

MEMORANDUM

TO: Gerald Christie, Manager Development Services
Columbia Shuswap Regional District

FROM: Allan Neilson
Neilson-Welch Consulting Inc.

DATE: July 3, 2018

SUBJECT: ELECTORAL AREA C BUILDING INSPECTION — PUBLIC OPEN HOUSES

INTRODUCTION

The Columbia Shuswap Regional District (CSRD) will be expanding the CSRD Building Inspection Service to include the whole of Electoral Area C. The exact date on which the service will take effect in the Area has yet to be determined; however, the CSRD is committed to implementing the service in the Spring of 2019.

In an effort to provide property owners, residents, builders and other stakeholders with opportunities to learn and ask questions about the new service, the CSRD undertook a six-week public information program from mid-May, 2018, to the end of June, 2018. Neilson-Welch Consulting Inc. was engaged by the CSRD to assist in the design and delivery of the program. This memorandum outlines the program structure and reports on the input received.

INFORMATION PROGRAM

The information program consisted of the following components:

- *Written Materials* — A set of written materials was produced to outline, in detail and in summary form, the key elements of the service initiative. Materials included:
 - a ten-page *Overview* of the initiative
 - a *Frequently Asked Questions* sheet that anticipated and answered a series of questions that property owners and others may have of the initiative
 - nine, one-page handouts on various aspects of the initiative

Copies of the written materials were made available online, at the open houses (see below), and at the CSRD office. The availability of materials was advertised in the *Market News* and the *Scoop*, beginning May 18, 2018. Social media platforms were also used to highlight the availability of the materials.

- *Website* — The CSRD used a portion of its main website to profile the service initiative. All

written materials were available for download from this part of the site; all key events and dates in the information program were listed. Viewers could use the site, as well, to provide comments on, and ask questions about, the initiative. People were directed to the website through community and social media advertising.

- *Public Open Houses* — The CSRD hosted three open houses in June, 2018, for property owners, residents, builders and others in the South Shuswap. The open houses occurred as follows:
 - Sunnybrae Community Hall
Monday, June 11, 2018
 - Blind Bay Memorial Hall
Tuesday, June 12, 2018
 - Sorrento Memorial Hall
Tuesday, June 19, 2018

The open house details were advertised in the community publications, online and using social media. Each open house featured a self-directed portion during which attendees were able to review large poster boards on elements of the service, and ask questions of the Electoral Area C Director, CSRD staff and the consultant. Each open house also featured a presentation on the service by the consultant, and a Q & A portion. Attendees at the events were invited to leave written comments using forms available, and take handouts of the various poster boards, the *Overview* and the *Frequently Asked Questions*.

Attendance at the open houses was lower than expected. The Tappen (Sunnybrae) event experienced the largest turnout, with approximately 30-35 people attending. At Blind Bay, a total of 10-12 turned out, whereas only six people attended the event at Sorrento.

INPUT RECEIVED

Property owners, residents, builders and others were given opportunities to provide input online through the CSRD website, and at the open houses directly to the CSRD representatives present, and using written comment sheets.

Written Comments

There were no comment sheets received by the CSRD through the website over the entire six-week information period. A total of five written comments were received at the Tappen (Sunnybrae) open house (no comments were submitted at the other open houses). Each of these comments was supportive of the initiative. The exact wording is as follows:¹

¹ Four of the five comments were signed; one was unsigned. The names associated with the four comments are not included here.

- *Comment #1* — "What a great idea; I can hardly wait for it to take effect. P.S. CSRD staff were very professional." (Tappen)
- *Comment #2* — "Love the move to implement building restrictions into our area. It addresses current grievances and issues that shouldn't be, protecting future home owners. I so appreciate what the CSRD has done for the community already, and probably only aware of half!" (Tappen)
- *Comment #3* — "As a new homeowner in the area, I am very much in favour of bringing in new building inspection legislation. This legislation will preserve the region and increase the value of the property here. As a new resident, I am grateful for what the CSRD has provided in the new water plant and new firehall. This is a great place to live and I am in favour of protecting its ongoing safe and measured development through this legislation." (Tappen)
- *Comment #4* — "The presentation was excellent. I am grateful for CSRD involvement in Area C. Thank you for better roads, water, fire dept., parks and all the other ongoing operations. I am grateful for the OCP and that building inspections will soon be required. My own experience in dealing with the CSRD has been positive while applying for a development permit." (Tappen)
- *Comment #5* — "I am thankful for the recent upgrades in Sunnybrae. I am directly affected by the new water treatment facility and also the new firehall as a firefighter. I believe those two things as well as this initiative will positively affect my property value. Thank you." (Tappen)

Verbal Input

Several questions were asked and comments provided during the Q & A portion of the open houses. Key questions and comments related to the following points:

- the types of structures that will be exempt from the building permit requirement, including farm structures
- the ability of a homeowner to undertake construction work him- or herself, instead of hiring a registered builder
- concerns over the (perceived) increasing level of regulation on development, and the resulting inability in cases of a property owner to do what he or she wants to do on his or her land
- the legality of existing structures that were built prior to the new service
- the applicability of the new service to construction that has already begun at the time the service is introduced
- building permit requirements imposed on renovations — do they apply only to the new renovations, or to the entire building
- the ability of consumers to become aware of properties that were built before the new service, and therefore never received a building permit; and the expectation on realtors to

disclose the information

- questions over service levels and the ability of inspections to occur quickly during boom times
- questions over the sufficiency of the budget, and the number of inspectors
- the capacity of building inspectors to account for alternative energies and other alternative building features
- question over the degree of consultation regarding the wishes of people to participate in the service
- questions on the linkages between building inspection and land use regulations
- question on the rationale for the sliding, value-based building permit fee schedule
- questions about the choice for six building inspections
- questions about why building inspection was not introduced earlier in Area C

CONSULTANT OBSERVATIONS

Attendees at the open houses asked some excellent questions about the purpose of and need for building inspection, as well as about the implementation of the service. Staff from CSRD Development Services provided clear, thorough answers that succeeded in almost every case to satisfy attendees. With the exception of two persons at Sunnybrae who appeared philosophically opposed to further government involvement in development, attendees seemed to be supportive of — indeed, enthusiastic about — the building inspection initiative. The written comments reflect the overall "tone" at the open houses.

As noted earlier, the turnout at the open houses was lower than expected. Total numbers may have been impacted by weather, competing events, a lack of awareness, or other factors. In the consultant's view, based on discussions with people who did attend, the turnout reflects at least in part a sense of support for building inspection in Area C, as well as a sense of trust in the CSRD. In recent years, residents in the South Shuswap have worked with the CSRD to articulate a vision for the community, and to put in place important land use regulations to both promote the vision and protect against poor development. Building inspection, it would appear, is recognized by the community as an important and necessary tool to help South Shuswap grow as desired.