

NEWS *letter*



M.D. of Bighorn

Issue 16, December 2007

Welcome to New Committee and Board Members

On October 9, 2007, Council held its annual organizational meeting: at this meeting, Council reviews applications from citizens at large, who are interested in being a representative on one or more MD boards, committees or commissions. Councilors are also appointed to the various bodies as well. The result of this meeting was the appointment of 24 MD residents to our various board and committees.. Our sincere thanks and appreciation go to all those who applied, and who served over the past year.

On a similar note, Dene Cooper was appointed Reeve and Maria Dunki was appointed Deputy Reeve for the next one year term

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Christmas Office Hours

Please note that our office will be closed during the following times to enjoy the holidays:

Monday December 24 – at Noon
Tuesday December 25th
and Wednesday 26th
Tuesday January 1st

Thanks and Happy Holidays

*On behalf of the
Council and staff
of the MD of Bighorn
we wish you and your
family the very best
of the holiday season
and a wonderful New
Year.*



2007 – The Year In Review

It seemed impossible, back in January of this year, to imagine that 2007 could be any busier than the preceding year, but it happened: 2007 was busier than 2006. Leading the way were a couple of new developments, a bigger step into municipal utilities, and a growing workforce in the M.D.

Two new developments hit our planning department staff's desks: Area Structure Plans for both the Horseshoe Lands and the Carraig Ridge projects were ultimately approved by Council. The Horseshoe Lands project encompasses 800+ acres of land formerly owned by Transalta, at the site located roughly near the intersection of Highways 1 and 1X: at full build-out, this project will have 3,500 new residential units, along with commercial and light industrial development as well. Carraig Ridge is a unique concept: in exchange for higher density on the initial parcel, the developer will commit additional lands to permanent "no development" status, by dedicating the additional lands to nature conservancies. The full story on both Horseshoe Lands and Carraig Ridge is much more detailed, obviously, but both concepts clearly indicate a greater interest in developing within the M.D.

In 2006, the M.D. had drilled for water in both Exshaw and Dead Man's Flats: in late 2007, Council approved the application for grant funding for the Exshaw water system, with the Dead Man's Flats situation anticipated to move in the same direction, in early/mid 2008. Council also approved an application for grant funding for the construction of a waste-water treatment plant at Dead Man's Flats: the current lagoon system will be decommissioned with the BHB project moving forward, and there are capacity limitation concerns (with the existing lagoon), with respect to the on-going Copperstone development in the same hamlet. Finally, the Exshaw Industrial Park will be serviced with water and sewer lines, in the upcoming year, as a local improvement initiative was accepted by the landowners in the Park.

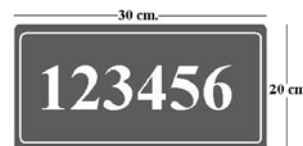
M.D. Council also indicated concerns with existing private sewage disposal systems in

three other hamlets (Benchlands, Harvie Heights, and Lac des Arcs), giving first reading to a bylaw that would require regular maintenance of septic/private disposal systems by landowners, with proof of such maintenance being delivered to the M.D. The Bylaw will be circulated for public comment, and it is anticipated that Council will give further consideration in early 2008.

In contrast to previous years, there were a considerable number of personnel changes within the M.D. organization this year, including some key personnel departing our offices. Cheryl Mickelson, our Municipal Secretary, and Debbie Czank, our Secretary/Receptionist, both resigned after many years with the M.D.; Helene Hesse, our Director of Finance, has taken a year's leave of absence to join her husband while he is on assignment with his company. We welcomed Cindy MacArthur as our new Secretary/Receptionist, Valerie Flink re-joined the M.D. as the Executive Assistant replacing Cheryl (Valerie

Rural 911 Signs

Over the past 6 years, the MD of Bighorn has produced and distributed 911 rural signs to all rural properties where a dwelling is situated. The purpose of this program is to help identify properties more quickly in an emergency situation: callers can provide an address, along with a range/township/named road location, to the dispatchers, to help the emergency service providers find the site (in some situations, it may also help if the caller has directions on how to find the site, if the call is coming from a remote or difficult to find location). Hamlet dwellings did not receive these signs as they have civic addresses to identify them for these purposes.



