

Hagensborg Water and Fire Protection Services Governance Review Final Report

October 2022

Prepared for



Prepared by



With



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Executive Summary

In 2021, the Central Coast Regional District (CCRD) took responsibility for drinking water and fire protection services formerly provided by the Hagensborg Waterworks District. At that time, all rights, assets, liabilities, and obligations for these services transferred to CCRD.

The purposes of this report are: 1) to summarize research conducted with the Hagensborg community in summer 2022 about these services; 2) to assess governance options CCRD has available to it under the *Local Government Act* to continue to involve residents in services oversight; and 3) to provide recommendations to CCRD on next steps for governance.

Background

The Hagensborg water and fire protection services support over 220 properties and about 460 residents in the Bella Coola Valley. The system needs repairs and upgrades, including replacement of aging distribution pipes to address pressure issues and leakage. As well, capital upgrades are required to address a long history of boil water advisories. These advisories stem from Vancouver Coastal Health Authority's administration of the *Drinking Water Protection Act* and ongoing noncompliance with potable quality standards (Vancouver Coastal Health, n.d.).

Under the former improvement district, Hagensborg residents had a long history of involvement and influence over policy and operational decisions. The decision-making process in 2019 through 2020 to convert to regional district services became somewhat acrimonious, resulting in division within the community. Some residents indicated strong preference for the former governance arrangement at that time (see, for example, Breffitt, 2020).

Community Research Results

To inform this project, research with the Hagensborg community took place in June through August 2022. This included an online citizen survey, a public open house, and two roundtable meetings with engaged residents.

All residents and residential landowners in the Hagensborg water and fire protection services areas were invited to participate in the online survey. Thirty-three (33) residents took part, or approximately 7% of those eligible. This level of uptake is consistent with what we would expect for a survey of this kind and yields a margin of error of +/- 16.45%, 19 times out of 20 (95% confidence interval). Key findings include the following:

- The great majority of people (82%, 26 individuals) are happy with their water service, evenly split between “satisfied” and “very satisfied” (41% each).
- Interestingly, 69% of people are highly satisfied with safety, and another 14% are neutral, despite the long-standing boil water advisory.
- Willingness to volunteer time to help guide management of the water service is tempered. Only about a third of respondents (36%, 12 people) indicated any kind of enthusiasm for this, and only 18% (6 people) are “very” willing and able. The remainder are ambivalent (28%, 9 people) or not willing (36%, 12 people).
- Among those who are less willing to volunteer (21 people), the most common reason cited is not having enough time to spare (43%, 9 people), followed by not being sure if they have the required skills or experience (33%, 7 people).

- We asked how respondents think major decisions about the Hagensborg water service should be made, including decisions about things like costs, rates, and major upgrades. About half (52%, 17 people) prefer that this be done by the CCRD Board of Directors with advice from a volunteer advisory committee. A third (33%, 11 people) prefer that this be led by an elected commission.
- Generally, residents feel that the cost of water services is affordable. Three quarters of respondents (75%; 25 individuals) feel that the cost of services is fair. Only a small minority think the cost is too expensive, and a couple of people think it is too cheap.

Two roundtable meetings were held in Hagensborg with community members with a history of involvement with the water and fire protection services. The first session included seven residents who identified as generally not in favour of conversion from an improvement district to a regional district service. The second session had six residents who identified as generally in favour. Key observations from these sessions are as follows:

- Participants were encouraged to focus on how the services should be governed under the CCRD in the future. However, in both sessions discussion repeatedly shifted back to the past, and specifically the process of conversion from an improvement district. Clearly this process became unpleasant, which may make it difficult for some to work collaboratively and to look to the future instead of the past.
- Without doubt, the single greatest challenge to community consensus in the future will be the issue of water treatment, and specifically chlorination to prevent pathogens in the distribution system. Perspectives on this range from “zero tolerance” to ambivalence.
- Participants in both groups were asked whether they think user rates are reasonable and how they feel about the prospect of paying more for services in the future. Happily, there is evidence of much more consensus in this area than elsewhere. People seem to agree that current costs are quite reasonable and affordable.
- Not surprisingly, there are different perspectives on how community input into governance of the services should continue in the future.

Governance Options

Six governance options available to CCRD through its powers under the *Local Government Act* were identified and assessed, 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.

The analysis demonstrates that, in many ways, options at either end mirror each other. Where one scores highly, the other tends to score poorly. For example, a local community commission is difficult to establish, but highly transparent. In contrast, simple communication and engagement is simple to do, but does not necessarily facilitate strong resident input into decision-making. The options in the middle (e.g., standing committee; temporary select committee) may represent a “happy medium”.

Synthesis

Based on the research and analysis completed, the following points are particularly relevant to the Hagensborg services:

- For example, everyone accepts (though some with bitterness) that things will not go back to the way they were and that the Hagensborg services will not return to an improvement district. Similarly, community members are surprisingly close to consensus on the issue of water service costs. Finally, people agree that some kind of community advisory function is a good idea. People only differ on how onerous, formal, and entrenched this needs to be.
- Evidence from the community research suggests that, overall, the community's appetite to participate in governance forums is limited. This is based on input from the roundtable meetings, extremely poor attendance at the open house, and that the survey demonstrated that willingness to volunteer time to help guide management of the water service is tempered.
- The issue of water treatment with chlorine is likely the trickiest issue facing the community in the immediate future. Those who object to chlorination have clear and specific reasons for taking this position. We advise against discounting their concerns.
- The local community commission option was preferred by roundtable attendees that were not in favour of regional district conversion. Notwithstanding this interest, we have reservations about the viability of this alternative. Reasons include the fact that, in practice, a local community commission for the Hagensborg water service will have very little or no decision-making authority. Other factors include the fact that evidence suggests that it will be difficult to attract qualified candidates to run for this office, CCRD's limited capacity to support this kind of forum, and that it would be difficult to establish.

Recommendations

Based on the preceding analysis, we offer the following recommendations to CCRD for future governance of the Hagensborg water and fire protection services:

1. As a matter of priority, demonstrate progress on infrastructure upgrades and renewal to the community.
2. Establish a temporary select committee under section 218(1) of the *Local Government Act* to attain community advice on capital renewal and upgrades.
3. Prepare a communications plan to address community concerns about water treatment involving chlorination.

Finally, as noted above, this report also highlights that there are many things that people agree on, not the least of which is that they are passionate about their community and safe water services. CCRD staff and elected officials have an opportunity to continue to show leadership and to work with the legitimate concerns and experience that some community members bring forward. In so doing, it can build more cohesion about water and fire protection services in the years ahead.

1.0 Introduction

In 2021, the water service provision and fire protection activities carried out by the Hagensborg Waterworks District were converted to two distinct regional district services operated by the Central Coast Regional District (CCRD), in accordance with provisions in the British Columbia *Local Government Act*.¹ All rights, assets, liabilities, and obligations for the drinking water and fire protection services formerly associated with the Waterworks District transferred to CCRD at that time.

In April 2022, CCRD issued a competitive Request for Proposals to select a consultant to complete a governance study for the Hagensborg services. Econics was chosen to complete this work. Metroline Research Group, a full-service market research firm based in Ontario and a frequent collaborator with Econics, assisted with delivery of an online resident survey.

The purposes of this report are: 1) to summarize research conducted with the Hagensborg community in summer 2022 about these services; 2) to assess governance options CCRD has available to it under the Local Government Act to continue to involve residents in services oversight; and 3) to provide recommendations to CCRD on next steps for governance.

Following this introduction, the report has five parts, as follows:

- Section 2 provides some background,
- Section 3 summarizes community research completed for this project,
- Section 4 describes and analyzes six governance options available to CCRD under the *Local Government Act*,
- Section 5 provides a synthesis of findings,
- Section 6 concludes with three recommendations for CCRD.

Methodologically, the following research informed this work:

- a literature review to identify governance options available under the *Local Government Act* and information on historic governance of the Hagensborg services,
- informal interviews with CCRD staff and contractors,
- telephone interviews with representatives from other regional districts in BC that continue to use local community commissions (one of the governance options identified),
- an online survey advertised to eligible Hagensborg residents through various channels,
- a public open house, and
- two roundtable meetings with engaged Hagensborg citizens.

Full details on the project methodology can be found in Appendix 1.

¹ Note that drinking water provision and the fire protection are treated as separate regional district services by CCRD and are managed as distinct financial entities. The two services also have slightly different service boundaries, and a small number of residents receive fire protection only (i.e., not drinking water). As such, we refer to them in plural form (i.e., “services”) throughout this report.

2.0 Background

The Hagensborg water and fire protection services support over 220 properties and about 460 residents in the Bella Coola Valley. These services began under an improvement district, which received its letters patent from the Provincial Government in 1964.

The water system needs repairs and upgrades, including replacement of aging distribution pipes to address pressure issues and leakage. Additional capital investments are required to address a long history of boil water advisories. These advisories stem from Vancouver Coastal Health Authority's administration of the *Drinking Water Protection Act* and ongoing non-compliance with potable quality standards (Vancouver Coastal Health, n.d.). A new reservoir is also proposed to provide fire protection and emergency storage improvements (Urban Systems, 2022).

As noted above, the improvement district was dissolved on 1 January 2021, and responsibility for the system transferred to CCRD. The main impetus for conversion was that CCRD secured a \$3.7 million grant from the Provincial Government for part of the cost of needed upgrades. Planning and regulatory approvals are currently underway, including collaborating with Nuxalk Nation regarding archaeological protocols associated with proposed construction. The intent is to have the designs complete and permits in place by late 2022 to allow the project to be completed in 2023 (Urban Systems, 2022).

Under the former improvement district, Hagensborg residents had a long history of involvement and influence over policy and operational decisions. The decision-making process in 2019 through 2020 to convert to regional district services was somewhat acrimonious, resulting in division within the community. At least a large minority of residents indicated their preference for the former governance arrangement (see, for example, Breffitt, 2020).

