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## **REPORT TO GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE MEETING OF WEDNESDAY, APRIL 5, 2017**

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### **SUBJECT      Board Standards of Conduct**

### **ISSUE**

To receive direction from the Governance Committee on bringing back additional information on Board standards of conduct.

### **BACKGROUND**

There has been increasing discussion in British Columbia in recent years about standards of conduct and behaviour for local government elected officials and the benefits of officials having a shared understanding of what constitutes acceptable conduct. Proponents maintain that formal codes of conduct have the ability to enhance the reputation of organizations by promoting ethical behaviour, preventing negative legal effects and encouraging positive relationships and decision-making processes.

In January 2017, the Union of British Columbia Municipalities (UBCM) announced that a working group was created to examine the issue of responsible elected official conduct and report on its findings to the UBCM membership at the 2017 convention. The creation of the working group was prompted by a resolution from the City of Kelowna calling for the creation of independent integrity commissions to assist with the investigation, application and enforcement of codes of conduct. At a recent meeting of Regional District Chairs and CAOs held on March 28<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup>, an update on the working group process was presented indicating that a background paper will be released the week of April 3 for distribution to Provincial Local Government Associations to be discussed at their annual meetings.

The District of Saanich adopted a code of conduct policy for its elected officials following the 2016 UBCM conference, which included a session on the role of integrity in addressing public concerns regarding confidence in government institutions. Most municipalities within the CRD have adopted codes of conduct or codes of ethics that guide Council processes and establish shared understandings of the expectations of Council members. The CRD Board does not have a policy or guideline that addresses Director conduct.

In September of 2016, the Governance Committee discussed Board and Chair performance and self-evaluation in connection with the Board Strategic Priorities and ultimately decided not to advance any recommendations in relation to the matter. At the Governance Committee meeting of February 2017, the Committee discussed exempt staff protection policies and directed staff to report back with further information and background on the issue, including examples from other contexts.

### **ALTERNATIVES**

#### *Alternative 1:*

That staff be directed to report back to the Governance Committee with additional information on Board standards of conduct in conjunction with the report on exempt staff protection policies.

#### *Alternative 2:*

That staff bring back information on Board standards of conduct after the UBCM working group on responsible conduct has completed its work and reported its findings to the UBCM membership at the 2017 convention.

#### *Alternative 3:*

That the matter be referred back to staff for additional information.

## **IMPLICATIONS**

The Governance Committee has directed staff to provide additional information about staff protection policies. Part of the rationale for a staff protection policy is to encourage an ethical workplace characterized by positive relationships and decision-making processes. Recent examples throughout the province suggest that in the local government context, organizational and workplace culture can also be impacted by the behaviour and processes of elected officials. Providing additional information, research and analysis of these impacts as a companion to the information that will be provided on staff protection policies will give the Governance Committee additional context to inform its discussions on workplace processes, culture and policy direction.

### *Alternative 2:*

In recommending that a working group be established, the UBCM Resolutions Committee noted that because the issue of elected official conduct is a multi-faceted and complex, a thorough analysis should be undertaken before solutions are recommended. If CRD staff were to wait for the working group report prior to reporting back on the matter, the Committee would receive the benefit of the policy work conducted by UBCM. However, the focus of the working group may only be on legislative reform at the provincial and institutional level, and will be less relevant to a discussion of organizational culture at the CRD and the merits of articulating a common understanding of acceptable conduct unique to the organization.

## **CONCLUSION**

The Governance Committee has directed staff to report back with additional information on staff protection policies. Providing additional information regarding Board standards of conduct would supplement Committee discussion and address a related matter that UBCM has identified as an emerging policy area.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

That staff be directed to report back to the Governance Committee with additional information on Board standards of conduct in conjunction with the report on exempt staff protection policies.

Submitted by:	Brent Reems, MA, LLB, Corporate Officer
Concurrence:	Robert Lapham, MCIP, RPP, Chief Administrative Officer