



**General Purposes Committee
Electronic Meeting**

**Council Chambers, City Hall
6911 No. 3 Road**

**Monday, March 20, 2023
4:00 p.m.**

Pg. # ITEM

MINUTES

GP-3 *Motion to adopt the **minutes** of the meeting of the General Purposes Committee held on March 6, 2023.*



ENGINEERING AND PUBLIC WORKS DIVISION

1. **STEVESTON ISLAND DIKE PRELIMINARY DESIGN – PUBLIC AND STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT**
(File Ref. No. 10-6060-01) (REDMS No. 7123938)

GP-9 **See Page GP-9 for full report**

Designated Speaker: Eric Sparolin

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

That, as outlined in the staff report titled “Steveston Island Dike Preliminary Design – Public and Stakeholder Engagement,” dated February 8, 2023, from the Director, Engineering, the preliminary design for the Steveston Island Dike project be endorsed for the public and stakeholder engagement.



General Purposes Committee Agenda – Monday, March 20, 2023

Pg. #

ITEM

2. **2022 GENERAL LOCAL AND SCHOOL ELECTION: SUMMARY OF HIGHLIGHTS**

(File Ref. No. 12-8125-80-01) (REDMS No. 7106730)

GP-20

See Page **GP-20** for full report

ADDED

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

That the staff report titled “2022 General Local and School Election: Summary of Highlights”, dated March 2, 2023 be received for information.

☐

ADJOURNMENT

☐



General Purposes Committee

Date: Monday, March 6, 2023

Place: Council Chambers
Richmond City Hall

Present: Mayor Malcolm D. Brodie, Chair
Councillor Chak Au
Councillor Carol Day
Councillor Laura Gillanders
Councillor Kash Heed
Councillor Andy Hobbs
Councillor Alexa Loo
Councillor Bill McNulty
Councillor Michael Wolfe

Call to Order: The Chair called the meeting to order at 4:02 p.m.

AGENDA ADDITION

It was moved and seconded

That Richmond's Ecowaste landfill removed from the Agricultural Land Reserve be added to the agenda as Item No. 4.

CARRIED

MINUTES

It was moved and seconded

That the minutes of the meeting of the General Purposes Committee held on February 21, 2023, be adopted as circulated.

CARRIED

General Purposes Committee
Monday, March 6, 2023

**PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT AND ENGINEERING AND
PUBLIC WORKS DIVISIONS**

**1. STEVESTON HIGHWAY MULTI-USE PATHWAY PROJECT -
UPDATE**

(File Ref. No. 01-0060-20-LIEC1) (REDMS No. 7114588)

Staff noted that (i) the multi-use pathway project along Steveston Highway has been a part of the Regional and Municipal plans for a long time, (ii) Council approved Phase 1 and 2 of the project in 2019 and 2020, (iii) about \$350,000 of work has been completed to date, and (iv) if project scope is reduced, discussions with TransLink would be required to discuss funding options.

In reply to queries from Committee, staff advised that (i) a reduced scope could mean a shorter route, (ii) only the curb lanes will be narrowed, (iii) currently there is no automated enforcement along Steveston Highway, however it has been requested, and staff will follow-up, (iv) Regional strategies may not always align with municipal plans, (v) the Development Cost Charge budget has \$34M, (vi) standards for cycling networks have changed significantly over the years, (vii) no direct comparison has been done between Williams Road and Steveston Highway, (viii) costs for connection to the new tunnel has not been determined, (ix) boulevards will separate riders and traffic, (x) environmental studies have not been done, however our air quality is excellent, (xi) an in-depth analysis of Williams Road bike lanes can be conducted, and (xii) funding is at TransLink's discretion.

John Roston, Richmond resident, referenced his submission (attached to and forming part of these Minutes as Schedule 1) and expressed concerns with cyclist safety and air quality along Steveston Highway.

Discussion took place on safety concerns along Steveston Highway and comparing Williams Road and Steveston Highway for best options for the potential multi-use pathway.

As a result of the discussion, the following **referral motion** was introduced:

It was moved and seconded

That the staff report titled "Steveston Highway Multi-Use Pathway – Update" be referred back to staff to:

- a) compare the implications of Steveston Highway and Williams Road as multi-use pathways;*
- b) examine the feasibility of a Class A bike lane on Williams Road; and*
- c) investigate funding implications.*

2.

General Purposes Committee

Monday, March 6, 2023

The question on the referral motion was not called as discussion took place on planning for the future and air quality concerns.

In reply to a further query from Committee, staff advised that a report back could take a couple of months.

The question on the referral motion was then called and it was **CARRIED** with Cllr. Wolfe opposed.

CAO'S OFFICE

2. CITY OF RICHMOND FLAG POLICY

(File Ref. No. 01-0005-01) (REDMS No. 7066031)

In reply to queries from Committee, staff advised that (i) option 1 and 2 do not have a formal request process for the public, (ii) members of the public can delegate to Council or Council can bring forward a motion for additional flag requests, (iii) flag poles can be added to the City's infrastructure, and (iv) the City of Delta's City Clerk's Office manages flag requests from the public.

It was moved and seconded

- (1) *That option 2 as outlined in the report titled "City of Richmond Flag Policy" dated January 26, 2023 from the Director, Intergovernmental Relations and Corporate and Strategic Planning be endorsed; and*
- (2) *That an additional flag pole be erected at the east side of City Hall (fronting No. 3 Road) so long as the Ukrainian flag is flying.*

CARRIED

3. COUNCIL STRATEGIC PLAN 2022-2026

(File Ref. No. 01-0005-01) (REDMS No. 7142456)

It was moved and seconded

That the Council Strategic Plan 2022-2026 for the current term of office as outlined in the report titled "Council Strategic Plan 2022-2026" from the Director, Intergovernmental Relations and Corporate and Strategic Planning, dated February 15, 2023, be adopted.

The question on the motion was not called as in reply to queries from Committee, staff noted that housing needs falls under Strategic and Sustainable Community Growth, and focus areas and priorities are broad to allow Council to achieve the goals.

