



Governance and Priorities Committee Report

Date: January 14, 2014 **From:** Ed Robertson, Assistant Director
Engineering and Public Works

Subject: Stormwater Utility Engagement and Program Report

Executive Summary:

City of Victoria Property owners and other stakeholders were recently consulted about the shift to a Stormwater Utility funding model and the proposed Rainwater Credit program. The goals of the engagement were to raise awareness of the changes and impacts to how the stormwater program would be funded and to seek feedback on the proposed Rainwater Credit program, as well as highlighting the benefits of sustainable rainwater management.

The engagement program took place from November through January, and consisted of a variety of engagement methods and opportunities for property owners to learn about the program and provide feedback. Common themes emerged in the stakeholder feedback, including suggestions for adjustments to the Rainwater Credit program, providing credit program resources and increasing the simplicity of the program; recommendations for changes to the Utility Program, changing the implementation timeline and increasing communication and education efforts.

The main concern identified by staff is the implementation timeline. Stakeholders that would be most significantly impacted by the change indicated concern that the current timeline would not provide opportunity for adjustments to their existing budgets or take advantage of the Rainwater Credit program. In addition, proceeding with a 2014 implementation would not provide staff sufficient time to review and integrate stakeholder feedback, and may still prove challenging with the amount of work required prior to the launch. Moving implementation to 2015 would not impact the principles, and would significantly contribute to the strength and success of the Stormwater Utility and Rainwater Credit program.

Council's decision on whether or not to proceed with a 2015 implementation will inform the next steps in the implementation of the Stormwater Utility and development of the Rainwater Credit program.

Recommendation:

1. That Council receives this report for information.
2. That Council approves the 2015 implementation date for the Stormwater Utility launch.

Respectfully submitted,

A blue ink signature of Ed Robertson.

Ed Robertson
Assistant Director
Engineering & Public Works

A blue ink signature of Dwayne Kalynchuk.

Dwayne Kalynchuk, P. Eng.
Director of Engineering and
Public Works

A blue ink signature of Katie Hamilton.

Katie Hamilton, Director
Communications and
Civic Engagement

Report reviewed and endorsed by the Director of Finance:

A blue ink signature of Jocelyn Jenkins.

Report accepted and recommended by the Acting City Manager:

Jocelyn Jenkins

Purpose

To present the results of Stormwater Utility engagement program, and to provide recommendations.

Background

In October 2013, staff reported to Council on the status of the Stormwater Utility development and the upcoming engagement with property owners and other stakeholders regarding the program. The focus of the engagement was to raise awareness of the changes to how the stormwater program would be funded, to seek feedback on the proposed Rainwater Credit program, and to highlighting the benefits of sustainable rainwater management such as environmental stewardship and the ability to respond to the impacts of climate change. The goal was to seek general feedback on the change to the Stormwater Utility model itself and all that it encompasses, and specific input on the details of the proposed Rainwater Credit program.

The engagement took place from November 5, 2013 to January 10, 2014. A media event to introduce the City of Victoria's Rain Garden Gnomes and to celebrate local property owners that were managing rainwater sustainably on their property was held on November 5. Mail-outs, paid advertising, media and social media outreach were used to communicate the three open houses and 10 stakeholder meetings. One additional community meeting was also held. A series of three educational videos, an interactive timeline tool, and the watershed table, a Rain Garden Gnome puppet and display boards were used at most of these engagement events.

Stormwater management is a complex issue that in the past had mostly been out of sight and out of mind for most residents. In order to meaningfully engage with 10 different types of property owners, a very-targeted approach was used to invite each stakeholder group to an information and feedback session designed specifically for them.

Online and print surveys were also used to collect feedback from property owners and residents. Feedback was also collected from emails, letters, phone calls and social media. A complete description of the engagement program is listed in Appendix A.

Question posed: What are your recommendations for the City of Victoria as they develop the rainwater management credit program and introduce the Stormwater Utility in 2014?

