

Background Notes from the Mayor's Desk - February 2017

Do you want your next Council to be the "A Team"?

If the answer to that question is "yes" - and it should be, then now is the time to start recruiting so you have a slate of candidates for the upcoming October elections.

What should you be looking for in a Council, and members of Council? (Apart from the obvious optimistic attitude, commitment to read 100-200 pages per week of agenda, email, technical, financial, legal and engineering documents, and willingness to give 15-40 hours per week, 1-2 evenings per week and 1-5 days per month for meetings in town and out of town.)

Our sewer system (waste water treatment plant) is nearing capacity and must be expanded for future growth in our region. Water and waste water treatment is critical for us, and there are leaks in old pipes underground that make our systems inefficient. Councillors that are prepared to understand technical details, work regionally, assist and support our staff to find creative solutions, funding, encourage conservation and actively commit to follow the long term plans, will lead us into our future efficiently.

We need to focus on putting together a plan for a new hospital. The Hospital Futures Committee has already begun with the first, and hopefully annual, Gala fundraiser in that long term plan. There should be a Councillor who is a medical professional who understands the inner workings of the health care system and who will advocate passionately, with facts and determination toward the goal of a new hospital.

For two years we have been talking with provincial and local RCMP representatives to begin plans for an updated RCMP detachment building, or a multiple emergency services building that will meet the needs of the community as we grow. There must Councillors with knowledge and background in emergency services: police, fire and ambulance. When our population reaches 5000, we will pay hundreds of thousands of dollars for police services, and a new, possibly integrated, RCMP building may be a way to help offset those costs with lease revenue. As we grow, our Volunteer Fire Department will need more space. More importantly, the coordination of emergency services will provide better services to the community.

We have to address the aging arena, the condition of all Town owned buildings, the supports necessary for volunteer groups and their buildings (the Aquaplex, Curling Club, Legion, Elks, the Agricultural Society, to name a few), and come together as a community to deal with the realities of aging individual buildings and whether it might be a good idea to consolidate all the "stand alone" buildings under one roof. Incoming Councillors will have to lead the community to solutions over the next two terms (eight years), with the same attitude that was modelled by the builders of our community: optimism, commitment, some collaboration, problem solving, working together, and a plan. Councillor leaders with a passion for recreation, culture, history of our community, and vision for bringing us together planning facilities for a more affordable future, will be needed. There has been lots of talk. There must now be action.

Taxes get talked about a lot. Councillors need a financial background - not just in understanding how to count money, but to find money, to understand how to move money, to understand the "big picture" connections between projected budgets and actual expenditures, reserves, debt, surplus, and grants. We are "richer than we think" if we take the time to look into the depths of our finances and recognize we must consider the "worst case scenario", but it is by choice that we get drawn in to the negativity and the fear that the "can't afford it" attitude creates. Analytical, accounting Councillors bring depth to discussions about finance.

If you want the "A Team" for your next Council, consider some of the above - or not. We have seen some changes in provincial, federal, and US elections recently. In our Town elections, we get about 35% voter turnout. Apathy will not get the "A Team" so start recruiting :)

As always, I would love to talk with anyone about the above, or any other issue, question, suggestion, or concern. Please call me at 403-559-7352 if you want to chat.

Terry Leslie, Mayor