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**REPORT TO ELECTORAL AREAS COMMITTEE
MEETING OF WEDNESDAY, MAY 12, 2021**

SUBJECT Community Resiliency Initiative Grant: FireSmart Economic Recovery Fund

ISSUE SUMMARY

The Capital Regional District (CRD) provides emergency coordination to member municipalities and electoral areas (EAs). This includes helping communities prepare for wildfire through public education, vegetation management, emergency planning, and cross-agency training. The CRD is applying to the Union of British Columbia Municipalities (UBCM) for funding to increase wildfire resilience in the EAs and to support collaborative FireSmart committee work across the capital region. UBCM requires that all grant applications be accompanied by a motion of support from the local government.

BACKGROUND

UBCM provides funding for a range of community based projects, including wildfire preparedness. A 2021 grant opportunity is available to build local capacity in EAs and support regional coordination amongst municipalities and EAs. The intent of the FireSmart Economic Recovery Fund is to support immediate employment and build local wildfire resiliency. Wildfire preparedness includes all seven FireSmart disciplines: education, vegetation management, legislation and planning, development considerations, interagency cooperation, cross-training, and emergency planning.

This grant opportunity was announced in February 2021. Protective Services staff launched a series of engagements with EA fire departments and the Regional FireSmart Resiliency Committee which informed this grant application. The resulting grant application was submitted to UBCM by the March 19 deadline. As part of the application process, UBCM requires a motion of support to receive and manage grant funding.

Fire departments operated by improvement districts and independent societies were eligible to apply for this grant opportunity independently. Protective Services notified all eligible EA departments of the opportunity, encouraged them to apply, and provided guidance during the application process.

The CRD has applied for this grant to improve wildfire resiliency in rural EA communities. Community resiliency will be built through increasing local capacity and collaboration, facilitated by a FireSmart Program Coordinator contract position. The position would be funded for one year and responsible for coordinating home assessments, establishing FireSmart educational outreach programs, coordinating FireSmart projects, overseeing reporting and information sharing, supporting activities required for FireSmart Canada Neighbourhood Recognition, and related tasks. While the proposed position would report to Protective Services, the work is conducted in and on behalf of EA communities. The ideal candidate would be an experienced resident of the EAs. Further EA employment would be created through FireSmart home assessments and community woody debris disposal events.

The CRD facilitated a Regional FireSmart Resiliency Committee in 2020, as a result of motion 19-146 passed by the Parks and Environment committee in February 2019. This group enables regional efficiencies and provides a forum for sharing best practices. The grant project would provide some funding support for future committee meetings and the furthering of action items.

The grant fund requested in the application totals \$127,907. Of this, \$108,100 is directed to the three EAs: Juan de Fuca, Southern Gulf Islands, and Salt Spring Island. These grant funds would facilitate homeowner risk assessments, public education, first responder collaboration, and increased options for rural woody debris disposal, such as community chipping events. The remaining \$19,807 is to provide support for Regional FireSmart Resiliency Committee Coordination.

ALTERNATIVES

Alternative 1

The Electoral Areas Committee recommends to the Capital Regional District Board: That the Board support an application to the Union of British Columbia Municipalities Community Resiliency Initiative Fund for the FireSmart Economic Recovery Fund and direct staff to provide overall grant management.

Alternative 2

That staff be directed to rescind the grant application to the Union of British Columbia Municipalities Community Resiliency Initiative Fund for the FireSmart Economic Recovery Fund.

IMPLICATIONS

Financial Implications

The grant will have no impact on annual Fire Department or Emergency Program budgets, but provides an opportunity for one-time projects that increase community resilience to wildfire, such as homeowner education and chipping events in addition to an employment opportunity to support the community during COVID.

CONCLUSION

The CRD is responsible for community wildfire preparedness in its EAs and coordinates with member municipalities. The UBCM FireSmart Economic Recovery funding stream is an important opportunity to increase wildfire resilience and provide employment opportunity in the Capital Region. If supported by the Board, UBCM will consider the CRD’s grant application.

RECOMMENDATION

The Electoral Areas Committee recommends to the Capital Regional District Board: That the Board support an application to the Union of British Columbia Municipalities Community Resiliency Initiative Fund for the FireSmart Economic Recovery Fund and direct staff to provide overall grant management.

Submitted by:	Shawn Carby, CD, BHSc, MAL, Senior Manager, Protective Services
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Concurrence:	Robert Lapham, MCIP, RPP, Chief Administrative Officer

ATTACHMENT

Appendix A: UBCM FireSmart Economic Recovery Fund Application