



Date: 05/11/2019

To: Chair and Directors, Finance/Budget Committee

And To: John MacLean, Chief Administrative Officer

From: Emily Epp, Manager of Communications

Date of Meeting: Finance-Budget Committee_Nov13_2019

File: 550-01

Short Summary:

Review of CRD Public Engagement Events

Voting:

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Memorandum:

Following a report from staff at the March 22, 2019 meeting and a discussion of the Board's desire to continue holding Information Fairs each year, the Board expressed interest in revisiting the conversation around the CRD's current public engagement events during the 2020 budget discussions.

Since that report, the CRD's 2020-2022 strategic plan has been finalized with a goal to create and implement a community engagement/consultation strategy due Y3:Q1 (March 2022). During the development of that strategy, CRD staff will do a comprehensive review of the CRD's current and past engagement activities to determine areas for improvement.

However, ahead of that review and strategy development, the following information is presented on the public engagement opportunities currently in the 2020 budget to help inform budgetary discussions.

The two types of events included in the Communications budget are:

- a) Information Fairs
- b) Meet and Greets.

Information Fairs

Every year the Cariboo Regional District budgets for one Information Fair in the north, central and south areas, for a total of three per year. These events are an informal tradeshow-style event where residents can meet with their Electoral Area directors, CRD staff and other agencies to discuss issues specific to their community. This format was selected by the Board in 2015 to replace the previous Town Halls, which had very low public attendance.

- Based on feedback from other local government communications staff, average attendance at local government public events is 10-15% of the population. At the Information Fairs held in 2017, 2018 and 2019, we have seen an average of 9% of the community population attend each event.
- On average, each event costs about \$1,700. We budget \$7,275 annually to cover all three events. Based on attendance, we spend an average of \$60 per attendee.
- We invite agency representatives to attend and host a booth – typically we have about 20 agency reps attend. The agency reps seem to value and appreciate the events, although in the past some have expressed disappointment at low public turnout.
- Each info fair takes about 25 hours of staff time to coordinate.

The following is a summary of previous events. The first information fair events were held in 2015 in McLeese Lake, Bouchie Lake and 108 Mile Ranch, but we don't have statistics on those events.

Date	Event	Location	Cost	Attendees	Agencies	Cost per attendee	% of Community Population
May 2017	N.Cariboo Info Fair	Kersley	\$1,500	19	12	\$77	5%
April 2018	N.Cariboo Info Fair	Nazko	\$1,800	13	11	\$135	7%
April 2018	S.Cariboo Info Fair	Lone Butte	\$1,800	26	11	\$70	9%
May 2019	N.Cariboo Info Fair	Barlow Creek	\$1,400	35	15	\$40	6%
July 2019	S.Cariboo Info Fair	Forest Grove	\$1,400	70	28	\$20	24%
Oct. 2019	C.Cariboo Info Fair	Williams Lake	\$2,500	95	45	\$25	1%

Meet & Greets

At the request of the previous Board of Directors, staff also budget for one “meet your director” event in each Electoral Area per year (“meet and greet” events). These events are initiated by Directors and organized by the Communications department.

The budget to hold these events totals \$17,400 each year, to cover the venue rentals and advertising. This equates to about \$1,450 per event.

Since the Board decided in 2015 to include annual funding for these events, only 3 meet and greet events have been held – one in 2015 and two in 2017. We only have recorded statistics for one of those Meet & Greet events, which saw 23 attendees.

NOTE: It should be noted that the previous Board endorsed a policy not to host centralized budget meetings and rather have budget information available on the website and at the Area Branch libraries. As such, public engagement regarding the CRD's budget is not included in the Communications budget.

Summary

Broadly speaking, events that are not tied to a specific project, issue or initiative have lower public participation. However, overall attendance numbers for CRD events generally fit with the typical attendance at local government events (10-15% of population). Individually, though, our events range greatly in attendance.

When Communications staff review and develop a public engagement strategy for the CRD, as outlined in the strategic plan, staff will look for opportunities to continue face-to-face interaction with residents yet do so creatively to engage the public in a cost-effective manner. Staff plan to balance face-to-face and digital engagement, with consideration that the value in face-to-face engagement goes beyond return on investment numbers.

Budget Implications

In the meantime, in terms of budgeting, staff recommend keeping the Information Fairs in the budget, because they are meeting average attendance targets and do seem to be of value to attendees and agency representatives. However, the Board may want to consider whether they still want to budget for 12 Meet and Greet events a year when they have rarely been utilized.

Attachments:

None

Financial Implications:

The proposed 2020 communications budget includes \$17,400 for Meet and Greet events (12 per year) and \$7,275 for Information Fairs (three per year).

Policy Implications:

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Alignment with Strategic Plan:

- ☒ **Communication:** Facilitate communication strategies throughout the entire Cariboo Regional District that meet the needs of residents, community stakeholders, and other levels of government.
- ☐ **Planning:** Intentionally plan services and activities of the CRD to prepare for future needs of residents and community stakeholders.
- ☐ **Economic Sustainability:** Foster an environment to ensure the economic sustainability of CRD communities and the region.
- ☐ **Governance:** Ensure that CRD governance policy and practices are intentional, transparent, and respectful.

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CAO Comments:

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Options:

- 1) Receipt;
- 2) Receipt and other action.

Recommendation:

That the agenda item summary from Emily Epp, Manager of Communications, dated November 5, 2019, regarding a review of CRD public engagement events, be received. *Further action at the discretion of the Committee.*