Engagement participation:

Stakeholder meetings:	143 participants
Open Houses:	225 participants
Surveys:	263 received
Emails:	98 received
Letters:	3 received
Phone calls:	79 received
Stormwater main webpage views:	732
Facebook: 9 posts	35,516 views
Twitter:	13 tweets, 20 re-tweets
Media:	14 stories
Community Association Meeting:	60 participants

The City connected with property owners or their representatives from all affected property types (single family, multi-family, commercial/ industrial, civic/institutional, tax exempt (faith groups, heritage and revitalization, not for profits/shelters, schools), and tax deferred) and residents from all of Victoria's 13 neighbourhoods.

Issues & Analysis

During the Stormwater Utility engagement, the primary focus for feedback included targeted stakeholder meetings and open houses. This provided participants an opportunity to speak directly with, and ask questions of, subject matter experts from various City departments. This model helped to clearly explain the Stormwater Utility model and the proposed Rainwater Credit program prior to them providing recommendations and feedback. Additional opportunities to provide feedback included surveys, emails and other correspondence.

At the open houses, and particularly at the stakeholder meetings, information was shared in detailed discussions with those who dropped in about the shift to the Stormwater Utility model and proposed Rainwater Credit program, and what the impact would be for various property types.

Participants in the engagement were very forthcoming with thoughtful ideas and input and provided specific recommendations on the Rainwater Credit program and the move to the Stormwater Utility model.

Regarding the Rainwater Credit program, the following themes emerged during the engagement process:

- Credit program
 - Develop detailed case studies for rainwater management techniques on typical property types and give a clear account of the return on investment for rainwater management work undertaken;
 - Make the Rainwater Credit program more flexible and consider some additional options;
 - Consider a rebate option to help with the initial cost of installation. Alternatively, consider bulk purchasing of low cost materials that owners could access;
 - Engage Associations (including the development community, Strata and Rental Property Owners, Community Associations and Professional Associations) to review options for the Rainwater Credit program to ensure their viability.
- Credit program simplicity:
 - Make the credit program application process simple, streamlined and easy to access and work with;
 - Have clear guidelines for credits that may also allow for some 'Do it Yourself' projects;
 - Provide City support for those who undertake Rainwater Credit projects, to help them understand the requirements and who they could get guidance from.

Regarding the Stormwater Utility program itself, the main themes included:

- Utility Model:
 - Consider phasing in the change;
 - Consider capping rates in subsequent years;
 - Consider adjustments to the Utility model itself to address some specific property types and situations; and
 - Consider adjusting the rates to make it less costly.
- Timeline
 - Consider changing the implementation date to 2015, to provide opportunity for owners to adapt and raise revenues to cover a potential increase in fees, or to give them more time to undertake credit work prior to the initial billing cycle. This was a consistent theme from property owners that will be most impacted by these changes.

For both the Stormwater Utility and the Rainwater Credit program, there was a common theme:

- Communication and Education
 - Provide more information and clarification about the Stormwater program, and how owners could take advantage of the Rainwater Credit program;
 - Use various Associations (as noted earlier) to help communicate with membership groups.

Positive comments were received from the participants about the Stormwater Utility rate model and how it was developed; they recognized the work of the various departments in the City to ensure its fairness. This is evidence of the extensive time and focus that has been given to developing and refining the model, and building a comprehensive property attributes database over the past year.

A review of the comments and dialogue from the stakeholder meetings and open houses indicated that the Rainwater Credit program needs more work prior to launch to ensure its success. Additionally, the details need to be clearly communicated to property owners to educate them about how the program will work; the long-term positive impact rainwater management will have on the stormwater system, and the benefits to property owners and the environment. Owners also want to be able to review the specific impact to their property.

These comments dovetail with growing concerns from staff that the timeframe to implement the program is too short; this is a very complex program that has many components requiring collaboration and input from various City departments along with continued dialogue with other municipalities that have already implemented similar programs. Clearly the same level of attention is required for the credit program as was given to the rate model development. More time also allows staff to work more closely with stakeholders, review the engagement information in detail, and to build a stronger program.

Options & Impacts

The critical decision at this point is whether to proceed in 2014, or move the launch to 2015.

Continue with implementation in 2014

- There would be insufficient time to consider many of the well thought-out suggestions from the engagement process;
- The program would have to be very simple. The focus would be on developing internal systems to deliver the program as well as completion of the bylaw;
- A 2014 timeline may prove challenging for staff with the amount of inter-departmental work required prior to the launch.

