
MEMORANDUM

To: Chair & Members of the Community and Regulatory Services Committee
Chair & Members of the Regional Board

From: Lisa Grant, Planner 1

Date: October 25, 2011

Subject: First Reading of Fraser Valley Regional District Official Community Plan for Electoral Area "E" Bylaw No. 1115, 2011

File No: 6480-20-580

RECOMMENDATION:

1. THAT the Fraser Valley Regional District Board give first reading to "Fraser Valley Regional District Official Community Plan for Electoral Area "E", Bylaw No. 1115, 2011";
2. AND THAT draft "Fraser Valley Regional District Official Community Plan for Electoral Area "E", Bylaw No. 1115, 2011" be referred to various agencies for comment.

SUMMARY OF THE ISSUE:

The new draft Official Community Plan for Electoral Area "E" is developed to an extent that it would now be productive for it to receive initial consideration by the Board, be made available for public review, and be referred to various agencies for comment. Amendments to the draft plan, such as those arising from referral comments, will be consolidated and presented to the Board at second reading. Formal public process, including a public hearing, will happen after second reading.

BACKGROUND:

Updating the Electoral Area "E" Official Settlement Plan has been a 2011 Regional Board priority project. The current Official Settlement Plan was adopted in 1983 and had one major update in the mid 1990's.

The FVRD Board approved a consultation strategy for this Official Community Plan update at their May 26th 2011 meeting. Since this time, staff has worked extensively with Electoral Area "E" Director David Lamson and with two Advisory Planning Commissions (APC) comprised of local community members; one in the Chilliwack River Valley area and a second APC for the Columbia Valley and Cultus Lake areas.

The preparation of the draft OCP involved:

- Public information meetings and open houses in Chilliwack River Valley and Columbia Valley to launch the project;
- Newsletter;

- Community survey mailed to every household in the plan area;
- Notice of plan development and invitation to provide input sent to government agencies and First Nations;
- Meetings with stakeholders; and,
- Comprehensive review of available technical information pertaining to the plan area.

The two APCs endorsed by vote the draft OCP going for first reading as presented in draft Bylaw No. 1115, 2011. However, it should be noted that this endorsement was not unanimous but supported by the majority.

Draft Bylaw No. 1115, 2011 will repeal “Official Settlement Plan for Electoral Area “E”, Regional District of Fraser-Cheam Bylaw No. 400, 1982”.

Background information, including APC meeting notes, consultation strategy, input received to date and other material related to the development of the draft OCP has been placed in the Director’s Room for review. It is also available on the FVRD corporate website.¹

The plan is in an early draft form. Staff will continue to refine and edit the plan and to address comments from APC members, FVRD staff and others. In addition, development permit area guidelines require further work. These modest changes will be brought into the draft plan for Board consideration at second reading.

Nonetheless, staff is recommending first reading for the draft OCP to allow members of the public to begin to review the plan and allow development applicants to understand the potential policy directions of the draft plan. This is especially important for south Cultus Lake in view of current development proposals for this area. The Electoral Area “E” Director supports this approach.

Prior to 2nd reading, staff will meet with both APCs for a final meeting to review additional changes as a result of consultation. Once 2nd reading is complete, open houses and a statutory public hearing will be held.

DISCUSSION:

FVRD Official Community Plan for Electoral Area “E” Bylaw No. 1115, 2011 presents an up-to-date plan that reflects community values and current legislation. It will provide greater clarity and direction for development applications, crown land referrals, servicing decisions and general land use decisions and land use management. Overall the plan takes a conservative approach with a strong emphasis on environmental protection reflecting community values and interests.

The section below summarizes key aspects of the draft OCP. It is followed by a discussion of how the draft OCP relates to the current Financial Plan and Solid Waste Management Plan. Next steps are identified at the end of the memo.

Summary of OCP Bylaw No. 1115, 2011

Plan objectives

The following objectives have guided policies of the Plan:

1. Recognize the value of the natural environment in the Plan boundary;
2. Support residents as stewards/protectors of the environment and natural beauty;

¹ <http://www.fvrd.bc.ca/InsidetheFVRD/CommunityPlanning/Pages/ElectoralAreaEOCP.aspx>

3. Provide a framework for consultation and engaging residents when the Regional District is commenting on resource uses, re-zoning applications or OCP amendments.
4. Preserve wildlife and fish habitats, and water resources;
5. Foster a sense of stewardship toward local environments among residents, industry and visitors;
6. Address issue of housing affordability while supporting alternative housing options;
7. Encourage sustainable development and building practices to create low impact development and building upgrades;
8. Promote agricultural viability while providing flexible uses and sustainable practices which strengthen the agricultural sector;
9. Ensure recreation is well managed on crown lands, within regional parks and provincial parks to meet local and regional demands;
10. Encourage alternative modes of transportation including bike lanes and pathways linking to community amenities and where feasible larger urban areas;
11. Maintain and enhance rural character and local aesthetics;
12. Recognize the shift in character for the Chilliwack River Valley from a resource oriented area to environmental conservationism and recreation oriented community;
13. Respect for the natural beauty of Electoral Area 'E'; and
14. Identify areas of public interest which include compatible land uses, protection of people and property from hazardous conditions, appropriate level of services and public consultation and engagement where appropriate.

