
TO: Committee of the Whole **MEETING:** January 8, 2019

FROM: Jeannie Bradburne **FILE:** 1700-06
Director of Finance

SUBJECT: Public Engagement Review of the 2019 Proposed Budget

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the public consultation results be incorporated into the Board's deliberations on the proposed 2019 budget.

SUMMARY

The 2019 preliminary budget information was made available on the RDN website for public access at getinvolved.rdn.ca/ and rdn.bc.ca/financial-reports. On December 5, a survey was opened to the public titled "How do you want to learn about and share input on the Regional District of Nanaimo budget in the future?" The survey remained open until December 31 and was heavily promoted, including a news release, newspaper advertisements in multiple papers throughout the region, and social media posts. During this time, RDN Budget Talks received 324 visits, 3 questions were asked and answered, and 13 surveys were completed. The results of the surveys are located in Appendix 1 and the Question & Answer (Q&A) in Appendix 2.

BACKGROUND

At the December 4, 2018 Committee of the Whole, the following motions were made:

1. That the public consultation on the proposed 2019 budget proceed with the results of such consultation reported to the Board.
2. That during the public consultation feedback be sought on how to best obtain public input on future budgets.
3. That the proposed 2019 budget form the basis of public consultation.

A survey titled "How do you want to learn about and share input on the Regional District of Nanaimo budget in the future?" was created and published December 5, 2018 on the RDN's website under the RDN Budget Talks section of Get Involved RDN!. The survey remained open until December 31, 2018. A news release was issued on December 5, 2018 inviting residents to complete the survey, and was prominently displayed under the News & Highlights section of the RDN's website. There was follow-up from both local newspapers and radio to request further information for their stories. Further steps were taken to ensure public awareness of the survey, including:

- Newspaper Advertisements:
 - Gabriola Sounder – December 12, 2018

- Nanaimo News Bulletin – December 13, 2018
- PQNews – December 13, 2018
- Twitter
 - December 19, 2018
456 impressions (views)
18 engagements (users clicked on the item)
 - December 27, 2018
392 impressions (views)
6 engagements (users clicked on the item)
- Facebook
 - December 19, 2018
1,366 reached (views)
68 engagements (users clicked on the item)
 - December 27, 2018
1,147 reached (views)
37 engagements (users clicked on the item)

The December 19, 2018 Facebook advertisement was boosted to increase the number of residents who would see the posting. Further to the above, the Survey was noted in local newspaper articles, and circulated by residents on social media.

RDN Budget Talks received a total of 324 visits and three questions asked and answered, which can be found in Appendix 2.

A total of 13 surveys were received. A preference was shown to be able to provide input on future RDN budgets online through Get Involved RDN (11 votes) and by direct email (6 votes). Engagement events, such as open houses or pop-up events were not favoured, receiving only 1 vote. Further, the survey showed that residents want to learn more about the differences between municipal and regional governments (8 out of 13), services provided in the entire RDN (5 requests), services provided in a resident's specific area (5 requests), and more details about the services provided in the resident's specific area (5 requests). Two residents responded that they would like to learn how to get new services in their area. An open ended question requested any thoughts or comments on the proposed 2019 budget. Common themes did not appear in the open ended question. All of the responses and a full report on the survey results can be found in Appendix 1.

ALTERNATIVES

1. That the Board receive the public consultation results on the proposed 2019 budget as per the January 8, 2019 Staff Report.
2. That the Board provide alternate direction.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The financial implications of the proposed 2019 budget were highlighted in the 2019 Proposed Budget Overview Report on the December 4, 2018 Committee of the Whole. The RDN Budget Talks platform was the preferred means of communication to residents regarding the budget (see Appendix 1). The cost to continue to use this platform is minimal and already incorporated into the budget. The survey also indicated a desire to learn more about regional government. The cost for this will vary depending on the level and platform for public engagement and education.

STRATEGIC PLAN IMPLICATIONS

Focus On Service And Organizational Excellence - As We Invest In Regional Services We Look At Both Costs And Benefits - The RDN Will Be Effective And Efficient



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January 2, 2019

Reviewed by:

- D. Wells, General Manager, Corporate Services
- P. Carlyle, Chief Administrative Officer

Attachments:

1. Appendix 1 - Survey titled "How do you want to learn about and share input on the Regional District of Nanaimo budget in the future?"
2. Appendix 2 - RDN Budget Talks Q&A Summary