

Frequently Asked Questions

The system is working fine - why change now?

This is a good opportunity for the residents of White Rock to take control of our city asset - to the benefit of the residents.

Why invest so many taxpayer dollars in something that isn't broken?

This is about ensuring that taxes paid in White Rock stay within the city for much needed projects. Every municipality and city in British Columbia maintains its own water utility except a small area in Nanaimo and White Rock.

This is about bringing our community in line with the best practices across the province.

Isn't this a huge risk for taxpayers?

There is always a risk in infrastructure acquisitions. To say otherwise, would be misleading to the public. However, the difference is that under this proposed model the city will have greater control of its asset and the money paid into the water utility will stay in White Rock, not passed on to an Alberta company.

What are the options available?

More information about the options available for a potential acquisition will be presented at the information meeting. Individuals will be able to give feedback at that time.

How do you set a price for purchasing the utility?

The City has three options – to continue negotiating, to move towards arbitration or to serve notice and start expropriation proceedings. Council directed the Chief Administrative Officer to work with the City's legal counsel with a view to acquire the water utility.

How do you set a price for purchasing the utility?

That is dependent on the option pursued. In general terms, if Epcor and White Rock cannot agree on the price, it will be determined by a neutral third party, such as an arbitrator or in a court proceeding.

Why does the potential purchase of the water utility not include the purchase of 1454 Oxford Street?

The City remains focused on the potential acquisition of the water utility and assets that support the utility. 1454 Oxford Street was not deemed necessary to support the water utility.

Why is this happening so suddenly?

This process has been underway for the past two years, but we have been bound by confidentiality. The City is not satisfied with the lack of progress and is seeking options that will move this forward with some certainty. Now, after receiving positive feedback from the community, the City is moving forward with options that would enable the acquisition of the water utility this year.

Will this increase my taxes?

Revenue is primarily derived from water user rates rather than property taxes. The City will operate the utility the same way virtually every other community in BC operates their water utility - in the best interests of the community.

Does this mean more jobs for the residents of White Rock?

At this time, it is too early to know.

How much is this going to cost?

Until negotiations have been concluded, a final cost of acquisition will not be known. Council gave three readings to an amended 2015-2019 Financial Plan that includes the revenues and the capital and operating expenditures associated with the acquisition and ongoing costs of the water utility.

Where is the city getting the money?

The costs to acquire a secure water asset will be financed through a combination of long-term borrowing and the existing budget.

Will I still get a water bill?

Yes.