



STAFF REPORT TO COUNCIL

Date: August 1, 2008
To: Mayor and Council
From: David Dyer, Chief Engineer, Development Services
Subject: Flood Risk Evaluation and Flood Control Solutions
Information Update

RECOMMENDATION:

1. The Development and Operations Department recommends that Council receive this report, and provide any input that Council feels appropriate.

BACKGROUND:

Stakeholder and Public Process

The Risk Analysis – Progress Report 1 from Northwest Hydraulic Consultants was received by City Council at its July 7, 2008 regular meeting. Stakeholder and public meetings were subsequently held on July 16, 2008 at the Civic Centre to inform participants of the findings of the progress report, to advise on the work to be completed in the next steps of the project, to respond to questions, and to receive input.

The meetings were facilitated by the Fraser Basin Council and presentations were made by the City's consultant, Northwest Hydraulic Consultants. Some feedback was received from participants that further discussion sessions would be useful to stakeholders as some may not have been able to attend the presentation due to other commitments or activities, and participants and stakeholders wish to provide input on their experiences and observations during flood events and on the flood control options proposed.

The Fraser Basin Council facilitators have prepared the attached memo dated July 21, 2008 that recommends three actions be considered by the City to learn more about stakeholder and community preferences, concerns, opportunities and challenges related to the flood issue and potential solutions. In summary, the actions include:

1. providing an information package to community stakeholders and using the City website to provide more detailed information;

2. convene exploratory discussions with stakeholders on proposed options where there is support based on science and where there has been expressed community interest;
3. conduct a third round of substantial community involvement meetings or workshops following completion of the Phase 1 Final Report (to be completed by mid-November 2008).

Grant Applications

The recently announced Canada-British Columbia BUILDING CANADA FUND provides funding for disaster mitigation projects. This program set an August 1st 2008 deadline for applications to obtain assistance from this fund in this first intake. City staff has proceeded with applications to Emergency Management BC (EMBC) under its 2008-2009 Flood Protection Program. This to assure that resources are applied to solutions as early as possible and that every opportunity for funding is pursued. The grant applications include:

1. additional funding for the Flood Risk Evaluation and Flood Control Solutions project;
2. a multi-year gravel removal program at the Nechako and Fraser River confluence with the first year funding to proceed with the necessary 2 dimensional river hydraulic analysis, sediment transport analysis, environmental impact analyses, and regulatory agency permit applications;
3. a multi-year project to construct a between River Road and the Nechako River to the 200 year flood construction level with first year funding to proceed with engineering design and floodway restoration (which includes asset removal and property acquisition where property owners are in concurrence).

With respect to item 3, the 200 year flood construction level will be determined by Northwest Hydraulic Consultants as part of their work being undertaken in the Flood Risk Evaluation and Flood Control Solutions project.

DISCUSSION:

Involving the public and stakeholders in information sessions regarding the findings of the risk analysis report prepared by Northwest Hydraulic Consultants and in discussion concerning potential solutions will benefit interested participants and stakeholders in understanding the complexities of river flooding in Prince George. With both freshet and ice-jam flooding to consider, the process involves technical analyses to determine the effectiveness of each option to provide flood protection followed by several cost considerations including initial capital cost, ongoing maintenance costs, environmental costs and social costs during flood events. As stated in the attached memo from the Fraser Basin Council, it is expected that a “preferred suite of options” will emerge in the final analysis, i.e. there is no one solution that will protect all flood risk areas from all types of flooding that can occur.

City staff supports the Fraser Basin Council recommendations and believes that continued communication with, and engagement of the community is critical to the success of this study. The

results of these ongoing efforts will be communicated to Council along with the results of the technical analysis in mid-November this year.

Though the Flood Risk Evaluation and Flood Control Solutions project is not complete and a list of preferred flood protection works for all flood risk areas is not finalized, there is opportunity for funding available under the 2008-2009 EMBC Flood Protection Program to proceed with measures that are considered common to the higher ranked options within the river confluence floodplain. City staff believes that the necessary preparatory works for a gravel removal program, dike construction and floodway restoration, such as engineering and the environmental permit process, can proceed, should grants be received, without affecting the technical examination and selection of preferred options under the Flood Risk Evaluation and Flood Control Solutions project. Our application has been discussed with provincial program representatives and it is concluded that these applications can be viewed as our indication and reserve of consideration in this earliest funding intake with flexibility to adjust as further information is available from the overall study.

CONCLUSION:

City staff believes the Fraser Basin Council recommendations regarding public and stakeholder consultation will be beneficial to engage interested participants in the flood issue and potential solutions.

Grant applications under the EMBC 2008-2009 Flood Protection Program include: 1) additional funding for the Flood Risk Evaluation and Flood Control Solutions, 2) initial engineering, sediment transport analysis and environmental work for a confluence gravel removal program, and, 3) initial engineering, flood restoration and asset removal to construct the Island Cache Area Flood Protection dike to the 200 year flood construction level.

Respectfully submitted,



Dave Dyer
Chief Engineer, Long Range Planning
Development Services

Attachment



MEMO

To: Dave Dyer, Chief Engineer, Development Services, City of Prince George

Date: July 21, 2008

Re: **Flood Hazard Evaluation and Flood Relief Solutions Project
– Community Involvement Process**

On behalf of the Fraser Basin Council we would like to take this opportunity to provide some initial reflections on the community involvement process, which is being facilitated by the FBC. Since the launch of this community involvement process on May 21, seven meetings have been held with representatives of regulatory agencies, business and industry, residents affected by recent flooding and other members of the public. Through the consultation process several residents and business owners have expressed an interest in additional opportunities to discuss the options proposed in the Phase I progress report for flood management strategies (such as land use change or diking), particularly where their properties and/or businesses could be affected.

At this stage, there appears to be merit in continuing to explore non-technical issues with stakeholders and community representatives in parallel with the technical and scientific investigations being undertaken by the consulting team.

We would recommend that the following actions be considered to learn more about the preferences, concerns, opportunities and challenges related to the flood issue and potential solutions, from a variety of stakeholders throughout the community:

1. Make an information package available to affected individuals, households, businesses, utility providers, and the community at large, containing a cover letter to provide context, an overview of the project, and an Executive Summary of the Phase 1 progress report. A web link would also be provided to direct people to more information;
2. Convene exploratory discussions with stakeholders on proposed options where there is support based on science and where there has been expressed community interest. These discussions could also explore preferred formats for ongoing involvement; and,
3. Conduct a third round of substantial community involvement meetings or workshops following the completion of the Phase 1 Final Report (and receipt by City Council in November).

We see value in continuing to discuss the various options with stakeholders. We also see the importance of deferring final decisions on a preferred suite of options until after the completion of both the final technical report and final community involvement report on or before April 1, 2009. However, this would not preclude the City from pursuing works that are common to all solutions, where there is a sound technical basis. We look forward to continuing to work with the City of Prince George to identify and advance the optimal suite of flood management solutions throughout the community.

Steve Litke
Program Manager
Flood Hazard Management
Fraser Basin Council

Joan Chess
Regional Manager
Upper Fraser Region
Fraser Basin Council