

Backgrounder

Hagensborg Governance Study: Options for Community Involvement

June 2022

Prepared for



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1.0 Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to provide an overview of governance options that the Central Coast Regional District (CCRD) has available through its powers under the *Local Government Act* to involve residents in ongoing governance of Hagensborg water and fire protection services. The goal is to inform a community engagement process that will take place in spring and summer of 2022. It does not make recommendations for or against any option, as this will happen later in the project. At this point the objective is only to describe the options.

Six governance options have been identified. These are listed below, ordered roughly by the level of effort required of both CCRD and the community to establish and maintain them (from most to least effort).

1. local community commission,
2. service commission,
3. standing committee,
4. temporary select committee,
5. advisory committee, and
6. communication and engagement program.

Following this introduction, the paper has three sections as follows:

- section 2 provides a brief background on the project,
- section 3 describes the governance options listed above and provides examples from other jurisdictions,
- section 4 sets out a summary and next steps.

2.0 Background

The Hagensborg water and fire protection services serve about 460 residents on the British Columbia mid-coast. They began under an improvement district, which received its letters patent from the Provincial Government in 1964. On 1 January 2021, the improvement district was dissolved, and responsibility was transferred to CCRD. The impetus for conversion was that CCRD secured a \$3.7 million grant for part of the cost of capital upgrades to address a long history of boil water advisories.

In April 2022, CCRD issued a Request for Proposals to select a consultant to complete a governance study for the Hagensborg services. The goal is to determine how residents can participate in decision-making for the services in the future. Econics (www.econics.com), a Victoria-based firm that specializes in water sustainability, was chosen to complete this work.

Under the former improvement district, Hagensborg residents had a long history of involvement and influence over policy and operational decisions. As well, a citizen referendum was held on 3 December 2019. This was required to approve conversion to a regional district service. The result was very close (68 in favour, 63 opposed). This indicates that a large minority of voters preferred the former governance arrangement. It is reasonable to assume that both those who voted for and voted against regional district conversion are interested in CCRD's ongoing administration of the system.

Throughout the spring and summer of 2022, Econics will manage a community engagement process along with Metroline Research Group, a market research firm that Econics has worked with many times in the past. The goal is to determine how much involvement Hagensborg residents would like to have in decision-making related to service provision and how they would prefer to provide this input. Engagement activities will include the following:

- a survey open to all residents over 18 years old in the Hagensborg service area; this can be completed online or over the phone with a trained operator (a post card with information about the survey will be sent to all households by mail);
- two in-person roundtable meetings with seven to nine people in each session;
- an in-person open house meeting held in the community and open to all residents;
- advertising about these activities through channels such as the CCRD website, posters in the community, Facebook posts, and a press release to the local newspaper and radio.

3.0 Governance Options for Hagensborg Services

This section describes the six governance options available to CCRD through its powers under the *Local Government Act*. Sub-sections below provide the following information:

- a brief description of the option,
- examples from other jurisdictions (or in a few cases, from other CCRD services), and
- a summary table.

Note that some constraints are common across all six options, as follows:

- Options that involve an entity other than the CCRD taking over management and governance authority for the Hagensborg services are out-of-scope for this project. For example, the option of overturning the conversion process and returning to an improvement district model was not considered.
- CCRD (and all regional districts in the province) derives power from the *Local Government Act*, so any governance options considered here must also be explicitly or implicitly enabled by that Act.
- The *Local Government Act* allows regional district boards of directors to delegate certain roles to individual board members, regional district staff, or members of committees and commissions. However, delegation of authority is subject to restrictions. For example, boards cannot delegate authority to make a bylaw (see Province of BC, n.d.).
- In particular, a regional district board cannot delegate the power to set bylaws to establish annual budgets for a service. Effectively, this means that the CCRD Board of Directors cannot delegate the ability to set parcel taxes or user rates for the Hagensborg water service. While it can take advice from staff or community members on these things, this authority ultimately must remain with the Board.¹

The remainder of this section describes the six governance options.

