

DATE: May 5, 2022

FILE: 5330-20

TO: Chair and Directors
Electoral Areas Services Committee

FROM: Russell Dyson
Chief Administrative Officer

Supported by Russell Dyson
Chief Administrative Officer

R. Dyson

RE: Sewer Extension South – Process Update

Purpose

To provide an update on the Sewer Extension South Project and seek direction to refine the design and servicing parameters through ongoing dialogue with Ministry of Environment and Ministry of Municipal Affairs staff, engineering resources and project partners.

Recommendations from the Chief Administrative Officer:

1. THAT staff continue to work with consulting engineers, provincial staff as well as partners and K'ómoks First Nation to refine the Sewer Extension South Project, including specific attention on
 - design and costs
 - affordability strategies
 - approval mechanisms related to the liquid waste management plan process and/or elector approval and
 - partner contributions/commitments.
2. THAT staff continue its outreach with staff from the Ministry of Environment and Ministry of Municipal Affairs and report back to the Electoral Area Services Committee at its June meeting with a recommendation on public engagement and approvals for this project.

Executive Summary

Wastewater management has been a regular topic for Royston and Union Bay over the years. Since a failed referendum on the south sewer project in 2016, there has been ongoing work to find a wastewater solution that protects the natural environment and provides a cost-effective solution for residents. (www.comoxvalleyrd.ca/sewerextension) The area has been identified as a priority for a centralized collection and treatment system because of the high density of homes, high water tables, poor soil conditions, ageing onsite treatment systems and anticipated growth in the area. This report summarizes several actions and proposes to continue advancing the project with the intent to provide for community sewer services in Area A.

History and Rationale

- In early 2020, the Comox Valley Sewage Commission agreed to receive wastewater from the area – opening the door to a collaborative waste management solution for the region. Since then, the Comox Valley Regional District (CVRD) has been working to pursue a regional concept for sewer that would see wastewater from communities in the south be treated at the sewage treatment plant located on Brent Road in Lazo North (Electoral Area B) and then discharged to the environment by the existing marine outfall at Cape Lazo.
- This regional service model provides for financial benefits to all partners through improved efficiencies and economies of scale. In recognition of past infrastructure investments made by

existing service participants, Electoral Area A has also provided a financial contribution of \$542,791 from Community Works Funds towards the non-depreciated value of Comox Valley Sewerage Service assets based on the relative proportion of predicted south wastewater flows.

- Partnership with the Comox Valley Sewage Commission provides Electoral Area A with access to a permitted treatment plant without a new outfall or impact to Baynes Sound. It is a lower cost sewage treatment solution.
- The importance of providing a community sewer solution continues to increase, especially as norovirus outbreaks are experienced and economic interests are impacted as a result of aquaculture closures in BC's most important shellfish producing region.
- The Sewer Extension South Project is important in advancing reconciliation with K'ómoks First Nation. Baynes Sound is a significant region for K'ómoks for cultural heritage, environmental and economic development reasons.

Project implementation will rely on partner contributions and borrowing in order to deliver a cost-effective project that the community can support. Staff continue to work with project partners to confirm and finalize these commitments.

Legislative Framework

- A legislative framework for the sewer extension south project is being presented to the Sewage Commission on May 10, 2022. The concept is depicted graphically in Appendix A and includes
 - a) an expansion of the Sewer Service to include portions of Electoral Area A that will connect to the Comox Valley Water Pollution Control Centre
 - b) a new service to construct the conveyance works from Union Bay to Courtenay and
 - c) one or more sewer collection services in Electoral Area A.
- Initial consideration was given to an October 2022 referendum that would seek elector approval for the collection service in Area A. This was aligned with the ICIP grant opportunity. Substantial engineering work has advanced the design specifications for the infrastructure, however more time is needed to ensure that design implications are fully considered and cost estimates appropriately advanced, project affordability considerations are incorporated, and partner contributions confirmed through required agreements and new bylaws. There are numerous challenges for estimating and costing projects during these times. Further, discussions with the Province have identified that the October 2022 deadline for public support may be adjusted, while still including the potential for senior government funding for the project.
 - Delaying decision could help mitigate risk by providing additional time for design/costing, partner approvals, and further development of alternate options being septic regulation and zoning changes to support more comprehensive public communications.
 - Additional time may also allow for consideration of including the sewer extension south project within the liquid waste management planning process underway for the Comox Valley Sewer Service core area.
 - Therefore, an October 2022 referendum will not be pursued – rather, as the recommendations in this report indicate, the project will be advanced to ensure engineering designs are refined, affordability for residents is incorporated and project partners are committed to a system that will provide for service for decades to come.

