



**REPORT TO PLANNING AND PROTECTIVE SERVICES COMMITTEE
MEETING OF WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 24, 2018**

SUBJECT **Regional Food Land Access Improvement Feasibility Study and Business Case Terms of Reference**

ISSUE

To consider the draft Terms of Reference for the Regional Food Land Access Improvement Feasibility Study and Business Case and obtain direction regarding next steps.

BACKGROUND

At the December 14, 2016 meeting, the Capital Regional District (CRD) Board approved the Regional Food and Agriculture Strategy (RFAS) and appointed the Regional Food and Agriculture Task Force (RFATF).

On April 12, 2017, the CRD Board directed the RFATF to “continue to examine a range of options for assisting agriculture in the region together with the potential costs and report back for the Planning and Protective Services Committee’s decision.”

During summer 2017, the RFATF examined options for assisting agriculture in the region and in September 2017 recommended to the Planning and Protective Services Committee that pursuit of a Regional Food and Farmland Trust would have the greatest impact and that the concept be further advanced in 2018. Letters of support were conveyed from several municipalities and stakeholder groups. On September 13, 2017, the Board supported funding a 2018 feasibility study/business case. The Board has since adopted a Provisional Budget which provides the necessary funding.

Development of a regional agricultural land banking solution was identified as a 2015-2018 Board Priority. This report introduces a draft Terms of Reference (Appendix A) for the Regional Food Land Access Improvement Feasibility Study and Business Case for the Committee’s consideration and direction.

DISCUSSION

The purpose of the feasibility study/business case is to identify and assess options for increasing food production, by enhancing access to farmland as a community asset for the public good. In response to prior Board direction, the proposed scope of work for the feasibility study/business case will identify approaches to increasing access to farmland and food production. A cost-benefit analysis will compare and contrast potential approaches. Operating models will be identified for all cost-effective and timely approaches. The consultant will be asked to recommend an approach, operating model, partnerships, funding and to suggest a timeline to implement. The focus of the study would be to deliver recommendations that are:

- Cost-effective – actions/approach will have low or reasonable financial implications
- Timely – actions/approach will quickly result in greater access or improvements to farming
- Implementable without land acquisition – actions/approaches should not consider the immediate purchase of lands, rather utilization of existing publicly owned lands, donated lands, land linking opportunities and other options that do not incur purchase costs

As drafted, the Terms of Reference call for the following deliverables:

- A draft written report responding to the identified scope of work.
- A presentation of the draft feasibility study to the RFTAF.
- A revised written report responding to RFTAF and staff input.
- A presentation of the revised written report to the Planning and Protective Services Committee to summarize key findings and answer questions.
- A final written report reflecting any direction from the Planning and Protective Services Committee.

Subject to approval, staff anticipate posting a proposal call by the middle of February. The anticipated project start would be early April to accommodate proposal submission and evaluation time. Project completion is targeted for year-end 2018.

The RFATF provided input into the development of the Terms of Reference and supports the proposed approach.

ALTERNATIVES

Alternative 1

That the Terms of Reference for the Regional Food Land Access Improvement Feasibility Study and Business Case Terms of Reference be approved, and that staff be directed to issue a request for proposals.

Alternative 2

That the Regional Food Land Access Improvement Feasibility Study and Business Case Terms of Reference be referred back to staff with Committee direction.

IMPLICATIONS

Consultation Implications

The successful consultant or consulting group will be expected to seek input from stakeholders such as local farmers, local farm groups, municipal staff, CRD staff, local First Nations, Ministry of Agriculture staff, and educational institutions. The RFATF membership have offered to be a conduit for stakeholder input to save consultant time/costs. The consultants would be responsible for analysing and reporting out on the feedback.

Staff Implications

Project oversight will be provided by Regional and Strategic Planning staff.

CONCLUSION

The Board has approved 2018 funding for a Regional Food Land Access Improvement Feasibility Study and Business Case in 2018. Draft Terms of Reference intended to respond to comments and suggestions from previous Committee and Board meetings have been developed in consultation with the RFATF. With Committee approval, staff would proceed to initiate a request for proposals, with the intent of completing the work by year- end 2018.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Terms of Reference for the Regional Food Land Access Improvement Feasibility Study and Business Case Terms of Reference be approved, and that staff be directed to issue a request for proposals.

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JW/SB

Attachment: Appendix A - Regional Food Land Access Improvement Feasibility Study and Business Case Terms of Reference)