¹ For further discussion of what a regional district board of directors can and cannot delegate, see Division 7 of the *Local Government Act* and Province of British Columbia (2003), p. 6

3.1 Local Community Commission

What is a Local Community Commission (LCCs)?

- LCCs are enabled under Division 9 of the *Local Government Act*.
- LCCs are typically set up to assist with governance of several regional district services together (e.g., water, sewer, solid waste management, etc.).
- They are useful when a regional district provides services to a geographically well-defined community that has high interest in its services and some characteristics of a municipality, but it is not yet ready for incorporation.
- A defining feature of LCCs is that its members (along with at least one regional district director) are elected by the voters in the community. The method of election may be customized to suit the community needs (Province of BC, n.d.).
- A LCC’s level of authority is defined in an establishment bylaw, passed by the regional district Board of Directors. It can be purely advisory in nature or can be responsible for operating services.
- A LCC may have broad authority over management of a service, including over operational and administrative decisions, policy making, and setting levels of service.
- As with the other options discussed here, the regional district Board cannot delegate budget setting authority to an LCC (including rate setting for a service).
- A regional district board cannot interfere with a delegated body’s decision making, but it can withdraw the delegation if it is dissatisfied (Province of BC, 2003).
- A LCC is set up through a referendum (an assent vote) by the community and must be approved by the Provincial Inspector of Municipalities (Province of BC, n.d.).

Examples of Local Community Commissions

Since the authority to do so was created in 1987, only five LCCs have been created in BC:

- [Bear Lake](#) (Regional District of Fraser-Fort George),
- [Coal Harbour](#) (Regional District of Mount Waddington),
- [Fort Fraser](#) (Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako), and
- Charlie Lake (Peace River Regional District),
- Olalla (Regional District of Okanagan-Similkameen).

At least two of these (Charlie Lake and Olalla) appear to have since become dormant or been repealed (PRRD, 2020; RDOS, 2018).

In addition, community groups and the Capital Regional District are currently exploring an LCC for Salt Spring Island (see Adams, Kerr, and Webster, 2022).

Summary

What is it?	Local Community Commission
Who sits on it?	Members of the community plus one Area Director
How are members appointed?	Elected by voters in the community
How is it established?	Through a community referendum (“assent vote”)
What authority can it have	Advisory OR delegated operational and/or policy authority
When does meet?	Discretionary; quarterly is advisable

3.2 Service Commission

What is a Service Commission?

- Commissions are enabled under section 229(1) of the *Local Government Act*, which provides that a regional district board may delegate some of its powers, duties and functions to a commission, committee, employee or other body.
- Having the ability to establish commissions allows a regional district to share the workload of managing a service and provides a dedicated forum for community members to provide input of a more operational nature (Province of BC, n.d.).
- Like a local community commission, service commissions may have certain powers delegated to them. These are defined in a delegation bylaw, passed by the regional district Board of Directors. As with LCCs, service commissions may be purely advisory in nature or can be responsible for operating services.
- A commission may be comprised of both elected and non-elected officials. Unlike LCCs, members of service commissions who are not board directors are typically appointed by the board for terms of a certain number of years.
- No referendum is required to set up a commission. This decision can be made by the regional district board.
- As with the other options discussed here, the regional district board cannot delegate its law-making powers, including budget setting authority, to a commission (therefore including rate setting for a service).
- Commissions are very commonly used across regional districts in BC. However, there are fewer examples of water service commissions, and those we have found tend to operate in a more advisory than operational role.

Examples of Service Commissions

- The [Capital Regional District](#) supports about 10 different water service commissions, mostly for smaller water services on the Gulf Islands within its jurisdiction. Members are drawn from the community receiving the service. They serve alongside the responsible Electoral Area Director (see CRD, n.d.).
- Regional District of Central Kootenay supports the [Erickson Water Distribution Service Commission](#) for its largest water service area. This appears to play a mostly advisory role (see RDCK, 2022).
- While CCRD does not have water commissions, it does have experience with other commissions, including through the Denny Island Recreation Commission, the Denny Island Airport Commission, the Centennial Pool Commission, and the Economic Development Advisory Committee. Note that many of these bodies are not currently meeting regularly (see CCRD, 2022).

