

Ward 6

UPDATE

November 2008

Alan Dunn
Councillor, Ward 6

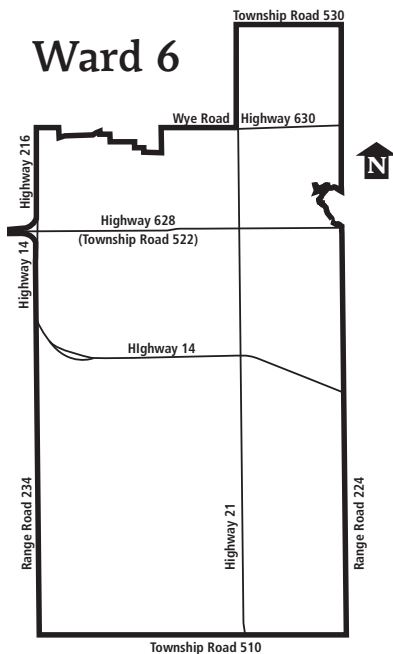
Office Phone: 780-464-8206
Fax: 780-464-8114
E-mail: dunn@strathcona.ab.ca



Strathcona
County

www.strathcona.ab.ca

Ward 6



Distribution of this newsletter

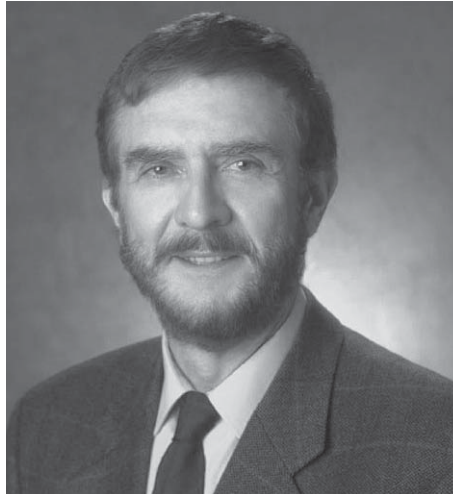
This newsletter is intended for residents of Ward 6, as shown on the map above. To economize, it is being distributed according to delivery zones established by Canada Post, which do not coincide with ward boundaries.

A limited number of households in Wards 5 and 7 may receive a copy as a result. If so, please enjoy the information and make note of the councillor for your area.

Ward 5, Councillor Jacquie Fenske, 780-464-8147

Ward 7, Councillor Glen Lawrence, 780-464-8003

from your councillor



Councillor Alan Dunn

Solid waste management

As the summer ebbs away, the *Sturm und Drang* about the new Green Routine is gradually abating.

To read the newspaper, one would think this has been the most traumatic experience the County has ever experienced. In Ward 6, however, it has been quite anti-climactic. I have had fewer than a dozen complaints about the new system and 10 times as many favourable comments. This is in contrast with the hundreds of complaints received by some of my Sherwood Park colleagues.

This speaks well of Ward 6 residents' willingness to adapt to change in the face of changing economic and environmental conditions. Thanks to everyone for helping to make this work.

There may, of course, be some tweaking required in order to optimise cost and the level of service. In the past, a typical July saw 1,850 tonnes of waste going to landfill. This past July the number was down to 580 tonnes. The difference represents a huge

savings in diesel fuel and heavy vehicle trips beating up the roads.

Country residential wastewater service

The long-awaited open house on the proposed country residential wastewater service took place at the Wye Hall on September 24.

To refresh everyone's memory, this was to discuss retrofitting of a Septic Tank Effluent Pumping (STEP) wastewater system in the Bailey's Subdivision.

At the outset, I must state that I have supported this idea, which has been under development for a number of years. With increased development and residential density, centrally processing sewage has many environmental and health advantages. The issues have always been at what cost and who should pay.

Costs are prohibitive

It was the money issue that prompted me to put the brakes on this project months ago pending a review of the estimates. The news is not good.

Cost summary

Local Improvement

Cost (capital) \$ 85.50/month

Treatment and


O&M Cost \$ 59.48/month

Total monthly charge \$144.98/month

In addition, hook-up to the system could cost the homeowner \$20,000 or more in a worst case scenario. This is way too much money to expect a resident to pay and far in excess of the replacement cost of a mound or tile field, which was the breakeven benchmark we had hoped for.

