

STAFF REPORT

то:	Committee of the Whole	MEETING:	October 2, 2018
FROM:	Delcy Wells General Manager, Corporate Services	FILE:	0340-50
SUBJECT:	Flag Policy		

RECOMMENDATION

That the Board adopt the attached Flag Policy A1.34.

SUMMARY

The Regional District of Nanaimo (RDN) does not have a Board policy on flags, but may choose to regulate what flags are raised and when they are half-masted on RDN-owned flag poles through a flag policy. The purpose of such a policy directive is to ensure that all flags at RDN-owned or operated facilities are flown and displayed in a consistent and appropriate manner.

BACKGROUND

In the absence of a policy, staff relies on past practice when receiving flag raising and halfmasting requests. Past practice has been to fly flags at half-mast when requested to do so and with the approval of the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO). Requests received thus far to raise flags have been from community groups, non-profit organizations and cultural groups. Under this current practice, the RDN would only refuse a flag for an undertaking that would be against the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and would not differentiate between any other group. Lowering the flag to half-mast has been done under the CAO's direction.

The CAO requested staff bring forward information about when it would be appropriate to halfmast flags belonging to the RDN, and staff also included provisions in our proposed policy for requests to raise flags not belonging to the RDN. At this time, the RDN does not have any community flag poles, and this proposed policy confirms that this practice should be maintained.

In the absence of a policy, staff will continue raising flags and half-masting flags upon request and decide on a case-by-case basis. Without this policy, it is difficult for staff to administer its decisions as there are no guiding principles upon which to rely. This creates a risk of inconsistent decisions which may offend community members.

Flags are symbols that identify people as belonging to a group and sometimes have the ability to divide communities. Consistency in our decisions on when to half-mast our flags is an important message to our communities. Avoiding use of community flags will avoid any unintentional indication that the RDN supports a group or activity connected to a flag. Displaying only the Canadian, Provincial and the Vancouver Island flags circumvent this concern. The

Canadian flag is a symbol of our nation's unity and represents all the citizens of Canada without distinction of race, language, belief or opinion. Flying the Canadian, Provincial and Vancouver Island flags on official RDN flag poles fully represents diversity and inclusiveness in our community.

Staff researched the protocols of the Government of Canada and the Province of British Columbia with respect to half-masting, and the draft policy incorporates the protocols of these two levels of government that staff determined were appropriate to the needs of the RDN.

Staff research included our member municipalities: the City of Nanaimo, the City of Parksville, the District of Lantzville and the Town of Qualicum Beach. The City of Nanaimo is the only member municipality of the RDN to have any material regarding flag half-masting. Staff also researched three regional districts in our area, and none of them have a flag policy (Capital Regional District, Cowichan Valley Regional District, Comox Valley Regional District). The City of Nanaimo does not have an official Council Policy, but their flag protocol administered by their staff is attached for information. To meet our needs, our policy is more specific than the protocol used by the City of Nanaimo, so there will be variation between our organizations.

ALTERNATIVES

- 1. To not adopt a Flag Policy and continue with the current ad hoc practice for administering our flags.
- 2. To amend the proposed Flag Policy prior to adoption.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications.

STRATEGIC PLAN IMPLICATIONS

The adoption of the Flag Policy will support our goal of focusing on improved two-way communication within the Regional District and with our communities.

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Delcy Wells dwells@rdn.bc.ca September 12, 2018 Reviewed by:

- D. Wells, General Manager, Corporate Services
- G. Garbutt, A/Chief Administrative Officer

Attachments

- 1. City of Nanaimo Flag Protocol
- 2. Draft Flag Policy, Regional District of Nanaimo