Summary

What is it?	Service Commission
Who sits on it?	Members of the community and/or Board Directors
How are members appointed?	Typically appointed by the Board of Directors
How is it established?	By the Board of Directors through a delegation bylaw
What authority can it have	Advisory OR delegated operational and/or policy authority
When does meet?	Discretionary; quarterly is advisable

3.3 Standing Committee

What is a Standing Committee?

- Section 218(2) of the *Local Government Act* provides that a regional district board chair may establish standing committees for matters better dealt with by a committee (Province of British Columbia, 2003).
- Like to other mechanisms discussed above, standing committees may have certain powers delegated to them.
- People who are not directors may be appointed to a standing committee, or it may be composed entirely of board members. At least one member must be a director.
- Standing committee members can be appointed solely by the board chair (unlike select committees, where members are appointed by the whole board).
- As with the other options discussed here, the regional district board cannot delegate its law-making powers, including budget setting authority, to a standing committee. However, it might make recommendations to a board on these matters.
- Standing committees often have broad mandates. For example, they might have responsibilities for multiple water services or for water supply to very large populations. A defining feature is that they are enduring through time, usually across electoral terms.
- Standing committees are a mainstay of regional district governance across the Province. In the case of water services governance, standing committees are most often composed entirely of elected regional board members.
- Standing committees are subject to many procedural rules like those that apply to a board meeting (for example, the taking of minutes). The procedure rules are usually established in the board procedure bylaw (Province of BC, n.d.).

Examples of Standing Committees

- Comox Valley Regional District’s [Water Committee](#) is made up of only Board Directors (see CVRD, 2022).
- Metro Vancouver has a single [Water Committee](#), made up of Board Members, with governance responsibility for many functions of the Greater Vancouver Water Board.
- Regional District of Central Kootenay has recently endeavored to consolidate many of its water-related commissions and committees into a single [Water Services Committee](#) made up of elected Board Directors (see RDCK, and Nesteroff, 2022).
- Alberni Clayoquot Regional District supports the [Bamfield Water Committee](#), which includes both elected and non-elected members who assist with governance of water services in isolated Bamfield on Vancouver Island’s west coast.

Summary

What is it?	Standing Committee
Who sits on it?	At least one Area Director; can include non-elected members
How are members appointed?	By Board Chair alone
How is it established?	By the Board of Directors through a delegation bylaw
What authority can it have	Advisory OR delegated operational and/or policy authority
When does meet?	Discretionary; at least semi-annually is advisable

3.4 Temporary Select Committee

What is a Select Committee?

- Section 218(1) of the *Local Government Act* allows a regional district board of directors to create a select committee.
- These are similar in most respects to a standing committee, discussed above, but are typically appointed for a special purpose. They may be dissolved once they have accomplished their task or may meet irregularly (whereas standing committees are usually enduring and meet regularly).
- A board may appoint a select committee to consider or inquire into a matter and report its findings and opinion to the board.
- In the case of the Hagensborg services, for example, the Board could appoint a select committee (that includes residents) to oversee the conversion process and the construction of a new water treatment facility, then dissolve the forum once those tasks are complete.
- Only the whole board has the power to create select committees and to appoint members. At least one member of each select committee must be a director (Province of BC, 2015, s. 218(4))
- As with standing committees, select committees are subject to many procedural rules like those that apply to a board meeting. The procedure rules are usually established in the board procedure bylaw (Province of BC, n.d.).

Examples of Select Committees

We were unable to discover any examples of select committees specific to water or fire protection services currently running under BC regional districts. However, they are commonly used across the Province for various other purposes. For example:

- Regional District of Central Okanagan supports the [Westside Regional Wastewater Treatment Service Stakeholder Select Committee](#), which is a forum for discussion between parties that contribute financially to that service (including RDCK, District of Peachland, the City of West Kelowna, and Westbank First Nation).
- Various regional districts have established select committees related to arts, culture, health, and grant making, among other functions. For example, Regional District of Fraser-Fort George currently retains an [Arts, Culture, Heritage Grants Select Committee](#).
- Regional District of Nanaimo has a number of committees labelled “select” including for transit, solid waste management, regional parks and trails, community grants. However, these appear to be more characteristic of ongoing “standing committees” rather than the more transitory mechanism imagined here (see RDN, 2022).