Discussion took place on addressing housing needs and including it as a specific priority, and as a result the following **referral motion** was introduced:

General Purposes Committee
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It was moved and seconded

That the staff report titled “Council Strategic Plan 2022-2026” be referred back to staff to include housing options for all as a priority.

DEFEATED

Opposed: Mayor Brodie

Cllrs. Au

Heed

Hobbs

Loo

McNulty

It was moved and seconded

That the second bullet under Strategic and Sustainable Community Growth be amended by removing “enhance” and replacing with “prioritize”.

CARRIED

It was moved and seconded

That the fifth bullet under Strategic and Sustainable Community Growth be amended by adding “and proactively” following “Work collaboratively”.

CARRIED

It was moved and seconded

That the title to the fourth strategic focus area be amended to “Responsible Financial Management and Governance”.

CARRIED

Opposed: Cllrs. Heed

Loo

The question on the main motion, as amended, was then called and it was **CARRIED**.

4. RICHMOND’S ECOWASTE LANDFILL REMOVED FROM THE AGRICULTURAL LAND RESERVE

(File Ref. No.)

Discussion took place on the Provincial announcement to remove Richmond’s Ecowaste landfill from the Agricultural Land Reserve. As a result of the discussion, the following **referral motion** was introduced:

It was moved and seconded

That the Richmond’s Ecowaste landfill matter be referred to staff to analyze the removal of the land from the Agricultural Land Reserve and provide advice regarding options.

4.

General Purposes Committee
Monday, March 6, 2023

The question on the referral motion was not called as further discussion took place on concerns regarding potential future use for the land and soil reclamation and compensation for Richmond.

The question on the referral motion was then called and it was **CARRIED**.

ADJOURNMENT

It was moved and seconded

That the meeting adjourn (5:35 p.m.).

CARRIED

Certified a true and correct copy of the Minutes of the meeting of the General Purposes Committee of the Council of the City of Richmond held on Monday, March 6, 2023.

Mayor Malcolm D. Brodie
Chair

Sarah Goddard
Legislative Services Associate

**Schedule 1 to the Minutes of the
General Purposes Committee meeting
of Richmond City Council held on
Monday, March 6, 2023.**

**Submission to General Purposes Committee, March 6, 2023, Agenda Item 1, by John Roston
Steveston Highway MUP or Williams Segregated Bi-Directional Bike Path?**

Health Effects

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has studied the health effects of air pollution from highways on those nearby (quotes below from attached report). A highway is defined as a roadway with four lanes or more of vehicular traffic. Steveston Highway is obviously a highway. Williams is not. The study outlines the health hazards for those within 300 ft. of the roadway. The proposed Steveston Highway MUP is 3 ft. (1m) from the roadway.

“Pollutants directly emitted from cars, trucks and other motor vehicles are found in higher concentrations near major roads. Examples of directly emitted pollutants include particulate matter (PM), carbon monoxide (CO), oxides of nitrogen (NOx), and benzene, though hundreds of chemicals are emitted by motor vehicles. ... Individually and in combination, many of the pollutants found near roadways have been associated with adverse health effects.”

“Health effects that have been associated with proximity to roads include asthma onset and aggravation, cardiovascular disease, reduced lung function, impaired lung development in children, pre-term and low-birthweight infants, childhood leukemia, and premature death.”

“The type of vehicles and fuel used, traffic activity, and the wind speed and direction can all have big effects on pollutant levels near major roadways. Generally, the more traffic, the higher the emissions; however, certain activities like congestion, stop-and-go movement or high-speed operations can increase emissions of certain pollutants. The combination of rush hour and calm winds in the morning often leads to the highest concentrations during this time of the day.”

Aside from the much greater number of vehicles using Steveston Highway, those vehicles have a much higher proportion of heavy-duty diesel trucks than the vehicles using Williams.

“Per vehicle, heavy-duty diesel trucks can emit more of certain pollutants (e.g., NOx and PM) and contribute disproportionately to the emissions from all motor vehicles.”

Translink and BC Government Funding

The staff report implies that the Translink funding secured for this project (\$5,010,000) and the BC Active Transportation Infrastructure Grant (\$500,000) will be lost if the Steveston Highway MUP is not constructed. There is no indication that Translink and the Infrastructure Grant will be lost if the segregated bike path is built on Williams instead. Neither Translink nor the BC Government wants to see headlines pointing out that they prefer to spend their money on a major health hazard.

Staff Report

The staff report says that the existing painted bike lanes on Williams “may not be considered suitable by all cyclists.” No one is suggesting that Williams be left as is. The alternative to the Steveston Highway MUP is a segregated, bi-directional bike path on Williams.

The staff report says that the Steveston Highway MUP “can encourage recreational walking.” The adverse health effects are far worse for someone walking along Steveston Highway with much longer exposure than for someone cycling. We should not be encouraging people to walk so close to a highway.



City of Richmond

Report to Committee

To: General Purposes Committee

Date: February 8, 2023

From: Milton Chan, P.Eng
Director, Engineering

File: 10-6060-01/2023-Vol
01

Re: **Steveston Island Dike Preliminary Design – Public and Stakeholder
Engagement**

Staff Recommendation

That, as outlined in the staff report titled “Steveston Island Dike Preliminary Design – Public and Stakeholder Engagement,” dated February 8, 2023, from the Director, Engineering, the preliminary design for the Steveston Island Dike project be endorsed for the public and stakeholder engagement.

Milton Chan, P.Eng
Director, Engineering
(604-276-4377)

REPORT CONCURRENCE		
ROUTED TO:	CONCURRENCE	CONCURRENCE OF GENERAL MANAGER
Real Estate Services	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Parks Services	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Roads & Construction	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Sustainability & District Energy	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Intergovernmental Relations	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
SENIOR STAFF REPORT REVIEW	INITIALS: 	APPROVED BY CAO

Staff Report

Origin

The Council endorsed Dike Master Plan—Phase 1 report assessed and recommended flood protection measures for the west dike south of Williams Road and the south dike from Garry Point Park to No. 2 Road. Recognizing the disruptions to residents, businesses, and heritage sites posed by upgrading the dike along its existing alignment between London Farm and Gary Point Park, Phase 1 proposed a new dike on Steveston Island with floodwalls and gates to enclose Steveston Harbour as the recommended long-term solution for flood protection in the Steveston area.