As will be discussed in further detail later in this report, the issue of water treatment via chlorination remains contentious within the community. This is a widespread practice across North America and the world but, to date, has never been done in Hagensborg. CCRD's engineering project team, supported by engineering consultants at Urban Systems, has had extensive dialogue with Vancouver Coastal Health to understand their treatment and water quality expectations, as well as ongoing monitoring and testing requirements. Feedback from the health authority confirms that all options include a requirement for chlorination for primary disinfection, to reduce public health risk. Vancouver Coastal Health also expects residual/secondary chlorination in the distribution system as a blanket requirement.

CCRD's project team is very cognizant that there is some community opposition to chlorinating water. They are exploring all options to at least minimize the amount of chlorine that would be mandated by Vancouver Coastal Health. Notably, current plans call for installing ultraviolet (UV) treatment as a first defense barrier that could allow chlorine requirements to be scaled back. Further, the team is looking at utilizing groundwater via a new well rather than the existing Snootli Creek source. If this proves viable, less treatment requirements and lower operating costs are expected (with the added benefit of leaving the Snootli Creek intake available as an emergency backup). However, to advance this design further, testing the quality of water drawn through the new well is required. Planning and procurement for this work is underway.

3.0 Community Research Results

This section summarizes the research completed in June through August 2022 with the Hagensborg community. Specifically, it details results from an online citizen survey, a public open house, and two roundtable meetings with engaged residents.

3.1 Online Citizen Survey

As detailed in Appendix 1 (Project Methodology), all residents and residential landowners in the Hagensborg water and fire protection services area were invited to participate in an online survey from late June through to end of August 2022. The survey included questions about satisfaction with services, governance, willingness to volunteer, cost of service, and communications preferences. It was advertised through multiple channels including via direct mail to all eligible residents.

Thirty-three (33) residents completed the survey including 32 residents who receive both water and fire services and one (1) resident who receives only fire service. Despite this relatively small sample, about 7% of all eligible residents participated, based on the service population of 460. This level of uptake is consistent with what we would expect for a survey of this kind. This yields a margin of error of +/- 16.45%, 19 times out of 20 (95% confidence interval).

This section provides highlights from the survey. Complete detail can be found in Appendix 3.

Satisfaction with Drinking Water Service

The survey results suggest Hagensborg residents are overwhelmingly satisfied with most aspects of their drinking water service.

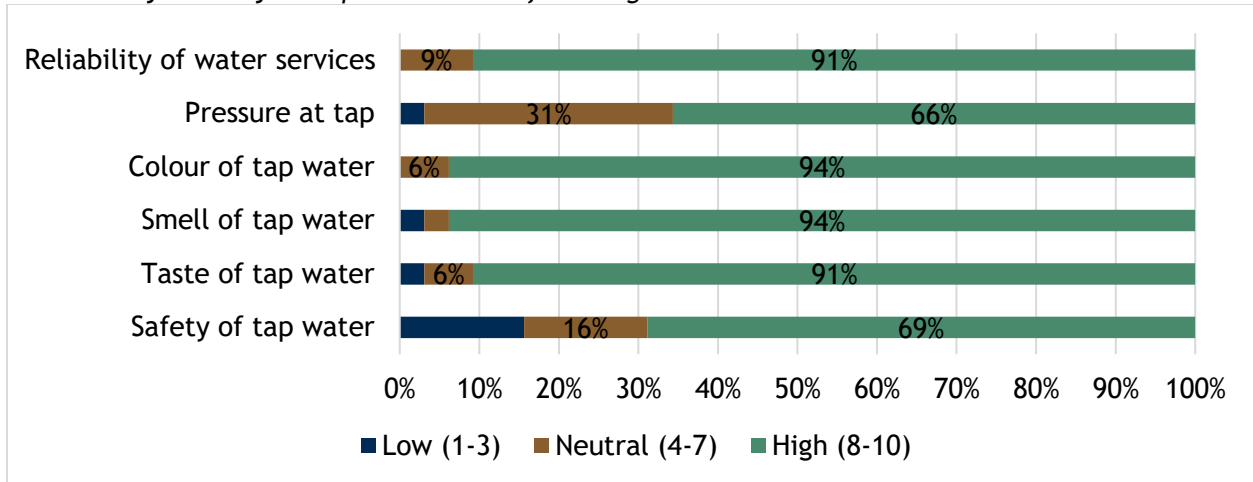
The great majority of people (82%, 26 individuals) are satisfied overall with their water service, evenly split between satisfied and very satisfied (41% each). Only one respondent indicated they were very dissatisfied, and the remainder (5 respondents) are neutral.

Figure 1 shows how respondents rated specific aspects of the water service. Satisfaction with most aspects is very high. For example, about two thirds of people (66.7%) give the taste of the water ten out of ten, and 91% rate this at eight out of ten or higher.

Satisfaction with pressure at the tap is slightly lower at only 66%.

Interestingly, 69% of people are highly satisfied with safety, and another 14% are neutral, despite the long-standing boil water advisory.

How would you rate your tap water on the following?



Base=32 (all respondents with water service)

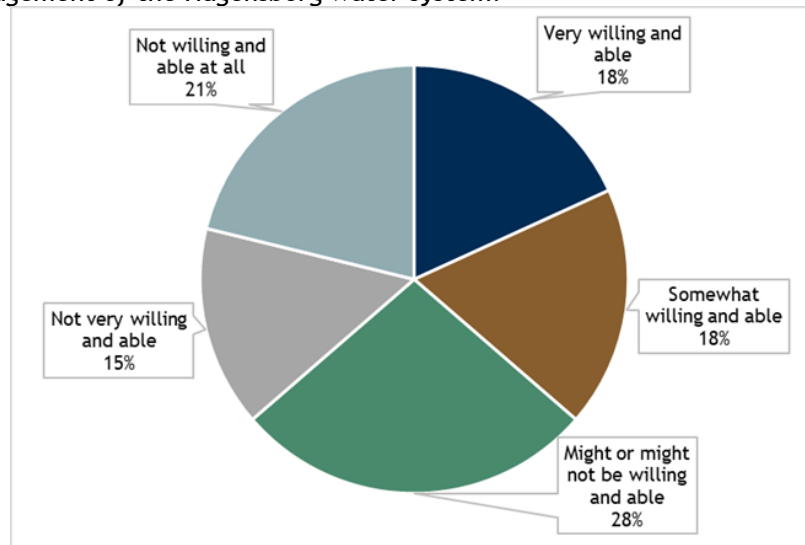
Figure 1: Satisfaction with Aspects of Drinking Water Service

Willingness to Volunteer

Willingness to volunteer time to help guide management of the water service is tempered. Only about a third of respondents (36%, 12 people) indicated any kind of enthusiasm for this, and only 18% (6 people) are “very” willing and able. The remainder are ambivalent (28%, 9 people) or not willing (36%, 12 people). See Figure 2.

In this context, remember that this sample includes only those who were willing to take the time to fill out a survey in the first place, so it is unlikely that willingness to volunteer would be higher among those who did not take the time to complete it.

How willing and able would you be to volunteer your own time to help set the direction and oversee management of the Hagensborg water system?



Base=33 (full sample)

Figure 2: Willingness to Volunteer Time for Hagensborg Water Service

Among those who are more willing to volunteer (12 people), most (75%) said they would be willing to put in one to five hours per month or less, noting the very small sample size. Only three people would be willing to dedicate more time than this on a voluntary basis.

Among those who are less willing to volunteer (21 people), the most common reason cited is not having enough time to spare (43%, 9 people), followed by not being sure if they have the required skills or experience (33%, 7 people), followed by those who felt this task should be done by elected officials and staff at CCRD (19%, 4 people).

Similar results emerge when the question was posed a different way. When respondents were asked specifically if they would be willing to volunteer on advisory committee to provide guidance on management of the water service, 12 people (36.4%) indicated any level of meaningful interest (5 very interested; 7 somewhat interested).

Governance

We asked how respondents think major decisions about the Hagensborg water service should be made, including decisions about things like costs, rates, and major upgrades. About half (52%, 17 people) prefer that this be done by CCRD Board of Directors with advice from a volunteer advisory committee. A third (33%, 11 people) prefer that this be led by an elected commission (see Figure 3).

Which one of these best describes how you think major decisions about the Hagensborg water service should be made, including decisions about things like costs, water rates, and major upgrades?

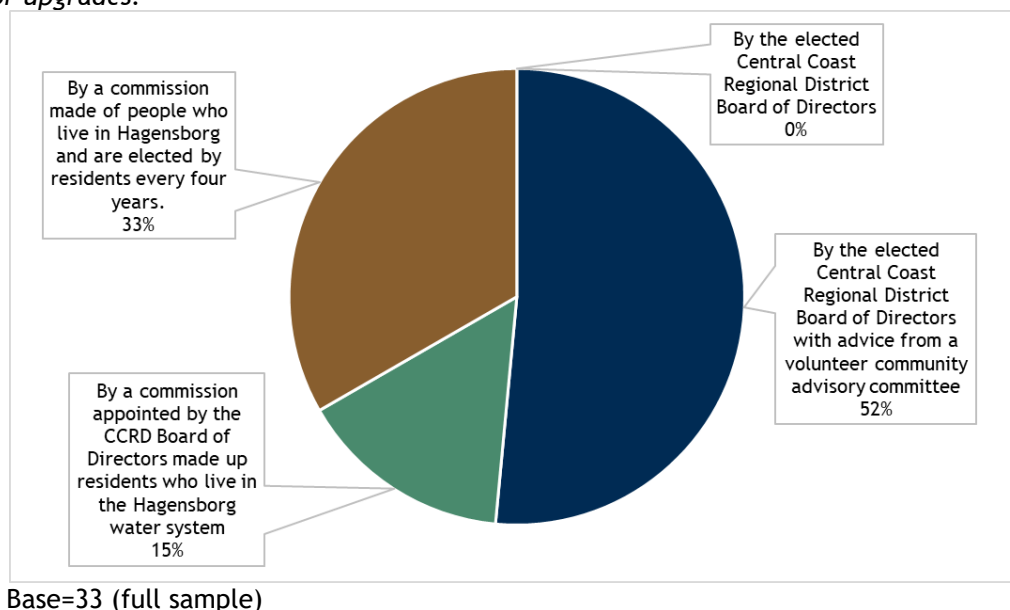
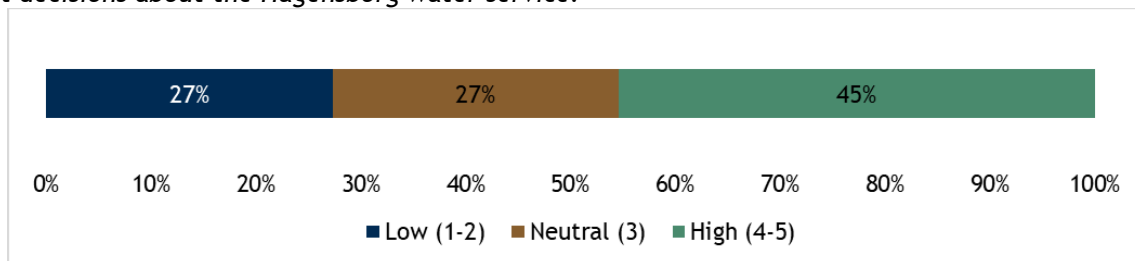


Figure 3: Governance Preferences for Hagensborg Water Service

When asked how they would describe their level of trust in CCRD to make the right decisions about the Hagensborg water service, respondents are split. About half (45%, 15 people) express higher levels of support. The remainder are split between neutrality and lower trust (see Figure 4).

