

**REPORT TO CAPITAL REGIONAL DISTRICT BOARD  
MEETING OF WEDNESDAY, MAY 13, 2026**

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**SUBJECT**     **Biochar Project – Public Engagement Update**

**ISSUE SUMMARY**

To provide feedback received during the recent public engagement process on the proposed introduction of carbonisation technology at the Residuals Treatment Facility at Hartland Landfill to convert Class A biosolids into biochar.

**BACKGROUND**

In June 2024, the Capital Regional District (CRD) Board approved the Long-Term Biosolids Management Strategy, which established advanced thermal processing as the preferred long-term beneficial use for biosolids. In June 2025, following a competitive procurement process, Pyrocal PTY Ltd. was selected as the preferred proponent to advance this approach, integrating technology to convert biosolids into biochar (carbonisation) into the region's wastewater treatment system.

On November 12, 2025, staff presented a public engagement plan to guide the next phase of outreach, focused on early information sharing, gathering input to inform project development, and supporting regulatory authorization and Board decision-making. The results of this engagement are summarized below.

**PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT**

**Approach**

The public engagement period took place between February 13 and March 5, 2026. The public was invited to provide feedback on the proposed introduction of carbonisation technology as an addition to the Residuals Treatment Facility at Hartland Landfill.

The engagement approach focused on creating opportunities for those neighbouring the facility and other interest holders to understand the carbonisation process and share top-of-mind considerations related to operations and potential end uses for biochar. It was designed to build trust and confidence in the CRD's approach to biosolids management through proactive, two-way communication and a transparent decision-making process.

The public engagement process included:

- an online survey with 170 responses
- site tours/open house at the Residual Treatment Facility with 86 participants
- presentations at meetings
- interactive displays at in-person events
- multiple avenues for submitting questions and comments
- email invitations and updates to neighbours and community groups
- *Get Involved* website and digital content (e.g., maps, images, infographics, FAQ's)

- project subscriber email updates (Get Involved website)
- informational video
- social media
- agency referral letters
- print advertising
- digital advertising
- printed materials
- media outreach

### **Outcomes**

Public feedback on the proposed approach to transform biosolids into biochar was generally supportive, with participants expressing openness to the management approach and curiosity about the process. There was a high interest in learning more, and engagement activities demonstrated that increased understanding corresponded with higher levels of support for the project.

The results of this public engagement represent a notable shift from earlier engagements on biosolids management, which historically attracted higher levels of concern and opposition. In contrast, feedback on the proposed transformation of biosolids to biochar demonstrated a more constructive and receptive tone.

Participants emphasized a desire to be kept informed as the work progresses, underscoring the value of continued transparency and public education and engagement throughout future phases of work. Key themes heard throughout the engagement included:

- neighbourhood impacts
- air quality, emissions and monitoring
- climate and environment
- biochar composition and end uses
- level of awareness and ongoing engagement
- costs, affordability, and value for money
- overall interest and support

A consistent focus was the importance of ensuring that contaminants of concern (e.g., PFAS) are effectively destroyed through the biochar production process, with participants seeking clear, accessible information about safety, environmental performance, and ongoing oversight.

A public consultation summary report is attached as Appendix A.

### **Next Steps**

While the formal public feedback period has closed, engagement on the project remains ongoing. A detailed webpage and dedicated project email remains active and is regularly monitored, and any additional feedback received will be considered as part of the permitting process.

Engagement with First Nations continues through a separate process. Early outreach began in Fall 2025, with timelines and approaches tailored to the interests and decision-making processes of each Nation. CRD staff will continue to work closely with interested Nations as this project moves forward.

Staff anticipate bringing a report to the Board in early 2027 presenting the results of negotiations with the project preferred proponent, updated design and cost estimates, and seeking Board direction on a final investment decision for the project.

**CONCLUSION**

The public engagement process provided meaningful opportunities for neighbours, community members and interest holders to learn about the proposed introduction of carbonisation technology at the Residuals Treatment Facility and to share their perspectives. Feedback gathered through this process has helped inform staff's understanding of community priorities, and questions and considerations related to operations and potential biochar end uses will be considered as the project advances through design and permitting.

**RECOMMENDATION**

There is no recommendation. This report is for information only.

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**ATTACHMENTS**

- Appendix A: Tavola Strategy Group Public Consultation Summary Report – Transforming Biosolids to Biochar (April 2026)
- Presentation: Transforming Biosolids to Biochar – Summary of Public Input - Tavola Strategy Group (May 2026)