

# NEWS letter



M.D. of Bighorn

Issue 24, March 2010

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## Property Assessment Notices

In the past few years the MD has sent combined Assessment and Tax Notices in May each year. That will be changing this year. Effective with the 2010 taxation year, the Province has changed how Property Assessment Appeals are handled and due to these changes, the MD finds it necessary to send separate Assessment and Tax Notices.

What does this mean for you?

1. Assessment Notices for 2010 will be mailed early in March, followed by Tax Notices toward the end of May. If you have not received an Assessment Notice by March 23, 2010, please contact our office and we would be pleased to send you another copy.
2. Property taxes will continue to be due on the last business day of June, with the 2010 deadline being June 30, 2010.
3. You will now have 60 days (up from 30 days) from the date the notices are mailed to file a complaint, forms for which will be available on our website, picked up at our offices, or mailed to you upon request.
4. The 60 day appeal period begins on the date the notices are originally mailed. An advertisement that assessment notices have been sent is placed in three local newspapers, which constitutes mailing, whether the owner actually receives the notice or not. We make every effort to ensure notices are sent to all property owners to the addresses we have on file for them, but sometimes addresses are incorrect or there may be mailing delays that occur once the notices leave our office. Any such delays do not impact the appeal deadline.
5. The Province of Alberta has set a maximum Assessment Complaint Fee that can be charged for Assessment Complaints, which are increases from those set by Council previously. The fees are now \$50.00 for each residential/farmland appeal and \$650 for each commercial/industrial assessment appeal. If your appeal is successful, these fees will continue to be refunded to you.
6. The MD continues to encourage you to contact the Assessor to discuss any concerns you have with your assessment before filing a formal complaint. The assessor's contact information can be obtained by calling our office.

Included with your Assessment Notice will be a four page Information Sheet prepared by the Province, which will include detailed information on determining if your property assessment is fair and accurate. We encourage you to read this information and to contact us or the Province if you have any questions.

# Council Briefs

*What follows are some of the highlights of Council actions since the last newsletter published in December 2009*

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Council received two delegations over the past three months, both from provincial government departments/agencies: Esther Johnson and Susan MacDonald, both advisors from the Energy Resources Conservation Board (ERCB) discussed the Board's roles and responsibilities in the community, while Alberta Environment's regional director Jay Litke and regional compliance manager Martin Foye discussed a number of issues ongoing in the MD, including biosolids, riverbank erosion, and the old nuisance grounds in Dead Man's Flats. Council also took the opportunity to thank Alberta Environment for their support with CRAZ, the Exshaw water system and Alberta Environment's handling of the permit issuing to Lafarge and Graymont.

Council gave final readings to Bylaw 03-09, the new Streets and Roads Bylaw, an M.D.-wide bylaw regarding traffic control, the use of public thoroughfares, parking, and other such matters; in a subsequent decision, however, Council agreed to exclude the Hamlet of Exshaw from the enforcement of certain provisions of Bylaw 03/08, until such time as decided otherwise by Council, in order to facilitate the installation of the water project. It was recognized that the ten month water project construction would lead to disruption of normal parking and traffic activities in the hamlet, and Council wanted to show some leniency, given the pending situation.

The firm of BDO Dunwoody LLP was appointed as the M.D.'s new auditors for the accounting years 2009, 2010 and 2011. A proposal call had been issued earlier this year, with Dunwoody being selected as the firm of choice. BDO Dunwoody has a number of municipal clients, and is very familiar with municipal accounting/auditing.

Council submitted a letter to the Minister of Municipal Affairs, regarding the Alberta Safety Codes Act review, which outlined Council's request for amendments to the Act. Section 66 in particular was noted as needing amendment ("A bylaw of a municipality that purports to regulate a matter that is regulated by this Act is inoperative."), as it had prevented the final passage of the M.D.'s proposed Harvie Heights Private Sewage Disposal Systems Maintenance Bylaw. Council also submitted comments on the draft Banff National Park Management Plan, as circulated by Parks Canada.