How would you describe your level of trust in Central Coast Regional District to make the right decisions about the Hagensborg water service?



Base=33 (full sample)

Figure 4: Trust in CCRD to Make Decisions about Hagensborg Water Service

Cost of Water Services

Generally, residents feel that the cost of water services is fair and affordable. Three quarters of respondents (75%; 25 individuals) feel that the cost of services is fair. Only a small minority think that the cost of service is too expensive, and a couple of respondents felt it is too cheap. In terms of affordability, 45% of respondents (14 people) agree that they can easily afford their bills; 39% (12 people) are neutral on this issue and 16% (5 people) disagree.

3.2 Roundtable Meetings

Two roundtable meetings were held in Hagensborg with community members with a history of involvement with the water and fire protection services. The first session included seven residents who identified as generally not in favour of conversion from an improvement district to a regional district service. The second session had six residents who identified as generally in favour. Both sessions took place on 28 June 2022 at the Hagensborg Legion. More information on the facilitation methodology used for these meetings can be found in Appendix 1 and the discussion guide can be found in Appendix 2.

Not surprisingly, there were many points of disagreement between the two groups. However, there were also important points of consensus. This section summarizes the discussion.

Improvement District Conversion Process

Participants were encouraged by the facilitator to focus on how the services should be governed under the CCRD in the future. However, in both sessions, discussion repeatedly shifted back to the past, and specifically the process of conversion from an improvement district. Key observations on this issue are as follows:

- Those opposed to conversion believe that the decision-making process was highly flawed, and question whether the outcome reflects the majority view. They feel that they have been unfairly labelled as dissidents for raising what they see as legitimate concerns with CCRD control. In fact, these individuals have a very long history of involvement in water system management. As one person put it, “we put a lot of ourselves into that work”.
- Those who were in favour of conversion believe they were working in the community interest, on a voluntary basis, and that they had widespread community support. They

see conversion as necessary and unavoidable given regulatory requirements imposed by agencies outside the community (specifically the Provincial Ministry of Health and Vancouver Coastal Health). In their view, the improvement district Board of Directors was in an untenable situation, and conversion was the only viable option.

- Clearly this process became very unpleasant for all involved and much bitterness remains. This may make it difficult for some to work collaboratively and to look to the future instead of the past.
- Even within this disagreement about the past, there are at least a couple of important points of consensus. Everyone seems to accept that governance of the services will never return to an improvement district arrangement (albeit grudgingly by those opposed to conversion). Everyone involved also clearly cares very much about the community they live in and want what is best for Hagensborg residents.

Drinking Water Treatment

Without doubt, the single greatest challenge to community consensus for the future of the Hagensborg service is the issue of treatment, and specifically whether water should be chlorinated to prevent pathogens in the distribution system. Key observations on this issue are as follows:

- Those in the group against regional district conversion expressed strident opposition to any level of chlorine or chlorine by-products in the water system. As one participant put it, “my level of acceptance for chlorination is zero”. They see the risks from chlorination as greater than the risks of the status quo because they believe that the water is already safe to drink.
- Those in the group in favour of regional district conversion were more ambivalent about treatment. While they themselves drink water directly from their taps at home, they see treatment with chlorine as inevitable because of requirements imposed by Vancouver Coastal Health. They note that this practice is widely recognized as safe by public authorities.² They believe that science supports the claim that benefits of chlorination are much greater than any health risks from by-products. One participant referred to chlorination as a “necessary evil”.
- Participants in this group also noted the impacts of the long-standing boil water advisory on local businesses, such as tourism. For example, they explained that restaurants in Hagensborg must boil all water served to patrons.
- Nobody we spoke to (including many others in the community during our brief stay) could be described as particularly keen to chlorinate Hagensborg drinking water. Rather, people differ in their level of opposition from zero tolerance to ambivalence. Everyone also recognizes that the pressure to treat originates outside the community, from the Health Authority.

Cost of Infrastructure Upgrades and Water System Operation

Participants in both groups were asked whether they think current user rates are reasonable and how they feel about the prospect of paying more for water and fire protection services in the future. Happily, there is evidence of much more consensus in this area than elsewhere, though there are still important points of disagreement, as summarized below.

² See, for example, <https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/healthy-living/your-health/environment/drinking-water-chlorination.html>

- There is consensus that current water service costs are quite reasonable and affordable, consistent with findings from the online survey. In fact, some in the first group questioned the wisdom of rate reductions passed by the improvement district Board prior to conversion.
- There is also broad consensus that infrastructure renewal is overdue, especially for pipe replacement and the fire department. There is recognition that future rate increases to fund renewal would be reasonable, as long as they are justified and adequately communicated to residents. People are willing to spend more if it goes into capital renewal and directly into the water and fire protection services.
- There is also general frustration with the pace of progress on infrastructure renewal and expenditure of grant funding since conversion was completed in 2021. As one person put it, “no one is explaining the money”. Another person described CCRD’s financial management to date as a “black box”. While this sentiment was more acute in the first group, there seems to be consensus that CCRD needs to demonstrate progress on renewal and spending grant funding.
- The two groups differed on how important they think the offer of infrastructure grant funding was.
 - The group against conversion thought that \$3.78 million is not nearly sufficient to meet the need. They think that there were other options that were not fully explored and could have resulted in even more money flowing into the community.
 - The group in favour of conversion believed the offer of grant funding was a huge incentive that could not be turned down, and that doing so would have had a detrimental impact on the community.

Control

Much of the discussion centered on the issue of control, and who should be trusted to manage the water system and fire protection service. Key observations on this issue are below.

- The two groups differed in their overall level of trust in CCRD.
 - The group against conversion questioned the Regional District’s ability to represent community interests, pointing out, for example, that there are only two Area Directors representing the service areas. They spoke several times about wanting direct control over water management. There is a sense of loss about the dissolution of the improvement district. As one participant expressed it, “we had this in hand”.
 - The group for conversion spoke much more favorably about CCRD and expressed high trust. They noted, for example, that volunteer fire fighters have been treated very well by the Regional District since conversion.
- The two groups differed on how much trust they place in CCRD as the custodian of financial resources.
 - The group against conversion pointed out that CCRD’s administrative costs are extremely high compared to an improvement district. They also believe that CCRD will be far less efficient with capital expenditures.
 - The group for conversion has high trust in CCRD’s financial management capabilities.

Community Input into Services Governance

This resident engagement underscored that there are different perspectives about what role community members should have in governing the services in the future. At the roundtable meetings, both groups were provided with a short presentation that outlined the governance options identified below in Section 4. Participants were then asked what option makes the most sense to them and which one was least appealing. Key observations from this discussion are summarized below.

- The group against conversion prefers a model where advisors to CCRD are elected from the community, along the lines of a local community commission (described in the next section).
 - They viewed this option as the next best thing to reinstating the improvement district. In the words of one participant, “the more that it looks like what it was, the more favorable it is to us.”
 - They also referenced CCRD’s history of not supporting and/or dissolving other advisory committees and commissions, and fear that a water advisory committee would go the same way. They prefer a model that is more firmly entrenched, such as an elected commission.
 - That said, there was also mixed reaction to the question about whether the group participants would personally be willing to run for election on such a commission, especially if its powers are limited. As one person put it, “we’re not interested in rubber stamping everything from CCRD.”
- The group in favour of conversion were more ambivalent about the need for an intensive community advisory function.
 - Many are already serving the community in other capacities and are not looking for new roles. Some were frank about feeling jaded by past experience: “the water board was the absolute worst volunteer experience I have ever had.”
 - They spoke about apathy in the community and the sense that most people just want to see the capital works done and rates kept low.
 - At the same time, they also recognized that people who were not in favour of conversion need a way to bring concerns forward. They generally support some kind mechanism to attain community input, especially over the next several years while upgrades and capital improvements are underway.
 - Given these factors, they preferred an advisory committee model that involves minimal bureaucracy and administrative overhead. They are satisfied that this will provide enough transparency. An elected or appointed standing commission is seen as overkill.

3.3 Public Open House

The public open house on 29 June 2022 could not be described as well attended, despite significant advertising effort. Only one person who is not employed or contracted by CCRD (or a relative of someone employed) appeared.³ This person expressed sentiments similar to those articulated by the roundtable group against conversion from improvement district to a regional district management. Specifically, they spoke against water treatment via chlorination and expressed distrust about CCRD’s ability to oversee services governance.

³ A second person who also attended a roundtable meeting the evening before also briefly dropped in.

4.0 Governance Options for Hagensborg Services

This section describes the six governance options available to CCRD through its powers under the *Local Government Act*.⁴ These are as follows, 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.

Note that some constraints are common across all six options, as described below.

- 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 (along with 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.⁵

As noted in Section 3.2, above, some Hagensborg community members expressed particular interest in the local community commission approach during the roundtable meetings in June 2022. As a result, we conducted additional research into this option by contacting representatives of each of the remaining three local community commissions in the province (Bear Lake, Coal Harbour, and Fort Fraser). The results from this supplementary investigation is documented in Appendix 4.