Subsequently, the City pursued the recommendations from Phase 1 to develop the Steveston Island dike concept further and was awarded \$1.2 million through the National Disaster Mitigation Program to complete the Steveston Island Flood Risk Investigation. The findings of this investigation, including the conceptual design, geotechnical investigations, and the sea gate concept, were presented at the Public Works and Transportation Committee Meeting on June 19, 2019, in a staff report titled “Steveston Island Flood Protection Update,” dated May 17, 2019, from the Acting Director, Engineering.

Following the work plan outlined in the Dike Master Plan - Phase 1, staff have progressed this project forward by completing further technical assessments and initial stakeholder engagement to inform the preliminary design of the Steveston Island dike. This report presents the findings of the Steveston Island Preliminary Dike Design project and seeks Council endorsement to engage the public and key stakeholders for feedback on the proposed concepts.

This report supports Council’s Strategic Plan 2018-2022 Strategy #1 A Safe and Resilient City:

Enhance and protect the safety and well-being of Richmond.

1.2 Future-proof and maintain city infrastructure to keep the community safe.

1.3 Ensure Richmond is prepared for emergencies, both human-made and natural disasters.

This report supports Council’s Strategic Plan 2018-2022 Strategy #2 A Sustainable and Environmentally Conscious City:

Environmentally conscious decision-making that demonstrates leadership in implementing innovative, sustainable practices and supports the City's unique biodiversity and island ecology.

2.1 Continued leadership in addressing climate change and promoting circular economic principles.

Analysis

Project Location – Steveston

Located in the southwest corner of Richmond, Steveston is home to a vibrant community with historical buildings, diverse cultural history, and an operating harbour with over 500 commercial fishing vessels. Harbour facilities are located at two different sites – the Gulf site and the Paramount site – managed by the Steveston Harbour Authority. Steveston is protected from flooding by a perimeter dike surrounding Lulu Island.

The assessment completed for the Dike Master Plan Phase 1 identified that raising the dike in its current alignment will majorly impact the existing properties, businesses, and infrastructure in the Steveston area. Additionally, it would leave many new and historic buildings like the Britannia Shipyards and the Gulf of Georgia Cannery outside of it unprotected.

The Steveston Island Dike project proposes to change the existing Steveston breakwater into the City's primary flood defense between London Landing and Garry Point Park as an alternative to raising the existing dike. The proposed dike would provide a standard of flood protection that meets provincial guidelines, working in tandem with the existing dike, with a navigable gate at the harbour entrance that would close under high water conditions that risk overtopping the existing dike. The foreshore area along the existing dike alignment will be raised over the years through development or as opportunities arise. Council endorsed this alignment presented in the staff report titled "Dike Master Plan – Phase 1 Report, at the April 22, 2013, Regular Council Meeting.



Figure 1. Steveston Island Dike Layout

Figure 1 above shows the proposed layout of the Steveston Island dike. The planned work area is primarily contained on Steveston Island and the Fraser River riverbed. This alignment ties into the existing dike at the eastern edge of Garry Point Park and at Dyke Road at the London Landing area. The section of dike east of this project will be raised in the upcoming years as a part of an active Capital project.

Technical and Environmental Site Assessments

With an average land elevation of 1.0 metre above sea level, Richmond is located wholly within the floodplain of the Fraser River and is susceptible to flood risks posed by climate change-induced sea level rise, spring freshets and storm surges. For this project, sea level rise was specified as 1.0 metre by the year 2100, as accepted by the province, and a land subsidence allowance of 0.2 metres was established for the same period.

This project completed hydraulic and seismic assessments, and wave impact analysis to inform the preliminary dike design. Additionally, preliminary environmental investigations were completed to better understand the existing habitat at this location. In addition, an Archeological Overview Assessment was also conducted for this project by the Musqueam Archeology Department; no archaeological sites or areas of archaeological potential were identified during the survey.

Preliminary Dike Design

The preliminary dike design outlined in Figure 2 is proposed to protect the harbour and the adjacent community from flood hazards and enhance the adjacent habitat. The concept involves enclosing the harbour with a dike on Steveston Island and floodwalls with gates at the east and west ends that can be closed during high water levels.

The dike will span the 3.3 kilometres length of Steveston Harbour from London Landing in the east to Garry Point Park in the west. From east to west, this includes the following:

- An earth-fill dike connection to the existing dike along Dyke Road at the London Landing parking area;
- A flood wall across the east entrance to the park;
- An earth fill dike along Steveston Island;
- A flood wall along part of the existing breakwater west of Steveston Island; and
- A flood wall along the river bed and harbour entrance to a connection at Garry Point.



Figure 2. Rendering of the Steveston Island Dike

Earth-Fill Dike: The earth-fill portion of the dike will have a crest width of ten metres to permit future raising without future widening of the base and a 4 metres maintenance access road atop the dike. The crest elevation will vary between 4.7 metres and 5.5 metres. Due to the varying width of the island along its length, the dike slopes will vary depending on available space. Where space permits, a 30 m riparian setback is proposed to avoid disturbing habitat and removing trees along the bank.

Flood Walls: The two proposed flood walls will consist of two rows of circular pile walls, at a width of 4 metres apart, topped with a minimum 4 metres maintenance access road with handrails. The flood walls will be designed at the second stage of preliminary design.

East Gate: The East Gate design, as shown in Figures 3 and 4, consists of a large concrete open box culvert with an access bridge above it and stop log slots to close off the gate during high tidal water levels. The access bridge design will be further refined in the second stage of the preliminary design. This gate will provide water access between the Fraser River and the Steveston Harbour for recreational use, including canoers, kayakers and paddle boarders.



