



Report and Recommendation CVHTF Options for Governance Facilitated Discussion

1.0 Facilitated Discussion

Thursday, January 23, 2014, 1:00 pm to 4:00 pm
Courtenay Fire Hall, Upstairs Meeting Room

Facilitator: Jessica McNamara, ADR Education
Presenter: Shannon Pickering, Coordinator, CVHTF

Attendees:

City of Courtenay

Ronna-Rae Leonard
Starr Winchester
Manno Theos
Peter Crawford (until
2:30)
Erin Ferguson

Town of Comox

Tom Grant
Barbara Price
Patti Fletcher
Maureen Swift
Hugh McKinnon (until
3:10)
Marvin Kamenz (until
2:30)

Village of Cumberland

Roger Kishi
Judith Walker

CVRD

Jim Gillis
Edwin Grieve
Bruce Jolliffe
Ann MacDonald

CVHTF

Anne Davis
Joline Martin

Brent Hobden
Monica Goodheart

Erik Eriksson
Sam Sommers

Michael Pitcher
Tom Beshr

Other

Roger Albert - Future Organization Sub Committee CVHTF
John Jessup – Consultant, City of Courtenay

Purpose

To build on the “Building Housing Solutions Together” Community Forum's learning and dialogue to move toward long-term permanent solutions that will increase local capacity to meet the housing needs of the community. The discussion 'dovetailed' with the work of the CVHTF and the work done since 2008. The intent was to have a clear understanding of the level of support for a backbone organization, and the type of structure that is best suited to the Comox Valley.

Process

In order to familiarize themselves with the background material and working document, all attendees received an Information Package and Appendices prior to the meeting.

A brief overview of the work done in the community leading up to this point established the context for the discussion. The attributes and functions exercise set the stage for the final group work exercise and ensured that all participants understood and had an opportunity to look at each attribute and function. The final group exercise was structured around two questions; participants were asked to brainstorm how each of the 3 options for governance would look in our community and the strengths and weaknesses of each. The groups were also asked to choose which option they believed best suited the needs of the Comox Valley and report back to the whole on the key points of their discussion. Finally, at the end of the session participants were asked to individually rank the options.

Attributes and Functions

The attributes and functions were reviewed with the addition of a note that “stakeholders” refers to all community members, neighbourhoods, businesses etc. See Appendix 1 – Attributes and Functions Table for more information.

Options For Governance

The “3 Options For Governance” as presented in the Information Package were reviewed in 4 small groups and each group reported back to the plenary with highlights of their discussion, including a recommendation on an option. Participants were assigned groups; the groups were structured in an attempt to have representation from each jurisdiction and the CVHTF. The groups had 45 minutes to work through their questions and record their responses. Each group then had 5 minutes to report back to the plenary followed by a 15 minute large group discussion. The discussion focused on how each of those Options may work in the Comox Valley, potential challenges and ways to mitigate and adapt.

2 out of 4 groups recommended Option 2 – Municipal Non Profit¹ (MNP), one group recommended Option 3 – local government function with a Social Planner/Committee and one group did not come to an agreement on a recommendation. It became clear that although the Private Non-Profit option had merit, it was not favoured by any of the 4 groups and therefore was removed as a viable option in the final step of individual selection.

¹ *Although the term Municipal Non Profit is commonly used, for communities in British Columbia it is more appropriate to use the term Local Government Non Profit. For future reference the term Local Government will replace Municipal. A Local Government Non Profit Corporation is a non-profit corporation established at the initiative of a local government.*

Summary

At the end of day, participants were asked to indicate their individual preference for governance. The majority preferred Option 2 – MNP by a margin of 2 to 1. Not all participants remained at the end of the discussion or chose to vote. See Appendix 2 – Notes from Facilitated Discussion for more details.

Based on the reporting out and large group discussions some themes emerged:

Re: MNP type structure

- The CVEDS is not the right place to deal with affordable housing/homelessness, but as a municipal non-profit the model would work well. Even though affordable housing and economic development are linked and collaboration is needed, conflict in purposes would impede success if mandates merged under auspices of one body.
- Professional expertise is necessary outside of local government and service providers; politicians play a governance role to represent the community, and service providers are busy advocating for their clients, but play an important role in “working together” to identify and prioritize community needs.
- Accountability to local government (i.e. taxpayer through local government) needs to be addressed with requirements built-in (such as strict mandate, conditions to funding, regular service reviews).
- An MNP would be able to access more funding opportunities than local governments alone and not compete with other local not for profits.

Re: Support for local government involvement

- Source of on-going funding required. The community philosophically supports local government dealing with issue – example of only one letter of opposition to the function to purchase the Cliffe Ave land and feedback from the Community Forum. In fact, the community appears eager for action.
- Regional taxation to help finance (everyone contributing).
- May be politically difficult for a Social Planner to have 4 masters or for the other jurisdictions to pay for a Social Planner outside of their jurisdiction.
- The community is looking for leadership from local government on this issue.
- Leadership and political will are necessary to move anything forward.

The session ended positively, with an overall understanding that there is a way to move forward together. Participants acknowledge that affordable housing and homelessness is an issue that needs to be addressed and that local governments need to take a leadership role to make it happen. The community sees this as an important issue, and taking action now will capitalize on the momentum of the Forum and this Session.

The intent of the facilitated session was to have a clear understanding of the level of support for a backbone organization, and the type of structure that is best suited to the Comox Valley. Three options were examined with one option, the Municipal Non Profit emerging as the favourite amongst the majority.

2.0 Recommendation

At the January 31, 2014 meeting of the Comox Valley Housing Task Force the following recommendation was made:

That the Comox Valley Regional District establish a function to collect funds regionally to address affordable housing and homelessness; and, that within that function a Local Government Non Profit Corporation be established to fulfill the service mandate.

The above recommendation is based on the past two years of work of the CVHTF, and the with guidance of the following Comox Valley initiatives and reports:

1. "Building Housing Solutions Together" Facilitated Discussion, CVHTF (January 2014)
2. "Building Housing Solutions Together" Affordable Housing and Homelessness Community Forum, CVHTF, (October 2013)
3. Comox Valley Community Capacity Initiative (Dawn to Dawn, Wachaiy, AVI) - Building Community Capacity Grant, CVHTF (2013)
4. Homelessness, Affordable and Appropriate Housing in British Columbia, Canada and Internationally: Some Accessible Strategies for Local Governments, Roger Albert (2012)
5. Building Community Capacity to Address Affordable Housing and Homelessness in the Comox Valley – Final Report, Butler and Bazink (2011)
6. Creating Certainty within Uncertainty: A Regional Structure to Address Homelessness – Final Report, City Spaces (2009)
7. Mayor's Task Force on Homelessness Final Report (2008)

<http://www.cvhousing.ca/about/cvhtf-background-info/>

Attachments:

Appendix 1 – Attributes and Functions Table

Appendix 2 – Notes from Facilitated Discussion