



REPORT

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FILE: 6480-16

TO: Christopher D. Coates, Chief Administrative Officer
FROM: Laura Beckett, Planner
DATE: January 12, 2012
SUBJECT: **DRAFT Integrated Community Sustainability Plan (ICSP):
Public Consultation Opportunities and Policy Hierarchy with OCP**

RECOMMENDATION

THAT Council direct staff to extend the deadline as on the District's web site to February 15, 2012 for input on the draft ICSP.

BACKGROUND

At their December 12, 2012 Special Meeting, Council resolved:

That Council direct staff to post, "Sustainability Highlands – Integrated Community Sustainability Plan for the District of Highlands," "District of Highlands Integrated Community Sustainability Plan – Summary Document," both dated October 25, 2011, and SSAC's transmittal letter dated December 8, 2011 on the District's website inviting response to the following questions:

1. What do you really like about Sustainable Highlands?
2. What can be done to improve the Sustainable Highlands Plan?
3. Does Sustainable Highlands help you understand what you and the
4. community can do to move toward sustainability?
5. Looking at the strategy areas and Descriptions of Success (DoS), what
6. actions can you take as an individual (or organization) to help Highlands
7. move towards a more sustainable future?
8. Do you want to participate in future ICSP planning?
9. Do you have any other comments about Sustainable Highlands?

AND FURTHER THAT the Integrated Community Sustainability Plan and the Integrated Community Sustainability Plan Summary Document be forwarded to the Committee of the Whole meeting scheduled January 16, 2012 with a summary report on the relationship between the Integrated Community Sustainability Plan and the Official Community Plan and how they work together (hierarchy of documents).

Some typographical changes were made to both documents since the December 12, 2011 Council Meeting – please find attached the amended versions. These amended versions were placed on the District's web site in mid December with the questions from Council's resolution. Staff used SurveyMonkey online survey software to facilitate public response to the questions. The deadline noted on District's web site is January 31, 2012 for the public to respond. No surveys have been returned as of January 12, 2012. Staff notes that the holiday/Christmas season is typically a difficult time to solicit public input.

The ICSP portion of the overall Sustainability Strategy project to date has taken nine months longer than contemplated in the work plan. FCM, who are the body administering the grant money for the Sustainability Strategy, advise that the extended deadline for the project is August 15, 2013, and that a further extension is possible. This alleviates staff's previous concern of not being able to meet the deadline for the grant.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ICSP AND OCP

Based on scientific evidence of the need, higher level governments (multi-national, federal and provincial) have adopted laws and policies supporting sustainability including, but not limited to, reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Council will be familiar with some of these laws, such as OCP requirements for Greenhouse Gas Reduction from the Local Government Act. Each level of government has certain powers that it can apply, and these powers collectively may not achieve all of the goals that a municipality and its residents may have.

An Integrated Community Sustainability Plan (ICSP) is a non-binding document, endorsed by a Council resolution that provides an overarching policy framework for a community, based on sustainability principles, along with a process to identify and realize the kind of community residents want in the future. The ICSP includes actions and indicators to move the community towards this desired future. It is intended that other municipal plans, policies, projects and practices are informed by, and take direction from, the ICSP, including the Official Community Plan (OCP). Some funding agencies, such as FCM, now require an ICSP as part of grant applications to ensure that sustainability considerations are addressed in projects.

An ICSP seeks to provide a comprehensive framework to address the full range of a municipality's functions, working with community partners and other levels of government. It is meant to be reviewed regularly (e.g., annually or every two years) and, while the long term vision should remain fairly consistent over time, it will constantly adapt and respond to that year's current reality through updated sets of actions. The result of this is that previous successes are constantly built upon, and any previous failures are learned from and courses changed.

An OCP is a legally binding statement of objectives and policies to guide decisions on planning and land use management respecting the purposes of local government, such as zoning bylaws and development permit guidelines. The OCP is an important document, as it provides the physical "blueprint" for the community, and must be enacted by municipal bylaw. The OCP can only be changed through a formal bylaw amendment process.

Once an ICSP has been adopted, it is important that its directions are reflected in the OCP. This ICSP-OCP alignment process is straightforward, with OCP policies that are lacking or inconsistent with ICSP directions being identified and updated before public and Council review and approval. In conjunction with this alignment process, a number of other OCP issues previously identified for Highlands will be addressed, including conservation of energy and water, invasive species control, sustainable transportation, housing affordability and appropriate mixes of land uses to support sustainability objectives.

FURTHER PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT OPPORTUNITIES

At the December 12, 2011 Special Council Meeting, Council requested options for Committee of the Whole discussion regarding further public engagement opportunities for the draft ICSP.

Upon reflection and after due consideration, staff is of the opinion that the ICSP needs to be implemented rather than receive further public input. The reasons are threefold:

1. Variations of sustainability discussions have been occurring since the inception of the District, and specifically in its current form since 2008. An ICSP, while it sets goals through its 'descriptions of success,' is essentially a process toward continuous sustainability improvement. Thus, the time has come to put the process to work. Staff applied this similar philosophy to the Sustainability Appraisal Form.
2. Earlier in 2011, staff analyzed the draft ICSP's descriptions of success and the OCP with the draft policy directions in the Regional Sustainability Strategy (RSS). Staff was and continues to be of the opinion that each process had overall similar policy direction, and noted the alignment of the ICSP's descriptions of success in the Food and Healthy Community strategy areas with similar topic areas in the RSS. Overall, staff was very comfortable with the results of that exercise, and was confident with the appropriateness and usefulness of the draft ICSP.
3. The draft ICSP was vetted by a very talented and dedicated group of community members each with a unique background relevant to sustainability and the Highlands. Staff is of the opinion that the best way to solicit public input is through use of the document, which will innately result in its improvement. Part of its implementation is to employ existing people resources within the community, such as the select committees.

Council may still prefer to consider public engagement opportunities in addition to the web-based survey currently active using the questions from the December 12, 2012 Council resolution. Two possibilities to this end would be:

- 1) A more focussed group of invitees, such as the Select Committees and the Highlands District Community Association (HDCA), to another Committee of the Whole meeting, or
- 2) Holding an open house that presents the draft ICSP to the public at large on a Saturday.

To make any input meaningful, Council should be specific about the input they seek and should have an idea as to how the document needs to be changed. As staff reflected on these exact questions with the intent to advise Council, staff's only advice is to use the existing questions that are currently on the District's web site. In light of the holiday/Christmas season, staff's preferred option for further public engagement opportunities is to extend the deadline to February 15, 2012. Thus, staff's only recommendation is to extend the deadline for return of the survey to February 15, 2012.

Staff notes that the next stage of this overall Sustainability Strategy is to amend the OCP to bring it in line with the ICSP, only once the ICSP is approved by Council. Amending the OCP is a very public process that will solicit public input to specific points. Thus, Council should be satisfied with the ICSP before it proceeds to this stage. Staff is satisfied with the document.

OPTIONS

1. (*Recommended.*) In light of the holiday/Christmas season, staff sees value in extending the period for public response to the questions currently on the District's web site regarding the ICSP. Staff recommends to extend this period to February 15, 2012. At that point, staff would analyze the input and report back to Council.
2. Council may wish to schedule a Committee of Whole that also invites members of the two Select Committees to provide feedback to Council about the draft ICSP. Council should provide specific detail about the feedback they seek.

3. Council may wish to schedule an open house that would present the ICSP to the public at large. Staff notes that the draft document has been public since summer 2011. Council should provide specific detail about the feedback they seek.



Respectfully submitted by Laura Beckett, MCIP

CAO Concurrence

Christopher D. Coates, CAO