Figure 3. Rendering of East Gate Concept (Looking East)



Figure 4. Bird's Eye View of the East Gate (Looking East)

Navigation Gate: The proposed type of gate for the Navigation Sea Gate is a horizontal axis sector gate. Figure 5 shows the closed Navigation Gate with an upper gate elevation of 5.5 metres to accommodate the anticipated sea level rise beyond 2100. The navigation gate design

will be completed at the second stage of preliminary design. No changes have been made since the concept design stage.

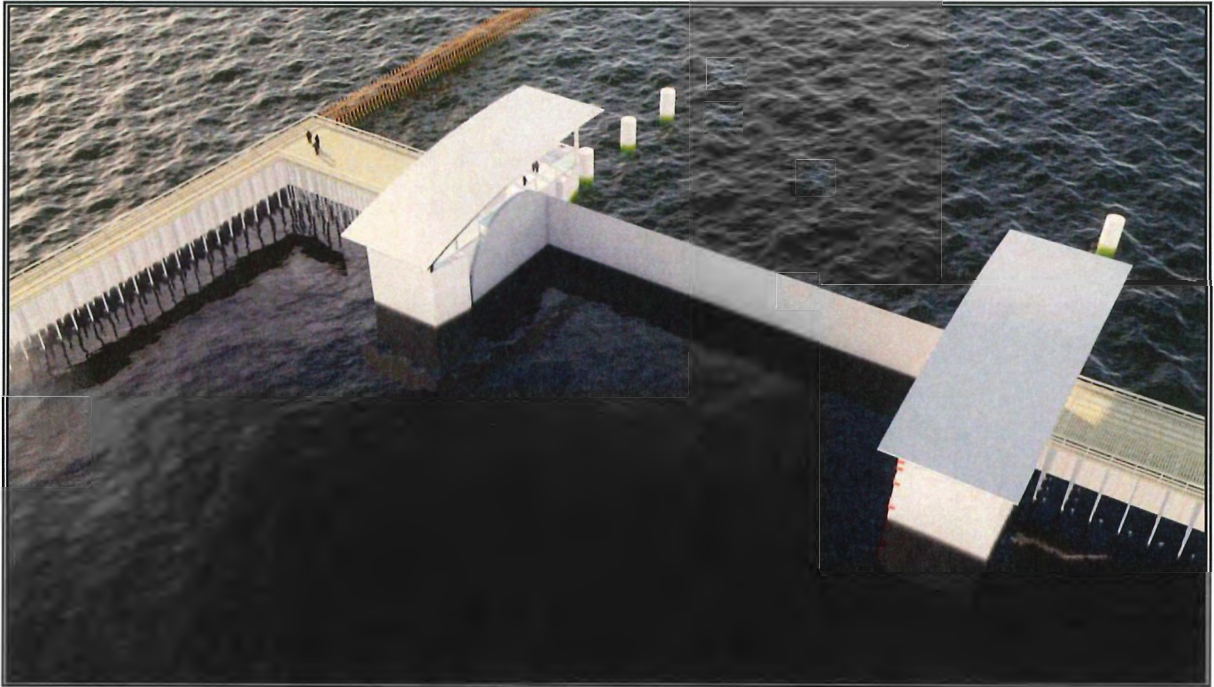


Figure 5. Closed Horizontal Axis Sector Gate (Looking West) Rendering

Breakwater: There are three proposed breakwater structures. The two rip rap breakwater structures are intended to reduce erosion from river flow and waves to protect habitat enhancement areas behind them. The third runs west of the navigation gate, as shown in Figure 2 above, and is intended to minimize wave action approaching and entering the gate. This will also be designed at a second stage of preliminary design.

Ecological Enhancement and Environmental Permitting

The proposed concept includes enhancing the existing habitat east of the East Gate (Figure 6). Enhancement works can be supported by constructing a rock berm and wood retaining walls that will be filled with river sediments to promote the development of intertidal marsh habitat at this location. Sediments will be contoured and planted, creating a diversity of elevations and habitat types, including intertidal marsh, tidal channels, and riparian floodplain. The proposed work, including enhancement, will be subject to provincial and federal environmental permitting requirements including the federal *Fisheries Act*, which is administered by the Department of Fisheries and Oceans Canada.

Council endorsed the pursuit of a formal agreement with the Department of Fisheries and Oceans Canada to establish a fish habitat bank in 2021. Staff continue the work to develop a formal, city-wide agreement for Richmond, which may take several more years to be operational. The ecological enhancements proposed for this project consider future permitting requirements to offset the modification of fish habitat that a final design may propose.



Figure 6. Proposed Intertidal Marsh Complex

Project Costs

Since the last update to Council, the project costs have continued to evolve as the project advanced and a substantial escalation in construction costs is anticipated. As the project decisions around the structural elements, land rights, environmental offsetting and public access are finalized, staff can estimate the project costs more accurately. The cost of this project will be comparable to the estimated cost to raise the dike in Steveston along the existing alignment through the village. However, the latter would significantly disrupt existing properties, underground utilities, commercial and heritage buildings, and infrastructure in Steveston, as well as impact the character of the existing waterfront area.

More refined project estimates will be prepared as the design progresses and will continue to be revised to suit the evolving market conditions. Additionally, staff will continue to develop and bring forward funding and resourcing strategies for the overall flood protection program in the coming years.

Opportunities and Considerations

Past community and stakeholder engagement generally supported creating a new dike alignment on Steveston Island based on the potential to minimize community disruption and maximize opportunities for long-term dike upgrades. The City proactively engaged key internal and

external stakeholders to inform the preliminary dike design. These discussions brought to light several opportunities and challenges associated with the project.

The proposed design and location of the Steveston Island dike presents the opportunity to integrate solutions to maximize habitat value, implement on-site habitat compensation requirements, and support a future habitat banking agreement. The proposed exploration of using dredged material for the construction of the dike aligns with circular economy objectives.