So, what if you have a rural dwelling that doesn't have a sign? If your property does not have a sign because it has been destroyed or stolen, etc., MD of Bighorn has made arrangements with Alberta Traffic Supply for residents to purchase a replacement directly. If you know your rural 911 number, you can contact Alberta Traffic Supply directly and they have all the technical specifications ready. If you do not remember the number or are uncertain as to whether you've even been assigned a number, please contact Ulrika at the MD of Bighorn office. New properties without an assigned 911 number must go through the MD office.

Alberta Traffic Supply Toll Free: (800) 242-8408

2007- Year in Review Cont'd

had worked in our Finance area, for a number of years, before leaving to take up a position with the separate school in Canmore), and the company Civic Solutions has provided Brenda Christie to replace Helene for the year. Rick Lyster, our Bylaw Enforcement/Safety Codes Officer, moved to full-time status. Geoff Cameron, who had been the junior Utilities Operator, moved into the new position of Roads Assistant; Forrest Manser was hired to fill Geoff's old position. Finally, our Agricultural Fieldman/Watershed Coordinator and Roads Foreman again benefited from the assistance of summer employees this year: David Jones helped in the Agricultural/Watershed sector, while Sandy Lyster returned for another summer with the Roads crew.

There was not a lot of road work done, in 2007: most of what occurred upgraded some deficient areas. Jamieson Road received an overlay along the Pork-Chop hill stretch, that included new guard rail at a portion that had been damaged; the side-rails on the bridge over Heart Creek in Lac des Arcs were improved, as a safety feature; Diamond Drive, in the Exshaw Industrial Park, was the focus of some construction work to raise the road level; and a number of roads in the north area were spot-gravelled and bladed, as required, with a re-gravelling program scheduled for 2008. The M.D. continues to push the Province into improving a number of provincial roads that run through our municipality, including Highways 40, 68, and 1A, and secondary road 579 in the north end: a meeting with the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation, during the summer of 2007, brought these matters directly to his attention, and a second meeting with A.I.T. officials, at the fall AAMD&C conference, reiterated the M.D.'s concerns.

The M.D.'s financial position is still very strong. Assessments continue to grow, in terms of property value, and a healthy residential/non-residential tax base helps to keep the overall tax situation very

favourable. The M.D. will have close to five million dollars in capital and operating reserves (combined), going into Year 2008; with increased grant dollars coming from the Provincial government (the Alberta Municipal Infrastructure Program and the Municipal Sustainability Initiative being the two key recent grants established), our municipality should be in good shape, when considering any new projects in the upcoming years.

There were sixteen Council meetings this year (twelve regular, three special, and one organizational meeting) and six public hearings (one of which, for the Horseshoe Lands Area Structure Plan, was conducted over three afternoon/evenings). A total of eighteen bylaws were considered before year end: six were Land Use Bylaw amendments, one Area Structure Plan and one ASP amendment (of a minor nature), two were local improvements, three were election-related, and five were miscellaneous in nature. The regular workload of Board/Committee/Commission meetings also took up a lot of your elected officials' time, as did attendance at a number of conferences, conventions, and special sessions.

Towards the end of the year, all five Councillors were elected back into office by acclamation, as no challengers came forward at election time. Paul Adams, Dene Cooper, Maria Dunki, Hugh Pepper, and Paul Ryan will serve as your Council for the next three years, and will be busy working on strategic plans and long-range goals, on your behalf, throughout their term of office.

On behalf of M.D. Council and staff, best wishes for a safe and happy festive season.

May 31st House Fire – We Need Your Help.

On May 31st, a house on Richards Road, near the Ghost River, was destroyed by fire, in a suspected case of arson.

The M.D. and Cochrane RCMP are seeking information, from any sources, on this fire: if you have any knowledge of this fire, or know anyone who may be involved with this situation, please contact Cochrane RCMP at 932-2213.

Thank you for your assistance

Council Briefs

What follows are some of the highlights of Council actions since the last newsletter published in September 2007

A managerial delegation from the Lafarge Exshaw cement plant met with Council, regarding the proposed Exshaw Plant Renewal Application and Expansion Project. It was indicated that, over the next decade, Lafarge will be upgrading their operations, completing about \$200 million in improvements, to provide extra production and plant modernization. Council also received a delegation from the 2007 Bow Valley Weed Survey and Control Program: Andrew Stiles advised on the 2007 weed survey and control work done in the Bow Valley, outlining that there is considerable more work to be done in the upcoming year, and stressing that education is imperative, with respect to weed control. On a related note, Council directed Administration to bring forward a proposal for an M.D.-wide weed education program, for consideration in the 2008 budget.