Move implementation to 2015

- There will be sufficient time for staff to work through input and suggestions from stakeholders, and will demonstrate that their input was considered and integrated into the program. This will enable the creation of an improved Stormwater Utility and Rainwater Credit program that can be well-explained to owners rather than proceeding with a program that may not be well understood or supported.
- There will be opportunity to add more components to the credit program, to potentially make it more attractive and accessible to property owners.
- Development of case studies on various property types will be possible; this will demonstrate to property owners how the credit program will apply to them and may help to increase uptake;
- A significant focus for 2014 can be an education and communications program which will help to inform property owners on various aspects of the program, as it is complex with many parts.
- There will not be an impact financially to the stormwater program as it will continue to be funded from property taxes for 2014;

If the 2015 timeline is adopted, this change will be communicated to stakeholders, owners and management associations and via the media and other avenues.

Next Steps

The suggestions that have been compiled will be thoroughly reviewed. Focus will be on finalizing and fully developing the credit program and integrating stakeholder suggestions where appropriate. Work will also continue to complete the update to the stormwater section within the Sewer Bylaw. The intent is to bring the final Stormwater Utility, including the Rainwater Credit Program and the revised Sewer Bylaw, to council in the spring of 2014 for approval and adoption. The final rate schedule may be brought forward in December 2014 if staff anticipates further adjustments as a result of work in the balance of 2014.

To ensure there is no drop-off in momentum during the intervening months, the outcome of the engagement process will be communicated to property owners, and educational materials and events will continue to be developed and launched to help educate owners about the Stormwater Utility and the Rainwater Credit program in preparation for the launch in 2015; it will be a steady build-up of information and will help to increase understanding and awareness over the year.

Recommendations

1. That Council receives this report for information
2. That Council approves the 2015 implementation date for the Stormwater Utility launch.

Attachments:

Appendix A – Stormwater Utility Engagement Overview

A binder containing a compilation of all feedback from all sources is available

- Part 1: Stakeholder Meetings
- Part 2: Open House
- Part 3: Surveys
- Part 4: Emails, Calls and Letters
- Part 5: Social Media
- Part 6: Session Feedback Forms



Stormwater Utility Public Engagement Overview

Introduction

The Stormwater Utility engagement program was split into two phases: two preliminary focus groups in the summer of 2013, followed by an in-depth, targeted engagement phase in the fall that included three open houses and 10 stakeholder meetings. Phase two also included information package mail-outs, print advertising, media relations and social media outreach.

Phase 1: Stormwater Utility Focus Groups

Focus Groups

Two focus groups were held in June 2013 to gauge what City of Victoria property owners understood about the stormwater system and rainwater management and to gather preliminary feedback about the proposed stormwater utility model and the rainwater management credit program. The feedback was used to develop the fall engagement program.

Participants:

- Two groups of 10-12 property owners within the City of Victoria

Feedback heard:

- Want to see fairness, responsibility and sustainability as key principles
- Show what the City has been doing to build and maintain the stormwater system
- Tell us why this system should change now
- Show how this change will facilitate long range planning
- Tell us what needs to be done and what it will cost
- Be clear on how rate will be determined
- Clarify that the credits are for existing and new rain gardens, etc.
- Manage rainwater because it's the "right thing to do" for the environment
- Credits help to offer an incentive but ROI isn't enough to drive this work
- A few cheaper, simple options needed to make the credit program more accessible

Program materials created in response:

- Three educational videos were created (Stormwater and Rainwater Management 101, A Look Back in Time, The Stormwater Utility - Proposed Changes)
- An online historic timeline was created to show how the City has managed stormwater over the past 150 years
- Credit program fact sheets were created (single family residential, multi-unit residential, commercial/industrial, civic/institutional)
- Letters were mailed to property owners to invite them to stakeholder meetings and provide detailed information about the stormwater utility and credit program
- The sustainability aspects of the program were highlighted
- Details were provided on components of the rate model and how rates would be determined

Phase 2: Stakeholder Engagement

A media event to introduce the City of Victoria's Rain Garden Gnomes and to celebrate local property owners who were managing rainwater sustainably on their property was held on November 5. Mail-outs, paid advertising, media and social media outreach were used to communicate the three open houses and 10 stakeholder meetings that were the focus of the fall engagement program.

