
TO: Electoral Area Services Committee **MEETING:** January 8, 2019

FROM: Courtney Simpson
Senior Planner **FILE:** 2400 20 NAV/AVI

SUBJECT: Nanaimo Airport Planning Consultation Plan

RECOMMENDATION

That the Terms of Reference including the Consultation Plan for the “Nanaimo Airport Planning Bylaw Updates” be endorsed.

SUMMARY

The Nanaimo Airport is a regional transportation hub and important part of the Central Vancouver Island economy. The Nanaimo Airport Commission (NAC), who owns and operates the airport, has developed a land use plan that includes expanding the airport terminal and airside commercial for aviation and aviation light industrial, and developing land adjacent to the Trans Canada Highway for commercial uses, passenger flow, and parking. The purpose of this project is to amend the Regional Growth Strategy (RGS), Electoral Area A Official Community Plan (OCP), and Nanaimo Regional District Land Use and Subdivision Bylaw 500, 1987 (zoning bylaw) to support growth of the Nanaimo Airport lands as a regional transportation hub and an important part of the central Vancouver Island economy.

The attached Terms of Reference outlines a project to amend the RGS, OCP and zoning bylaw for the Nanaimo Airport lands to acknowledge current airport use and to create policies, objectives, guidelines and regulations for uses not related to aeronautics (see Attachment 1 – Terms of Reference). This project will build on previous work over the past 15 years to adopt land use regulations for the Nanaimo Airport lands. As a starting point for consultation, draft RGS, OCP and zoning bylaw amendments will be developed building on past work and updated for today’s context. Stakeholder and public consultation will seek input on these draft amendments. The objectives of this project are as follows:

- Consider the proposed land uses on Nanaimo Airport lands within the local and regional land use context.
- Ensure that development on the Nanaimo Airport lands is consistent with the vision, principles and goals of the OCP.
- Build on previous work to update RDN planning bylaws for the Airport lands.
- Ensure policies, regulations and guidelines are in place to protect the Cassidy aquifer, and other ecologically important habitats and features.

BACKGROUND

The Nanaimo Airport is located on approximately 211 hectares of land situated in the southwest corner of Electoral Area A. Jurisdiction over land use is shared between the RDN and the NAC, and depends on the nature of specific uses. Use and development of the Airport lands in relation to aeronautics is under exclusive federal authority through the NAC, and not subject to the regulatory control of the RDN, however, uses not related to aeronautics are subject to RDN bylaws.

The Nanaimo Airport lands are almost entirely within the RDN; a small portion at the south end of the property is within the Cowichan Valley Regional District. In 1942, the Department of National Defense purchased the land on which the Airport is situated, and constructed an airstrip making it war-ready. In 1992, the management of the Airport was transferred to the NAC, a federally registered not for profit authority, to which ownership of the lands was also transferred in 1996. A more detailed history of the airport is found on the Nanaimo Airport website at: www.nanaimoairport.com/business/history.

Until 1997, the Airport land was entirely in the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR). The Airport received approval from the Agricultural Land Commission to exclude approximately 50 hectares from the ALR to allow for the addition of 'airport related' uses along the portion of the airport adjacent to the Island Highway. The Commission also granted 'special use status' for a 40 hectares parcel for commercial/recreational use (Cottonwood Golf Course) to the east of the airport runway.

Since at least 2003, the RDN and the NAC have been in discussion to formalize current aeronautics-related uses in RDN planning bylaws and to create policies and regulations for future uses on the Nanaimo Airport lands that are not related to aeronautics and operation of the airport. During the most recent review of the Electoral Area A OCP, it was decided to initiate a separate process to adopt a objectives, policies and regulations for the Nanaimo Airport lands within the OCP and zoning bylaw, and this separate process began in 2011. Over the past several years, the RDN and NAC have been in discussions to develop a MOU, which is ongoing.

Land Use Implications

The RGS designates the area containing the airport terminal, hangars and associated parking and some undeveloped land as "Industrial", and the ALR land including the runway and golf course, and the land fronting the Island Highway as "Resource Lands and Open Space". The Cassidy Village Centre is immediately across the Trans Canada Highway from the Airport lands.

The 2011 OCP designates these lands as "Nanaimo Airport" and does not contain any objectives or policies for this designation, instead supporting a public process to add objectives and policies for these lands to the OCP in the future.

Current zoning of the Nanaimo Airport lands does not reflect actual land uses. The lands are zoned Rural 4 or Agriculture 1, and are within Subdivision District 'D'. The permitted uses in the Rural 4 zone are agriculture, aquaculture, home based business, produce stand, residential use, silviculture, and secondary suite. Permitted principal uses in the Agriculture 1 zone are farm use, agriculture and residential. The minimum parcel size in Subdivision District 'D' is 2.0 hectares irrespective of the level of servicing available.

Intergovernmental Implications

Given the regional importance of the Nanaimo Airport, the Cowichan Valley Regional District, City of Nanaimo, and Town of Ladysmith are included in the stakeholder list for this planning project. The RGS

recognizes the need to coordinate planning with First Nations. The Terms of Reference includes a list of First Nations who have indicated interest in the lands that include the Nanaimo Airport lands who will be engaged with as part of this project (see Attachment 1).

Public Consultation Implications

As outlined in the Consultation Plan within the Terms of Reference, public consultation includes key local stakeholder engagement and broad public consultation. Drop-in office hours in Cassidy for three days is planned as an opportunity for local residents to learn about the project and provide input, and a public meeting or open house with presentation by staff is planned to target a broad range of interested public from the wider region. Planning staff will seek to meet with stakeholder groups individually either by attending meetings they already have scheduled or at a meeting specifically to discuss the project.

ALTERNATIVES

1. That the Terms or Reference including the Consultation Plan for the “Nanaimo Airport Planning Bylaw Updates” be endorsed.
2. That the Terms or Reference including the Consultation Plan for the “Nanaimo Airport Planning Bylaw Updates” be amended.
3. Not proceed with the Terms or Reference including the Consultation Plan for the “Nanaimo Airport Planning Bylaw Updates”.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The resources needed for this project are largely staff time. The 2018 budget includes a small amount for community engagement such as facility rentals and printed materials.

Approximately 0.5 full-time staff equivalent from Strategic and Community Development and mapping resources will be assigned to the project through to completion. All community, stakeholder and First Nations engagement, along with bylaw drafting, communication materials drafting and design will be completed by RDN staff.

STRATEGIC PLAN IMPLICATIONS

The Board’s Strategic Plan recognizes “focus on economic health” and this project will advance the goal to “support both our traditional industries including forestry, tourism, manufacturing and fishing as well as emerging knowledge based and technology based industries.” The process proposes to address issues of jurisdiction at the airport and balance the local matter of land use with the regional provision of air transportation. Goals of other focus areas of the Strategic Plan for “focus on the environment” and “focus on relationships” will also be advanced through this project.



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December 6, 2018

Reviewed by:

- G. Garbutt, General Manager, Strategic and Community Development
- P. Carlyle, Chief Administrative Officer

Attachments

1. Terms of Reference for Nanaimo Airport Planning Bylaw Updates Project