As a result of a request from the owners of the units in Dead Man's Flats' Copperstone Resort complex, Council authorized Administration to discuss, with the Town of Canmore, the issue of the supply of (trucked) potable water. As a result of their development permit, Copperstone had been purchasing and trucking bulked water from the Town, under a two year agreement; however the agreement had run out, and the Town indicated, to the Copperstone owners, that it would not renew the arrangement, forcing those

owners to purchase their water from more costly sources.

Council provided a \$1,000.00 donation for general operating purposes, to the Bow River Basin Council for the calendar year 2010. This is the first year that the BRBC has requested funds directly from its members.

Based on the recommendation of the Heritage Resources Committee, Council directed Administration to work with the affected landowner on exploring options and opportunities for preserving the ruins of the Grier House for future interpretive purposes. The partial foundations and fire-place/chimney are all that are left from this early 1900's house, and as a result of Highway 1A widening/realignment, the ruins may be in jeopardy. The landowner has indicated a willingness to work with the M.D. in finding ways to preserve the remains of the Grier House.

The Heritage Resources Committee also recommended that Council award the M.D.'s heritage inventory contract to Heritage Collaborative Inc. The inventory is a more detailed, site-specific project, which follows up on the recently-completed heritage survey. The inventory will cost \$40,000, which will be split between the Province and the M.D.

Council agreed to the Agricultural Services and Environmental Advisory Board's recommendation that a letter of support be provided to the *Council Briefs cont'd page 3*

*Council Brief Cont'd*  
Jumpingpound Creek Watershed Partnership, for their application for Environment Canada EcoAction grant funding, to draft the Water Management Plan for the Creek.

Resulting from the Province's changes to the assessment regulations, the M.D. will be issuing separate property assessment and tax notices this year. In prior years, the M.D. was able to issue a joint assessment/taxation notice (thus saving paper, postage and time); however, given new specified timelines for assessment appeal filing, separate notice must now be provided.

Council approved an updated Playground and Trail Policy, and also the Trail Development Management Guidelines.

The purchase of two new vehicles was approved: a new ¾ Ton truck for the Road Foreman, as an extraordinary expenditure in 2009, and a replacement vehicle (Chevrolet Suburban) for the 2003 mini-van. Authorization was also given to dispose of an older 2002 GMC truck, due to the potential high costs of repairs. Funds for the purchase will come from the Vehicle & Equipment Reserve fund: the purchases were done at year end, in order to take advantage of both vehicle availability and year-end savings.

Elsewhere on the bylaw front, Council requested that Bylaw 04/09, the proposed Area Structure Plan (ASP) for the Bar C Guest Ranch be brought back at the

March Council meeting with recommendations discussed; Council also agreed to table any decision on draft Bylaw 05-Z/09, a bylaw to amend the Land Use Bylaw with respect to the Bar C, until final decisions are made on the ASP. Finally, Council gave all three readings to Bylaw 01/10, a bylaw allowing nomination papers to be received between 8:00 a.m. and 12 noon on nomination day (September 20<sup>th</sup>, 2010). Normal nomination hours are from 10:00 a.m. to noon, however M.D. Council recognizes that some potential candidates may have a long way to travel, to file their nomination papers.

A Project Liaison will be engaged for the Exshaw Water System construction project. The position will basically serve as a "go-between", working with both the project proponents (the M.D., the engineers, the contractors) and the Exshaw ratepayers, during the period from February 2010 to no later than November 30<sup>th</sup>, 2010. The contracted position will be filled by selection, rather than an open competition.

Utility rates' increases (water and sewer charges) for affected hamlets were approved, effective March 1<sup>st</sup>, 2010: water and sewer rates for Harvie Heights' commercial sector, Dead Man's Flats and Exshaw sewer rates will all be adjusted to reflect

operating cost increases.

Over the past many years, Shell's Burnt Timber gas plant has maintained the Burnt Timber Road, under an arrangement/contract with the M.D.: Shell has now indicated its desire for the M.D. to take over the maintenance, starting in the fall/winter of 2010. Council authorized Administration to extend the current snow removal contract with Shell, for Burnt Timber Road, for the remainder of the first five months of 2010; thereafter Administration will issue a proposal call for a new for a snow maintenance contract for the Road.

