



YOUR LOCAL ASSET MANAGEMENT COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE IN BC.

Enhancing BC communities through leadership in asset management.

TWENTY NINTH EDITION – SUMMER 2020

Asset Management, Service Delivery, and the COVID-19 Virus

With the pandemic, the priority with our communities, councils, boards, and administrations has been on managing under adverse conditions with closure of facilities, 'physical distancing', and managing community health concerns. A major constraint, especially in larger communities, has been the loss of revenue from user fees, transit services, parking, and other related services. Local government have had to reassess service delivery and impacts on several major issues. Progress with asset management programs came to a halt with the required change in staff priorities, but those with asset management programs in place had the tools to help with difficult decisions. The 'value' of having an active and dynamic asset management program and process became clear.

Asset Management BC, as part of Local Government Week, undertook a series of interviews with senior staff and politicians. Some quotes from these interviews are highlighted throughout this newsletter. To follow are four articles dealing with managing in the COVID-19 pandemic environment:

1. District of **North Vancouver** – How our AM Framework helped with the decision process
2. Resiliency Planning During a Pandemic: Perspectives from **Gibsons** on a local government response
3. Asset Management Program Helps **CVRD** respond to COVID – 19 Virus
4. Citizens, Politicians, Councils, Boards and the COVID Virus: A View from **Christina Bentley**

District of North Vancouver – How our Asset Management Framework helped with the decision process

Rick Danyluk CPA CMA, Manager Business Planning & Decision Support, and Steve Ono Manager, Engineering Services/Deputy General Manager, Engineering, Parks & Facilities

At the District of North Vancouver, our Asset Management framework, strong team, and long-term focus are helping us be more resilient in response to the impacts of COVID-19. We are:



- Fully engaged in 'business continuity' and our Asset Steering Committee was one of the first committees to move to virtual meetings
- Continuing our emphasis on isolating existing (renewal) assets and new assets, and applying appropriate funding sources
- Evaluating risks related to capital plans, including an assessment of reserves, enabling us to re-prioritise projects with confidence
- Accelerating urgent work and deferring non-essential work, where appropriate
- Leveraging opportunities related to changing market conditions and economic activity
- Improving our organizational resiliency and response capabilities to COVID-19, including investments supporting the new work environment and Ministry of Public Safety orders

- Providing a framework for future budget amendments and sharing revised plans with Council and the community
- Benefiting from an integrated team aligned in our approach to asset management, facilitating nimble, effective discussion and decision-making.

Within our Asset Management Framework and integrated, cross-departmental steering committee, we are accustomed to organizational alignment, collaboration, and best practice results. We believe our response to COVID-19 reflects our clarity of purpose and enables us to maintain essential services, avoid increased costs, and navigate project delays.

Resiliency Planning During a Pandemic: Perspectives from Gibsons on a local government response

By Emanuel Machado,
Chief Administrative & Resiliency Officer, Town of Gibsons

The article was originally published in April 2020 by the Partnership for Water Sustainability in its weekly Waterbucket eNews.

In the article, Emanuel Machado first reflects on what he observed during a recent visit to South Africa just as the world began to react to the COVID-19 situation, and British Columbia was implementing initial actions in its pandemic response plan. After providing a big picture context, Machado sets the stage by describing COVID-19 impacts experienced in the Town of Gibsons. These fall into three categories: economy, mental health, and crime rates. He then elaborates on how local government is responding. His emphasis is on 'a culture of teamwork' that has made it possible to create staff teams that are ensuring continuity of service. Machado concludes with a perspective on the role of natural assets during a pandemic.

South Africa - an inspiring example of human resilience

In March, I travelled to Africa to share Gibsons' approach to natural asset management. This was part of an exchange between Canada and South Africa, via the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, to support local governments in work on asset management and climate change planning.

During the trip, I found inspiration in the capacity and commitment of municipal leaders in South Africa. This has been helpful with putting the recent changes that have occurred in Canada into perspective.

