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REPORT TO GOVERNANCE AND FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING OF WEDNESDAY, MAY 01, 2019

SUBJECT **Follow-up: Board Highlights Report as part of Regional Governance and Transparency Initiatives**

ISSUE

Supplementary information was requested related to a potential Board Highlights report, originally suggested in a Motion with Notice intended to endorse and implement governance and transparency initiatives at the Capital Regional District.

BACKGROUND

At the November 14, 2018 CRD Board meeting, a Motion with Notice regarding improving regional governance and transparency was referred to the Governance & Finance Committee. On February 6, 2019 the committee reviewed information from staff regarding resource implications on all suggested governance and transparency initiatives and referred the following amended motion to staff for more information: *That a monthly Board Highlights summary be created to augment the current press release model.*

ALTERNATIVES

Alternative 1

That the Governance and Finance Committee recommend to the Capital Regional District Board: That a monthly Board Highlights summary be created to augment the current post-Board press release model, as outlined in Appendix A.

Alternative 2

That the Governance and Finance Committee recommend to the Capital Regional District Board: That no changes be made to current service levels relating to post-Board meeting communications.

IMPLICATIONS

At the direction of the Committee staff have considered how to augment the practice of issuing press releases and advisories with a Board Highlights Report ('report'). The purpose of the report would be to have it written for the public and posted on the CRD website with the option to subscribe to enhance the CRD's reputation as an accessible and transparent organization. The report would provide one more way for residents to access information about Board decisions, in addition to press releases, agendas & minutes, website updates, social media and live webcasts.

Staff assessed the option of including all decisions or actions of the Board to avoid the selection process. Including all items would overlap with the role of minutes to give a record of decision on each item, and would be more accurately described as a summary report. While there are benefits to being comprehensive, a full list of decisions would increase the amount of staff time required to verify each motion as well as the level of cognitive effort required by the reader to scan and filter topics based on level of personal impact or interest.

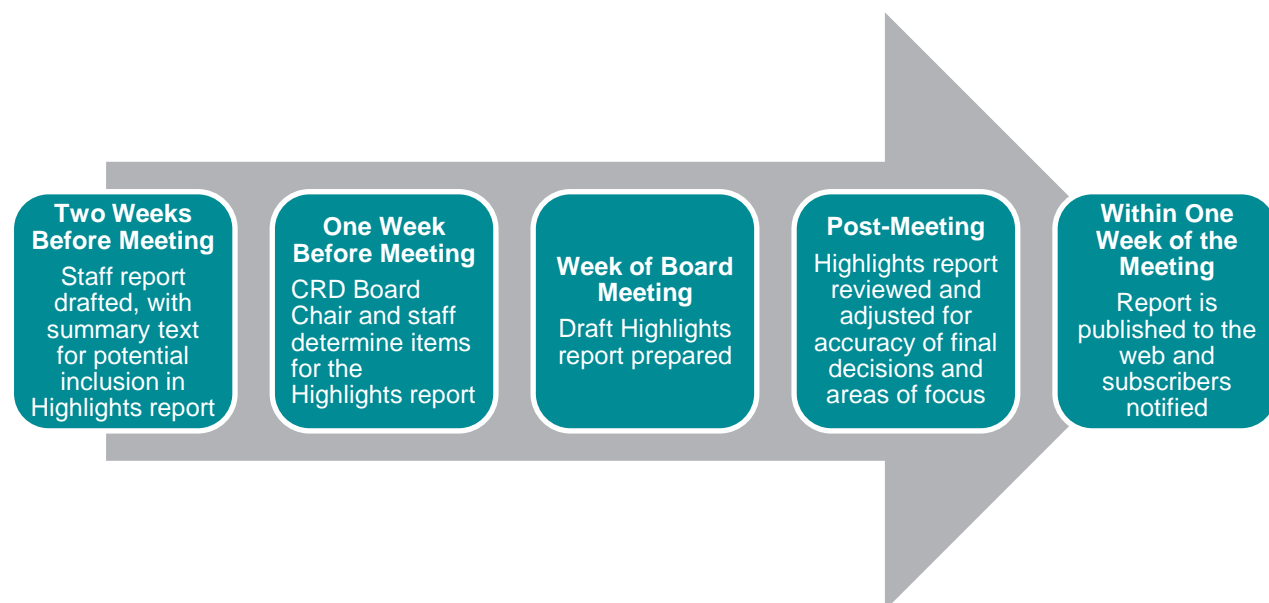
The purpose of a highlights report such as the one provided by the City of Victoria and other local governments is to feature a selection of topics with links to related records such as the agenda package and webcast. Staff checked with the City of Victoria and confirmed the selection process is coordinated between Strategic Planning, Legislative Services and Public Engagement departments using criteria specific to their municipality.