I have always maintained that a sewage system is to the benefit of the entire community, not just the residents

continued on page 2...

 This newsletter is also available at www.strathcona.ab.ca.

Ward 6

UPDATE

...Wastewater service continued

and therefore should be funded all or in part by the community. To do otherwise would be as ridiculous as expecting Wye Road improvements to be paid for solely by those living along that road or that Millennium Place should be funded by the surrounding neighbourhood only.

I have added a councillor request for funding for this project to the 2009 budget. If this fails, which it might very well do in what will be a tight budget year, I will press to have the wastewater retrofit project shelved indefinitely.

MDP: Edmonton appeal denied

The long-awaited decision by the Municipal Government Board fully vindicated Strathcona's position by denying the appeal of our new Municipal Development Plan (MDP) by the City of Edmonton.

What this means is that the MDP passed by Council last year is now law. As it was passed before the establishment of the Capital Region Board, it is "grandfathered," meaning its provisions remain more or less independent of the new rules governing the region.

Particularly, it means that the door has been opened to potential development in the proposed "growth node" north of Highway 16 and along the Edmonton border in the Colchester region.

Some of the issues

- At recent rates of growth, Sherwood Park could be built out to the limits of its current boundary within a few years. Further growth, if desired, would require consideration of other areas in the County suitable for urban growth. The "growth node" was identified in the MDP as a possibility.
- It is expected to be at least 10 years, and very likely longer, before any

development actually begins. Many factors affect the pace of development such as how soon Sherwood Park reaches its physical limits, or whether population growth levels off. Much also depends on the economies of our region and the province.

Our first responsibility is the well-being of our residents. Any development in the new areas must be entirely self-funded so as not to be a financial burden to taxpayers.

- We need a growth management strategy broadly to define the new area, the timeline and the need for growth. Following the establishment of need, detailed planning may begin. This would set out residential and commercial areas, parks and schools, roads, interchanges and the necessary infrastructure. All of this will depend on considerable input from the Capital Region Board, neighbouring municipalities and most importantly, our residents.

Sustainability: what it means

For Strathcona County, sustainability means developing in a manner that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs. Sustainable development strikes a balance between economic prosperity, social responsibility and environmental stewardship. The County is committed to applying the principles and themes of sustainable development in our new urban area.

- The new area will provide diversity of housing and employment opportunities that suit people of different ages and lifestyles. We will use technology to reduce energy and resources and provide an emphasis on the natural environment. Currently we are using ideas like this

in other projects such as Emerald Hills Urban Village, South Wye and Centre in the Park. The sustainability practices developed in these projects will be applied in the new urban area on a much larger scale.

Other areas in Strathcona County are identified in the MDP for growth, such as the Colchester area and existing hamlets. More detailed plans and strategies will be required before development occurs in these areas.

Whether you own property in one of the growth areas, are an adjacent landowner or are interested in acquiring land, the current land use dictates the development and land uses allowed today. The MDP guides the future potential of these areas; however, until the necessary planning has been done, the current land use regulations apply.

Ardrossan boundary change

At the August 19 public hearings, a motion to expand the Ardrossan hamlet boundary passed two readings in spite of the objections of a majority of the local residents present. This major change to the configuration of the neighbourhood attracted very little debate.

It was, as the cliché goes, pretty much of a "slam-dunk," a decision made without much thought as to how this would be good for Strathcona County. I have always been troubled by the way we sometimes make planning decisions without thinking through the consequences.

To those who say that this is "only" a boundary change, a few lines on a map, I would point out that change of this kind leads to certain expectations. Every time Council says yes to anything, saying no later becomes just a little bit more difficult until eventually no is impossible.

So now we are on our way to approving a greatly expanded residential development in Ardrossan. What will this mean to Strathcona? Growth is expensive. Residential developments require millions of dollars worth of new "hard" infrastructure such as roads, walkways, water lines and sewerage systems.

In theory, developers are required to fund these. In practice, the municipality

continued on page 3...

...Ardrossan boundary change continued must assume financial responsibility for infrastructure in the hopes of recovering these costs as development proceeds.