There are also opportunities to explore public access on Steveston Island by constructing trails and viewpoints along the dike and incorporating user amenities to enhance the experience. In addition, concepts to create a potential pedestrian and cyclist friendly loop connecting the London Landing to Garry Point across the stretch of Steveston Island Dike could be presented as a part of the public and stakeholder consultation to gauge public interest. This concept can be explored and developed further and incorporated into the design in future stages of the project, if supported. Additionally, staff will seek to secure senior government funding through grants and cost-share opportunities to support the development and construction of this project.

Some challenges identified for consideration include acquiring land use rights and regulatory environmental permits, a potentially extensive environmental assessment process, large project costs, and waterfront view obstructions at Steveston village. These challenges will be addressed during future stages of the project.

Proposed Public and Stakeholder Engagement

Staff recommend engagement with key external stakeholders and the public on the Steveston Island dike preliminary design. Key stakeholders include:

- Adjacent residences, businesses and the general public;
- Steveston non-profit associations and societies;
- Local First Nations;
- Richmond Advisory Committee on the Environment;
- Small Craft Harbours;
- Steveston Harbour Authority;
- Port of Vancouver;
- Department of Fishers and Oceans, Fish and Fish Habitat;
- BC Ministry of Forests;
- BC Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship;
- BC Inspector of Dikes;
- Transport Canada;
- Canadian Coast Guard;
- Urban Development Institute (UDI);
- Ducks Unlimited; and
- The City of Delta.

Public engagement events will aim to increase awareness of climate change impacts, including sea level rise and the associated flood risks. The engagement will identify public interests and opportunities relating to this project, build community support and gather stakeholder feedback.

Key external stakeholder groups will be engaged through leveraging the City's social media tools, such as Let's Talk Richmond, Facebook, Instagram, and a dedicated project webpage. In addition, staff will hold community workshops, focus group events and open houses targeting key external stakeholders either virtually or in person. The City will also engage the local indigenous communities to inform them of the proposed project and the community enhancement opportunities, and collect their feedback. The results of external stakeholder engagement and any updates to the Steveston Island dike preliminary design will be presented to Council in the future.

Next Steps

Moving forward, staff will undertake the following:

- Completing the second phase of the preliminary design, which will constitute the designs for the structural components, including the flood wall, navigation gate, breakwater, and wharf;
- Initiating conversations with the province to negotiate land tenure on Steveston Island to facilitate the dike construction;
- Establishing requirements for the environmental assessment;
- Working with key stakeholders to establish strategic partnerships that can be leveraged to reduce construction costs; and
- Seeking funding from the senior levels of government.

The Steveston Island dike project is a long-term initiative with a multi-decade implementation timeline. Planning and proactive engagement of stakeholders allow the City to strategically implement this upgrade through grants and partnerships and accelerate the construction schedule should funding opportunities or changes in climate change science arise.

Financial Impact

None.

Conclusion

Staff have completed the preliminary design for the Steveston Island Dike proposed between Garry Point Park to the west and London Landing to the east. This dike alignment protects Steveston from flood hazards without disrupting the residents, businesses and historical sites located on the foreshore. The completed preliminary design project aims to address the more significant design decisions, provides preliminary design drawings, formalizes stakeholder support, and prepares the City for public engagement.

The Steveston Island Dike project is a unique large-scale project which, in addition to strengthening flood protection infrastructure and safeguarding the Steveston community, also

February 8, 2023

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presents many opportunities for the City to explore and benefit from. Staff will continue to advance the project and update Council as required.



Eric Sparolin, P.Eng.
Manager, Engineering Planning
(604)-247-4915



Ridhi Dalla, EIT
Project Manager, Engineering Planning
(604)-204-8521



City of Richmond

Report to Committee

To: General Purposes Committee

Date: March 2, 2023

From: Claudia Jesson
Director, City Clerk's Office

File: 12-8125-80-01/Vol 01

Re: 2022 General Local and School Election: Summary of Highlights

Staff Recommendation

That the staff report titled "2022 General Local and School Election: Summary of Highlights", dated March 2, 2023 be received for information.

Claudia Jesson
Director, City Clerk's Office
(604-276-4006)

REPORT CONCURRENCE		
ROUTED TO:	CONCURRENCE	CONCURRENCE OF GENERAL MANAGER
Finance	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
SENIOR STAFF REPORT REVIEW	INITIALS: 	APPROVED BY CAO

Staff Report

Origin

The 2022 General Local and School Election in Richmond took place on October 15, 2022. The purpose of this report is to provide a summary of the highlights of the 2022 General Local and School Election and the various election program components.

For the 2022 Local General and School Election, the main components of the election program fall under the following categories: Voting Opportunities; Advertising, Public Awareness & Engagement; Equipment & Technology; Election Supplies; Staffing; and Communicable Disease Plan. In addition to an overview of the key program components, an overview of the Election Budget will be provided.

This report supports Council's Strategic Plan 2018-2022 Strategy #8 An Engaged and Informed Community:

Ensure that the citizenry of Richmond is well-informed and engaged about City business and decision-making.

Findings of Fact

The General Local and School Election was held in all local jurisdictions across BC on October 15, 2022. The General Local and School Election in Richmond was coordinated and administered through the City Clerk's Office in accordance with the requirements of the *Local Government Act*, the *Community Charter* and the City's Bylaws.

General Local and School Elections are funded through the Election Reserve to which an annual transfer of \$117,800 is made. These annual transfers are set aside and kept in the Reserve for use during the election year. In addition, one-time additional level requests, when required, are approved by Council. Funding for the 2022 Election was approved by Council for the amount of \$900,000, with \$538,000 coming from the Election Reserve and \$362,000 being approved as a one-time additional level top-up to ensure for adequate funding. It should be noted that funds from a one-time additional level request were also utilized to fund the 2021 By-Election that was held on May 29, 2021, of which \$140,916 was unspent.