The selection of items introduces challenges related to assessing importance or impact of a particular decision on stakeholders and residents at the sub-regional or local level. As stated by the Governance & Finance Committee at the February 2019 meeting, each decision has a level of importance for individuals impacted by the decision that may be communicated by directors to their respective council and constituents. For this reason, each report would require a disclaimer and link to the full agenda and webcast.

Staff would work with the CRD Board Chair to identify items for the report in advance based on: alignment with Board priorities, level of regional and/or organizational impact, previous media coverage and general public interest. The intent would be to highlight items from Regional Board meetings, although items of regional significance from the Housing Corporation Board or the Hospital Board could also be featured.

The work required to summarize each item correctly and in plain language is important to ensure accurate and transparent records. To assist with creating the report and to give the Board an idea of how the item would be communicated, the staff report template and workflow would be revised to include the Highlight in the Conclusion section of reports.

Following the meeting, Corporate Communications and Legislative Services staff would review and adjust each item in the report to ensure it reflects the nature and outcomes of the meeting. Next, the report would be published to the website and then sent as an e-newsletter to subscribers. Some changes to the website would be required to add a section for highlight reports and to set up an e-newsletter template and workflow for sending to subscribers. Efficiencies could be found by doing this work in tandem with the creation of a rise and report section on the website, if that recommendation is endorsed by the Board, which is estimated to be ready by Q4 of 2019.



A review of council and board highlights from other jurisdictions found the common practice to be upfront disclosure that highlights are not comprehensive records of decision with a link to full agendas and minutes. A selection of topics to highlight would maintain the readability of the highlights and a link to the full webcast and agenda would still support the goals of complete transparency regarding Board decisions. More details are included in the concept attached in Appendix A.

The amount of work to coordinate and deliver a Board Highlights report does not amount to an additional FTE allocation. Staff in both the Corporate Communications and Legislative Services divisions would be required to work on implementation, including creation of a new website section and templates and a change to the staff report template and process. On an ongoing monthly basis, staff on both teams would be required to coordinate and support the creation of each Highlight report, including review of highlight summaries in staff reports, review and recommendation of items for each report and ensuring the meeting outcome is correctly reflected. In order to accommodate this additional work, the overall capacity of both areas to deliver on other operational work may require reallocating existing resources and delay deliverables outlined in 2019 service plans.

CONCLUSION

Augmenting the current post-Board communications model with a Board Highlights report can be done by staff by reallocating existing resources and decreasing support for operational projects. A Board Highlights report for the CRD Board would include topics of regional and public interest and be released within a week after each Board meeting. If given direction to implement, the report would be launched concurrently with a rise and report section on the CRD website for late 2019.

RECOMMENDATION(S)

That the Governance and Finance Committee recommend to the Capital Regional District Board: That a monthly Board Highlights summary be created to augment the current post-Board meeting press release model, as outlined in Appendix A.

Submitted by:	Zoe Gray, Manager, Website & Multimedia Development
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Attachments:
Appendix A: Board Highlights Concept