

**COUNCIL REPORT**

**To:** Mayor and Council

**From:** Administration

**Date:** March 17, 2025

**Subject:** Contract Award – Development Services Program Update

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**RECOMMENDATION:**

THAT Council awards the Development Services Program Update project to Praxis Solutions in the amount of \$34,400 plus GST;

AND THAT the Chief Administrative Officer be authorized to execute the contract and any related documentation.

**BACKGROUND:**

Development services at the District includes the following service areas:

- building inspection
- building/property file records management;
- development permit application processing;
- subdivision and servicing;
- business licensing;
- real estate referrals;
- crown referrals (ie. new pipeline permitting processes);
- Provincial land licensing and applications (ie. Azan Trail License-to-Occupy, Alpine Riders License-to-Occupy, Morfee Lakeshore Trail License-to-Occupy);
- environmental monitoring referrals;
- contaminated site registration;
- District land administration (leases, license-to-use agreements, land sales, subdivision development);
- Signage and Fence permitting;
- Long-term community and social planning (ie. housing needs reports and official community plan updates);
- GIS services;
- Land-use/Development research, report writing, and policy/bylaw updates; and
- General land use inquiries for residents and businesses (ie. am I allowed a sea-can, what are the setbacks for me to build a small shed or a fence, what kind of business am I allowed if I buy this property, etc.).

Primarily due to turnover in our organization in the last 5-10 years (at both the management and exempt staff levels), there has been the necessity to adapt non-traditional development service roles to support these necessary services, which has identified a few gaps and inefficiencies in current workflows, bylaws, and in our corporate history.

The purpose of this contract with Praxis Solutions is to create a “Development Services Policy and Procedure Manual” that outlines the responsibilities of each person within the necessary development services workflows, and make sure that anyone who steps into the role or is managing staff within this service area have clear and consistent processes and decision points to follow and improved records management. Additionally, we seek to work with them to perform some necessary bylaw updates to align with new best practices and legislation (ie. the Building Bylaw has not had a major review or update since 2000).

Having well-established and documented policy and procedure will assist in the recruitment and retention of staff, but also help ensure continuity or service when staff changes do occur in the future. Overall, it will improve efficiency, consistency, transparency, and should reduce overall staff time.

### **Procurement – Sole Source**

Praxis Solutions, based in Prince George and Delta, BC, is recommended for the contract. Staff wish to sole source this work as Praxis Solutions is already familiar with our processes and have helped establish some new best practices during their time as the District’s contract building inspection service, which in turn will save time and funding when hiring an outside company who would have to learn our practices from both the District and Praxis Solutions.

Praxis Solution’s team includes several previous northern bc local government building inspectors and professional planners, as such they are well equipped to provide the services and best practices as seen in other jurisdictions when setting up a planning and development services department. A copy of their proposal, including team member qualifications and experience has been provided in centre table file for Council’s consideration.

### **Proposed Workplan – 4-6 months**

#### **Phase 1: Confirmation of Process Changes and Bylaw Amendments**

- Reviewing findings from the initial process and bylaw analysis with District staff.
- Identifying areas where further direction is needed, such as policy decisions, procedural changes, or areas requiring additional stakeholder input.
- Confirming the proposed process changes to be documented in the Development Services Manual.
- Establishing the key amendments for both the Development Procedures Bylaw and Building Bylaw to ensure they align with the District’s objectives.
- Identifying any additional considerations to be incorporated into the next phase of work.

## **Phase 2: Drafting the Development Services Manual and Bylaw Amendments**

- Development Services Manual, which will document standard procedures, staff roles, and workflows.
- Bylaw amendments, which will incorporate procedural improvements, align with best practices, and integrate legislative requirements.

Key focus areas in this phase include:

- Standardizing roles and responsibilities for key staff and referral departments.
- Documenting procedural improvements for application intake, review, and approvals.
- Ensuring the bylaws and procedures accommodate a future cloud-based permitting system.
- Drafting clear requirements and decision-making frameworks to improve consistency and efficiency.

## **Phase 3: Review and Refinement with the District**

- Presenting the draft Development Services Manual and proposed bylaw amendments.
- Gathering feedback on procedural clarity, feasibility, and operational alignment.
- Confirming any refinements or additional changes required before finalization.
- Coordinating 2 to 3 demonstrations with cloud-based permitting software vendors to assess alignment between the District's updated procedures and potential digital solutions.
- Working with the District to determine their requirements for a digital solution such as ensuring that the permitting software includes functionality to track staff time spent on applications to support workflow management and operational efficiency.
- Identifying any further bylaw or procedural modifications necessary to ensure compatibility with a future permitting system.

## **Phase 4: Finalization of the Development Services Manual and Bylaw Revisions**

- Incorporate final refinements into the Development Services Manual.
- Complete the replacement bylaws, ensuring alignment with provincial legislation, best practices, and operational needs.

## **Phase 5: Implementation Support and Training**

- Providing training materials for key staff.
- Assisting with internal communication and adoption strategies.
- Supporting Council consideration with content for the Council Report required to present the new bylaws for approval.

## **BUDGETARY IMPACT:**

\$34,400 will be allocated and fully funded through the Province of BC's Capacity Funding for Local Government Housing Initiatives Grant.



The District received approximately \$160,000 from the Province of BC towards improvements to its development services processes along with the required housing needs report and official community plan updates and any other necessary program and policy updates that support Provincial Bills 44, 46, and 47.

**COUNCIL PRIORITIES:**

**Strong Governance and Finances**

- As the municipality's elected governing body, we serve all residents and businesses in the community. We engage residents and stakeholders on important issues and make our decisions through open and transparent processes. We are careful in our use of resources, mindful of the need to maintain programs and services, while also meeting the community's infrastructure needs.

**RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED:**

Emily Kaehn, Director of Corporate Services

**Reviewed By:** Corporate and Financial Services

**Approved By:** Chief Administrative Officer