Summary

What is it?	Temporary Select Committee
Who sits on it?	At least one Director; can include non-elected members
How are members appointed?	By the Board of Directors
How is it established?	By the Board of Directors through a delegation bylaw
What authority can it have	Advisory OR delegated operational and/or policy authority
When does meet?	Discretionary; at least semi-annually is advisable

3.5 Advisory Committee

What are Advisory Committees?

- The *Local Government Act* does not explicitly mention advisory committees. However, a board's ability to establish such forums is implicit in broad corporate powers.
- Members may be appointed by the Board of Directors, but could conceivably be appointed by standing committees, staff, or in other ways.
- Local governments establish advisory committees as a means of seeking input from a broad or select stakeholder group on specific issues (Province of BC, n.d.).
- Advisory committees typically do not have any formal decision-making powers or delegated authority. They do not have any direct approval, ownership, or authority over matters that are referred to it. If a board wanted a forum to have specific authority, it would usually establish it as a standing committee or use one of the other mechanisms discussed above.
- Advisory committees are another mainstay of local government governance across British Columbia. Many examples can be found at both the regional and municipal level, providing advice on diverse matters such as land use planning, solid waste, parks and recreation, agriculture, water, and wastewater services.
- Advisory committees that are set up for water services often provide opinions about services across the whole regional district area (i.e., for multiple services or larger populations) rather than for a single, geographically-confined service.

Examples of Advisory Committees

- Sunshine Coast Regional District has the [Water Supply Advisory Committee](#), a committee of volunteers who provide recommendations to the SCRD Board on the development and implementation of water supply and water conservation plans for the SCRD's three water systems.
- Capital Regional District has the [Water Advisory Committee](#) to provide advice to the Regional Water Supply Commission on water supply, water quality, the stewardship of lands held by the CRD for water supply purposes, and water conservation measures. This forum is somewhat unique in that it is mandated by the Provincial Capital Regional Water Supply and Sooke Hills Protection Regulation, in place since 1997 (CRD, 2014).
- Regional District of Kootenay Boundary established the [Kettle River Watershed Advisory Council](#) to provide advice on watershed management planning for the Kettle River basin.

Summary

What is it?	Advisory Committee
Who sits on it?	Discretionary: stakeholders, agencies, community members
How are members appointed?	By the Board of Directors or by other means (e.g., by staff)
How is it established?	Under Board of Director's corporate powers
What authority can it have	Usually only advisory
When does meet?	Discretionary

3.6 Communication and Engagement

What is a Communication and Engagement Program?

- If the preferred direction is to not set up a community forum like the ones described above, by default, all governance decisions would all be made by the CCRD Board of Directors. However, the Board can still engage with the community and solicit advice about administration of the Hagensborg system through various channels.
- Regional districts have broad latitude to communicate with residents through their general corporate powers under the *Local Government Act*.
- Communication can happen through many different avenues, some requiring high levels of effort and others requiring very little. Examples include newsletters, billing inserts, social media, news releases, and website updates to name just a few.
- Communication may be regular and scheduled (e.g., annual open houses) or be irregular and/or in response to emergent issues (e.g., social media posts about main breaks).
- Communication may concentrate on specific events (e.g., service interruptions), provide general information about the functioning of the water service, or focus on major developments such as changes to water rates structures or major infrastructure upgrades.
- Communication can be two-way (e.g., customer satisfaction surveys) or one-way (e.g., a website post).
- The amount of communication that takes place is usually entirely at the discretion of the board of directors or regional district staff. However, this approach does have the advantage that it can be very low cost and requires little from community members.