The remainder of this section describes the six governance options.

⁴ This section is adapted from a backgrounder prepared for CCRD in June 2022 to support the public engagement phase of the project.

⁵ 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

4.1 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 strategic governance of several regional district services (e.g., water, sewer, streetlights, recreation, solid waste management, etc.).
- They are useful when a regional district provides services to a more isolated, geographically well-defined community that has high interest in its services and some characteristics of a municipality but is not yet ready for incorporation.
- A defining feature of LCCs is that its members (referred to as Commissioners) are elected by voters in the community, along with at least one regional district director. The method of election may be customized to suit needs (Province of BC, n.d.).
- A LCCs level of authority is defined in an establishment bylaw, passed by a regional district board of directors. It can be purely advisory in nature or 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 a 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). See Appendix 4 for additional information on the remaining three LCCs. In addition, in October 2022 Capital Regional District voters on Salt Spring Island approved a referendum to create a LCC for that island, though it has yet to be established (see Adams, Kerr, and Webster, 2022; Driftwood News, 2022).

Summary

What is it?	Local Community Commission
Who sits on it?	Members of the community plus at least 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; at least quarterly is advisable

4.2 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 LCC, service commissions may have certain powers delegated to them. These are defined in a delegation bylaw, passed by a regional district board of directors. 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; at least quarterly is advisable

4.3 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 the other mechanisms discussed above, standing committees may have certain powers delegated to them.
- People who are not board 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, the regional district board cannot delegate its law-making powers, including budget setting authority, to a standing committee. However, such a committee 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

4.4 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 regional district 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 CCRD Board could appoint a select committee (that includes residents) to oversee the construction of a new water treatment facility and other upgrades, 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 board 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

4.5 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 SCR D Board on the development and implementation of supply and conservation plans for the SCR D's three water systems.
- Capital Regional District has the [Water Advisory Committee](#) to provide advice to the Regional Water Supply Commission on supply, quality, the stewardship of lands held by the CRD for supply purposes, and 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

4.6 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 though 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 service, or focus on major developments such as changes to rates 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 a 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 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 available 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](#) (funded through the regional district). 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

4.7 Analysis of Governance Options

Table 1 on the following page provides a consolidated summary of the options set out in this section. Table 2 provides a simple evaluation of the options against the questions listed below.

- 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?

In many ways, the options at either end of Table 2 mirror each other. Where one scores highly, the opposite tends to score poorly. For example, a LCC is very difficult to establish, but highly transparent. In contrast, simple communication and engagement is simple to do, but does not necessarily facilitate resident input into decision-making. The options in the middle (e.g., standing committee; temporary select committee) may represent a “happy medium”.

Issues specific to the Hagensborg services that need to be overlaid on these considerations include the following:

- CCRD’s limited administrative capacity;
- the likelihood of citizen participation in these kinds of forums, not just now but into the future;
- how much influence residents can actually have on water service management with the governance options available, and specifically on the issues of costs and water treatment, the most “top-of-mind” issues for this community;
- how appropriate each option is for Hagensborg based on factors such as its proximity to the CCRD office and the number of distinct services it delivers; and,
- how difficult it would be to establish a particular governance model and, if necessary, to discontinue it should it prove not viable over the long term.

These issues are discussed in more detail in the next section.

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 at least 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; at least quarterly is advisable	Discretionary; at least 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: 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

5.0 Synthesis

This section integrates findings from the research and analysis above to inform recommendations in the next section for a preferred governance direction for the Hagensborg services. It does so under the following four themes:

- points of community consensus,
- community appetite to participate in governance forums,
- water treatment, and
- viability of a local community commission.

5.1 Points of Community Consensus

The decision-making process in 2019 through 2020 to convert from an improvement district to regional district services was somewhat acrimonious and resulted in division within the community. The passage of time has not healed all wounds. Under the former improvement district, Hagensborg residents had a long history of direct authority over policy and operational decisions. Ceding this authority to the Regional District has been very difficult for some community members.

Despite the discord, there are some areas where residents may be closer to consensus than one might think. These points can serve as a foundation for rebuilding community cohesion.

- Everyone accepts (though some with bitterness) that things will not go back to the way they were and that the Hagensborg services will not return to an improvement district.
- Community members are surprisingly close to consensus on the issue of costs, based on the following evidence:
 - Three quarters of survey respondents (75%; 25 individuals) feel that the cost of services is fair. Only a small minority think that the cost of service is too expensive.
 - Both roundtable groups thought that costs are currently fair and reasonable. More importantly, both groups indicated that they believed the community would be willing to pay more for water and fire protection services if the need and value can be demonstrated.
 - The group against regional district conversion is nervous about the likelihood of higher administration costs under CCRD. However, everyone seems to agree that administration costs need to be minimized.
 - People in both roundtable groups pointed out that water service rates actually decreased prior to dissolution of the improvement district. (In fact, some questioned whether this was appropriate, inferring that they think costs are too low.)
- People agree that CCRD needs to show progress on infrastructure upgrades and to spend grant funding before deadlines lapse.

- There is consensus that some kind of community advisory function is a good idea. People only differ on how to achieve this. For example, not one respondent in the survey indicated that the Board should make decisions on its own without advice.
- Everyone we spoke to recognizes that the drivers for chlorination of drinking water are coming from outside the community (i.e., from the Provincial Government and Vancouver Coastal Health).

5.2 Community Appetite to Participate in Governance Forums

We suspect that, overall, the community’s appetite to participate in governance forums is limited. This is based on the following evidence:

- Those we spoke to who were in favour of regional district conversion told us that they were “burnt out” by their experiences in 2019-20 and were happy to now delegate governance responsibilities to the regional district. They prefer to dedicate their volunteer efforts elsewhere. Simple appointed community advisory forums like the ones set out in Section 4, above, are enough for them. However, they were not enthusiastic about taking part themselves.
- Those we spoke to who were against regional district conversion are less trustful of CCRD but are also jaded by their experiences in 2019-20. They told us in no uncertain terms that they would not be satisfied with “rubber stamping” CCRD’s decisions. This needs to be balanced against the very limited decision-making authority that residents can actually have in water system management under any of the available governance options, as will be discussed further below.
- The community survey demonstrated that willingness to volunteer time to help guide management of the water service is tempered. Only about a third of respondents (36%, 12 people) indicated willingness to do this, and only 18% (6 people) are “very” willing and able. Note that this sample includes only the 7% of residents that were interested enough to take the time to fill out the survey in the first place.
- The June 2022 open house was very poorly attended, despite significant effort to make the community aware that it was happening (e.g., information was directly mailed to each household).

5.3 Water Treatment

The issue of water treatment with chlorine is likely the trickiest issue facing the community in the immediate future. The following factors are particularly relevant:

- According to CCRD’s engineering team, it is extremely unlikely that Vancouver Coastal Health will approve a treatment option that does not involve at least a small amount of chlorine as a secondary treatment requirement. As a team member put it, “there are not really any other options”.⁶

⁶ There may be some confusion in the community about the drivers for chlorine treatment. In the roundtable meetings and our other discussions in the community, people typically spoke about the

- The engineering team is acutely aware of community concerns and is doing their level best to minimize the need for chlorine, for example by planning to include UV treatment and by exploring groundwater source options.
- We are hard pressed to find anyone in the community who is enthusiastic about chlorination. At best, people will describe it as a “necessary evil”. At worst, we heard one person say that their “level of acceptance for chlorination is zero”. Everyone we spoke to is well aware of the boil water advisories, but drinks water right out of the tap regardless of their position on water service governance.
- According to the online survey, community confidence in the system is remarkably high in the face of a decades-long boil water advisory. 91% of people are highly satisfied with the reliability of the service. More surprisingly, 69% of people are highly satisfied with safety, and another 14% are neutral. Also relevant is the fact that about two thirds of people (66.7%) give the taste ten out of ten, and 91% rate this at eight out of ten or higher. We suspect this would almost certainly diminish with the addition of chlorine, despite the associated reductions in public health risk.
- Those who object to chlorination have clear and specific reasons for taking this position. We advise against discounting their concerns. Reasons presented for not wanting chlorine included the following:
 1. Taste: a matter of personal preference, but an important one to people who have drunk untreated water for their entire lives,
 2. Health risk: some attendees spoke about purported links between intake of high levels of chlorine by-products and incidences of cancer. This issue was also raised during the regional district conversion process (see, for example, Hagensborg Water Preservation Group, n.d.). This is an area of active scientific research and must be balanced against the risk of waterborne illness from pathogens in untreated drinking water.⁷ The Provincial Government’s position is that “current scientific data show that the benefits of chlorination are much greater than any health risks from by-products.” (Province of BC, 2022). However, this position does not resonate with all residents.
 3. Environmental contamination, especially to fish: the planned water treatment facility is upstream from the Department of Fisheries and Ocean’s Snootli Creek Salmon Hatchery. Some roundtable meeting attendees raised the concern that there could be an accidental spill that would impact this facility or other fish in Snootli Creek. (We note, however, that this is an example of a risk that could be well mitigated through proper design and maintenance activities).

“purity” of the water source (i.e., Snootli Creek). However, our understanding is that chlorine will be required by Vancouver Coastal Health as much to protect water once it enters Hagensborg’s lengthy and aging distribution network (i.e., for residual protection). That is, the source water may not be the real issue for Vancouver Coastal Health.

⁷ See the following links for further discussion on this issue:

<https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/healthy-living/your-health/environment/drinking-water-chlorination.html#th2>

<https://www.healthlinkbc.ca/healthlinkbc-files/drinking-water-chlorination-facts>

5.4 Viability of a Local Community Commission

The LCC option was preferred by members of the community that were not in favour of regional district conversion, as it is seen as the approach that comes closest to the now defunct improvement district. This is because it meets two conditions: 1) it is elected by the community; and 2) it can, in theory, have some delegated decision-making authority over how the water system is run.

Notwithstanding this interest, we have reservations about the viability of a LCC for Hagensborg for at least five reasons. Note that some of the observations below are based on learnings from other LCCs in the province as documented in Appendix 4.

