

## CITY OF NANAIMO

### BUSINESS CASE – Development Services Division: Community Development Clerk

#### CURRENT OVERVIEW

The Community Development Department and Development Approvals Department operate within the Development Services Division (DSD). Community Development has a mandate to provide oversight and management of long-range land use planning, as well as planning, programs and initiatives related to Sustainability, Social, Heritage, and Reconciliation. Development Approvals has a mandate to facilitate development approvals in accordance with applicable land use regulations, bylaws and policies, and respond to development enquiries and information requests from the public, City staff and external agencies.

#### Sustainability Section

In 2021, Council established the Sustainability Section within the Community Development Department. This Section includes 2 FTEs:

Position	# of FTEs
Manager, Sustainability	1
Environmental Planner	1

The Sustainability Section does not have dedicated admin support. Currently, limited admin support is provided by a shared Steno – Planning with the Community Planning Section.

Given Council’s direction to accelerate climate action upon declaring a climate emergency in 2019, and the urgency and scale of change needed to meet the climate targets and environmental goals set in the City Plan, the Sustainability Section developed a work plan which currently includes but is not limited to:

- Implementation of the climate and environmental sustainability policies in the Green Nanaimo section of the City Plan.
- City Plan indicators and monitoring strategy development.
- Climate/Environment communication strategy development and implementation.
- BC Energy Step Code upper steps adoption and GHG requirements development.
- Management of energy and climate related rebates such as CleanBC Better Homes, Woodstove Exchange, Home Energy Assessments.
- Agents of Change climate volunteer program development.
- Cool It! Climate Leadership Training Program for students.
- Community Watershed Restoration Grant administration.
- FCM Community Efficiency Financing Program feasibility study.
- Supporting the operation of the Environment Committee.
- Development application referrals.
- Energy and emissions/climate action reporting.

The following projects and programs to be led by the Sustainability Section are identified in the 2023-2027 Draft Financial Plan:

- Consumption Based Emissions Inventory and Carbon Footprint Calculator
- Nanaimo E-Mobility Strategy
- EV Charging Infrastructure Rebate Program

- Building Benchmarking
- Building Retrofit Roadmap
- Home Retrofit Support Program
- Community Environmental Sustainability Project Grant.

In addition, the Province significantly increased funding support to municipalities through the newly established Local Government Climate Action Program (LGCAP) to accelerated climate mitigation and adaptation action. This first round of funding must be spent by March 2025. The Sustainability Section and Departments across the City will work to leverage LGCAP funds to support the City Plan policies for greenhouse gas emissions reduction and climate adaptation.

Current Planning Section

The Current Planning Section is within the Development Approvals Department and includes 8.5 (FTEs):

<b>Position</b>	<b># of FTEs</b>
Manager, Current Planning	1
Planners	4
Planning Assistants	2
Steno - Planning	1
Community Development Clerk	0.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>8.5</b>

The 0.5 FTE Community Development Clerk is a shared FTE within the Development Approvals Department. The 1.5 FTEs for the Steno/Clerk also supports a rotating schedule for switchboard break coverage in DSD.

The Current Planning section is responsible for:

- Administering the Zoning Bylaw, Parking Bylaw, and Sign Bylaw;
- Administering the Development Permit Area Guidelines;
- Processing development-related applications including Official Community Plan amendments, rezonings, temporary use permits, covenant amendments, development permits and development variance permits;
- Processing applications for the Board of Variance;
- Processing applications for liquor licences, sign permits, telecommunications facilities, and Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR);
- Reviewing business license applications for compliance with Zoning Bylaw and applicable land use regulations; and
- Supporting the Design Advisory Panel and Board of Variance committees.

**BUSINESS ISSUE**

There is a need to provide adequate administrative capacity in the Sustainability and Current Planning Sections to effectively meet service demands and allow staff the capacity to carry out projects and programs that implement the City Plan goals and provide timely approval processes.

The workload for the Sustainability team continues to grow with more programs being established to advance the goals of the newly adopted City Plan: Nanaimo Reimagined. The limited admin support from the Steno – Planning, in Community Planning, is inadequate to support the Sustainability Section. Without

dedicated support, many of the administrative tasks for Sustainability will be assigned to the Environmental Planner:

- Reducing their capacity to manage other projects and programs in the Section's work plan;
- Impeding the timely and effective delivery of many projects; and
- Jeopardizing potential external funding opportunities.

In addition to limited support from the Steno, Sustainability estimates that an additional 0.5 FTE of dedicated admin support would meet their existing and near future demand.