Analysis

Voting Opportunities:

Advance and General Voting Day

The 2022 General Local and School Election was based on Voting Divisions, meaning that voting places were located within designated neighborhoods and that residents were required to vote at their designated neighborhood voting place, in accordance with the Civic Election Administration and Procedure Bylaw No. 7244.

On General Voting Day, the City utilized the 38 Voting Divisions for the 2022 General Election. In addition to the voting opportunities on General Voting Day, opportunities to vote in advance were also provided. In 2022, 10 advance voting opportunities over 5 days were provided. In terms of statistics, a total of 35,093 ballots were cast in the 2022 Election representing a 24.4% voter turnout. It should be noted that historically Advance Voting has always been well received by voters and in the 2022 Election this pattern was evident, as 23% of all votes were cast during the advance voting opportunities.

For the 2022 Local Election, great effort was undertaken to provide special voting opportunities to local care facilities. Staff undertook extensive outreach to various local care facilities in order to offer residents the opportunity to vote. Out of 9 facilities that staff reached out to, a total of 6 expressed interest in offering their care home residents the opportunity to vote via a mobile poll and 2 facilities requested that voting be offered via Mail Ballots.

Overall, the in-person voting at the 10 Advance Voting opportunities and at the 38 locations on General Voting Day proceeded very well, in accordance with City's Civic Election Administration and Procedure Bylaw No. 7244 and provincial legislation. In addition to the election being legislatively compliant, great effort was expended to protect the health and safety of all voters and voting location staff through the development and strict adherence to the Communicable Disease Plan. The conduct of the 2021 By-Election during the pandemic provided staff with invaluable experience in terms of public health measures that were implemented in the 2022 General Local and School Election that were very well received by the voters.

Mail Ballot Voting

At the May 24, 2022 Council Meeting, the Civic Election Administration and Procedure Bylaw No. 7244, Amendment Bylaw No. 10349 was adopted, which expanded the eligibility for all electors to vote by mail. For the 2022 General Local and School Election, extensive work was undertaken to develop and implement the Mail Ballot Program in order to enable all voters the opportunity to vote by mail.

The Mail Ballot Program consisted of the following components:

- Development of the Mail Ballot package, Voter Instruction Guides and public messaging material;
- Development of an online web application system to enable voters to request mail ballot packages online (voters also had the option to apply via call centre);
- Establishment of Mail Ballot Office to assist electors with their mail ballot package requests, assembling mail ballot packages, delivering mail ballot packages to Canada Post, adjudicating mail ballot packages and assisting with the processing of completed mail ballot packages; and,
- Establishment of Call Centre to assist electors over the phone with their mail ballot application questions and serve as a back-up call centre for the Election Office.

In the 2018 Election, mail ballot voting was offered to persons who had a physical disability, illness or injury that affected their ability to vote at an advance voting opportunity and General Voting Day, or persons who expected to be absent from the municipality on the designated voting days. In 2018, a total of 360 mail ballots were cast, representing less than 1% of the overall ballots cast. For the 2021 By-Election, the Province of BC issued Ministerial Order M148 to Richmond providing special provisions to enable all voters to “vote by mail” due to the pandemic. For the 2021 By-Election, a total of 1,895 mail ballots were cast out of a total of 12,984 votes, representing 14.5% of all ballots cast.

Based on the 2021 By-Election figures, staff estimated that between 7,000 to 8,000 mail ballots could be requested for processing. For the 2022 General Local and School Election, 998 mail ballots were requested and a total of 926 mail ballots were cast, representing a 92% return rate. It should be noted that extensive effort was undertaken to ensure that as many completed mail ballots as possible were returned by the required deadline of 8:00 pm on General Voting Day. A significant amount of work, including human and financial resources, is required to establish and run the mail ballot program. While extensive public messaging via many mediums was undertaken to promote mail ballot voting, the vast majority of Richmond’s voters opted to vote in person in 2022. Despite the lower than anticipated interest in 2022, mail ballot voting represents an important accessible voting option for voters.

Advertising, Public Awareness and Engagement

At the core of this component is the statutory election advertising that is required to appear in local newspapers and the Voter Cards which are mailed to registered electors to advise them about voting locations, dates and times relative to their neighbourhood voting place.

In addition to these core advertising initiatives, public awareness of the election was enhanced through a variety of print, electronic and social media communications. For the 2022 Election, a significant amount of work was undertaken to ensure that the public was aware of the election and the various voting opportunities, and assistance was offered to prospective candidates.

Detailed election work aimed at raising voter awareness and voting accessibility included the following:

- Website - Usage of City’s website to promote election and a separate Election microsite was developed to house election-specific information;
- News Releases - News Releases were issued regularly (9 in total);
- Election App - Election App was developed and provided voters with election information at their fingertips;
- Advertising - Print Advertising was undertaken to meet the statutory requirements with the placement of 8 statutory ads that were supplemented with 12 additional discretionary ads in various publications and digital ads were also booked with the aim of reaching a wider audience;

- Social Media - Social Media was used extensively to share election messaging, news and information via the City's Facebook, Instagram and Twitter accounts to keep voters informed and engaged;
- Posters - Posters and Signage was used to promote different aspects of the election and election services, including both print and digital Transit Shelter advertising;
- Voter Cards – the 2022 Election was a divisional voting election, as such 142,992 voter cards were produced and mailed via addressed mail to residents to communicate their voting location for General Voting Day;
- Voter's Guide – a comprehensive Voter's Guide was created and mailed to all residential and farm addresses in Richmond via neighborhood mail to 87,000 households, and 2000 additional copies were printed and distributed to all City Facilities, Richmond Public Library locations and outreach organizations. The guide was also translated into other languages and posted on the Election Website;
- Candidate Profiles – as part of the nomination package and process, Candidates were encouraged to provide a photograph and brief profile which was posted on the City's website and published in the Voter's Guide;
- Mail Ballots – Mail Ballot Voting is an important tool in ensuring those who cannot or do not feel comfortable voting in person have an opportunity to vote. All residents of Richmond could vote by mail. A detailed communication plan was developed and implemented to promote and provide information about Mail Ballot voting;
- Youth at the Booth – The Richmond Election Office ran the 2022 Youth at the Booth Program, which was a youth outreach program, by providing marketing opportunities and materials, and hired 89 youth to work and support the 2022 Election during Advance Voting and General Voting Day; and,
- Outreach – In an effort to reach as many eligible voters as possible, extensive outreach was undertaken with various organizations (Accessibility partners, Community Services, Richmond Public Library, Richmond Multicultural Community Society, Richmond School District and Richmond District Parents' Association).