First, in practice, a LCC for the Hagensborg water service will have very little or no decision-making authority.

- Under the *Local Government Act*, budget decisions cannot be delegated to a LCC. This must remain with the regional district board. This includes decisions about capital expenditure on system upgrades and renewal.
- A LCC could have very little material role in determining water treatment options. These decisions are dictated by the *Drinking Water Protection Act* and regulated by Vancouver Coastal Health.
- All three of the LCCs that continue to operate in the province are purely advisory. They have no decision-making authority and can only make recommendations to their regional district boards.
- This implies that, in practice, a LCC for Hagensborg would only be given authority over matters of minor importance, or have a purely advisory role. In contrast, the fact that it is elected from the community may lead to high expectations that cannot possibly be met, resulting in more disappointment.

Second, it seems likely that a LCC would have a difficult time attracting qualified candidates to run for the office.

- Experience in the three remaining LCCs in BC is that candidates are almost always appointed by acclamation (i.e., not enough people run to have an election). In many cases, not enough candidates step forward to fill the available number of seats and the regional district board must appoint members, rendering its status more similar to that of a committee or commission. The two other LCCs in BC that failed (Charlie Lake and Olalla) did so in great part due to lack of community interest.
- As noted above in section 5.2, community appetite to participate in governance forums seems to be limited.
- Other CCRD advisory forums have had difficulty sustaining volunteer interest in recent years (e.g., the Centennial Pool Commission; Denny Island Recreation Commission).

Third, the administration costs for a LCC are the highest of the available options, including, for example, the costs of elections every four years, and must be balanced against CCRD's capacity.

- Compared to the many other regional districts and local governments we have worked with across British Columbia and Canada, CCRD has an extremely small staff complement. Given this notably limited capacity, any governance forum that requires extensive handling and administration by staff will be challenged. Alternatively, CCRD could hire or contract new staff to fulfill this administration function, but this would entail additional expense for water and fire protection services users.
- Unavoidably, CCRD staff would need to oversee elections and provide administrative support to a LCC (e.g., organizing meetings, preparing agendas, minutes, training commissioners, etc.).
- Staff in the three remaining LCCs in BC indicate that this forum is a considerable additional burden on their limited time.
- Salary costs for staff time to support a LCC would need to be charged against the water and fire protection services. This needs to be balanced against some resident concerns that the administrative costs of the regional district could be unnecessarily high and will result in increases in rates.

Fourth, the circumstances in Hagensborg are different than other places where LCCs currently exist.

- Existing LCCs in the province have mandates that encompass several different kinds of services (e.g., cemeteries, streetlights, sewer, etc.), not just water or fire. This means that they can have a role in advising on decisions about many things of importance to the community (i.e., their agendas are much fuller).
- Existing LCCs are in communities that are geographically much more distant from their regional district headquarters compared to Hagensborg. It is much easier for Hagensborg residents to attend CCRD Board meetings or to meet with staff about matters of concern.

Fifth, a LCC would be difficult to establish and even more difficult to disband if it proves unviable.

- A LCC can only be established through a referendum (an assent vote) by the community and must be approved by the Provincial Inspector of Municipalities (Province of BC, n.d.), which would come with additional costs.
- The citizen survey indicated a preference for an appointed forum (67%) compared to an elected forum (33%).
- If a LCC was found to be unworkable (for example, due to lack of participation), reversing this course of action once it is set would also be very challenging, likely requiring another referendum. Staff would be left with an ongoing workload.

6.0 Recommendations

Based on the preceding analysis, this section sets out recommendations to CCRD for future governance of the Hagensborg water and fire protection services.

- 1. As a matter of priority, demonstrate progress on infrastructure upgrades and renewal to the community.**

Despite considerable effort behind the scenes on planning and work with Nuxalk Nation on archeological protocols, residents have not seen much tangible progress on infrastructure renewal since conversion from an improvement district at the start of 2021. Some people are understandably nervous that deadlines to expend Provincial Government funding by 2024 may not be met. It is important that CCRD gets in front of this by communicating progress and expediting planning and procurement, including addressing any concerns from Nuxalk Nation.

We recommend that the following low cost/low effort communications actions commence as soon as possible:

- make the monthly project updates from Urban Systems that are currently prepared for internal use more easily accessible on the CCRD website and post new updates as they are submitted (e.g., at <https://www.ccrd.ca/services/water-services/hagensborg-system>);
- post brief updates on project progress on the CCRD Facebook page at least monthly;
- work with editorial staff at Coast Mountain News to provide progress update newspaper stories at least quarterly.

CCRD's engineering team is working diligently to move project planning forward. However, there are currently pressing "big picture" challenges with inflation, procurement, and finding skilled tradespeople. As a result, the CCRD Board and senior management should prioritize doing whatever they can to clear a path for this work. This includes supporting collaboration with Nuxalk Nation on archeological protocols and other matters of concern to the Nation.

- 2. Establish a temporary select committee under section 218(1) of the *Local Government Act* to attain community advice on capital renewal and upgrades.**

Some residents wish to continue to be involved in water service governance. However, as detailed in this report, it is not clear whether this interest will be sustained under CCRD management or whether community consensus on key matters will be readily attainable. As such, we recommend starting with an interim approach through a temporary select committee as described in Section 4.4, above. It should have the following features:

- The committee will have a defined term of either two years or until planned infrastructure upgrades are completed, whichever comes first.
- Membership should include the Area Directors from Electoral Areas C and D as well as at least four community members.
- At least one seat should be offered to Nuxalk Nation (or an alternative government-to-government forum if the Nation prefers).
- Community members should be recruited through a transparent selection process that includes an open call for self-nomination as well as direct outreach to residents who have a history with the services.

- The committee’s responsibilities should be spelled out in terms of reference but will be advisory in nature. Ultimate decision making for the services will remain with the responsible CCRD Board members.
 - The committee will provide advice on constructing a new water treatment facility and renewing the aging distribution system.
 - After its two-year term is complete, CCRD should review results and determine whether to: 1) extend the forum in its current form; 2) transition it into an ongoing advisory or standing committee; or, 3) review the local community commission option if there is sustained community interest and perceived benefit.
- 3. Prepare a communications plan to address community concerns about water treatment involving chlorination.**

As detailed in this report, water treatment via chlorination is an issue of concern to some residents. Few in the community are particularly keen for this, though some accept it as inevitable. Given that the main push for this comes from outside the community (i.e., from the Provincial regulator), CCRD can serve as an impartial, balanced source of information for those who are unsure about what this means for them.

By end of 2022, CCRD should prepare a communications plan and supporting documents that addresses the following:

- **when** chlorination will commence;
- **who** is directing the use of chlorine disinfection (i.e., the Provincial Government and the Vancouver Coastal Health);
- **why** chlorination is necessary, with particular attention to the difference between providing residual disinfection in the pipe network versus concern about the “purity” of source water;
- **what** the benefits and risks are based on honest, science-based information from reputable sources that is respectful of differing views;
 - specific issues to address include taste, purported health risks, and the potential for risks to fish;
- **how** chlorination will be implemented;
 - how CCRD and its engineering team have endeavored to ensure use of chlorine will be absolutely minimized;
 - how any risks will be managed;
 - how any risks compare to other risks (e.g., the risk of illness due to pathogens in drinking water); and,
 - how people can avoid chlorine if they still have concerns (e.g., by using additional filtration at their tap).

Finally, this report also highlights that there are many things that people agree on (see Section 5.1), not the least of which is that they are passionate about their community and safe water services. CCRD staff and elected officials have an opportunity to continue to show leadership and to work with the legitimate concerns and experience that some community members bring forward. In so doing, it can build more cohesion about water and fire protection services in the years ahead.

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Appendix 1: Methodology

This appendix sets out the project methodology including the following three components:

1. governance options research,
2. online residents survey, and
3. roundtable meetings and open house.

Governance Options Research

Research on the governance options outlined in Section 4 focused primarily on “grey literature” from British Columbia using online search. Many of the sourced identified are listed in bibliographic references in Section 7. We also looked at examples of citizen advisory forums in place in other BC jurisdictions. With respect to local community commissions (LCCs) specifically, we contacted and informally interviewed staff and elected representatives from each of the three examples that continue to function in BC. These interviews were informal and conducted via telephone with the objective of understanding experience and satisfaction with these forums. Interviews were as follows:

- two representatives of Bear Lake LCC in Regional District of Fraser-Fort George,
- two representatives of Fort Fraser LCC in Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako,
- one representative from Coal Harbour LCC in Regional District of Mount Waddington.

We also conducted informal interviews with staff members or contractors from CCRD with specific questions about the Hagensborg services and about commissions or committees established by the Regional District in the past, including the following:

- the Centennial Pool Commission,
- Denny Island Recreation Commission,
- Denny Island Airport Commission,
- Economic Development Advisory Committee.

Finally, we also drew from previous experience with these kinds of forums, either through previous consulting engagements with other BC local governments, or through personal experience volunteering on similar forum in our own community.

Online Survey

All residents and residential landowners in the Hagensborg water and fire protection services area were invited to participate in an online survey, posted in late June through to end of August 2022. The survey questionnaire was developed jointly by Econics and Metroline Research Group and administered by Metroline. This included questions about satisfaction with services, governance, willingness to volunteer, cost of service, and communications preferences.

The survey was open to all residents, male or female and over 18 years old that receive tap water from Hagensborg water system and/or receive fire protection from the Hagensborg Fire Department. Multiple adults in a household were invited to participate. Several techniques were employed to inhibit individuals from completing it more than once.

Screeners questions were used to ensure that only Hagensborg residents were included. Entry into a draw to receive a \$100 Visa gift card was offered as an incentive to participate. Respondents had the option to complete the survey online or to call a toll-free number to do so with a trained phone operator employed by Metroline.

The survey was advertised through the following channels:

- by direct mail via a personally addressed postcard sent to all households in the service area in late June (see image below),
- through CCRD’s Facebook page (three posts throughout the survey period),
- posters at Hagensborg and Bella Coola post offices and several local businesses,
- an advertisement in the 23 June 2022 issue of the Coast Mountain News, and
- through the CCRD website including a dedicated webpage and two different posts in “notices” section of the homepage,
- through word-of-mouth to participants in the open house and roundtable meetings.



