



C·V·R·D

STAFF REPORT

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE MEETING OF OCTOBER 26, 2005

DATE: October 19, 2005 **FILE NO:**
FROM: Saila Hull, Special Projects Research Coordinator **BYLAW NO:**
SUBJECT: Terms of Reference of the Community Safety
Advisory Committee (CSAC)

Purpose: To provide background on the mandate and work of the Community Safety Advisory Committee, its plans for the future, and to review its terms of reference.

Financial Implications: Unknown at this point. The committee may need funding and the Comprehensive Community Safety Initiative (CCSI) may require a substantial amount of funding.

Interdepartmental/Agency Implications: The committee reports to the Board and it has a need for more staff support within the CVRD. A review of the structure of the committee could result in changes, and a commitment to the CCSI could require additional human and financial resources.

Background: The background provides information on the history of the committee, its activities in the past year, and what it proposes to do in the future.

The Community Safety Advisory Committee (CSAC) links back to 1996, when a regional task force was formed to oversee a pilot project focusing on women's safety issues. This task force was replaced by the Women's Safety Advisory Committee (WSAC), a CVRD committee established in December 1996. The WSAC membership ranged from fifteen to twenty members with representation from community groups and from each electoral area and municipality (which were a mix of elected officials and community members). Its mandate was:

“to advise on women's safety issues within the Regional District including review of land use application referrals, conducting of safety audits, representation on OCP reviews and other similar items referred by the Board.”

The committee, in partnership with the Safer Futures Program of the Cowichan Women Against Violence Society (CWAVS), oversaw a series of community safety audit projects from 1996 to 2000, which resulted in hundreds of recommendations. A process for implementing audit recommendations and ensuring that personal safety is a regular consideration in local government processes was developed. Many of the recommendations have been implemented

(about 70%), which has resulted in improvements to infrastructure, community programming, and long-term planning policies in support of safer communities. Other activities of WSAC included conducting specialized initiatives for community safety and providing tools and resources as well as education and training related to women's and community safety.

In 2002, the committee changed to CSAC in order to reflect the inclusive role the committee plays in all community safety, not just women's safety. The membership of the committee changed to 11 members with representation from geographical sectors, 4 community groups and 1 from school district 79. Currently, two electoral area directors and one council member from Duncan and North Cowichan sit on the committee. Its current terms of reference are: "*to advise on Community Safety Issues within the Regional District, including safety audits and safety related funding requests.*"

Within these general terms of reference, the committee has taken a very broad view of community safety to include prevention of crime and violence (beyond just personal and physical safety). It has adopted a formalized "Safer Communities" approach, based on a social development model to address the underlying causes of crime, victimization, and fear such as social, economical, and political inequality. As part of this approach, strategies are developed to address the physical obstacles to safety experienced by people, but the emphasis is on dealing with more complex issues of community safety. The goal is for citizens to be and feel safe and to have meaningful opportunities to participate in local decision-making processes.

To move in this direction, the committee partnered with Safer Futures in 2002 to undertake a three-year project called *Neighbourhood Links: A Regional Strategy for Community Health and Safety*. The project received board approval and a letter of support from the CVRD, and it is now in its final year and is funded until March 2006. The project was meant to address the need for a structure and process at the regional level to encourage and support the small rural communities and local neighbourhoods in the Cowichan Valley to define and, over time, solve their safety issues. The goal for the project is: "*to work in partnership with local governments to develop a regional strategy for community health and safety that can be used as a model for small, rural and isolated communities elsewhere.*"

The role of CSAC in the Neighbourhood Links project (and other projects) is to provide advice, direction, and active support with linkages outwards to the community and inwards to the CVRD. The committee also takes information resulting from projects to develop and submit recommendations for action. The role of Safer Futures is to support, assist, and provide guidance on projects to meet objectives for research and/or community development, and to communicate through reports and its websites the accomplishments of the committee's projects.

It was a hope of the project that CSAC could involve into the entity that takes active responsibility for the on-going regional strategy. An evaluation of the second year of the project conducted in early 2005 was informative about the challenges inherent in such a far-reaching project and with operating under a committee mandate that is more or less self-determined. The evaluation found that the project's funds and resources do not match its ambitious objectives and that CSAC works well with its community linkages but that it is not functioning very effectively as a committee of the CVRD. The committee needs clear goals besides those related to the

project, more support from the Board, some funding, less reliance on Safer Futures, more CVRD staff engagement, and permanency. Some proposals have included having a safer community resource “office” at the CVRD as well as having a coordinator within the regional district.

A review of the committee’s activities in the past year (through meeting minutes) reveals the breadth of the scope of issues it is involved with:

- Supported the creation of recreational youth outreach worker positions to target “at risk” youth to be hired this year, which the CVRD is contributing funds towards.
- Provided support letters for funding applications
- Conducted safety audits (e.g. Cobble Hill Elementary School)
- Addressed issues of lighting
- Attended community workshops such as the Chamber of Commerce Crime Prevention forum and the Cowichan Tribes Community Safety Forum
- Early stages of developing a resource centre for Area C
- Development of community profiles
- Examined youth issues in Chemainus/ Crofton
- Working with Transit Committee to provide more accessible and affordable transportation
- **Draft community safety action plan created** (attached to agenda)
- *Neighbourhood Links Project:*
 - research and information gathering,
 - neighbourhood and community level work in three areas (Downtown Duncan and Centennial Park, Cairnsmore/ Berkey’s area, Cowichan Bay), and
 - networking and participation in broader community safety themes such as drug abuse prevention, community policing, youth development, social development, affordable housing, and transportation.

With the winding down of the Neighbourhood Links project, CSAC and Safer Futures are now proposing to embark on a Comprehensive Community Safety Initiative (CCSI), which is an integrated approach to crime prevention and community safety. Eight communities in British Columbia have been chosen to conduct pilots and the Cowichan Valley has been recognized nationally as a being a leader in this field. Safer Futures has applied for \$10,000 seed funding to develop the project proposal, which is due in January 2006. Successful projects will be eligible for funding under the National Crime Prevention Strategy. The CCSI can take many forms, from one that is regional in perspective to one that is neighbourhood focused, and the approach will be decided on after community consultation is completed. Demonstration that local government is on side for a longer term is needed, and the involvement of the CVRD as a funding partner is preferable.

Recommendation: Direction is needed from the board in terms of its support and desired goals for the committee.

Submitted by,

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