



October 2005
Volume 1, Issue 2
Election Issue

Comox News

Municipal Election Nominees:

Mayor (elect 1):

- Jim Brass
- Dennis Strand

Council (elect 6):

- Amie Anderson
- Russ Arnott
- Ray Crossley
- Al Dafoe
- Don Davis
- Patti Fletcher
- Ken Grant
- Paul Ives
- John Marinus
- John Petzinger
- Marcia Turner

School District

Trustee (elect 1):

- Chris Aikman
- Karen Charlesworth

Also Inside:

- Library Referendum
- Knight Road and Point Holmes Boundary Extension Referenda
- Questions we often get at elections

The Town of Comox Community Newsletter

General Voting Day – Saturday November 19, 2005

Every three years, local government elections are held in all municipalities, Regional Districts and School Districts in the Province of British Columbia. In the column on the left you will note the candidates that will be running for the various positions that are available in the Town of Comox.

Voter eligibility

To qualify to vote as a **resident elector** in the Town on voting day, you must:

- be a Canadian Citizen;
- be at least 18 years of age;
- have lived in British Columbia for at least six months; and
- have lived in the Town of Comox for at least thirty days.

Most voters are resident electors, because they reside (live) in Comox.

Some other people (who do not live in Comox) can still qualify to vote in Comox as **non-resident electors**. To qualify (upon registration) they must:

- be a Canadian Citizen;
- be at least 18 years of age;
- have lived in British Columbia for at least six months; and
- have owned property in the Town of Comox for at least thirty days.

If more than one person owns the property, only one person may register as a non-resident elector and they must first have a Non-Resident Property Elector Certificate. We encourage non-resident electors to apply for this certificate before voting day.

General Voting – Comox Community Centre – 1855 Noel Ave

General Voting Day is Saturday November 19, 2005. The single voting place is the Comox Community Centre at 1855 Noel Avenue with voting being open from 8:00 a.m. until 8:00 p.m. It is recommended that you bring two pieces of identification that can confirm both your identity (photo identification) and where you live (something with your current address). A British Columbia Driver's License or Identification Card or a valid Canadian passport are good choices for photo identification. Vehicle insurance, utility bills, or your property tax notice will all show your residential address.

Advance Voting if you cannot vote on Voting Day

Some voters are not available to vote on the General Voting Day, so there are two Advance Voting Opportunities that voters can use to cast their ballot. On Wednesday November 9, 2005 and Wednesday November 16, 2005 voters can come to the d'Esterre Seniors Centre located at 1801 Beaufort Avenue from 8:00 a.m. until 8:00 p.m. You will be taken through the same voting process as during the general voting day, plus one additional declaration to sign.

Referendum for New Library November 19th :

What is being proposed?

That Comox would borrow up to \$3,000,000 for up to 20 years, for the purpose of acquiring and/or constructing a new library building or facility within the Town of Comox.

Why has this proposal come forward?

The Comox Library occupies around 2,500 square feet (just over half) of the top floor of a Town-owned building at 1729 Comox Avenue (Comox Avenue and Nordin Street). The library building also houses the Comox Archives & Museum, the Pearl Ellis Gallery and the Lions Den on the lower floor. The library has occupied its space since the building was built over 30 years ago. In the meantime Comox has grown enough to justify a library of 5,000 square feet, and with continuing growth we could soon need an even larger library. Council would like to be able to provide the library not only the 5,000 square feet needed today, but also allow for future growth (probably to 7,000 square feet), which we cannot do on a single floor of the existing building. The best alternative for the library would therefore be a new building with at least 5,000 (preferably 7,000) square feet of space on one floor. Council needs to know if Comox voters support this proposal.

How did we establish that \$3 Million was what we needed to borrow?

The Town has obtained a cost estimate for construction of a new building at 1729 Comox Avenue. To replace the current building with one including covered parking on the bottom level, 7,000 square feet of space on the main floor and 4,600 square feet of office space above, would cost over \$2.3 Million. However, with rapidly rising construction prices and at least a year's delay until construction (because we haven't designed the building yet) we estimate that the Town will need to borrow as much as \$3 Million to complete the building.

What are the alternatives?

The Town could renovate the existing building but it would still be a 30 year old building and the library would be limited to 5,000 square feet of space. We could therefore end up having to ask about building a new building again in just a few years, as the library wants to expand further.

Another alternative, which we cannot really explore until we have funding available, is to see whether we could participate in a public-private-partnership to acquire space for a new library either on Town-owned land downtown, or in some future downtown development. That is why the purpose of the borrowing is "for acquiring and/or constructing a new library building or facility within the Town of Comox". We might be able to acquire the space that the library needs by buying it from a developer for much less than building a new building.

Does this mean the library could move?

Council's (and the library's) preference is that the library would stay at its current location of 1729 Comox Avenue. However, if we can save a significant amount of money by moving to another location, but still remain in downtown Comox, Council would consider it.