Survey Postcard Direct Mailed to all Hagensborg Households in June 2022

Thirty-three (33) residents completed the survey including 32 residents who receive both water and fire services and one (1) resident who receives only fire service. Despite this relatively small sample, about 7% of eligible residents participated, assuming a service population of 460. This is very consistent with what we would expect for a survey of this kind. This yields a margin of error of +/-16.45%, 19 times out of 20 (95% confidence interval).

Demographically, 55% of respondents (18 people) were older than 55. However, younger people are also well represented in the sample population. Size of households ranged from one to seven people, with an average size of 2.94. 49% of respondents (16 people) have lived in the area for more than 20 years and 21% (7 people) have lived in the area for between 11 and 20 years.

While sophisticated procedures and professional staff have been used to collect and analyze the information presented in this report, it must be remembered that surveys are not predictions. They are designed to measure opinion within identifiable statistical limits of accuracy at specific points in time. This survey is in no way a prediction of opinion or behaviour at any future point in time.

Roundtable Meetings and Open House

Three meetings were held in the community, all held at the Hagensborg Legion, as follows:

- a roundtable meeting with seven residents who identified as generally not in favour of conversion from an improvement district to a regional district service on 28 June 2022,
- a roundtable meeting with six resident who identified as generally in favour of conversion from an improvement district to a regional district service, also on 28 June 2022,
- an open house on the evening of 29 June 2022 open to any community member who chose to attend.

The roundtable sessions were by invitation. Participants were identified and recruited through a combination of online research (e.g., using the former Hagensborg improvement district website and Coast Mountain News archives), advice from CCRD staff, and word-of-mouth. All participants were Hagensborg residents who had a history of significant involvement with the former improvement district (e.g., as former Board Directors) and/or the volunteer fire department. Both meetings were about 90 minutes long. A copy of the discussion guide used to conduct these sessions can be found in Appendix 2. Notes were taken and the sessions were audio recorded. This information was subsequently digitized, compiled, and analyzed to inform this report.

The open house was advertised through the same channels as the online survey (i.e., postcard to all households, Facebook posts, Coast Mountain News, post CCRD website, posters in prominent locations). Six individuals attended, noting that this included four people either employed by CCRD (two people) or their relatives (two people) and a fifth person who joined briefly and who had attended a roundtable meeting the previous evening. As such, this event could not be described as well attended despite significant advertising effort. Posters outlining governance options for the Hagensborg system were posted in the room and the facilitator provided a short presentation followed by an informal discussion about governance options. Notes were taken throughout.

Appendix 2: Focus Groups Discussion Outline

Central Coast Regional District - Hagensborg Water Service Governance Study

When: 28 June 2022

Duration: 5:30pm and 7pm for 75 to 90 minutes

How: In Person, Hagensborg Legion

The questions below will only guide discussion; the facilitators will adjust questions and topics based on participant responses.

Introduction (~10 minutes)

- Welcome
- Introduce myself
- How the information will be used
 - Meeting will be recorded
 - May use brief quotes in the reports we write
 - However, quotes will not be attributed to individual people and your names will not appear in any of the reports we submit CCRD
- Round table introduction
- Did anyone do the online survey? Did anyone review backgrounder on the website?
- Meeting overview

Satisfaction with water service (~10 minutes)

- Overall, how satisfied would you say you are with the Hagensborg water service?
- What are your biggest concerns about the system for the future?

Water system conversion (~20 minutes)

- What are your biggest concerns about the conversion of the Hagensborg water service from an improvement district to a regional district service? What worries you?
- What opportunities do you see with the conversion to a regional district service?

Cost of services (~10 minutes)

- A single-family dwelling in Hagensborg currently pays \$275 per year for water services. How reasonable do you think this cost is?
- How do you feel about the prospect of paying more for water services in the future if it meant that the level of service you receive would increase?

BREAK (45-minute mark)

Water system governance (~30 minutes)

- How interested are you in participating in the oversight of the water system in the future?
- What kinds of things would you be willing to do?
- How much time per month would you be willing to devote to this?
- {specify examples if required}
 - Read periodic updates about the water system through a newsletter or website
 - Attend an annual meeting hosted by Central Coast Regional District
 - Sit on a volunteer advisory committee that meets every few months and makes recommendations to the Central Coast Regional District Board of Directors
 - Be appointed to a commission that that can make some decisions about important issues and meets monthly or more often
 - Run for election in the community to represent other residents on a commission that can make some decisions about important issues and meets monthly or more often

I'm going to share a list of options that we are looking at for CCRD to get input from the community in the future. I'll provide a short description of each option.

- Based on what you just heard, what option makes the most sense to you? Which one is the least appealing? Why?
- What challenges do you see with your preferred option?

Now I'm going to share a bit more information about each option. This is a preliminary assessment that I completed based on research about the *Local Government Act* and what has happened in other places.

- Based on what you just heard, do you agree with this assessment?
- Does this change your opinion at all about what option CCRD should pursue?

Wrap Up (~10 minutes)

- As we wrap up, I want to go around the table and get you to tell me: what is your biggest takeaway from this session this evening?

Appendix 3: Detailed Findings from Online Survey

This appendix provides full details on results from the online survey. A summary of these findings can be found in Section 3.1 of the main report. The methodology is described in Appendix 1.

A1.0 Satisfaction with the Services

Reassuringly, Hagensborg residents are overwhelmingly satisfied with most aspects of their drinking water and fire protection services.

Satisfaction with Drinking Water Service

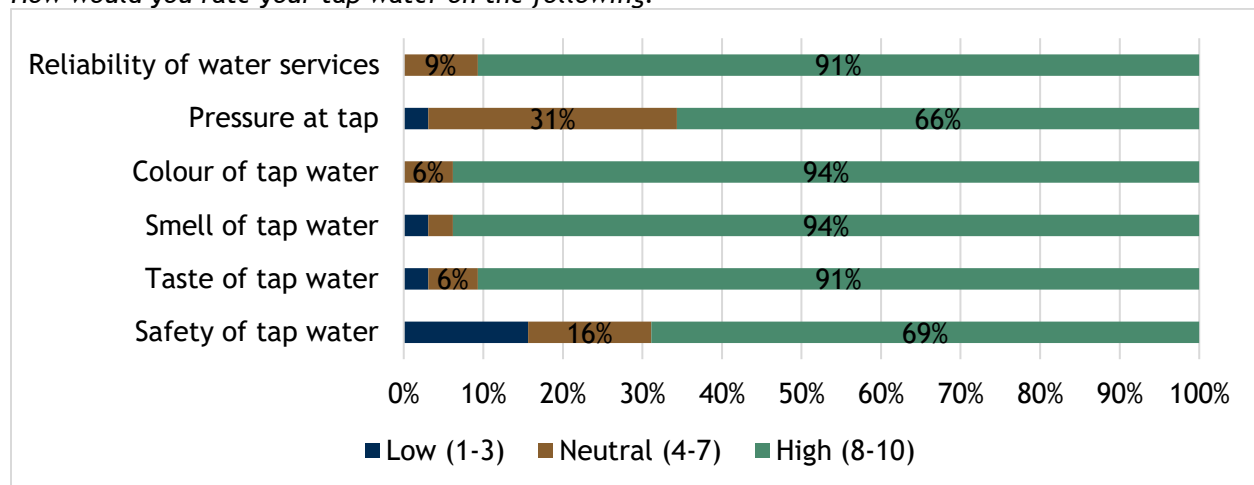
The great majority of people (82%, 26 individuals) are satisfied overall with their water service, evenly split between satisfied and very satisfied (41% each). Only one respondent indicated they were very dissatisfied, and the remainder (5 respondents) were neutral.

Figure A1 shows how residents rate specific aspects of the water service. Satisfaction with most aspects is very high. For example, about two thirds of people (66.7%) give the taste of the water ten out of ten, and 91% rate this at eight out of ten or higher.

Satisfaction with pressure at the tap is slightly lower at 66%.

Interestingly, 69% of people are highly satisfied with water safety, despite the long-standing boil water advisory.

How would you rate your tap water on the following?



Base=32 (all respondents with water service)

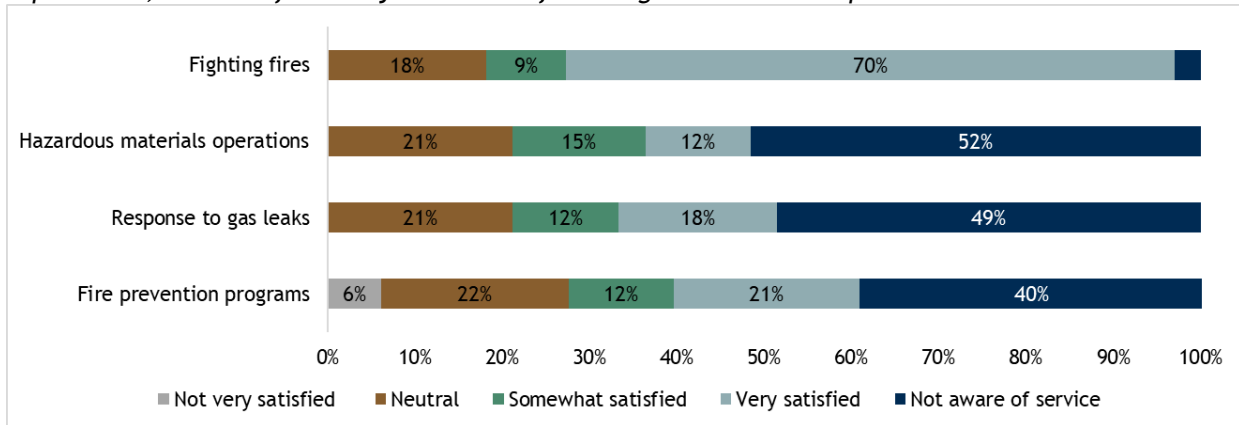
Figure A1: Satisfaction with Aspects of Drinking Water Service

Satisfaction with Fire Protection Service

Residents are similarly satisfied with various aspects of the fire protection service, at least to the extent that they are aware services exist. Nearly 80% are satisfied with fire fighting services (70% very satisfied, 9% very satisfied), and most are aware that this is available.

