

Ward 1: The backbone of our community

May 2009

1 Ward

from your County Councillor Vic Bidzinski

Wow! Is Alberta truly an interesting and wonderful place to live. The saying *if you don't like the weather just wait* is sure true in our province.

From rain in January to freezing snow in April we see a diverse change in temperature and climate. We hopefully are going into a stable period with warm weather on the way. I am looking forward to the awakening of Mother Earth with the flowers, green grass, birds singing and of course the ping of my club hopefully hitting that elusive white golf ball.

There have been a number of reports, concerns and hopefully solutions that have been culminated since my last newsletter. I have tried to keep you informed of some of these through my column in the newspaper.

We hosted a Ward 1 Open House which was attended by 12 residents. There were a number of concerns and issues brought up at the meeting and we have since then worked to alleviate as many of these as possible. Sometimes it is impossible to completely look after a concern but we try to help to the best of



Ward 1 Open House Thursday, May 21

6:30 - 8:30 p.m.

County Hall
2001 Sherwood Drive
Sherwood Park

our ability. Thank you to those residents who came out and made their views known. It is always appreciated.

Recently I met with residents from
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County**

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FSC logo



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Rain barrel

Place your barrel under a downspout nearest to your garden. You may need to cut, or re-arrange your downspout to sit above your barrel. Place blocks beneath the barrel to raise it up for easy access to the hose adapter—make sure your barrel is stable. Combine several barrels together for more water storage, or add a soaker hose to your barrel to efficiently water your plants roots during dry weather.

Get creative and save water.

Composter tips

Set up your composter in a well drained area of your yard. Place loose twigs, pine needles or other coarse, dry material at the bottom of your composter for drainage and air circulation. Add some dried leaves or dry plant clippings, top with a splash of water, then add your nutrient-rich kitchen and yard scraps and top with garden soil. Repeat these layers a second time—each layer should be 5 to 10 centimetres thick.

If your pile is too dry, add water and more nutrient-rich scraps. If it is too wet or has an odour, turn it with a shovel and add more dry material.

Compost should have a neutral, earthy odour and a black, crumbly texture when finished. Add finished compost to gardens, around shrubs or sprinkle as a top dressing over your lawn.

Community Centre takes shape

Council recently had the opportunity to view first-hand the work on the Community Centre now under construction next to County Hall on Sherwood Drive. When complete late next year, the Community Centre will become a hub for community activity including a new library and space for community gatherings, art and culture.

Environmental features are being built in at every phase. Even on the construction site, materials are sorted for recycling, and 80 per cent are being recycled rather than landfilled.

Supporting Scouts in a great cause



In July, members and leaders of the 152nd Mills Haven Scout Group are travelling to Peurto Viejo in Costa Rica where they will help to build a classroom in a school. The group is also working to gather school supplies, backpacks and other much-needed materials for the students. Councillor Bidzinski recently presented a cheque to assist the Scouts in their efforts.

Pitch-In Campaign



Taking pride in our community: Councillor Bidzinski (left) and Councillor Linda Osinchuk (right) participated in Strathcona's first annual Pitch-In Appreciation Day on April 25.

Annual spring clean-up campaigns have long been held in Strathcona County. This year, along with the campaign, a Pitch-In Appreciation Day was held to thank the many volunteers who help to clean up litter. In addition to individuals and groups, over 40 families registered to help out. A big thank-you to everyone who is doing their part!

From your County Councillor

(continued from page 1)

Manor Drive and Mission Street along with representatives from our Office of Traffic Safety and Transportation Engineering.

We discussed the interim results of an ongoing study regarding the 40-kilometre-per-hour speed limit on these two streets. The study will continue for the next several months.

2009 budget

Our 2009 budget approved tax rate was rate was 7.37 per cent. Recently Administration was able to find a windfall of approximately \$2.5 million. If we returned all of the \$2.5 million to our taxpayers, we could have reduced the tax rate to 5.28 per cent. I believed all of the windfall should have been returned to the taxpayer but due to circumstances and a lack of certain knowledge was unable to proceed with a motion at a specific Council meeting.

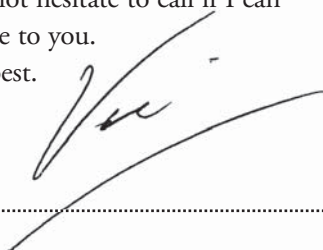
As some of my residents are aware, I am not easily discouraged and will move forward to ensure our residents get the best possible bang for their buck.

I also believe we have not seen the end of amendments for this budget period as there are external forces that will precipitate this Council re-examining its priorities. I would also like to point out we are beginning the cycle for next year's budget which will be a challenge for Council, our Administration and of course our residents.

There are a number of issues which will affect and are affecting the ward but other articles in this newsletter will hopefully deal with them.

I would like to wish all our residents a safe, enjoyable and restful summer. Experiencing the pleasures this time of year enables us to enjoy, and fill your cup with its bounties.

Please do not hesitate to call if I can be of assistance to you.
I will do my best.



Supporting arts and culture

Bill Roberts, centre, President of the Arts and Culture Council of Strathcona County, receives a cheque from Councillor Bidzinski and Councillor Linda Osinchuk.

The Arts and Culture Council works to promote arts in our community. It brings together diverse rural and urban cultural groups, individual artists and supporters.

