

**REPORT TO PLANNING AND PROTECTIVE SERVICES COMMITTEE
MEETING OF WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 20, 2019**

SUBJECT **Municipal Feedback on Foodlands Access Program Feasibility Study**

ISSUE SUMMARY

To consider municipal feedback and next steps on a Capital Regional District (CRD) Regional Foodlands Access Program feasibility study.

BACKGROUND

Over the course of 2018, a consultant prepared a Foodlands Access Program Feasibility Study. The study recommended that a foodlands trust is the best tool for the region to improve access to agricultural land, operated by the CRD in partnership with a non-profit organization.

On April 10, 2019, the CRD Board received the study for information and directed that staff:

- 1) Canvas all municipalities to assess whether there is a desire to have the CRD operate a foodlands trust in partnership with a non-profit organization;
- 2) Canvas whether any municipal land could be made available for inclusion in a trust; and
- 3) Report back to the CRD Board upon receiving municipal feedback.

Staff canvassed municipalities and requested a response by May 21, 2019. Several municipalities advised they required additional time to fully consider and confirm land donations and financial contributions.

ALTERNATIVES

Alternative 1:

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

- a) That the Board receive the municipal feedback;
- b) That the Board direct staff to confirm municipal land donations; and
- c) That should land donations be confirmed, the Board direct staff to develop a business case with input from supportive municipal councils.

Alternative 2:

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

That the Board receive the Municipal Feedback on Foodlands Access Program Feasibility Study report for information.

Alternative 3:

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

That the report be referred back to staff for further information based on Committee direction.

DISCUSSION

A farmland trust cannot operate without land contributions and financial support from municipalities.

Nine municipalities, representing over 70% of the region's population support a foodlands trust. Of these nine, three municipalities (Central Saanich, North Saanich and Saanich) have indicated preliminary interest in providing land contributions, but require additional time to confirm land donation options and provide a formal response. Three municipalities who cannot provide a land contribution have indicated financial support in principle (Sooke, Victoria and View Royal). One municipality (Sidney) requires additional information on the governance structure and funding model before making a financial support decision. Four municipalities indicated they were not supportive. Appendix A provides a summary of responses. Appendix B provides copies of the responses.

Once land donations are confirmed, the next step in the process is to develop a business case based on parcel specific program cost estimates. The business case cannot be prepared until land donations are confirmed. A business case would supply the Board and supportive municipal councils with the information required to make a decision on whether to support the foodlands trust financially. The content of the business case would focus on the requirements needed to bring lands up to minimum level for production (soil, water supply and fencing) with potential add-ons to support new farmers such as marketing/promotion, equipment leases, out buildings, and education programs. The business case would also consider possible governance structures.

IMPLICATIONS

Intergovernmental Implications

Councils indicating an interest in preliminary land contributions or financial support in principle would be asked for input into the development of a business case. Councils would also be asked to confirm land contributions. This information is required for the business case to fully assess the scope of a foodlands access program and financial implications.

Regional Growth Strategy Implications

Alternative 1 is consistent with Food Systems policy 6.1(1) and 6.1(2) in the Regional Growth Strategy (RGS). The alternative helps achieve the RGS objective to foster a resilient food and agriculture system and meet the target to increase productive foodlands by 5,000 ha by 2038.

Financial Implications

Alternative 1 would enable a more detailed analysis of the financial implications of a foodlands trust. The business case would provide the information to support Board and municipal council decision-making on matters such as program scope, governance structures and financial implications. This analysis can only be undertaken once municipalities have confirmed land contributions. The preparation of a business case can be funded through core budget.

Service Delivery Implications

Alternative 1 would enable a more detailed analysis of service delivery implications. A preliminary scan has identified that a foodland access program provides opportunities to train new farmers on protocols and practices that will help deliver CRD services related to resource management and ecological conservation.

Alignment with Board and Corporate Priorities

Alternative 1 aligns to community need 11b – Affordable Farming Land.

Alignment with Existing Plans and Strategies

Alternative 1 would help implement the CRD's Regional Food and Agriculture Strategy, recommendation 9, action 1, to explore the feasibility of the CRD managing a public land bank, or foodlands trust.

CONCLUSION

In April, the CRD Board directed staff to canvas municipalities on their level of support for a foodlands trust. Nine municipalities support the proposed foodlands trust in principle, three indicated a preliminary interest in contributing land, three indicated financial support in principle and one municipality would consider financial support should additional financial information be available. A business case is needed to identify the scope and financial implications of a foodlands trust. Land contributions need to be confirmed before a business case can be prepared. The recommended alternative is to confirm land contributions and prepare a business case to identify program scope and financial impacts.

RECOMMENDATIONS

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

- a) That the Board receive the municipal feedback;
- b) That the Board direct staff to confirm municipal land donations; and
- c) That should land donations be confirmed, the Board direct staff to develop a business case with input from supportive municipal councils.

Submitted by:	Emily Sinclair, MCIP, RPP, Senior Manager Regional & Strategic Planning
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Attachments: Appendix A - Summary of Municipal Input
Appendix B - Record of Municipal Responses to the Proposed Regional Foodland Access Program