Awareness of other services (hazardous material operations, response to gas leaks, fire prevention) is much lower, with only about half of respondents aware of these. Not surprisingly, satisfaction with these varies more, noting the small sample sizes (see Figure A2).

Based on your experience or knowledge of services provided by the Hagensborg Volunteer Fire Department, how satisfied are you with the following services that it provides?



Base=33 (full sample)

Figure A2: Satisfaction with Aspects of Fire Protection Service

Table A1 provides detail on satisfaction with various aspects of the fire protection service.

Table A1: Additional Detail on Satisfaction with Fire Protection Service

Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements. The Hagensborg Volunteer Fire Department...

	Disagree or Strongly Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
Does its best to protect properties from damage due to fire	6%	12%	15%	67%
Does its best to protect human life	3%	12%	18%	67%
Has my best interest at heart	3%	18%	16%	63%
Protects me and my community in the case of an emergency	3%	18%	30%	49%
Arrives on scene in a timely manner when they are called	3%	30%	24%	42%
Helps me when I have an emergency	3%	36%	18%	42%
Helps to keep my community healthy and safe	9%	16%	28%	47%

Base=33 (full sample)

A2.0 Cost of Water Services

Generally, residents feel that the cost of water services is fair and affordable. Three quarters of respondents (75%; 25 individuals) feel that the cost of water services is fair. Only a small minority think that the cost of service is too expensive (see Figure A3), and a couple of people think it is too cheap.

Homeowners who draw their tap water from the Hagensborg water service pay pennies for every litre they use or less. How reasonable do you think this cost is?

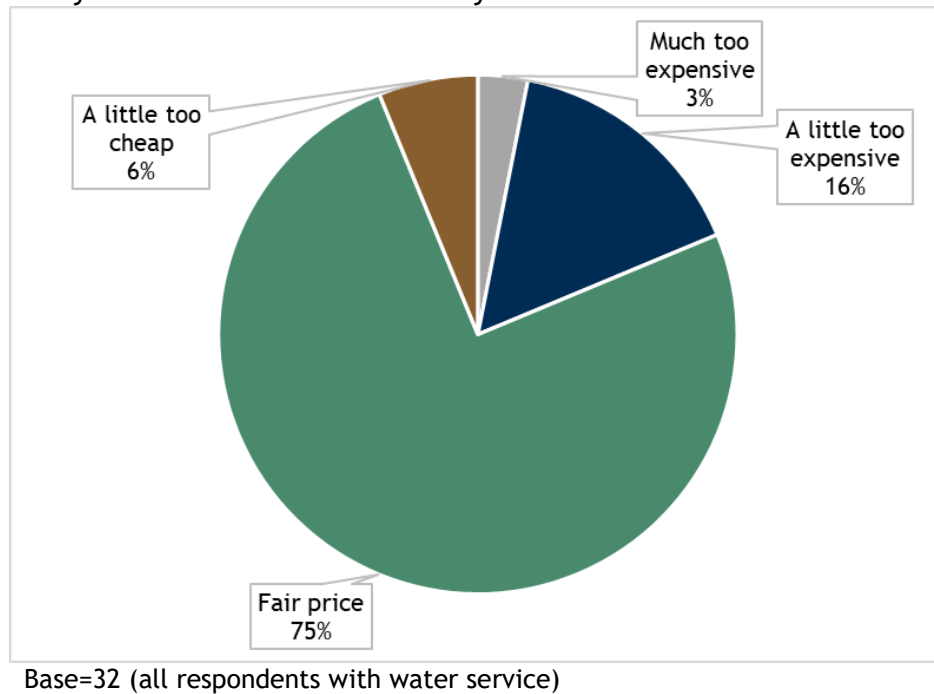


Figure A3: Perception of Cost of Water Service

Most think that user fees for water are about right (72%). A minority (25%) think that user fees should increase to invest more in keeping the system safe and reliable. Only one respondent thinks user fees should decrease.

In terms of affordability, 45% (14 people) of respondents agree that they can easily afford their water bills; 39% (12 people) are neutral on this issue, and 16% (5 people) disagree.

A3.0 Willingness to Volunteer

Willingness to volunteer time to assist with providing guidance on management of the Hagensborg water service was tempered. Only about a third of respondents (36%, 12 people) indicated any significant enthusiasm for this. Note that this sample is made up of only those who were willing to take the time to fill out a survey in the first place. The remainder were ambivalent (28%, 9 people) or not willing (36%, 12 people). See Figure A4.

How willing and able would you be to volunteer your own time to help set the direction and oversee management of the Hagensborg water system?

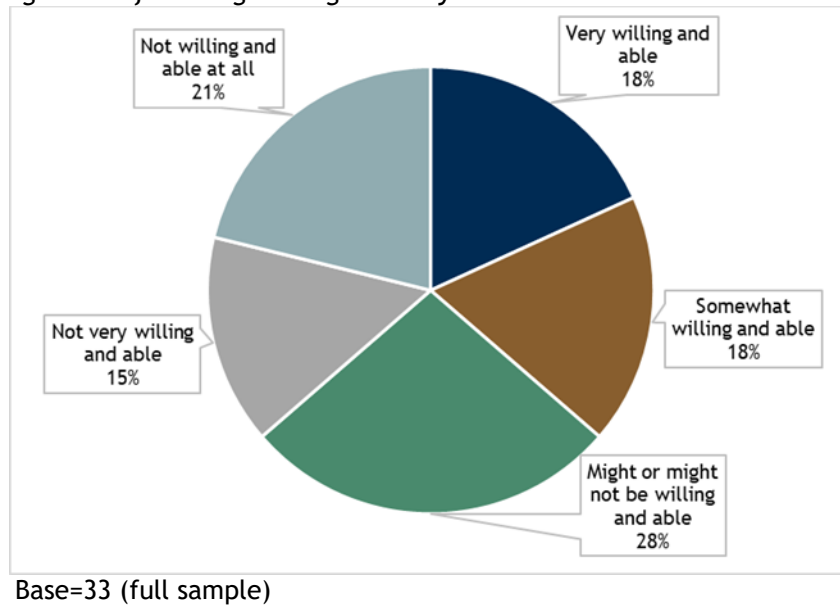


Figure A4: Willingness to Volunteer Time for Hagensborg Water Service

Among those who are more willing to volunteer (12 people), most (75%) said they would be willing to put in one to five hours per month or less, noting the very small sample size. Only three people would be willing to dedicate more time than this on a voluntary basis.

Table A2 shows the kinds of activities people would be willing to volunteer for, again noting the very small sample size. Importantly, only six people indicated that they would be willing to run for election by the community to participate on a commission that can make some decisions.

Table A1: Preference for Different Types of Volunteer Activities

What kinds of activities would you be interested in participating in related to overseeing management of the Hagensborg water service? Select all that apply.

Activity	%	#
Attend an annual meeting hosted by Central Coast Regional District	75%	9
Read periodic updates about the water system through a newsletter or website	67%	8
Sit on a volunteer advisory committee that meets every few months and makes recommendations to the Central Coast Regional District Board of Directors	58%	7
Run for election in the community to represent residents on a commission that can make some decisions about important issues and meets monthly or more often	50%	6
Be appointed to a commission that that can make some decisions about important issues and meets monthly or more often	33%	4
None of the above	8%	1

Base=12 (those willing to volunteer); more than one selection permitted

Similar results emerged when the question was posed a different way. When respondents were asked specifically if they would be willing to volunteer on advisory committee to provide guidance on management of the water service, 12 people (36.4%) indicated any meaningful interest (5 very interested; 7 somewhat interested).

Among those who are less willing to volunteer (21 people), the most common reason cited is not having enough time to spare (43%, 9 people), followed by not being sure if they have the required skills or experience (33%, 7 people), then thinking that this task should be done by elected officials and staff at CCRD (19%, 4 people).

A4.0 Governance

We asked how respondents think major decisions about the Hagensborg water service should be made, including decisions about things like costs, water rates, and major upgrades. About half (52%, 17 people) prefer that this be done by CCRD Board of Directors with advice from a volunteer advisory committee. A third (33%, 11 people) prefer that this be led by an elected commission (see Figure A5).

Which one of these best describes how you think major decisions about the Hagensborg water service should be made, including decisions about things like costs, water rates, and major upgrades?

