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REPORT TO PLANNING AND PROTECTIVE SERVICES COMMITTEE MEETING OF WEDNESDAY, MAY 18, 2022

SUBJECT **Sooke Regional Context Statement**

ISSUE SUMMARY

To review the District of Sooke regional context statement (RCS) in relation to the Capital Regional District's (CRD) Regional Growth Strategy (RGS) Bylaw (Bylaw No. 4017).

BACKGROUND

On March 14, 2018 the CRD Board adopted the RGS, Bylaw No. 4017.

A RCS, adopted within a municipality's Official Community Plan (OCP), relates OCP provisions to the RGS. Per section 446 of the *Local Government Act* (the *Act*), an OCP in a municipality to which an RGS applies must include an accepted RCS. The *Act* stipulates that upon receipt of a proposed RCS, the CRD Board must respond by resolution within 120 days to the municipal council to indicate whether or not it accepts the RCS. The Board is deemed to have accepted the RCS if it does not respond within the 120 day period.

On April 11, 2018, the CRD Board approved a framework to guide the evaluation of regional context statements.

On April 13, 2022, the District of Sooke submitted a RCS for Board acceptance (see Appendix A). The RCS was prepared to reflect the content of a new 2022 Sooke OCP in relation to the 2018 RGS. The CRD Board has until August 10, 2022, to review and respond to the Sooke RCS. The CRD approved Sooke's previous RCS on March 11, 2020.

Regional and Strategic Planning staff have evaluated the Sooke RCS in accordance with the Board-approved "Regional Context Statement Framework". This framework identifies three criteria against which staff should evaluate an RCS:

- 1) **All relevant content is included:** The RCS addresses all RGS content relevant to the OCP. Content that is not applicable in the context of the OCP should be identified as "not applicable".
- 2) **Clearly articulates relevant content:** The RCS provides a sufficient level of detail to convey how the specific OCP content relates to the RGS.
- 3) **Plan to be consistent over time:** The RCS identifies how the OCP will become consistent with the RGS over time, if content is not immediately consistent.

Appendix B presents a summary of the evaluation.

ALTERNATIVES

Alternative 1

The Planning and Protective Services Committee recommends to the Capital Regional District Board:

That the District of Sooke regional context statement be considered in relation to the 2018 Regional Growth Strategy (Bylaw No. 4017) and be accepted in accordance with the requirements of section 448 of the *Local Government Act*.

Alternative 2

The Planning and Protective Services Committee recommends to the Capital Regional District Board:

That the District of Sooke regional context statement be considered in relation to the 2018 Regional Growth Strategy (Bylaw No. 4017) and not be accepted in accordance with the requirements of section 448 of the *Local Government Act*.

Alternative 3

That the Sooke Regional Context Statement report be referred back to staff for additional information based on Planning and Protective Services Committee direction.

IMPLICATIONS

Intergovernmental Implications

Board acceptance of the RCS is a key RGS implementation tool as the context statement relates a municipality's OCP to the RGS. The OCP provides policies that guide decisions related to land use, infrastructure, mobility, housing, parks and other content under the authority of a local government. Sooke has submitted a proposed RCS to fulfill its statutory obligation to have an accepted RCS that demonstrates the relationship of its new OCP to the RGS. An accepted RCS is necessary in order for Sooke to adopt its new OCP.

Regional Growth Strategy Implications

Sooke's proposed RCS demonstrates a strong relationship to the RGS that will work toward achieving the RGS vision and objectives, based on staff's analysis against the RCS evaluation criteria.

The RCS fully captures all relevant OCP content (*criteria #1*) and clearly identifies how the OCP relates to the RGS (*criteria #2*). As outlined in Appendix B, the RCS addresses population projections and the vision and objectives for growth management, environment and infrastructure, housing and community, transportation, economic development, food systems and climate action. Sooke will direct the majority of future growth into its Community Growth Area, which is consistent with the RGS Urban Containment Policy Area. Further, the RCS provides clear targets to accommodate anticipated growth and create safe and complete communities. The RCS identifies that these RGS policy objectives will be achieved by focusing commercial and residential growth within the Town Centre-Core and Town Centre-Waterfront, which are part of a sub-regional node in the RGS Settlement Concept.

Sooke elected to pursue a narrative approach that does not include specific policy citations/references in the RCS, which is noted in Appendix B. The Regional Context Statement Framework recommends that an RCS be as specific as possible in terms of clearly articulating all relevant content. Without such policy references, the RCS is less specific than recommended.

With the new OCP, the Sooke RCS now includes content for a number of RGS policy areas which were previously identified as needing to become consistent over time (*criteria #3*). RGS policy areas that are now addressed in the Sooke RCS are economic development, food and agricultural systems and climate action.

Environmental & Climate Implications

The CRD Climate Action Strategy identifies sustainable land use, planning and preparedness as an important goal area to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. RGS implementation, including the approval of RCSs that will help reduce community-based GHG emissions, is a key action. As shown in Appendix B, the Sooke RCS demonstrates a strong relationship to the RGS by setting GHG reduction targets and providing for policies related to growth management and transportation to help achieve its goals.

Alignment with Board & Corporate Priorities

Planning and Development Community Need 11a-2 is to review municipal RCSs for RGS consistency. This review process is an ongoing initiative, which is part of Regional and Strategic Planning core service delivery.

CONCLUSION

Provincial legislation requires that a municipal OCP contain an accepted RCS. Board acceptance of the RCS is a key tool for RGS implementation. Staff have reviewed Sooke’s proposed RCS in accordance with the Board-approved evaluation framework. Sooke’s RCS demonstrates a strong relationship to the RGS and will work toward achieving RGS vision and objectives.

RECOMMENDATION

The Planning and Protective Services Committee recommends to the Capital Regional District Board:

That the District of Sooke regional context statement be considered in relation to the 2018 Regional Growth Strategy (Bylaw No. 4017) and be accepted in accordance with the requirements of section 448 of the *Local Government Act*.

Submitted by:	Emily Sinclair, MCIP, RPP, Senior Manager, Regional & Strategic Planning
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ATTACHMENTS

- Appendix A: Sooke Regional Context Statement Referral
- Appendix B: Regional Context Statement Evaluation