Area Designations

The Plan identifies eleven land use designations: Agriculture, Conservation, Forest, Institutional, Limited Use, Local Commercial, Mobile Home Park, Residential-Limited Use, Resort, Rural and Suburban Residential. These land use designations are specific to Electoral Area "E", but also consistent with other community plans. Some aspects of the Plan land use designations are summarized below:

- There are several new land use designations. The new land use designations more accurately reflect actual land uses and are consistent with other Official Community Plans in the Regional District.
- CONSERVATION applies to existing or potential parks, Thompson Park, streams and recreation reserves.
- FOREST is established to recognize the working forest in the Plan boundary.
- RESIDENTIAL-LIMITED USE recognizes existing residential lands located in a high hazard area.
- RESORT is established to identify lands suitable for resort use located in close proximity to Cultus Lake.
- RURAL applies to large land holdings outside of the Agricultural Land Reserve with limited development potential.
- SUBURBAN RESIDENTIAL applies to lands relatively free of hazards and suitable for suburban/small lot development.

Policy Direction

Area “E” OCP Bylaw No. 1115, 2011 contains policy respecting:

- Local Area Policies (Section 5)
- Infrastructure and Servicing (Section 7)
- Recreation and cultural resources (Section 8)
- Hazard and risk management (Section 9)
- Habitat (Section 10)
- Ground and surface water (Section 11)
- Resource stewardship (Section 12)

Notable policy directions include:

- local area policies for Chilliwack River Valley, Columbia Valley, South end of Cultus Lake and Lindell Beach to identify local concerns and provide policies to assist in addressing issues;
- direction for a management strategy in the Chilliwack River Valley to address crown land issues;
- framework for community consultation and engagement;
- local area plan for the south end of Cultus Lake to address resort development, liquid waste management, trails and bike lanes, recreation and access to Cultus Lake; and,
- emphasis on creating greater flexibility through provisions such as alternative housing options, temporary non-farm use in the ALR, cluster development, and expanding DPA exemptions.

Please note that the Plan as currently drafted contains a heading for a section on greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, but no discussion or policies. It is expected that CARSC and the Regional Board will independently consider GHG reduction targets for the Electoral Areas in 2012 and identify an approach that is consistent for all EAs. Once the policy direction has been determined by the Board, this section of the Plan will be developed.

Development Permit Areas

The draft plan would improve existing development permit areas (DPAs) by improving exemptions to reduce the number of permits required (i.e. to avoid the need for a geotechnical development permit where a geotech report is required under Section 56 of the Community Charter). The current draft (for 1st reading) does not yet contain these improvements. Staff are working on this issue and changes to the draft DPA guidelines will be made before the draft plan is brought forward for second reading.

The draft plan would establish a new DPA to implement the Riparian Areas Regulation. This DPA follows the template approved by the Board (and will incorporate any subsequent improvements resulting from the current review).

Next Steps

After first reading, the following steps are necessary to bring FVRD Official Community Plan for Electoral Area “E” Bylaw No. 1115, 2011 through to adoption:

1. Referral of draft plan to outside agencies and FVRD departments
2. Meet with APCs for a final plan review
3. Amendments to plan to address APC and referral comments and other issues (as described above)
4. Consideration of the draft plan in conjunction with the financial and solid waste plans
5. Referral to the Agricultural Land Commission
6. 2nd reading

7. Mail out and Public information meetings
8. Public hearing
9. Revisions as required
10. Public hearing report to the Board and Board consideration of consultation input
11. 3rd reading
12. Plan adoption

COST:

Draft Electoral Area "E" OCP Bylaw No. 1115, 2011 contains policies identifying the need for local area planning, traffic studies, liquid waste management studies and other activities that, if acted on, would have significant costs. However, these actions would require separate consideration, budgeting and approval by the Regional Board before being undertaken. In some cases, funding has already been identified or allocated for these activities (for example, a liquid waste management study for Cultus Lake South). In any case, pursuant to s. 884 of the Local Government Act, Official Community Plans do not commit or authorize the Regional Board to proceed with any project specified in the plan. Any capital expenditure, establishment of a new service, or an increase in the provision level of an existing service, would require separate approval by the Regional Board and inclusion in the Financial Plan.

Further consideration of the impact of this draft plan on the FVRD Financial Plan will happen, as required by the Local Government Act, prior to second reading and public hearing. Comments from Chief Financial Officer regarding the impact of the draft plan on the Financial Plan will be sought to assist the Board with its consideration in this respect.

Costs associated with the development of this plan are included in the 2011 and 2012 EA planning budget.

COMMENT BY ACTING CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER:

Reviewed and supported.

COMMENT BY GENERAL MANAGER OF COMMUNITY AND REGULATORY SERVICES:

Reviewed and supported.

COMMENT BY GENERAL MANAGER OF REGIONAL AND CORPORATE SERVICES:

Will be available to provide comment, if any, at the CASRC meeting.