It was noted that Infrastructure and Transportation has completed substantial work on upgrading Highway 40, north of Highway 1A: Council forwarded a letter to the Provincial officials involved, commending Infrastructure and Transportation on all their efforts with this project, and indicating that the MD looks forward to similar action being taken on Highway 68.

Council gave final readings to two very important Area Structure Plan documents: one for the Horseshoe Lands project, involving the old Transalta lands at Seebe, and one for the Carraig Ridge project, just off Highway 1A near the Summer Village of Ghost (bylaws to amend the Municipal Development Plan and the Land Use Bylaw, relating to the Carraig Ridge proposal, were also passed by Council). Both developments, as previously noted in earlier M.D. newsletters, are unique in planning scope, in the Province. On a related note, Council also authorized the application to the 2007 Municipal Sponsorship program for funding to purchase a licence for Infracycle On-Line, a computer program that provides detailed analysis of fiscal sustainability information on proposed developments. It was felt that the program would provide worth-while information to assist in the planning of these, and other developments: the involved developers will also contribute towards the computer program's cost.

In anticipation of the municipal elections that didn't materialize (all Councillors went unchallenged on Nomination Day, thus being elected by acclamation), Council passed a bylaw to establish more than one voting station per ward, when necessary: two stations would have been necessary, for example, in Ward Four, the North Ranchlands region, given the significant area covered by this ward.

With the Provincial Government creating the Municipal Sustainability Initiative program, which will provide a significant new source of grant dollars for municipalities, Council wrote an early letter to the Premier, indicating how the M.D. felt the dollars should be allocated; then followed up with a letter (once the allocation decisions had been made) thanking the Premier for establishing the program and settling upon a funding formula that, while not meeting all of the M.D.'s requests, provided a favourable approach to Alberta municipalities in general.

Council agreed to the Bow Valley Waste Management Commission's twenty year payment purchase plan for the purchase of the Francis Cooke Landfill, with annual payments (to the M.D.) of \$95,125.00 to commence in Year 2007. In prior years, the payment plan was based on the tonnages of waste tipped: the repayment was being dragged out, beyond the anticipated life-span of the Landfill. With the Commission now on solid financial ground, after its initial start-up years, an agreement on a set repayment plan seemed appropriate.

Municipalities had been asked, by the Province to comment on proposed amendments to the Well Drilling Equipment Tax Rate regulation: this regulation provides for a one-time payment to affected municipalities, when well-drilling occurs in the jurisdiction. The M.D. comments were that the proposed new rates should be phased in over two years (not three, as suggested by the Province); that the rates should be higher, given that they were last reviewed/changed thirty years ago; and that the regulation and associated rates should be reviewed on a more frequent basis.

Council Briefs Cont'd

Council approve the recommended upgrades to two playgrounds in Exshaw and the expenditure of approximately \$20,000 from Municipal Recreation Reserve to complete the necessary work; and provided a grant of \$800 to repair and paint the Harvie Heights Community Hall and shed.

Council endorsed the Biosolid Alkaline (LKD) Stabilization pilot project, with incidental costs for the provision of site containment fencing, leach protection liner, laboratory costs and other misc. items for a cost not to exceed \$10,000.00. The pilot project will test the feasibility of using lime from the Graymont Western plant at Exshaw, to treat sludge recovered from M.D. lagoons, in an effort to produce a safe, inert product that can be eventually be used as a fertilizer/compost. Lime would chemically generate high temperatures in the sludge, thus killing off any pathogens in the raw material.

A third effort at finding a deep potable water source in Dead Man's Flats will go ahead, with a better level of certainty to it: Camfield Drilling has been given a \$165,000 contract to drill a well for a deep water source, and will only be paid if the driller finds a water source that will meet the M.D.'s needs and the Province's standards.

The old Benchlands Fire Hall will be demolished and hauled away by J.C Sykes Excavating of Banff: the demolition will also involve some site separation of recyclable materials, by contracted staff.

Council gave all three readings to Bylaw 17-z/07, a Land Use Bylaw amendment for the Shell Oil Burnt Timber gas plant, to allow construction of a small administrative building addition. This bylaw was unusual for the M.D., because a public hearing was not held: it was pointed out that the gas plant was approved by the Energy and Utilities Board, and under the Municipal Government Act, such approvals over-ride local planning bylaws.

