with Urban Systems to identify short, medium and long-term options for the implementation of the site master plan, including the incorporation of potential economic opportunities and actions to support growth in the agriculture sector. The final report was received in May 2021.
- 2) Aquatics Strategy: Working in collaboration with the City of Courtenay to identify service levels and aquatic facility requirements for a 25-year horizon. The final report is expected in December 2022.
- 3) Sports Fields Study: Working with municipal partners and School District No. 71 (SD71) to assess the current inventory, condition and allocation of sports fields in the Comox Valley and ensure current needs, and future growth, can be accommodated. The final report is expected in December 2022.
- 4) Engineering Ice Rink Study: Engineering work to assess the life span of both arena ice surfaces will happen over the summer. The final report is expected in late 2023.
- 5) The Corporate Energy and Emission Plan (CEEP) will be another major factor to consider how greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions can meet the ambitious targets set by the CVRD.

These reports and their findings will inform the Commission's strategic planning session planned for spring 2023. The goal will be to identify priorities for capital improvements that meet the Commission's vision of recreation and services for the future. This includes:

- Identifying priorities in terms of new fields, new pools or the upgrades of existing fields and/or facilities.
- Setting high-level strategic direction, identification of priorities, and tactical recommendations for continued service using existing or new infrastructures.

- Ensuring future funding maximizes the investments made in asset management upgrades and provides the information needed to create work plans and support grant readiness.
- Identifying ways to reduce GHG emissions while recognizing the growing demand for additional facilities is evidenced by the growth in the region since many of the facilities were first built.
- Acknowledging limitations of regulatory obligations, servicing and environmental factors (floodplains) on overall facilities and site planning.

### Next Steps

Findings for the sports fields study, aquatics strategy and other works will undergo a financial overview and then be presented to the Commission early in 2023 to be considered as part of the spring strategic planning process.

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Concurrence:

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### **Background/Current Situation**

At the March 5, 2019, planning session, the Commission identified utilizing the asset management process to develop the long-term plan for recreation infrastructure and sustainable service delivery. This supports and enhances the delivery of recreation services to all citizens in the Comox Valley as one of five strategic priorities for the CVRD Recreation Department. Given the significant aging, infrastructure assets invested by the CVRD to provide recreation services and the need to maximize available funding for maintaining and upgrading these key community facilities, the department has been focusing on enhancing its strategic planning and asset management practices in recent years. The below-listed studies are a direct result of this.

#### Comox Valley Exhibition Grounds/Stonehenge Site Conceptual Site Study

In 2016 the Stonehenge property was acquired by the CVRD. Given these new conditions and opportunities, the CVRD required a conceptual site plan that would encompass both properties together as one site. The conceptual site study would meet the needs of the community and stakeholder groups as described in the 2017 master plan and incorporate potential economic opportunities and actions to support growth in the agriculture sector.

During the summer of 2020, the CVRD retained Urban Systems and their design team to conduct a conceptual site study of the CVEG/Stonehenge Grounds, including a conceptual site plan, road cross-sections and Class D cost estimate.

Together with Urban Systems, CVRD staff developed a proposed implementation strategy, with recommended improvements to the following planning horizons:

- Short-term (1-2 years);
- Medium-term (3-5 years); and
- Long-term (6-10 years)

A phased approach to implementation over the following ten years has been proposed, with the following short-term goals approved as part of the 2022-2026 financial plan:

- Farmers' Market vendor area (most of Zone D, including a portion of Main Spine Road);

- Tsolum Way trailhead and washroom (Zone E);
- Relocation of teaching and education plots to Stonehenge (from Zone D to Zone G);
- Property-wide wayfinding signage and map kiosk(s).

The final report was presented in May 2021.

There are several strategic options available for consideration. Proposed investments are quite comprehensive and include architecture, site infrastructure (drainage, electrical), multi-modal transportation and pedestrian safety and visitor amenity improvements (e.g. crosswalks, washrooms) while respecting the rural character and sensitive ecosystem of the site and surrounding area.

And of last note here is that consistent with all previous studies, there is potential for site improvements, including built facilities on the site. While potential is limited by regulatory, servicing and flood plain issues, we need to determine a program and how the site becomes a part of the overall facilities planning and priorities

#### Aquatics Strategy

In collaboration with the City of Courtenay, RC Strategies was retained in the fall of 2021 to conduct a review of aquatic services and pool facility capacities for the Comox Valley.