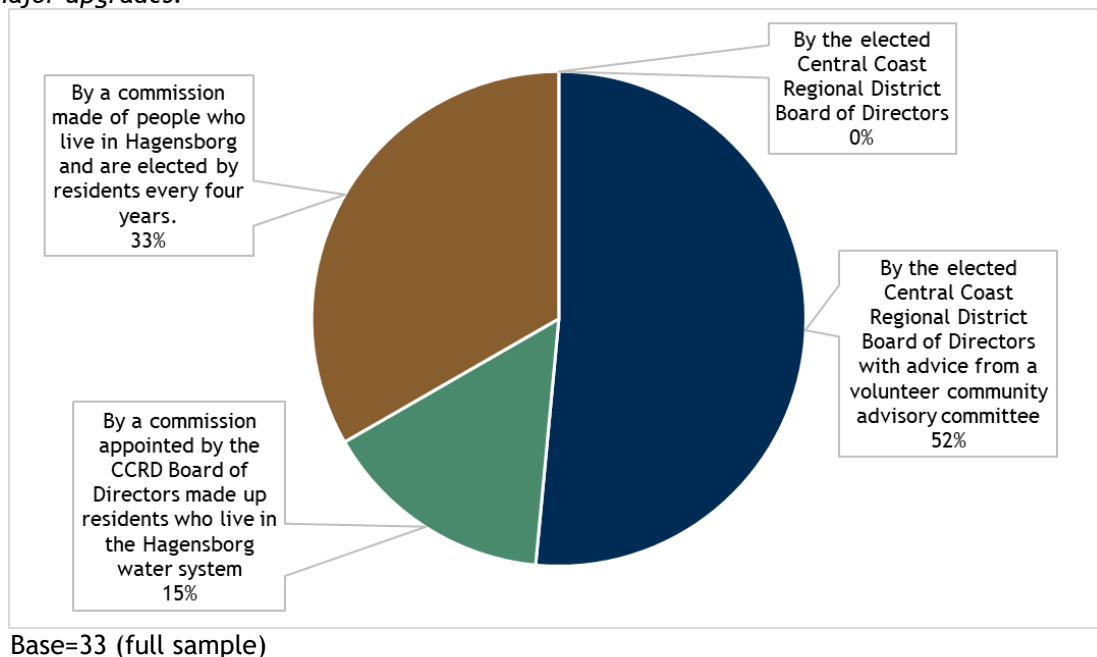
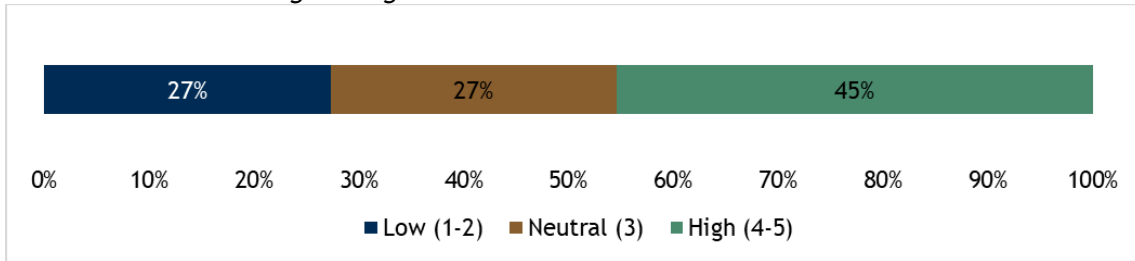


Figure A5: Governance Preferences for Hagensborg Water Service

When asked how they would describe their level of trust in CCRD to make the right decisions about the Hagensborg water service, respondents were split. About half (45%, 15 people) expressed higher levels of support. The remainder were split between neutrality and lower trust (see Figure A6).

How would you describe your level of trust in Central Coast Regional District to make the right decisions about the Hagensborg water service?



Base=33 (full sample)

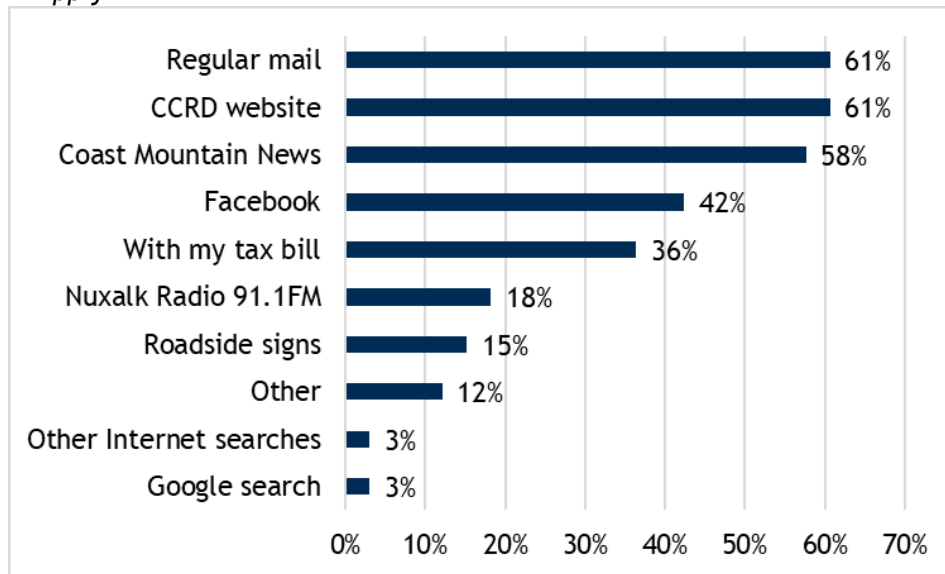
Figure A6: Trust in CCRD to Make Decisions about Hagensborg Water Service

A5.0 Communications Preferences

When asked how they prefer to get information about water and fire protection services, the most common answers are the CCRD website and regular mail (61% each, 20 people). Coast Mountain News is next (58%, 19 people), followed by Facebook (42%, 14 people). See Figure A7.

Rankings were similar when respondents were asked to select their single most preferred source of information (i.e., website and mail, followed by newspaper and Facebook).

How do you like to get information about Central Coast Regional District services, news, and events? Select all that apply.



Base=33 (full sample)

Figure A7: Preferred Information Sources

A6.0 Open Ended Responses

Finally, respondents were provided with an opportunity to provide open feedback on any matter related to the water and fire protection services that they wanted to. These are summarized in Table A3. Opposition to chlorination of drinking water was mentioned most often (5 times), followed by comments about the need to move forward with planned infrastructure upgrades (4 times), then support for more engagement or information about planned upgrades (3 times).

Table A2: Frequency of Open-Ended Comments by Category

Please provide any additional comments or suggestions to help Central Coast Regional District improve management of the Hagensborg water and fire protection services.

Comment Category	Frequency of Comment
Opposition to chlorination of drinking water	5
Need to move forward with planned infrastructure upgrades	4
Support for more engagement or information about services and planned upgrades	3
Comment or question about the survey and/or methodology	2
Opposition to process to convert improvement district to regional district service	1

Appendix 4: Background on Local Community Commissions in BC

This appendix provides additional information about experience with local community commissions. Research sources include online search (e.g., regional district websites) and six phone interviews with representatives of the remaining three commissions in the province. This included regional district staff (four interviews) or commissioners (two interviews). More information on the methodology can be found in Appendix 1.

Since the authority to establish local community commissions was included in the *Local Government Act* (Division 9) in 1987, only five have been created. Two of these, Charlie Lake in Peace River Regional District and Olalla in Regional District of Okanagan-Similkameen, have since become dormant or been repealed. This was apparently due to prolonged lack of interest and participation from their communities and specifically due to difficulty attracting candidates to run for election or to even be appointed (see PRRD, 2020; RDOS, 2018).

The other three local community commissions remain active to varying degrees. They are:

- [Bear Lake Community Commission](#) (Regional District of Fraser-Fort George),
- [Coal Harbour Local Community Commission](#) (Regional District of Mount Waddington),
- [Fort Fraser Local Commission](#) (Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako).

Information about how these three local community commissions continue to function is provided below under the following themes:

- services overseen,
- authority,
- staff workload and administrative overhead,
- community participation, and
- participant satisfaction.

Services Overseen

- All three remaining local community commissions provide advice on several services (i.e., not just water services alone).
- Coal Harbour Local Community Commission advises on fire protection, sewer, water, street lighting, planning, garbage collection, and will possibly take on recreation services in the future.
- Fort Fraser Local Commission advises on water, sewer, and street lighting.
- Bear Lake Community Commission advises on fire protection, street lighting, cemetery, ambulance station, recreation facilities, and water services.

Authority

- All three remaining local community commissions have little or no formal decision-making authority. They are all advisory in nature. They may provide recommendations to their respective Boards of Directors but cannot choose outcomes independently.
- A commissioner from Coal Harbour Local Community Commission reported that this forum had more authority in the past, but this has since been curtailed to an advisory function only.

- A representative from Regional District of Mount Waddington reported that Fort Fraser Local Commission was more active in the past when major capital upgrade projects were underway. However, this was also only in an advisory capacity.
- A representative from Regional District of Fraser-Fort George spoke specifically about Bear Lake Community Commission's role in water service management. They noted that the commission's responsibility in this area is very limited ("trivial"). This is mainly because most regional district decisions in this space are tightly constrained by requirements originating at the Provincial level, for example water treatment standards. This informant reported that this can result in some frustration for everyone concerned when expectations from commissioners that they should be able to provide more substantive input cannot be met.

Staff Workload and Administrative Overhead

- Staff workload and administrative overhead requirements for local community commissions seem to vary.
- Coal Harbour appears to be largely self-sufficient, primarily because of the effort invested in it by the Regional District Area Director member. Although staff may attend meetings from time to time, it mainly operates independently from staff to advise the Area Director.
- In contrast, staff at Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako and Regional District of Fraser-Fort George report that managing the Bear Lake and Fort Fraser Commissions is a source of considerable staff effort for agencies that have very limited capacity. Requirements such as attending meetings, responding to commissioner information requests, and training new commissioners result in prohibitive workload.

Community Participation

- Representatives from all three commissions reported considerable difficulty with attracting qualified candidates to run for election and fulfill the requirements of the office.
- Every member of the Coal Harbour Local Community Commission had to be appointed in 2018 when nobody stepped forward to run for election. For the pending 2022 election, four people have submitted nomination papers for four seats, so will likely be appointed by acclimation. Regional District staff report that positions are almost always appointed by the Board (when not enough people run) or filled by acclimation (when just enough people run).
- Staff at Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako reported that, in the past 25 years, they could only recall one instance when an election for the Fort Fraser Local Commission was required. In all other cases, commissioners have been acclaimed or appointed by the Board in cases where no one submits nomination papers. In their words, "people are not knocking down the door to be part of it".
- For Bear Lake Community Commission, all four members were appointed by acclimation in 2018 as there were not enough candidates to require an election. Staff reported difficulty with attracting qualified candidates. More optimistically though, one of the Bear Lake commissioners reported that there is enough community interest to make it viable. As well, five candidates submitted nomination papers for the 2022 election for four seats, implying that an election will likely be held.

Participant Satisfaction

- Satisfaction with local community commissions seems to depend on where you sit. The two commissioners we spoke with were generally more positive about the experience. In the words of one interviewee, “I’m happy with the commission”. However, both these individuals also noted that their role, as commissioners, has very limited authority. They were clearly aware of this and accepted it as inherent in the job.
- Staff reported some exasperation with the workload associated with commissions compared to the limited benefit of gaining some community input into projects and decisions. One person described it as “more like a formality”. Another complained that “we are kind of stuck with it”.
- Several of the people we spoke to at both the staff and commission level reported that their commissions do provide valuable advice and input from time to time, for example on annual budgets or operation of specific services.