This is of course completely at the risk of the municipality. If the development does not go ahead the municipality is left holding the bag – a potential burden for taxpayers. Then there are the so-called “soft” costs such as schools, recreation facilities, policing, emergency services and on-going maintenance of the new infrastructure.

Every time Council says yes to anything, saying no later becomes more difficult

Development makes no contribution to these costs. Conventional wisdom assumes that taxes provided by the new development cover these. In practice, that is only true for high density developments, density that has not so far been contemplated in Strathcona. Like most other residential developments in Strathcona, this will be a net burden on the taxpayer.

So, if we accept the fact that this is going to cost serious money, what then are the advantages? A good place to ask this question first might be in Ardrossan where folks seem to be fairly cool to the idea of a potential upheaval of their lifestyle. Few seem willing to trade a rural, equine lifestyle for the dubious benefits of whatever services this development may attract.

A new residential development in Ardrossan may be a wonderful idea. If it is, then those supporting it should have no difficulty providing hard evidence as to the social, environmental and financial benefits to be realised by Strathcona County and particularly Ardrossan residents. So far not a trace of such evidence has been forthcoming.

Big Island Lake levels

An update on progress

A project I thought long resolved is still on the books. So, time for an update.

The first stage of the lake stabilisation project was to determine the natural bed and shore and have landowners agree to

a fixed common boundary between their property and crown land.

In 2007, AMEC, an engineering consultant frequently engaged by Strathcona County, surveyed the bed and shore and determined an elevation of 725.8 metres above mean sea level (MSL) to be the natural level. This was based upon historical data including surveys, land titles and aerial photographs dated back over decades.

A number of landowners requested a higher water level of 726.1 MSL. This would require a weir structure set to that level. It was determined that four residents would be impacted considerably by a change in common boundary and could lose land area.

Two of these four residents were not supportive of the work that AMEC completed and we therefore hired IBI Group to confirm AMEC’s work.

IBI’s work showed slight adjustment to the common boundary on these two properties, though the landowners would still be required to agree to a fixed common boundary. Landowners are still reviewing their options and have not agreed to the common boundary. The two other landowners are prepared to accept the change in common boundary.

Should all landowners agree, IBI Group will be carrying out step 2, a lake stabilisation plan which will survey out the flood level (1:100) of 726.68 and landowners who are affected by that level will need to sign an easement. Once all surveys and easements are signed, Strathcona will be able to apply to Alberta Environment for a licence to construct a lake level control structure.

Fill and earthworks

During the past year or two, there has been a marked increase in the movement of fill into the County, both clay and topsoil.

There are a number of concerns: contamination of surrounding lands by inclusion of waste and non-native plant species, disruption of waterways with the potential of flooding, damage to habitat, damage to roads and aesthetics.

Traditionally, residents of Strathcona have taken the view that what someone

does on their own land is their own business. The result of this thinking is that currently no regulatory tools are available to the County to control the movement of fill, either removal or deposition.

The Province has unique jurisdiction over waterways and drainage; if these are not imperilled, then provincial agencies adopt a hands-off position. The County has some control where filling and contouring are part of a development.

Between those two legal positions is a gap one can drive a dump truck through.

In view of the increasing interest in this issue, I have requested that County administration research and bring forward some ideas, public input and possibly modifications to the Land Use Bylaw.

I hope to have some preliminary answers by the time folks receive this newsletter. To some, this will not be soon enough; however, I have been guilty of the “ready, fire, aim” approach to legislation in the past and it is a mistake I don’t intend to repeat.

Changes to the Land Use Bylaw could have some impacts that residents may not like. At the very least, it would be yet another restriction on personal freedom and another set of permits and fees.

Highway 21 update

On September 22, MLA Dave Quest, Councillors Gariepy, Włodarczak and I met with the Minister of Transportation, Hon. Luke Ouellette, for an informal discussion about Highway 21.

As the twinning project shows signs of being completed in the near future, it seemed the right time to put forward our needs and priorities. The primary concern of the Province is safety.

The portion of the highway South of Highway 16 will have at least four major intersections in a stretch of four miles.