Next Steps

- Next steps on the project, pursuant to this report’s recommendations, include:
 - Advancing discussions with the Sewage Commission that relate to the legislative framework for the services that need to be amended or created. A staff report to be considered at the May 10 Sewage Commission describes the services, related loan authorization bylaws and approval processes required for implementation.
 - Further discussion with the Ministry of Environment and Municipal Affairs staff about public assent and recommended actions for moving forward.
 - Further development of septic system regulations and zoning requirements while planning continues for a community sewer system. A separate report on septic system regulations and zoning considerations is presented to the Electoral Areas Services Committee at the May meeting for consideration.
 - Engineering Services continues to advance the design and analysis required to provide confidence in the infrastructure solutions.
 - A letter from the CVRD to the public is expected in mid-June that will provide updates on the Sewer Extension South Project including the identification of one or more opportunities for public input over the coming months. Interested individuals will be asked to liaise with the CVRD on the technical, environmental, social and financial elements of this project.
 - Ongoing work associated with partner contributions and commitments will be advanced, specifically through the development of bylaws and agreements that provide clarity to various roles.
 - The project team continues to work closely with the Provincial Government Staff to refine this project.

Prepared by:

J. Warren

James Warren
Deputy Chief Administrative
Officer

Concurrence:

D. Monteith

Darry Monteith
Manager of Liquid Waste
Planning

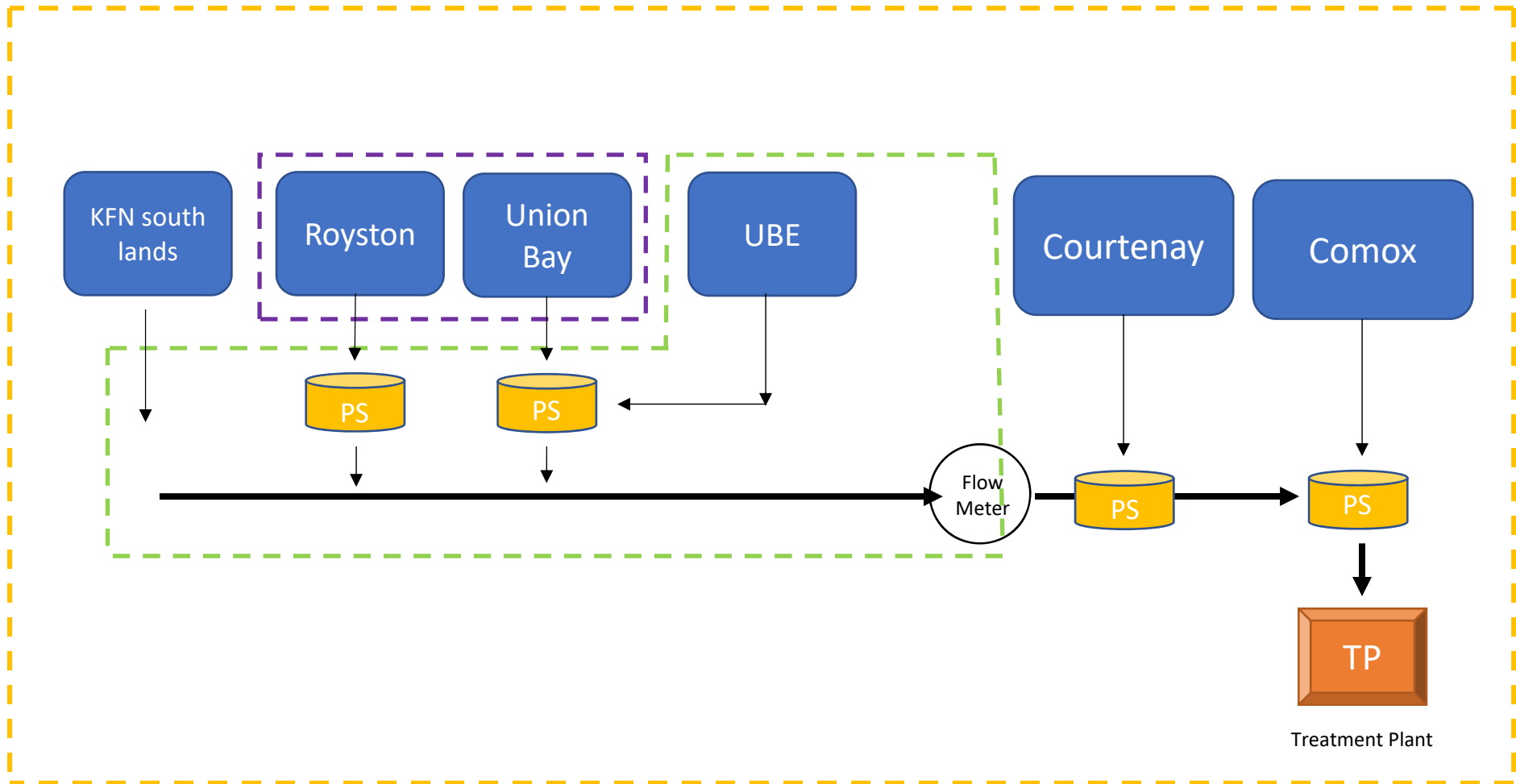
Concurrence:




M. Rutten

Marc Rutten
General Manager of
Engineering Services

Attachments: Appendix A – Sewer Extension South Proposed Legislative Framework (infographic)

South Sewer Servicing – Service Area Concept Graphic



-  Expanded CVSS (Bylaw 2541) Wastewater Conveyance and Treatment Service
-  New South Sewer Conveyance Service
-  New Union Bay & Royston Wastewater Collection Service