Stormwater management is a complex issue that in the past had mostly been out of sight and out of mind for most property owners. In order to meaningfully engage with 10 different types of property owners, a very-targeted approach was used to invite each stakeholder group to an information and feedback session that was designed specifically for them.

Online and print surveys were used as an additional method to collect feedback from property owners and residents. Feedback was also collected from emails, letters, phone calls and social media. The engagement program wrapped up with the survey deadline of December 13. Late surveys were accepted until January 10.

Focus of engagement: What are your recommendations for the City of Victoria as they develop the rainwater management credit program and introduce the stormwater utility in 2014?

Participation Summary:

Total interactions:

Stakeholder meetings:	143 participants
Open Houses:	225 participants
Community Association Meeting:	60 participants
Surveys:	263 received
Emails:	98 received
Letters:	3 received
Phone calls:	79 received
Stormwater main webpage:	732 views
Facebook:	9 posts, 35,516 views
Twitter:	13 tweets and 20 re-tweets
Media:	14 stories

Number of property types: all property types

Number of neighbourhoods: 13 of 13

All feedback collected during this engagement program is available in a binder for review by Council and the public.

Stakeholder Meetings

Invitations were sent to stakeholders in the property-type categories of multi-unit residential, civic/institutional, commercial/industrial and tax exempt. The stakeholder meetings provided an overview of stormwater management and rainwater management through a video and a short, tailored PowerPoint presentation. Small groups were then formed with one City stormwater representative at each table. There was an open questions and answers session first, and then a mini-workshop to explore rainwater management methods that could work for specific properties. To wrap up, each of the small groups were asked to brainstorm and choose 3-5 recommendations relating to Stormwater Utility and Rainwater Management Credit Program. These recommendations were shared with the larger group and have been compiled.

Participation:

Goal: to hear diverse perspectives from all targeted stakeholder groups

Attendance:

- | | |
|--|---------------------|
| • Multi-Unit Residential: | 60 (two meetings) |
| • Commercial/Industrial: | 45 (three meetings) |
| • Permissive Tax Exempt: | |
| Not For Profits, Shelters and Private Schools: | 13 |
| • Permissive Tax Exempt: Faith Groups: | 12 |
| • Heritage and Revitalization Tax Exempt: | 6 |
| • Deferred Tax | 6 |
| • School District 61: | 1 |

Total: 143 participants

Open Houses

Three open houses were held to reach single-family residential property owners. Venues included the Victoria Public Market and the Burnside Gorge Community Centre which provided an opportunity to showcase a City of Victoria green roof and an example of permeable paving.

The Open Houses included a watershed table to demonstrate the flow of stormwater, a Victoria watershed map, display boards, feedback boards, an "Ask an Expert" table, a rainwater harvesting demonstration, a CRD watershed management display, three stormwater videos, credit program and stormwater fact sheets and the stormwater utility survey. Feedback about the stormwater utility and credit program was collected verbally and through surveys.

The open houses were promoted through paid advertising in the Times Colonist and Victoria News, through media outreach and social media.

Participation:

Goal (based upon past open houses): 35 participants per event

Attendance: Total: 225

- 80: Victoria Public Market (average visit: 5-10 minutes)
- 35: Burnside Gorge (average visit: 30 minutes)
- 110: Victoria Public Market (average visit 10-15 minutes)

Surveys

Surveys were developed to gather feedback from property owners in the City. The properties were grouped into five categories: single-family residential, multi-family residential, civic/institutional, commercial/industrial and tax exempt. The surveys focused on collecting feedback about the stormwater utility and on the rainwater management credit program, while also collecting baseline information regarding what property owners were already doing to manage rainwater and what else they would like to learn. All five surveys asked the same questions, but were tailored for the variations in the credit programs that are proposed for the different property types.

The survey deadline was December 13. Late surveys were accepted until January 10. The completed surveys are available in the Stormwater Engagement Feedback Binder.

Participation:

Goal: Create an opportunity for those who were unable to attend a meeting or open house, or had additional comments, to provide input.