The M.D. will be provided a surveyed, dedicated road allowance across a quarter section in the West Jumpingpound region, to be tied into a possible future road network: the land comes about as a condition of granting a second parcel out subdivision, as requested by the quarter section's property owner. Council also agreed to refund 50% of the total application fees paid

by the land-owner (for subdivision and land use bylaw amendment), upon conclusion of the subdivision/dedication process.

With the approval of the Horseshoe Lands Area Structure Plan, Council has contemplated that the next steps in the planning process will involve the "concept plan" review: for each phase of development, the developer would submit further detailed plans on how the phase is envisioned to be developed, prior to moving to the land use bylaw and subdivision stages. It was agreed that Council would be the approving body for concept plans (as opposed to the Municipal Planning Commission being the approving body); the concept plans would be circulated to designated agencies and adjoining property owners; Council could hold public hearings, if felt necessary; and finally that approval would come via resolution, not bylaw. A policy and fees were established for all future concept plans, to set out how plans will be handled, and what cost will be charged for their review.

The first referral from the Ghost Stewardship Monitoring Group (GSMG) was received by Council: the GSMG has prepared a set of draft trails criteria, for the development and classification of trails in the Ghost Waiparous Forest Land Use Zone area, and the M.D. was asked to comment on these. Council suggested a number of amendments, and sent these on to the GSMG.

The M.D. has agreed to participate in the proposed Upper Bow Basin Cumulative Effects Study, initiated through the Bow River Basin Council, and to provide \$2,500.00 towards the project, on the condition that the other partners (other municipalities, special interest groups, provincial departments, and others) in the Study contribute on an equitable basis.

Authorization was given to purchase up to \$300.00 for "Support our Troops" decals to be placed on all Municipal vehicles.

Council gave first reading to Bylaw 14-07, the the Private Sewage Disposal Systems Inspection Bylaw, and requested Administration provide notice of this bylaw, to affected parties in the applicable hamlets (Benchlands, Harvie Heights, and Lac des arcs), requesting comments before consideration of further readings. The M.D. is

Council Briefs Cont'd

trying to establish a program of maintenance for private sewage systems, requiring landowners with such systems to provide proof, on a regular basis, that their system has been inspected/serviced.

Council submitted a response to the Alberta Water Council workbook "Talking with Albertans About a New Wetlands Policy and Implementation Plan": some of the comments addressed concerns respecting wetlands on private properties, seeking greater protection for these, while not inconveniencing the affected property owners.

Policy H-12, the Employee Health & Wellness Account policy was approved by Council: this Policy provides for the reimbursement of certain health/wellness related expenses for M.D. employees, and is in keeping with accepted employee benefits' practices in both the public and private sectors.

(Please note that unadopted Council minutes, in their entirety, are usually posted on the M.D. web-site within a week of the Council meeting being held. Go to www.mdbighorn.ca/, and click on "Minutes" under Virtual Bighorn on the right hand side of the page.

Keep Emergency Directions Handy

In a case of emergency, could you clearly tell emergency personnel how to get to your residence? Could a guest in your home describe the best route to your rural location?

If you live in a rural location it is recommended that you keep clear and precise directions along with your rural identification number (the number is your 911 sign) in a handy location near your phone to assist emergency personnel in getting to you quickly. Remember, minutes can make the difference – be prepared.

Electronic Utility and Tax Payments

The MD of Bighorn is pleased to offer more ways to pay your utilities and taxes. Effective October 1, 2007, telephone and on-line banking payments are now available. If your financial institution is the: Royal Bank, Bank of Montreal, Credit Union or CIBC, you can make a tax or utility payment through electronic banking.

For tax payments, the description listed in the payee section will be MD Bighorn Tax or Bighorn Tax. For utility payments, the payee description will be MD Bighorn Util or Bighorn Utilities. Please ensure you are using the correct payee or payments will be applied to the wrong account.

You will need to have your invoice or statement in front of you for the account number information. For utility accounts, please do not enter the dash or any spaces. If you are having problems setting up the payment, it is best to call your bank for assistance.

Please remember to allow at least two (2) business days for your payment to reach us. While they are electronic, they are not automatic and payments made in the evening or on the weekend are not always processed that day. If you are paying the last day of the month, your account may be subject to penalties.

Pre-Authorized Payments: Still An Option

Avoid penalty charges on your account by joining the pre-authorized payment plan for property taxes or sewer bills. This easy step will allow you to keep your accounts in good standing, without having to leave your home, and will save you money on bank charges and mailing costs.