Festival Place

Recent news: Festival Place is now Strathcona County's responsibility. The vibrancy of arts and culture is the prime goal. Arts and culture are very important to the quality of life for Strathcona County residents.

The County is currently conducting a review of our Cultural Policy and Strategy. Input from all interested residents including Festival Place patrons will be important.

Over the last 15 years, the volunteers, sponsors and boards of Festival Place have done a fabulous job in bringing the spirit and heart of arts and culture to this community.

Ensuring taxpayers' dollars are spent wisely is always of major importance to me. Financing this facility and still promoting arts and culture will be challenging.

Key principles I work for and believe in are these: 1) the importance of public input, 2) transparency through a facilitative process, and 3) a positive, consensus-based outcome. Please contact me for details, or with your comments or questions.

I support ensuring accountability of taxpayers' dollars, and at the same time maintaining a balance of volunteers within a County-run facility.

New local transit pass for seniors

A new bus pass is now available to qualifying seniors for free travel on Strathcona County Transit within Sherwood Park. The pass is valid during off-peak travel times: weekdays between 9 a.m. and 3 p.m., and after 6 p.m.; plus weekends and holidays.

To apply for this pass, seniors must provide proof of age (65+), residency and have annual household income of less than \$50,000. Monthly passes to February 2010, will be provided to seniors who qualify.

To apply, please call Family and Community Services at 780-464-4044 to make an appointment.

Capital Region Board update

On March 19, the Capital Region Board (CRB) approved the Regional Growth Plan. This plan represents a significant effort over the last months on the part of 25 municipalities in the region, ours included.

The plan covers land use, affordable housing, GIS (geographic information systems) and intermunicipal transit. It also sets out a cooperative approach for regional opportunities and issues.

On April 2, the plan was formally submitted to the Minister of Municipal Affairs. It is expected to be tabled in the Provincial legislature later this month, and the Province's response is expected before summer.

Proposed high-voltage transmission lines

You are likely aware of a proposal that could result in a major powerline being constructed in close proximity to our community.

Several routes are being considered, but one option could result in the construction of a high voltage line immediately west of Sherwood Park through the TUC or Transportation and Utilities Corridor running alongside Village on the Lake, Westboro and Woodbridge Farms.

This proposal has led to great concern among residents and Council alike. Health and safety are our foremost issue, along with negative environmental impacts.

In March, County Council unanimously approved a motion opposing such a line unless it could be safely constructed and operated underground.

The process by which powerlines like this are approved takes months, and a final decision is still some time away. However, it is important for us to be prepared.

I and my colleagues on County Council will continue to follow developments closely and represent the best interests of our community.

A residents' group called RETA or Responsible Electricity Transmission for Albertans has been formed by a group of concerned citizens. You have an opportunity to join and add your concerns to all of ours.

The citizens' group is well organized and has considerable information on a website. Should you wish to learn more or become involved, visit www.reta.ca.

I would also welcome any comments or questions on this important matter.



Strathcona County Emergency Services continues to provide ambulance

Of all the municipal services in our community, probably none is more highly valued than our ambulance service. For decades we have been well served by Strathcona County Emergency Services.

You may know that as of April 1, the Province took over ambulance (emergency medical service) throughout Alberta. Until now, each municipality has had responsibility for this.

For all of us, it is very good news that ambulance service in our community will continue to be provided by the personnel employed by Strathcona County Emergency Services.

The new agreement

Our municipality was able to negotiate an agreement for Strathcona County Emergency Services to continue as our primary care provider. Under the new agreement, this department will supply four staffed ambulances to respond at all times. These units may respond within Strathcona County, or as needed anywhere in the region. Because ambulance service now operates on a regional basis, we can expect occasional times when other ambulance services may respond to calls within the County. However, our Fire Chief anticipates Strathcona County Emergency Services

will respond to well over 95 per cent of the calls in our municipality.

Maintaining the quality of our service

One feature of the new contract that is important to Council is the flexibility to maintain the unique features that have proven to be so effective for our citizens.

For example, Strathcona County Emergency Services generally responds to major medical emergencies with three staff members rather than two, as is the case in many communities. This approach not only improves patient care, but also reduces the need for costly additional back-up resources such as fire engines or second ambulances.

Integrated service continues

Finally, under the new contract, Strathcona County will be able to continue to operate fire and ambulance as an integrated service. Our emergency personnel are fully trained both as firefighters and registered emergency medical services practitioners, and can provide seamless response.

Our Fire Chief, Darrell Reid, summed it up this way: "Our residents will continue to benefit from the effectiveness and efficiencies inherent in our integrated fire, rescue and EMS model."

More seniors' housing planned

The need for more affordable housing for seniors on low and modest incomes is well understood in our community. Council is pleased to support an initiative by Pioneer Housing Foundation to expand Silver Birch Lodge, the facility located on Bison Way.

The expansion would add a 60-unit apartment complex linked to Silver

Birch Lodge. The main clients will be independent seniors 65 years or older who live in Strathcona County or are moving here to be closer to their families.

The new building will allow aging in place, with services available through the Lodge to people who meet specific criteria. Construction is expected to begin this summer with completion by late 2010.

Census—Online option new this year

count with a click!
it's quick...

This month, Strathcona County is conducting a census. Something new—you can go online and fill in your own information.

Visit www.strathcona.ab.ca