Equipment and Technology

In Richmond, automated vote counting machines have been in use for close to 30 years and have been leased from one vendor, Election Systems and Software (ES&S). In January 2022, election staff were notified by ES&S that the vote tabulator units that were utilized in past elections had been discontinued and sold off and as such were no longer available. ES&S representatives further advised that they could not provide any assurance in regards to the availability of other units in time for the 2022 Local General and School Election. There are only two eligible providers of automated vote counting hardware and software: ES&S and Dominion Voting.

Accordingly, staff sought approval via a single source process and proceeded with Dominion Voting, an established organization providing advanced full-service election solutions with a proven track record with a number of municipal clients, including the City of Vancouver. The change of the vote counting unit provider had significant hardware and software implications for the 2022 Election. The entire election training program had to be re-written and new software had to be learned by election staff. In reviewing past election voter statistics by voting location, a decision was made for the 2022 Election to deploy multiple vote counting machines, for the first time, to busier locations to ensure for the efficient processing of voters. Accordingly, more vote counting machines were leased in total than in any previous election. The vote counting units worked exceptionally well at all 10 Advance Voting and 38 GVD voting locations, and all 5 mail ballot advance tabulation sessions.

In addition to the vote counting units, the voter's list software system provided by DataFix was utilized, which is integral and critical to the City's election processes. The software enables staff to fulfill many statutory obligations relating to the administration of the 2022 Election, including the management of the voters list, taking voter registrations, taking Vote By Mail applications, and assisting to ensure voters only vote once. The system provided by DataFix also provides essential self-serve tools on the City website so that the public can check their voter registration status and determine the location of their assigned voting place. DataFix software has greatly supported the 2011, 2014, 2018 General Elections and the 2021 By-Election.

With regards to other critical election equipment, 120 laptops were leased to support election training and voting opportunities. For the 10 Advance Voting opportunities, a "vote anywhere" model was applied and all laptops were programmed to enable voters to be processed and struck off as having voted. On General Voting Day, the laptops were then deployed to all 38 voting locations and utilized by key election staff to assist in processing voters. The laptops were also utilized to train voting location staff on the voter list management software that was integral to processing voters during advance voting.

Election Supplies

The planning for and undertaking of the 2022 Election required an extensive amount of supplies. Each of the 10 Advance Voting locations and 38 voting locations had to be equipped with a detailed set of supplies to enable the election process. With each election cycle, election staff build on the previous lessons learned which facilitates the conduct of an efficient, effective and legislatively compliant election. In accordance with the 2022 Communicable Disease Plan, specialized supplies were purchased to ensure that adherence to any public health measures that may be in place would be possible. In the end, staff adopted a cautious approach with public health safety being at the forefront of all election activities. The planning for the 2022 Election commenced early in 2022, as staff were aware of the delays and complications related to supply-chain issues brought about by the pandemic. Despite early planning and ordering supplies in advance as much as possible, the challenges of the global supply-chain issues had real implications, specifically in the cost of virtually all supplies and services.

In addition to the physical ordered supplies, there were many other administrative related tasks that were critical to the election. The production of all the training materials, election forms, posters, and other resource material was extensive, and greatly supported by City's Production Centre. The receipt of incoming supply deliveries, the transfer of equipment to other areas and general assistance with movement of equipment was made possible through the Public Works staff. Furthermore, the setup of the Election Office and Mail Ballot Office required various supplies and assistance which was provided by Facilities and Information Technology staff.

Staffing

Staffing levels at voting places and staff training programs are established with a view to providing a positive, orderly and efficient experience for the voting public. Voting place staff (those that work at the polling places at the time of voting) are also supported by a staff team in the Election Office in order to deliver a well-organized and legislatively-compliant election.

In 2022, approximately 600 temporary voting place staff were hired and trained to work at the 38 voting locations on General Voting Day and at the 10 advance voting opportunities. Select staff were also trained for the special voting opportunities at local care facilities. An extensive training program was developed and implemented to ensure all voting location staff received both technical and procedural training. Due to the requirement to utilize new vote counting units, the entire training program, specifically the rewrite of all procedural manuals, had to be completely revamped. As already noted, the Youth at the Booth program was implemented yet again, with 89 youth being hired to provide invaluable assistance to the voting process.

In addition to the staff who worked at the voting places, an Election Office team was assembled and hired to work on a temporary basis in the months leading up to the election. The Election Office positions were often filled by regular City staff whose regular positions were subsequently backfilled by auxiliary or temporary staff. The work undertaken by the Election Office staff team was further supplemented and supported by the Clerk's Office and IT staff who were specifically assigned to support the election in addition to their usual duties. In addition to the invaluable role of IT staff, it should be noted that staff support was received from various areas throughout the City, such as Public Works, Facilities, Community Bylaws, Human Resources and Communications.

Communicable Disease Plan

The 2021 By-Election was the first time that an election was undertaken during a pandemic. The conduct of an election during that time required the adherence to public health orders that impacted virtually every component of the By-Election. Staff gained great insight into the planning for and execution of an election during a pandemic. As the planning for the 2022 Election commenced in January 2022, staff engaged the consultant that had previously developed the detailed Safety Plan for the By-Election to assist with planning for the 2022 Election. Given the challenge of predicting what potential Covid-19 requirements could be in place for the 2022 Election, staff applied a proactive and cautious approach that would ensure for the safety of all voters, voting location staff and candidates.