If each intersection is posted at 70 km/h while the overall speed limit is 100 km/h, there will be frequent braking and acceleration along this section. This represents a significant safety hazard as various types of vehicles adjust to the posted speed in different ways and at different rates.

continued on page 4...

...Highway 21 update continued

Also, as the Minister pointed out, school buses may be required to exit the Wyecliff area at the Ranchlands exit onto Highway 21 subjecting children to additional risk. A reduction of the speed limit to 80 km/h along this section would appear to alleviate these problems to a large extent.

Both the Minister and Alberta Infrastructure and Transportation appear cautiously open to this idea.

Noise is another issue and while the province is more cautious about committing to a particular solution, they agree a speed limit reduction would be helpful and will continue to monitor the sound levels as the project advances.

Our MLA, David Quest, has been fully and actively supportive of our efforts to improve Highway 21.

Our progress to date has been an example of how well provincial and municipal representatives can work together for the benefit of our residents and constituents.

Proposed cell phone bylaw

On October 21, Council reviewed public input on a proposed bylaw to regulate the use of cell phones by drivers on County-controlled roads. We agreed to the next step, that administration will draft a bylaw and come back with a plan for further discussion.



Making tracks: The Rural Roads Master Plan

(Continued from the August Ward 6 newsletter)

Last newsletter, we looked at the Rural Roads Master Plan (RRMP), which aims to provide the best possible service levels on the five major rural roadway categories.

How does the County decide which roads will undergo maintenance each year?

Each autumn, after the summer maintenance program is completed, staff from Transportation and Agriculture Services and Engineering and Environmental Planning inspect every grid road and subdivision road in the County and assess them based upon a set of criteria.

The County's representatives inspect each road for its drivability—that is, its smoothness, shape, base failure and patching—as well as the last time it was overlaid. Once this information is collected, the grid roads and subdivision roads are sorted in order of those most in need of maintenance. The County then adjusts that list based on future development in areas of the County.

The grid roads are then short-listed down to 41 kilometres of grid roads and 16 kilometres for the subdivision roads. Where each road is positioned on this list dictates the amount of maintenance undertaken. The annual budget for this program is reviewed by Council each fall.

There are roads within Strathcona County that are used more often than

others, particularly by industry. So how does the County ensure these roads are maintained to the quality of the rest of the road system?

As the Road Use Authority for Strathcona County, Transportation and Agriculture Services is involved in different agreements with users of the road network to strike a balance between the needs of the client and the protection of the infrastructure. Additionally, road bans are in place on the majority of County roads all year round (75 per cent axle weight from March 1 to June 1 and 90 per cent axle weight for the rest of the year).

These initiatives are all in place to protect the safety and integrity of Strathcona County's roads.

Did you know?

In order to maintain each of the following roadways (summer road maintenance only) over their estimated useful lives, it costs on average:

- Grid roads: \$3,730 per kilometre per year
- Country Residential roads: \$1,470 per kilometre per year
- Hamlet roads: \$2,270 per kilometre per year

Regional park site

County staff have been working with residents in the Waterton, Silver Birch Hills and Scona Glen communities and others, including users of the dog off-leash area, to identify the long-term needs for the regional park site located adjacent to Highway 21 and Highway 628.

This was a former landfill site and is currently the County's only dog off-leash park. Environmental site remediation was scheduled for 2008. After considering timing and resources, and with input from Alberta Environment, the project has been delayed until 2009.


Weight restrictions on County roads

The Weight Restriction and Road Ban Bylaw 13-2008 is for the purpose of restricting the weight of commercial vehicles and the goods being carried by commercial vehicles on Strathcona County roadways.

Axle-weight restrictions are currently at 90 per cent seasonal axle weights on the majority of rural County roads. If any proposed loads over the posted axle weights are to be transported, a Road Use Agreement (RUA) must be obtained from Transportation and Agriculture Services.

If making six or more trips on the same road/route while under the posted axle weights, a Multi-Trip RUA may be required and can be obtained from Transportation and Agriculture Services. Strathcona County will not enter into an overweight RUA for divisible loads.

Further information

 Transportation and Agriculture Services
780-417-7100
www.strathcona.ab.ca/tas