Single-family: 143

Multi-family: 76

Commercial/Industrial: 24

Civic/Institutional: 4

Tax Exempt: 16

Correspondence

Emails:

- 15 regarding connection or no connection to stormwater utility
- 25 regarding stormwater fees for specific properties
- 11 engagement related – open houses, surveys, meetings
- 32 regarding other topics – timelines, affordability, credit program, billing

Letters: 2

Phone Calls: 79

Social Media

Facebook:

- 9 posts
 - 17 shares, 28 likes, 40+ comments, 35,516 views

Twitter:

- 13 tweets
 - 20 re-tweets

Media Relations

Media Releases

- November 4: Rain Garden Gnomes Kick off Stormwater Engagement
- November 14: Stormwater Open Houses Begin Next Week
- December 9: Stormwater Surveys Available Online Until December 13

Media Coverage

- October 17: CFX: Introduction to Stormwater Utility
- October 23: Times Colonist: Victoria Offers Tips Ahead of 2014 Stormwater Bills
- October 25: Times Colonist: Letter: Stormwater Promise Seems Dubious
- November 4: CTV: Rain Garden Gnomes and Launch of Stormwater Engagement
- November 8: Victoria News: Rain Garden Gnomes Kick-off City Stormwater Awareness
- October 25: Times Colonist: Letter: Rainwater Should be Directed Correctly
- October 27: Times Colonist: Correction re street cleaning rates and stormwater
- Nov. 17: Victoria News: Victoria to Host Stormwater Open Houses
- Nov. 18-22: Shaw Cable: Open House Dates and Details

- Nov. 20: Shaw Cable: 3 City of Victoria stormwater videos aired, repeatedly
- Nov. 20: CBC On the Island: Open Houses, Stormwater Utility and Credit Program
- Nov. 20: Victoria News: City Announces Stormwater Open Houses
- Nov. 24: Times Colonist: Comment: Stormwater Utility a Step in the Right Direction
- Nov. 24: CHEK: Evening News: Stormwater Open House – shift to rainwater management

Website

- 732 page views of www.victoria.ca/stormwater
 - 687 page views of Stormwater Engagement (surveys etc.)
 - 359 page views of Rainwater Management (credit details)
 - 215 page views of Stormwater FAQ
 - 127 page views of Our Stormwater System
- 3 videos
 - Stormwater 101: 221 views
 - A Look Back in Time: Stormwater in Victoria: 135 views
 - Planning for a Sustainable Stormwater System: 45 views
- Interactive historical timeline: 147 views

Other:

- Additional meetings (by request): January 8: James Bay Community Association: 60 attendees

Session Feedback:

An opportunity to provide feedback for each of the engagement sessions was available to participants. The following are examples of common themes from the feedback:

- Staff were friendly, open minded and accessible
- Well facilitated, good information and easy to follow
- Liked expert staff at tables, good opportunity to get answers
- Acceptance of everyone's ideas, effective group discussion
- Liked that recommendations from groups were shared
- Clear intention to help develop a workable stormwater system
- Liked that you were listening to our concerns
- Somewhat rushed
- Noise was a challenge in larger groups

(All comments can be viewed in the Stormwater Engagement Feedback Binder.)

Lessons Learned from the Engagement Process:

- Residents were keen to ask an expert about rainwater management options and stormwater utility impacts for their specific property, they want more information.
- Participants appreciated small group Q and A, was much more effective than a large group format as property owners could get specific information.
- It was helpful to ask participants for specific recommendations, not just general comments.
- It would have been useful to have a tablet for facilitating survey completion at events. Tablets could also potentially reduce staff time required for compilation and analysis of print surveys.
- The mail-out was a very involved process, as there are many different property types and information must be tailored to each one.
- A large staff commitment was required from multiple departments; this was important to ensure enough staff at each event (3-8). The benefit was participants could have detailed answers for their questions and staff across departments heard feedback first-hand from property owners.
- This was the first engagement process that several managers have been involved in; the process increased engagement knowledge and capacity within several departments.
- It is important to work with community associations and other related associations, as they can help communicate directly with stakeholders.
- The Rain Garden Gnome and interactive elements of engagement were cost effective and positively received, often drawing people in.
- Victoria Public Market was a new venue that worked really well for “going to where the people are”.

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