The referendum question:

Are you in favour of Comox Library Loan Authorization Bylaw, 2005, authorizing the Town to borrow up to three million dollars for the purpose of acquiring and/or constructing a new library building or facility within the Town of Comox?

**Voting Day is
Saturday
November 19th**

What will the new library look like?

We cannot answer that for the outside of the building because no detailed design has been done. On the inside, the new library will be less crowded than the current one. There will be more room for the public to browse and for library staff to work. There will be a larger public reading space, and there will be public washrooms on the same floor as the library.

How much will this increase our taxes?

The proposal for a new building at 1729 Comox Avenue includes a second floor of office space that could be rented out to help offset the cost of borrowing. Assuming that we rent it out at current rental rates and that we borrow the full \$3 Million over a term of 20 years, then the estimated net cost will be \$227,000 per year. Based upon 2005 assessments and tax rates, this equates to a one-time increase in taxes of \$0.19 per \$1,000 (of residential assessment). Another way to state this is to say that if your residence is currently assessed at \$150,000 you would pay an extra \$29 per year (\$38 on \$200,000 residence and \$48 on \$250,000 residence).

What if the actual cost is less than the estimated \$3 Million?

If the Town doesn't need to borrow the full \$3 Million it won't. That will reduce the cost of repaying the debt.

What if the library referendum fails?

Council would probably go back to its original plan to renovate the existing building to give the library the full top floor. It would cost at least \$250,000 and provide the library with almost 5,000 square feet of space – just enough for now, but not big enough for future growth.

Could this money be used for a new Town Hall instead of a library?

No. Legally the Town can only use this for a new library facility. If a future Council wanted to borrow for a new Town Hall, they would have to ask that question of the voters separately.

Referenda for Boundary Extensions on November 19th too:

What is being proposed?

That Comox extend its boundaries to include properties in portions of the Knight Road area and Point Holmes (see maps below and on back page). There are just over 90 lots involved with (we estimate) around 250 residents, and about 5 kilometers of roads.

Why has this proposal come forward?

A majority of property owners in each of these areas petitioned to come into Comox. In the Point Holmes area, one reason for this is a desire of some property owners to switch from well water to Town water (from our waterline to Kye Bay, adjacent to their properties). The Town has made coming into Comox a condition of getting Town water. Water is not an issue in the Knight Road area because it is already on the Regional water system. The referenda is required because over 10% of Comox electors signed petitions this past spring asking that the proposed boundary extensions “be submitted to the electors at large for their assent, in the form of a referendum”, which Council is now doing.

Can we supply water to Point Holmes and maintain water pressure in Town?

Yes. The recently constructed Knight Road Loop (a new water line along Knight Road which ties into the previously built Lazo Road line to Kye Bay) will improve water pressure and flows in portions of east Comox, and it will allow us to supply water in Point Holmes. It is anticipated that we will be able to recover much of our costs of constructing the Knight Road Water Loop from properties in Point Holmes, if they connect to our water system.

What do Comox taxpayers get out of this boundary extension?

The Comox taxpayers would have the ability to advise Council on land use, zoning and servicing issues for these areas that already benefit from some Town services. This would occur through any Official Community Plan (OCP) amendment and Rezoning requests from these areas. It should be noted that until Council amends the OCP and Zoning bylaws, the newly incorporated properties would retain their Regional District designations.

Comox would also see an increase in property tax revenue. These two areas have over \$38 Million in assessed values and had they been in Comox in 2005, we would have received over \$130,000 in additional taxes (3.4% of the Town’s total 2005 General Taxes of roughly \$3.8 Million).

What do we have to provide in return for these taxes?

We would provide municipal services like water, garbage collection, policing, fire protection, planning, building inspection, road maintenance, parks maintenance, recreation and cultural facilities. Some of this we may already be providing because these residents may be using Town facilities (like playing fields, the Recreation Centre, the Comox Museum, or the Comox Library) without having to pay taxes to the Town.

You can view & print more detailed maps from our web page:
<http://www.town.comox.bc.ca/voting/boundref.shtml>

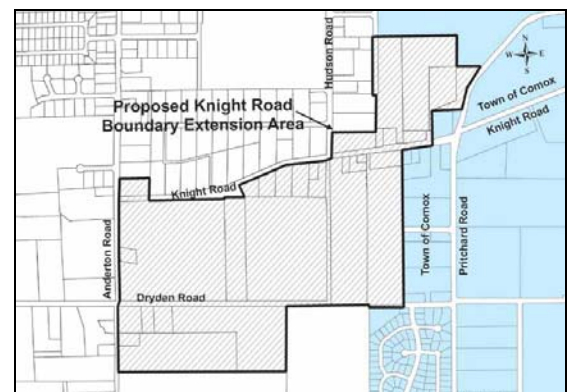
The referenda questions are:

Are you in favour of Council of the Town of Comox proceeding with the Knight Road boundary extension application as previously advertised and as shown on the map displayed within the voting place?

and

Are you in favour of Council of the Town of Comox proceeding with the Point Holmes boundary extension application as previously advertised and as shown on the map displayed within the voting place?