Articles in this Edition:

- **Feature Article: Asset Management, Service Delivery, and the COVID-19 Virus**
 - *North Vancouver: How our Asset Management Framework helped with the decision process*
 - *Gibsons: Resiliency Planning During a Pandemic*
 - *Cowichan Valley: Asset Management Program Helps CVRD respond to COVID – 19 Virus*
 - *Christina Benty: Citizens, Politicians, Councils, Boards and the COVID Virus*
- **Case Study: City of Nanaimo's Bowen Road Water Supply Main Failure - A Case Study in AM**
- **LG Awareness Week Wrap Up: How AM is Helping Local Governments Better Cope with COVID**
- **Asset Management Canada meets at FCM**
- **Are we doing asset management backwards?**
- **MMCD IDS and the Road to Community Resiliency**
- **Infrastructure AM in BC: Glen Brown**
- **When and where does the AM process stop**
- **Coming Soon: Advancing AM Practices**
- **Tips and Tactics: Developing Unit Costs for Assets**
- **Upcoming Events**

Not only are our South African colleagues dealing with the effects of COVID-19, but also with mass migration, corruption, and extreme violence. According to them, however, it is climate change impacts and the imminent collapse of governance and democracy that they fear most.

I remain hopeful that we will get through this experience and emerge stronger as individuals, as an organization and as a community."

Is COVID-19 an economic, environmental or a social (medical) pandemic?

The Town of Gibsons recently applied a **resiliency framework** that works as a dashboard to identify, prioritize and budget projects and initiatives to increase Gibsons' resiliency to climate change impacts, including global events, which are expected to become more common.

In our resiliency framework, Emergency Planning is identified as an area of focus and includes recommendations to update programs to support neighbourhood preparedness to deal with natural or human-induced disasters.

We had barely identified that as an action, and here we were dealing with an extremely serious situation, affecting everything and everyone we know. I wanted to share some thoughts about what I have observed in terms of our local government's response to this on-going situation."

What Are the Impacts in Gibsons as a community?

In April of this year, Gibsons Council considered adoption of substantially revised municipal budgets for operations and capital programs. Lower revenues are expected from development-related fees and other impacts. Projects approved, identified as critical are primarily to deal with ensuring the delivery of essential services, such as upgrades to water and sewer infrastructure, affordable housing and climate change initiatives.

Economy, Mental Health and Crime Rates: Costs of wages and benefits are expected to be higher, at least in the short term, due to overtime costs, increased technology to support staff and Council working from home, physical separation requirements, illness and loss of productivity.

Uncertainty of the possible impact of lower property taxes revenues and utility fees are forcing local governments to take a cautious approach to spending and are looking to the province for direction and support. Without revenues, however, local governments will be unable to pay their bills or maintain basic services.

At the community level, businesses are adapting to continue providing essential supports such as medicine and food, daycare, transit and the transportation of goods, while attempting to ensure the health and safety of their staff and the public.

Despite some of those challenges, many local organizations and individuals in the community have stepped up to provide new services and new ways of doing business to ensure that critical services are continued, which demonstrate community resilience.

One way the Town of Gibsons is contributing to the Sunshine Coast's community response effort was by creating a **Business Watch Program**, which relies on community volunteers to patrol business areas after-hours in support of bylaw enforcement and community policing.

A rise in social anxieties is noticeable at home, at work and in the community – and could explain the noticeable increase in property-related crime, domestic violence and mental health-related calls being reported by the RCMP and other police forces.

How are we responding as an organization?

What has been reassuring from day one, is that the provision of **essential municipal services**, such as water and sewer appear to be **resilient to a pandemic**, as we and other communities continue to provide those services without interruption.

Emergency Management Plan: On the Sunshine Coast, we have benefited from the existence of a plan and structure to help the region manage its response to the pandemic. The coordinated response, via an Emergency Operations Centre set-up for that purpose, has been particularly helpful in ensuring unified communications and action planning.