In 2017, a corporate reorganization reduced the number of Stenos in Current Planning from 2 to 1. In 2019, a business case was put forward to re-establish a second full-time Clerk/Steno. Council gave direction for the addition of a Community Development Clerk in DSD to provide shared admin support to the department, including 0.5 FTE capacity in Current Planning. For the past 4 years, the 0.5 FTE has assisted in a limited capacity, and the workload and responsibilities of Current Planning admin staff have grown and continue to exceed the admin capacity in order to meet targeted service levels. Some of the key challenges include:

- More complex development applications received in the last 5 years, including larger scale multi-family residential projects has resulted in greater volumes of information exchange with applicants, document filing, editing of correspondence and Council reports. Without sufficient admin support, these tasks greatly burden technical Planning staff and delay application reviews.
- Additional tasks to handle electronic application submissions. Since COVID, development applications have been received digitally and require admin support to provide links and instructions to applicants, manage incoming submissions, and maintain a tracking list of new files to be assigned.
- Maintaining timely updates to the City's "What's Building in My Neighbourhood?" public portal to reflect application submissions, revisions and file status.
- New demand to create maps for Council report agendas, including context maps, location plans, aerial photos, and bylaw schedule maps for each agenda item. Previously, this work was completed by GIS staff.
- Increased committee support – planning staff have in the past facilitated meetings and took minutes for committees such as the Board of Variance. Changes in recent years require the use of eScribe to prepare agendas and record or livestream meetings. Admin staff now support this role regularly with additional overtime hours.
- Delays in completing committee meeting minutes and forwarding to Legislative Services for Council adoption.
- Completion of other admin projects, such as:
  - Regular monitoring and communication to applicants regarding development permits that are soon to expire.
  - File archiving of completed development applications.
  - Updating procedures and document templates to improve staff understanding of process, consistency and efficiency in document creation.
- Staff feeling overwhelmed leading to poor morale and employee retention within the Section.

Nanaimo's population is projected to grow an additional 40,000 people over the next 25 years. City-wide development activity will continue to create new housing and job opportunities for residents, and this activity will maintain pressures on Current Planning staff who support development approvals. Additional

admin capacity would enable staff to address these challenges and support the implementation of City Plan policies to achieve livable neighbourhoods and a thriving economy.

The intent of this business case is to increase administrative capacity in the Current Planning and Sustainability Sections. The proposal would add 1 FTE to DSD providing an additional 0.5 FTE support to Current Planning and an additional 0.5 FTE support to Sustainability.

### **EXPECTED OUTCOME**

Adding a permanent full-time Community Development Clerk position will increase administrative support in the Sustainability and Current Planning Sections, providing sufficient staffing capacity to meet service demands, achieve City Plan goals and address the following issues:

- Delays and challenges in meeting deadlines for managing the preparation of and revisions to Council and Committee reports for large agendas, administering grant and/ rebate programs, and supporting special sustainability initiatives.
- Potential overtime in order to complete daily tasks and manage heavy workloads in a timely manner. This includes during times of grant administration.
- Poor staff morale and experience of being “stressed” and “overwhelmed”.
- Limited back up coverage / assistance for existing admin support.
- Challenges taking on new tasks/responsibilities given limited admin capacity.

### **OPTIONS**

#### **Option #1 – Add a Community Development Clerk Position, effective April 1, 2023**

Add one permanent full-time Community Development Clerk in in the Development Services Division, reporting to the Manager of Current Planning, providing an additional 0.5 FTE admin support to the Current Planning Section and an additional 0.5 FTE admin support to the Sustainability Section.

#### **Benefits:**

- Provides the necessary capacity to manage program/file loads and meet service demand in each Section.
- Restores the admin capacity that Current Planning previously had and continues to need to achieve targeted service levels and timelines.
- Provides the new Sustainability Section with dedicated support to ensure effective service levels reports, agendas, programs, grants and rebates.
- Provides additional admin support and relief to assist with planning committees (e.g. Environment Committee, Design Advisory Panel and Board of Variance).
- Provides additional capacity as well as relief coverage to the existing admin support in Community Development and Current Planning for vacation time and/or absences due to illness.
- Improves staff morale and retention.

#### **Weaknesses:**

- Permanent increase to DSD annual operating budget.

#### **Financial Analysis:**

- Position will be a CUPE level 7 working 35 hours/week.
- Estimated budget impact for 2023 for wages and benefits is \$64,100 based on an April 1<sup>st</sup> start date.

- Additional annual costs are estimated at \$1,300 in 2023 for network charges.
- One-time costs upon the creation of the position are projected at \$6,000 in 2023 for purchase of telephone, computer and furniture.

### **Option #2 – Status Quo**

The Sustainability and Current Planning Sections would continue to depend on the limited administrative support available in their respective sections.

#### Benefits:

- No increase to DSD annual operating budget.

#### Weaknesses:

- Does not address the need to increase staffing to manage workloads more effectively.
- Reduces the efficiency of technical staff who have to take on administrative tasks that would otherwise be delegated to a Steno or Clerk.
- Does not recognize or address increased operational demands for admin support generated by the newly established Sustainability Section.
- Would continue to impact the responsibilities of the existing admin support in Current Planning and Community Planning.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

Add one permanent full-time Community Development Clerk in in the Development Services Division, reporting to the Manager of Current Planning, providing an additional 0.5 FTE admin support to the Current Planning Section and an additional 0.5 FTE admin support to the Sustainability Section.