Examples of Communication and Engagement Programs

- [Regional District of Okanagan Similkameen](#) does not have a water commission or advisory committee, but it does produce detailed annual reports for all its water systems, available on the corporate website.
- [Cowichan Valley Regional District](#) also does not have a water commission or advisory committee, but makes information about its systems on its website and responds to customer concerns on an “as needed” basis.
- Regional District of Nanaimo has a comprehensive communications program under its [Drinking Water and Watershed Protection Program](#). It also offers residents across the region a broad range of services through its [Team WaterSmart](#) water efficiency program.

Summary

What is it?	Communication and Engagement Program
Who sits on it?	Not applicable; no forum required
How are members appointed?	Not applicable
How is it established?	Not applicable; staff make communications decisions
What authority can it have	Ability to communicate implicit in corporate powers
When does meet?	Not applicable; communication as required

4.0 Summary and Next Steps

This paper has provided an overview of governance options that CCRD has available through its powers under the *Local Government Act* to involve residents in ongoing governance of Hagensborg water and fire protection services. The options identified and described above are as follows:

1. local community commission,
2. service commission,
3. standing committee,
4. temporary select committee,
5. advisory committee, and
6. communication and engagement program.

Table 1 on the following page provides a consolidated summary of the options. Table 2 provides a simple evaluation of the options against the questions listed below. This evaluation is subjective and preliminary and is provided for discussion purposes only.

- How easy is the option is to establish initially?
- How much ongoing effort is required by CCRD staff and Board members to maintain the option?
- How much ongoing effort is required by community members to participate?
- What is the ongoing financial cost for CCRD?
- How transparent to community members is the option and the decisions or advice it offers?
- How frequently and deeply does the option engage community members?
- Based on experience elsewhere, what is the likelihood of the option enduring through time?

The information provided in this backgrounder will inform engagement with Hagensborg residents throughout June and July 2022. Feedback from this community engagement, along with other research completed for the project, will subsequently inform a final report and recommendations for the CCRD Board of Directors by the end of August 2022.

If you have any questions about the information provided in this document or would like to provide feedback, please contact the author, Kirk Stinchcombe, at +1 250 588 6851 or kirk@economics.com.

Table 1: Consolidated Summary of Governance Options

What is it?	Local Community Commission	Service Commission	Standing Committee	Temporary Select Committee	Advisory Committee	Communication and Engagement Program
Who sits on it?	Members of the community plus one Area Director	Members of the community and/or Board Directors	At least one Area Director; can include non-elected members	At least one Director; can include non-elected members	Discretionary: stakeholders, agencies, community members	Not applicable; no forum required
How are members appointed?	Elected by the voters in the community	Typically appointed by the Board of Directors	By Board Chair alone	By the Board of Directors	By the Board of Directors or by other means (e.g., by staff)	Not applicable
How is it established?	Through a community referendum (“assent vote”)	By the Board of Directors through a delegation bylaw	By the Board of Directors through a delegation bylaw	By the Board of Directors through a delegation bylaw	Under Board of Director’s corporate powers	Not applicable; staff make communications decisions
What authority can it have	Advisory OR delegated operational and/or policy authority	Advisory OR delegated operational and/or policy authority	Advisory OR delegated operational and/or policy authority	Advisory OR delegated operational and/or policy authority	Usually only advisory	Ability to communicate implicit in Regional District corporate powers
When does meet?	Discretionary; quarterly is advisable	Discretionary; quarterly is advisable	Discretionary; at least semi-annually is advisable	Discretionary; at least semi-annually is advisable	Discretionary	Not applicable; communication as required

Table 2: Simple Evaluation of Governance Options

	Local Community Commission	Service Commission	Standing Committee	Temporary Select Committee	Advisory Committee	Communication and Engagement Program
Ease to Establish	Challenging	Challenging	Medium	Medium	Easy	Easy
Ongoing Effort: CCRD staff and Board	High	High	Medium	Low	Medium	Low
Ongoing Effort: Community Members	High	High	Low	Low	Medium	Low
Ongoing Financial Cost	High	High	Medium	Low	Low	Low
Transparency	High	High	Medium	Medium	Medium	Low
Level of Community Participation	High	High	Medium	Medium	Medium	Low
Likelihood of Endurance	Medium	Medium	High	Low	Medium	Medium

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