

Municipality of North Cowichan

Special Council

MINUTES

February 15, 2019, 1:30 p.m.
Municipal Hall - Council Chambers

Members Present Mayor Al Siebring
 Councillor Rob Douglas
 Councillor Christopher Justice
 Councillor Tek Manhas
 Councillor Kate Marsh
 Councillor Rosalie Sawrie
 Councillor Debra Toporowski

Staff Present Ted Swabey, CAO
 Karen Robertson, Corporate Officer
 Sarah Nixon, General Manager, People and Business Services
 Ernie Mansueti, General Manager, Community Services
 Mark Frame, General Manager, Financial and Protective Services
 Alyssa Meiner, Deputy Corporate Officer
 Shaun Mason, Municipal Forester

1. **CALL TO ORDER**

There being a quorum present, Mayor Siebring called the February 15, 2019, Special Council meeting to order at 1:30 p.m.

2. **APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

It was moved and seconded:

That Council approve the February 15, 2019 Special Council agenda, as amended, to allow additional public input (beyond the maximum 5 speakers) for items on the agenda.

And That each speaker be given a maximum of 3 minutes each to provide input.

CARRIED

3. **PRESENTATION**

3.1 **Presentation by CAO and Shaun Mason, Municipal Forester Re: Overview of North Cowichan's Forestry Operations**

Council heard from the CAO and received a PowerPoint presentation from the Municipal Forester on North Cowichan's Municipal Forest Reserve (MFR). Highlights of the presentation included the following:

- The MFR mission is “to maintain and enhance North Cowichan’s valuable municipal forest resources for all users through sustainable forestry, ecological stewardship, and sound fiscal management;
- Background on the current North Cowichan Forestry Advisory Committee (FAC);
- The Forest Reserve Fund purpose is to support Forestry Operations when markets are poor, expand the MFR, cover fire-fighting costs, replace equipment, and provide community support;
- Forestry Profit Disbursements go to the forest reserve, the forest legacy fund, and to general revenues;
- Harvest Selection Process includes LiDAR, pre-assessment, field review, mapping, management prescription;
- Operations (annual allowable cut is 20,000 m³ per year; harvest 1% of MFR per year; average cutblock size is approximately 7ha);
- Timber sales to various mills/companies including to local businesses and small local mills;
- Silviculture – plant 100% of all harvested areas at the earliest possible time and over 2.1 million trees have been planted by North Cowichan since 1987; and
- 2018 Fire Season, 2019 blow down; and 2019 projects were also discussed.

Council asked questions of the Municipal Forester.

It was moved and seconded:

That Council receive the February 12, 2019 report provided by the Chief Administrative Officer for information.

CARRIED

4. PUBLIC INPUT

The Mayor provided instructions for members of the public who wished to speak during the public input portion of the meeting, then invited First Nations elders to speak first, followed by Freeman of the Municipality.

Council received public input from Cowichan Tribes elder Robert George, Freeman of the Municipality Jim Dias, and 28 members of the public regarding logging in the Municipal Forest Reserve.

Generally, themes discussed included the following:

- A review of forestry operations and purpose of the municipal forest reserve is welcome;
- It is important to consider the environmental impact of forestry and complete environmental assessments;
- Forestry plans and processed are currently a balance of economic, environmental, and social factors;
- It makes sense to carry on with current forest operations and realize economic benefits in the absence of irreparable harm to environment while consultation continues;
- There is economic opportunity from tourism and recreation in forest areas;
- Need economic engine to create opportunities for citizens of North Cowichan;
- The forests provide work for local citizens, wood for homes;

- The increase in mountain biking has been in conjunction with working forest;
- The municipality should consider an external audit of forestry practices;
- Municipal forests should be demonstration forests and shown to schools and the public;
- Coastal Douglas Fir Conservation Partnership willing to help by providing modelling information;
- Support for proposed expansion of FAC and proposed membership;
- Budget shortfall should not come from forestry reserves;
- Any logging work in Stoney Hill area should pause;
- Logging, should be by higher rotation age, in order to capture and store carbon and mitigate climate change;
- Need to consider link between healthy forests and healthy communities;
- Setting aside preservation areas is good for the climate, and we should consider future preservation areas;
- Coastal Douglas Fir ecosystem contains highest biodiversity, including many rare and endangered species, and forests should be allowed to mature to 100+ years to protect these species;
- Concern over growth of invasive species such as broom;
- Concern (by silent majority) for taxes paid by homeowners in North Cowichan, and increase in taxes should current forest management practices be discontinued; and
- Support for transitional strategy as proposed by option 2 on the agenda.