**Saturday
November 19th
is Voting Day for
the Boundary
Extension
questions too.**



What will it cost us if we take these boundary expansion areas into the Town?

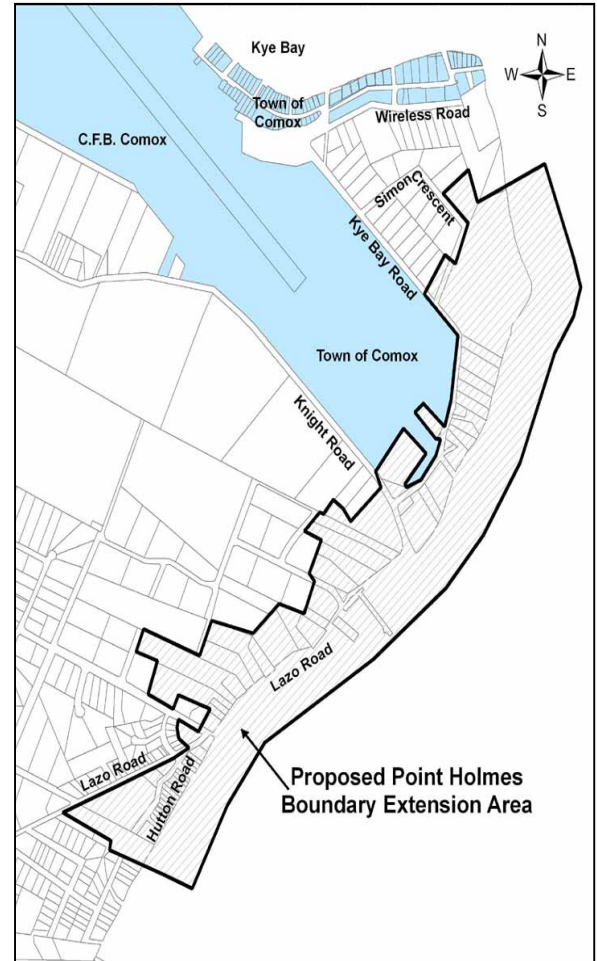
Direct costs will include a loss of around \$16,000 per year in revenue from the Comox Rural Fire Protection Improvement District (which will be made up from additional taxation in these areas once they are in the Town), a one-time cost of around \$30,000 to provide water meters to those who are already on the Regional District water system in the Knight Road area (to isolate their water consumption from the rest of that service area), several thousand dollars in materials per year to look after the new roads and parks, plus staff time (particularly in our Public Works and Parks departments).

Who will have to pay to resurface roads in these boundary expansion areas?

The Town will, as we have funds and when resurfacing is needed. We spend over \$200,000 per year resurfacing roads in Comox, targeted to the roads in the worst condition. The additional tax revenues from the boundary expansion may help us increase that budget, and we will resurface those area roads to applicable standards as required, and when our funds allow.

How much would it cost to provide sewer service and who will pay for it?

Council does not know how much it would cost to provide sewer service to these areas, although we have asked the Province for a study grant to find this out. We do know that the Regional sewer system has the capacity required to provide sewer service to these areas. The property owners requiring sewer service will have to pay for it (as Kye Bay property owners did), although the Town will apply for Provincial and Federal grants when available to help make that service affordable to those property owners. The Town has not subsidized the extension of new sewer and water services in the past, nor does Council intend to start doing so with these areas.



View & print more detailed maps from our web page:
<http://www.town.comox.bc.ca/voting/boundref.shtml>

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Comox Town Hall is at
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 Comox, B.C. V9M 1R9
 Phone 339-2202 Fax 339-7110

Questions we often get at elections:

I pay property taxes, so why do I need to be a Canadian Citizen to Vote?

Voter eligibility rules are set by the Province of British Columbia. As with Provincial and Federal General Elections, Citizenship is a requirement to be able to vote municipally.

Can I vote if I forget to bring identification to the voting place?

If you are already on the Voters List with the correct address then you can vote without producing further identification. But just in case you are not, we strongly recommend that you bring two pieces of identification with you when you come to vote.

Can I check to see if I am on the Voters List?

Yes. You can come to Town Hall (1809 Beaufort Avenue) or phone us (339-2202) during regular office hours (8:30 am to 4:30 pm weekdays) before November 19th.

Can I help someone cast their vote, if they need assistance?

Sorry, but that's not possible due to privacy. If someone needs assistance marking their ballot, an Election Official at the voting place will be happy to assist.