Accordingly, the Communicable Disease Safety Plan was developed and all election processes were then guided by this Plan, especially the arrangement of all advance voting and General Voting Day voting locations. The Communicable Disease Safety Plan included a detailed safety plan for all voting locations. Because election staff took the Covid-related measures seriously and public safety was at the forefront of all election planning, critical Covid-related supplies were purchased, such as plexiglass barriers, masks, and sanitizing wipes/lotion for all voting locations.

Election Budget

As noted earlier, funding for the 2022 Election was approved by Council for the amount of \$900,000, with \$538,000 coming from the Election Reserve and \$362,000 being approved as a one-time additional level top-up for adequate funding. The 2022 Election actual cost was \$1,185,997. The unspent funds from the 2021 By-Election of \$140,916 were utilized to fund the additional costs for the 2022 Election. The increased budget was due to the following:

- New Vote Counting Machines: Leasing vote counting machines through Dominion Voting was an unexpected yet necessary decision in order to conduct the election. The leasing cost was significantly more than budgeted simply due to the vendor's pricing and the fact that more machines were leased to support the election than ever before. In addition to leasing vote tabulators, Dominion Voting provided training, software for managing elections results, and customized ballots.
- Voter's List Software Costs: Due to a review of pricing, the Datafix contract that provides the critical software to manage the voter's list increased in pricing beyond what was budgeted.
- Mobile App: In 2018, the cost of the Mobile App was covered by Information Technology via the Digital Strategy budget. For the 2022 Election, the cost of the Mobile App was funded from the Election Budget.
- Covid-19 Items: For the 2021 By-Election, plexiglass barriers were borrowed from Elections BC at no cost. For the 2022 Election, Elections BC implemented leasing costs for the plexi-glass barriers. Following a review of the costs, a decision was made to purchase the plexi-glass barriers despite not having budgeted for this purchase. In addition, protective storage supplies were purchased to enable the plexi-glass barriers to be properly stored and protected for future election uses.
- Increased Staffing: To support all advance voting and General Voting Day voting locations and to adhere to the detailed Communicable Disease Safety Plan, approximately 100 more voting location staff had to be hired, when compared with the 2018 election, to work at the voting locations. In addition to voting location staff, additional Election Office staff time was required due to supporting the new vote counting units, specifically developing and conducting the detailed and critical process of testing and validating each of the 76 leased vote counting units, referred to as Logic and Accuracy Testing. In past elections, the Logic and Accuracy Testing was undertaken by the vendor and not election staff.

- Overall Cost Increases in Supplies: The global supply chain challenges in 2022 impacted the 2022 Election, especially in the availability and cost of all categories of election supplies. With the increase in transportation/freight costs combined with a shortage of supplies, staff observed an increase in costs of all supplies required to stage the election, most notably paper and paper products.

Staff always have the objective of keeping costs down and not surpassing approved funding. Despite the supply-chain issues, staff were diligent to attempt to obtain the best costing for all services and supplies purchased to stage the 2022 Election. In looking ahead, there are some potential savings that could be realized with the next Election in 2026. In terms of Covid related supplies, as already noted, plexi-glass barriers were purchased in 2022 and will be available for re-use in 2026 and subsequent Elections. Should there be no pandemic related concerns leading up to the 2026 Election and no need to adhere to a Communicable Disease Plan, fewer voting location staff could potentially be hired. As lower than anticipated voters took advantage of both Mail Ballot Voting and the Mobile App, staff will undertake a review of these two components to determine if savings could be realized and will report back to Council at the appropriate time.

Key Takeaways

With regards to voter turnout, the voter turnout of 24.4% was significantly lower than the 36% turnout in 2018. With all of the work undertaken to plan for, promote and conduct the election, the 2022 voter turnout was quite surprising, but all lower mainland municipalities exhibited a decline in voter turnout when compared with 2018 figures, with the exception of Surrey. Voter turnout is multi-faceted and complex and encompasses many variables such as: age/gender; education; family status; immigration status; economic well-being; and, employment status. Similarly, there are many variables that have been connected to low voter turnout figures, such as: lack of choice of candidates; too many candidates; satisfaction with status quo; voter fatigue due to other past elections; and impact of the recent global pandemic.

In terms of mail ballot voting, only 926 mail ballots were cast out of a total of 35,093 ballots cast, representing only 2.6% of all votes. As noted earlier, election staff were anticipating at least 7,000 mail ballot requests when considering the 2021 By-Election figures. The undertaking of the Mail Ballot program is extremely resource intensive and it was surprising that fewer Richmond voters took advantage of this accessible means of voting.

Also unanticipated in the 2022 Election was the low utilization by Richmond residents of the Election Mobile App. The 2022 Richmond Election App provided voters with election information at their fingertips. A total of 300 users downloaded the Richmond Election App.

As already noted as a key variable in increased election costs, the global supply-chain issues posed unpredictable challenges in the planning and undertaking of the election. While staff expected and planned for delays in receiving supplies, the real surprise was the increase in the cost of all supplies, especially the cost of basic paper which is required virtually for all election activities.

With the 2021 By-Election, conducting an election during a global pandemic was uncharted territory for staff and Covid-19 related public health measures were an absolute requirement at

all voting locations. Although there were no required public health measures that had to be implemented for 2022, staff took a cautious approach and developed the Communicable Disease Plan that guided all election activities. Had the pandemic or any other public health situation shifted, staff were prepared to respond to all scenarios. The use of plexi-glass barriers, availability of sanitizing lotion/wipes, and restricting capacity (i.e. number of voters inside voting place) at all voting locations was well-received by the Richmond voters. Despite the pandemic more or less being over and everything opening up, voters were appreciative of the measures that had to be followed in order to vote, and there was a continued risk that public health measures could be reinstated.

Financial Impact

There are no financial impacts from this report.

Conclusion

The Local Government and School Election was last held on October 15, 2022. This report provides a summary of the key components of the election program to be received as information by Council.



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