The purpose of the strategy is to develop a 10-year implementation strategy for aquatics services that:

- Frames aquatic services in the context of supporting community and personal well-being and enhancing social inclusion;
- Reviews the condition, effectiveness and performance of the CVRD and City of Courtenay aquatics services delivery system;
- Considers aquatic services within a 25-year timeframe which accounts for projected population growth and growth centres in the Comox Valley;
- Validates optimum region-wide service levels and delivery, including metrics that measure the effectiveness of service delivery (e.g. swims per capita, number of users, unmet demand);
- Explores and recommends new and innovative directions to meet valley-wide indoor and outdoor aquatic services delivery;
- Conducts an options analysis for the renewal, replacement, or relocation of either or both the Comox Valley Sports Centre pool and the Courtenay and District Memorial Outdoor Pool;
- Matches updated service metric(s) with an implementation plan to renew and invest in the system;
- Offers a comprehensive and robust community and stakeholder engagement strategy.

#### Timeline:

- Phase 1 input: Internal, public and stakeholder engagement was completed between December 2021 and April 2022.
- Phase 2 review: An upcoming review of the What We Heard report, and presentations of the draft and final strategy.
- Next steps: The What We Heard report will be presented to the Commission in July 2022. With this information, the consultant will build a draft strategy that will be provided to the community for comment in late October or November.
- The final report, incorporating public feedback, will be presented to the Commission in early 2023 and considered as part of the strategic planning process.

### Sports Fields Study

On November 9, 2021, Commission, a motion was carried:

THAT staff work directly with local clubs to begin the process for a new artificial turf field, the site location, financing and partnership opportunities;

AND FURTHER THAT the 2008 Sports Field Study to confirm demand and prioritize a strategy be updated concurrently.

The CVRD has retained RC Strategies to begin in June 2022 on a Sports Field Strategy.

This work is being done in collaboration with our municipal partners, the City of Courtenay, Town of Comox, Village of Cumberland and SD71.

The objective is to ensure the right user group is using the right field at the right time, and that the supply is sufficient to support today's needs and future growth.

- Update the 2008 Sports Fields Inventory;
- Confirm current conditions of sports fields;
- Considering best management practices for allocation of sports fields based on current use research and trends;
- Identify field expansion location(s) for artificial turf fields;
- Provide a letter of recommendation for the top three locations for artificial turf.

Sports Fields Study work commences June 2022, with state of fields conditions assessment to be completed post sports season, which takes this work into the summer and fall. It's important to ensure this process supports all partnering municipalities and SD71s requirements for accuracy in the outcomes.

Timeline:

- Phase 1 input: Public engagement completed in June 2022.
- Phase 2 current state analysis: Stakeholder engagement, inventory and assessment, allocation and fees review and utilization and capacity analysis.
- Next steps: A draft strategy will be provided to the community for comment. The final report, incorporating public feedback, will be presented to the Commission in early 2023 and considered part of the strategic planning process.

### Ice Arena Engineering Study

The Sports Centre Arena 1 ice slab is scheduled for an engineering report in 2023 to gain a deeper understanding of its remaining life span. This work can only be completed when the ice is out during the late spring/summer season. While it is anticipated that the life span of both arenas can carry on for another 15-40 years, with the continuation of a strong maintenance plan, the ice slab is the biggest part of the circulatory system of an ice plant. As the slab ages, the potential for cracks and upheaval is a common expectation.

Additionally, in 2021 the CVRD embarked on an update to the 2011 Corporate Energy Plan, which focuses on the energy consumption and GHG emissions from service areas that the CVRD owns and operates. The new CEEP establishes these GHG emission reduction targets in line with provincial, federal and global targets.

Implementation of the CEEP will require significant upfront funding but will also result in significant cost savings over time. CVRD's corporate energy expenditures for electricity, natural gas, propane, diesel and gasoline were approximately \$1.5 million in 2019, and this cost is forecasted to double by 2050 as CVRD increases service levels and energy costs rise.

Generally, this will require the CVRD to:

- Renovate existing buildings, facilities and infrastructure to operate at or close to the zero-emissions performance, with a focus on phasing out fossil fuels (e.g. natural gas);
- Transition heavy-duty fleet and equipment to electric or low carbon fuels;
- Consider business models and service levels with a lens to reduce energy and GHG emissions;

Funding required for implementation will be identified by each department as part of the financial planning process and in conjunction with departmental GHG reduction plans. Planning and development services staff will assist departments to coordinate and prioritize GHG reduction projects at the corporate level to work toward those with the highest value (i.e. biggest reductions) for money.

Attachments: Appendix A - Timeline