The letters provided to the Corporate Officer at the meeting will be provided to Council following the meeting.

Council took a 10 minute recess and resumed the meeting at 3:57 p.m.

5. BUSINESS

5.1 Forest Advisory Committee Terms of Reference and Committee Membership

Council heard from the Corporate Officer regarding North Cowichan committees and Council's instruction to establish strategic priorities before making further decisions on committees. The Corporate Officer identified the membership of the Forest Advisory Committee (FAC) as established by Council January 16, 2019, and then reviewed the proposed FAC terms of reference.

Council heard the committee chair may call more frequent meetings, and the Mayor is not an ex-officio member of the FAC.

Council discussed whether or not the words "conduct a full review of current practices" in the FAC Terms of Reference Scope would be broadly interpreted, what the FAC will be reviewing, and heard that specific questions can be forwarded by Council members to the Committee Chair, and that the FAC may receive advice from external experts, as required.

It was moved and seconded:

- 1. That Council adopt the Terms of Reference for the Forest Advisory Committee as attached to the February 15, 2019 report by the Corporate Officer; and**

2. **That Council give first three readings to Select Committees Repeal Bylaw No. 3733.**

Amendment:

It was moved and seconded:

That Council add the following additional bullet to the Terms of Reference Scope: "The review will be expansive enough to consider overall vision and overall management framework for the forest."

(Opposed: Siebring; Manhas)

CARRIED

Main Motion as Amended:

It was moved and seconded:

1. **That Council adopt the Terms of Reference for the Forest Advisory Committee attached to the Corporate Officer's February 15, 2019 report, as amended; and**
2. **That Council give first three readings to Select Committees Repeal Bylaw No. 3733.**

CARRIED

5.2 2019 Forestry Budget

Council heard from the General Manager of Financial and Protective Services regarding the 2019 Forestry Budget. Council heard that the 2019 budget shortfall could be met by increased taxes or using approximately \$27,000 from the Forestry Reserve Fund and reducing approximately \$127,000 in planned Parks and Trails Master Plan or other initiatives.

It was moved and seconded:

Option 2 (in the staff report):

That Council direct staff to:

- **harvest only the 2018 contract obligations and blowdown; and**
- **amend the 2019 budget to use \$26,585 from the Forestry Reserve Fund to offset the 2019 Forestry budget shortfall and to mitigate the lost profit of \$127,750 through budget savings.**

Amendment:

It was moved and seconded:

That Council add the following to the main motion:

"And That any new harvesting plans associated with the 2018 blowdown, or any other future harvesting plans, be reviewed by the Forest Advisory Committee, with recommendations by the Committee forwarded to Council for review and consideration".

CARRIED

Main Motion as Amended:

It was moved and seconded:

That Council direct staff to:

- **harvest only the 2018 contract obligations and blowdown; and**
- **amend the 2019 budget to use \$26,585 from the Forestry Reserve Fund to offset the 2019 Forestry budget shortfall and to mitigate the lost profit of \$127,750 through budget savings;**

And That any new harvesting plans associated with the 2018 blowdown, or any other future harvesting plans, be reviewed by the Forest Advisory Committee, with recommendations by the Committee forwarded to Council for review and consideration.

CARRIED

Council considered lifting the motion from the December 19, 2018 meeting from the table, and did not have concerns with the removal of approximately 5 trees for safety reasons for the Stoney Hill parking lot expansion within the Municipal Forest Reserve. Council did not lift the motion from the table.

6. QUESTION PERIOD

Council received questions from the public regarding business considered at this meeting.

7. ADJOURNMENT

It was moved and seconded:

That Council adjourn the February 15, 2019, Special Council meeting at 5:04 p.m.

CARRIED

Certified by Corporate Officer

Signed by Mayor