Simplify your life - call the M.D. office for more information.

Visa/Master/Debit Cards

In order to better serve you and provide the convenience of "using plastic", the M.D. accepts Visa/ Master/Debit Cards for payment of certain goods and services. Payments on tax and utility accounts will be available through Debit transactions at the office. Please note that credit cards will not be accepted for payment of taxes, utilities and permits (subdivision, building, etc.)

Penalty charges on outstanding Property Taxes

A Nine percent (9%) late payment penalty charge was applied to the outstanding current levy in July; and another nine percent (9%) late payment penalty charge will be applied to total property taxes outstanding on January 1, 2008. A reminder was sent in September to any property owner with outstanding property taxes.

2008 Dog Licenses

Licenses for dogs 6 months of age and older are required in the following areas of the MD: Dead Man's Flats, Exshaw, Harvie Heights, and Lac des Arcs. Dogs that are used as guide dogs are exempt for this licensing requirement. Licenses can be purchased at the Administration office; fees are the same as last year. Please note, if you have 4 or more dogs, a kennel license is required; contact our Planning department for more information.

Mail-in Dog License Request Form

Male or Female _____

Neutered or Spayed \$20.00 Not Fixed \$100

Proof that a dog is neutered or spayed must be provided the first time a dog is licensed.

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

NAME OF DOG _____ BREED OF DOG _____

PROOF OF SPAY OR NEUTER ENCLOSED? (Only required if first time registering for a license in Bighorn)

Transportation Assistance Program

The MD of Bighorn has a transportation program in place to assist residents who might need occasional or temporary assistance with transportation either into Canmore via taxi for Bow Valley residents or into Calgary for residents in the rural areas of the municipality. Here is some information on this program:

This transportation program is for M.D. of Bighorn residents who

- Are over the age of 65
- Have disabilities and have no or very limited access to transportation.

The program will help to pay for the transportation costs of eligible MD residents who have an annual income below \$25,000 for a single person and \$40,000 for two people.

Eligible participants can receive reimbursement to a maximum of \$20 per taxi trip or .35 cents per kilometre to a maximum of \$20 per trip. Participants will be required to submit a monthly expense form for reimbursement. There is a reimbursement limit of 5 one-way trips per month, or an equivalent in mileage claims, for each resident enrolled in the program. All types of trips are eligible; medical, shopping, and social trips all qualify.

Enquiries about this program can be made by phoning the M.D. of Bighorn's Community Services Department (phone 673-3611 or Calgary direct 233-7678, ask for Emily).

There is also an inter-municipal program between Canmore and Banff on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Bighorn seniors or low-income residents are welcome to take advantage of this program. For details on how to access the bus and schedules, please give Mavis or Val a call at the Town of Canmore FCSS – 678-7129

Snow Removal

As the white stuff starts to stick to the ground, our contractors are in place and ready to respond: Leo Brown Contracting for the South Ranchlands, Jimcon Contracting for the North Ranchlands and Volker Stevin in the Bow Valley. In accordance with Bylaw 08-00, you must not block or obstruct any roads: please park in designated spots and away from driving lanes to allow for effective snow removal. Your assistance in this matter is much appreciated and will make travel better for everyone. Should you need additional information in this matter please feel free to contact the Operations department or Bylaw Enforcement Services.

Community Program Round-up

Exercise Classes

Exshaw

Fitness Demo Night - FREE.

Join us on Wednesday December 5th from 7-8pm at the Exshaw Community Hall and try out 3 different programs: Yogalities (yoga/pilates combo), Latin Cardio and Kickboxing Boot Camp. We want to start a regular class in February and need to get your input on what you'd like to have. There is no charge for this demo-class. Bring a mat, water bottle and towel. Mats will be available if you don't have one.

Beaupre

Calling all women over 40! Please join me every Wednesday morning from 9:30am to 10:30 am starting nov.7/07 at the Beaupre Hall for an hour of dance exercise, coffee and friendly conversation. Call cindy@403-932-2605 to join in the fun!

Parent Link

Exshaw

This centre will be closed on December 27th only. The Canmore site will be closed December 23rd - January 3rd.

Beaupre

This centre will be closed on December 20 and January 3rd and will reopen on January 17th Alternative, Cochrane Parent Link, phone 851-2250 for details.



How to Contact Us

Reeve

Dene Cooper..... 673-3968

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Maria Dunki..... 932-6863

Councillors

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Paul Adams..... 673-3512

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