Municipal leaders and staff from various communities actively participated in the different roles and as a result, we have increased our region's capacity to support the work now and in future events. Many other agencies and utilities participate as well.

A Culture of Teamwork: Because of the way in which this pandemic has significantly affected virtually everyone, human resources have generated many questions and concerns. In response, and in close consultation with our labour union, benefits providers and others, we have done our best to provide timely responses and solutions to our staff. Part of the concern with COVID-19 is that if too many staff get sick at once, we will not be able to deliver the services the community requires. One key response was to create a series of staff teams, and to operate as follows:

- **The new work scheduling system** is designed to limit exposure among staff and to ensure that the Town continues to be able to offer at least a minimum level of our usual civic services, over the long term.
- **This strategy** is one that has been implemented with success in other parts of the world and we felt it was prudent to establish it within our workforce sooner rather than later.
- **Each department identified 2-3 teams** (Team A, Team B and Team C), based on the number of people in each section. Team A and B work alternating weekly schedules. If a department has enough people for a Team C, those employees remain at home and practice self-isolation during working hours. Team C will be called on to work

With the new scheduling protocol in place, many people will spend increased periods of time at home and perhaps seeking additional ways to stay mentally stimulated. Therefore, for example, we established employee access to **LinkedIn Learning**, an online learning platform which offers subscribers access to literally thousands of courses, from photography to business to design.

Risk Management – Planning Obsolescence: On top of enhanced health and safety measures to protect workers, contractors and the public, the Town has also conducted Critical Failure Testing on its key infrastructure in the water and sewer utilities. Contingency plans were then developed for the scenarios identified.

Business continuity was our focus when, in a matter of a few days, we eliminated nearly all direct interactions with the public, and between co-workers, and began offering online and phone support to homeowners, builders and developers. Building and development permit applications continue to be received and processed.

Information technology (IT) finally proved its worth, as the transition to working from home instead of the office was almost seamless, albeit with limitations. Despite concerns about data security, privacy and productivity, many of the changes we have introduced are likely to be used more regularly in the future, once the situation has improved.

Unfortunately, a real possibility is that we might be faced with having to manage other disasters, such as floods and, soon enough, wildfires, while the current one is still active. In those scenarios, we anticipate that our human resources would be highly stretched to respond. We continue to plan for those eventualities.

The Role of Natural Assets during a Pandemic

During these rapidly changing times, public policy has had to catch up to its new realities. In an effort to assist with the containment of the virus, public gatherings have been restricted and people have been asked to practice physical distancing of at least two (2) meters. However, there are concerns about the physical and mental health impacts of long-term isolation.

The Town and others have been trying to find the balance between encouraging people to keep their distance from others, while also promoting healthy activities, such as walks in the woods, trails and other greenspace. There is

an abundance of evidence which shows even limited exposure to nature promotes health and wellbeing.



The **natural assets that provide those health benefits** are managed by the Town of Gibsons, applying natural **asset management approaches**, as outlined in the Town's asset management policy.

These **ecosystem benefits** provided by the Town's natural assets, are in addition to other core municipal services - such as drinking water storage and filtration, rainwater storage and conveyance, and slope stabilization.

AM Helps Local Govts Cope with COVID

Emanuel Machado – Town of Gibsons

"Everything that we have been planning and thinking and putting into action has become very useful. When you practice asset management on an ongoing basis, risk management is a core function. From risk management, we have already taken an analysis of what we can be exposed to during these types of events."



Asset Management Program Helps CVRD respond to COVID – 19 Virus

*Austin Tokarek, B.Sc., MBA, CEA, CAMP, Asset Coordinator,
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The **Cowichan Valley Regional District (CVRD)** is a complex service delivery organization with responsibility for managing an Asset Portfolio with a replacement value of \$363M in public infrastructure. The CVRD budget has over 180 independent services and many of them rely on infrastructure to support the delivery of services.

