

DATE: February 2, 2024

FILE: 5360-20/Cortes

TO: Chair and Directors
Comox Strathcona Waste Management Board

FROM: James Warren
Chief Administrative Officer

Supported by James Warren
Chief Administrative Officer

J. Warren

RE: Cortes Island Free Store Funding Request

Purpose

To provide an update regarding the options to fund the Cortes Island Free Store roof repair.

Recommendation from the Chief Administrative Officer:

THAT the Comox Strathcona Waste Management Board advise the Cortes Island Free Store to explore alternate funding sources, such as local businesses, sponsors and community fundraising to supports its building maintenance.

Executive Summary

- On January 11, 2024 the Board passed the following resolution:
 - THAT staff be directed to report back to the next CSWM Board meeting with potential options for a \$1,500 contribution from the CSWM service towards roof repairs of the Free Store on Cortes Island.
- Free Stores are outside of the mandate of the Comox Strathcona Waste Management Service (Service) and are funded by resident associations, or the municipality where they exist (see table in in this report).
- The Cortes Island Free Store (Store) operates independently from the Service but is located on Crown land leased to the service.
- The Store is not part of a nonprofit organization, or any other organization that formalizes its existence. This presents unique challenges due to the Store's grassroots nature and lack of formal organizational structure.
- The building's condition raises concerns about safety and potential liability issues.
- In order to provide clarity in the legal relationship between the Store and the Service formal agreements should be put into place. These would aim to ensure the Store's legal compliance, and protection of both its volunteers and

the Service. Staff will be engaging with the Store representatives to resolve these differences.

- This report explores options for funding through the Strathcona Regional District’s Grant in Aid program or through local fundraising on Cortes Island.

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Concurrence:

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Background/Current Situation

Currently, there are six operational free stores within the Service area.

Table 1

Location	Ownership	Funding	Insurance	Staffing
Denman Island Free Store	Building: rent	Residents of Denman Island through DIRA	Insured by CVRD, paid for by DIRA	Volunteers 1 paid staff 1 hr/wk
Hornby Island Free Store	Building: CVRD Property: CVRD hold lease with Province	Residents of Hornby Island through HIRRA	Insured by CVRD, paid for by HIRRA	Volunteers
Cortes Island Free Store	Building: Unknown Property: CVRD hold lease with Province	Residents of Cortes Island	Not insured	Volunteers
Village of Gold River	Building: Village of Gold River Property: Village of Gold River	Village of Gold River	Village of Gold River	Unstaffed
Village of Tahsis	Building: Village of Tahsis Property: Village of Tahsis	Village of Tahsis	Village of Tahsis	Unstaffed
Village of Sayward	Building: Village of Sayward Property: Village of Sayward	Village of Sayward	Village of Sayward	Volunteers

Free stores are not currently within the Service's mandate and as per the table above are funded either by resident associations or by the municipalities where they exist.

The Cortes Island Free Store, situated on Crown land leased to the Service, presents a unique operational model. Operating without a formal structure, the Store lacks clear ownership, organizational framework and liability insurance. Additionally, the building, constructed by volunteers, raises concerns about compliance with building codes and the need for upgrades.

Policy Analysis

The lack of a structured policy framework for free stores complicates decisions regarding financial support.

The Solid Waste Management Plan (SWMP) renewal process is reviewing all aspects of the service including the use of free stores and any actions the Board takes should be aligned with SWMP principles and broader waste management policies.

Options

Given the Cortes Island Free Store is not a responsibility of the Board, staff are noting the following options for representatives of the Store to consider:

- Option 1: Establish the Cortes Island Free Store as a non-profit entity and submit a funding request to the Strathcona Regional District Grant-in-Aid program.
- Option 2: Explore alternate funding sources, such as local businesses, sponsors and community fundraising.

The challenge with Option 1 is that it may not be timely, given the application review process is scheduled usually for the latter half of year. Given the immediate nature of the request, Option 2 is recommended.

Financial Factors

Resource allocation is based on the SWMP outcomes, and therefore, no financial commitment to consider at this time.

Legal Factors

The Store building was constructed at a time when formal approvals were not required, and likely will not meet today's building codes. Allocating funds without a clear understanding of the legal ramifications and structural integrity of the building may expose the Service to undue risks. The SWMP assessment could shed

light on necessary upgrades and legal implications, informing a more prudent financial commitment.

Furthermore, the lack of liability insurance for the Store raises potential risks for both volunteers and the Service. It is recommended that the Store obtains their own insurance.

Intergovernmental Factors

Many of the projects and initiatives that will be detailed within the SWMP renewal, including the topic of reuse, will require collaboration with local governments to achieve the diversion targets expected by the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy. Participation by some staff from the local governments on the Regional Solid Waste Advisory Committee ensures their perspectives are considered in plan development.

Interdepartmental Involvement

Initiatives identified through the SWMP renewal provides an opportunity for the regional solid waste service to reach out to other departments within the Comox Valley Regional District and the Strathcona Regional District, and identify areas of overlap and common goals across services.

Citizen/Public Relations

Education and raising awareness about the need to increase diversion is at the core of the SWMP as informed and engaged citizens play a pivotal role in reducing contamination, promoting recycling and minimizing the environmental impact of waste throughout the region. Through educational initiatives, public outreach campaigns and community engagement, the Service aims to empower its residents with the knowledge and tools to make sustainable choices in waste disposal.