Recognizing a need to plan for the future, Council accepted the 18 Dec 09 proposal from Marshall Tittlemore Architects to complete a future M.D. Administration/Operations building(s) needs assessment, as the first step towards new facilities for municipal service delivery. The M.D. facilities will need replacement in future years, as the M.D. grows, and the needs assessment will give an initial indication of land requirements, and general building sizes.

*(Please note that unadopted Council minutes, in their entirety, are usually posted on the M.D. website within a week of the Council meeting being held. Go to [www.mdbighorn.ca/](http://www.mdbighorn.ca/), and click on "Minutes" under Virtual Bighorn ..*

## **EXSHAW WATER SYSTEM CONSTRUCTION INFORMATION**

The MD intends to make communication about the water system in Exshaw a high priority. Council has asked that a person be hired to ensure this communication, and in the meantime there are several sources you can use for project updates:

- the MD's website ([www.mdbighorn.ca](http://www.mdbighorn.ca))
- the bulletin board located south of the Exshaw post office
- the front counter at the office, where a special binder with updates is maintained
- project manager Greg Birch (ph: 403-673-3611)

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## FINANCIAL MATTERS

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### Municipal (Financial) Reserves: What Are They Intended For?

The M.D. of Bighorn, like most Alberta municipalities, engages in the prudent practice of setting up financial reserve accounts, for various purposes. As of year-end 2009, the M.D.'s total financial reserves amounted to \$7.1 million.

Ratepayers may not completely understand the purpose of reserves, and the intentions behind putting money away. Reserves are generally earmarked for a number of anticipated future costs: the M.D.'s Reserves policy recognizes the need to put dollars away for building upgrades, engineered structures (dyke repairs, lift station pumps, etc.), vehicle/equipment replacement, road upgrades, etc. The M.D. is required to maintain an operating reserve account of approximately \$1.2 million, should something catastrophic happen, on the financial front, but this amount is outside of the \$5.4 million in capital reserves.

Currently, there are a total of twenty-five dedicated reserve accounts: not included in the dedicated reserves are the general operating reserves account (a statutory requirement for all municipalities to have, in case of financial problems) and the Taxation Rate Stabilization account (which was set up with the proceeds from the Telenet affair, and is further funded by the well-drilling tax, which itself is dependent on oil/gas wells being drilled in the M.D.).

The other factor, with respect to the reserve accounts' balance, is that the vast majority of the current reserves actually came, not from property taxes, but from land sales by the M.D. (approximately \$4,000,000 in sales over the past five years), and from off-site levies, cash-in-lieu of municipal reserve land dedication, hosting fees and other non-tax sources. The M.D. does budget annually for regular reserve contributions from tax revenues (in 2010 the budgeted contribution totals \$530,500 into four standing reserve accounts: Vehicle & Equipment, Buildings, Engineered Structures, and Roads), in a fashion similar to a depreciation fund.

The reserves have one thing in common (with the exception of the Taxation Rate Stabilization reserve): these are dollars to be used on capital expenses, not operating costs. Given that the M.D. Council has approved a five-year capital plan outlining some \$40+ million in expenditures over the next five years, it is appropriate to maintain the reserves in healthy state to assist in covering those anticipated future capital expenditures.

If you have questions about the M.D.'s financial reserves, please call the M.D. office.

**See our special insert for news on our 2010 budget and a graphic breakdown of our financial situation.**

### Looking for Photographers for Special Events

Bighorn's Heritage Resources Committee would like to have photographs taken of important events that, on occasion, take place around the MD. A good example of such an event would be the opening of the Ghost Firehall back in 2006 or the up-coming ground breaking for the Exshaw Water System. Having photographs on record of history-making events will be a great resource in the future for MD residents.

If you are an experienced photographer, have a digital camera capable of taking pictures in RAW mode and would like to volunteer, we want to hear from you. Please contact Ulrika Gillespie at the office or by email at [ulrika.gillespie@mdbighorn.ca](mailto:ulrika.gillespie@mdbighorn.ca)

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## Olympic Torch Relay

The sun shone, the winds were light, the temperature hovered at zero and the MD of Bighorn turned out to celebrate a historic moment in a way that only a small community can.

With hundreds of people lining the route on day 83 of the Olympic Torch Relay, January 20, 2010 became a day to remember as four different torchbearers carried the Olympic Flame through the Hamlet of Exshaw.

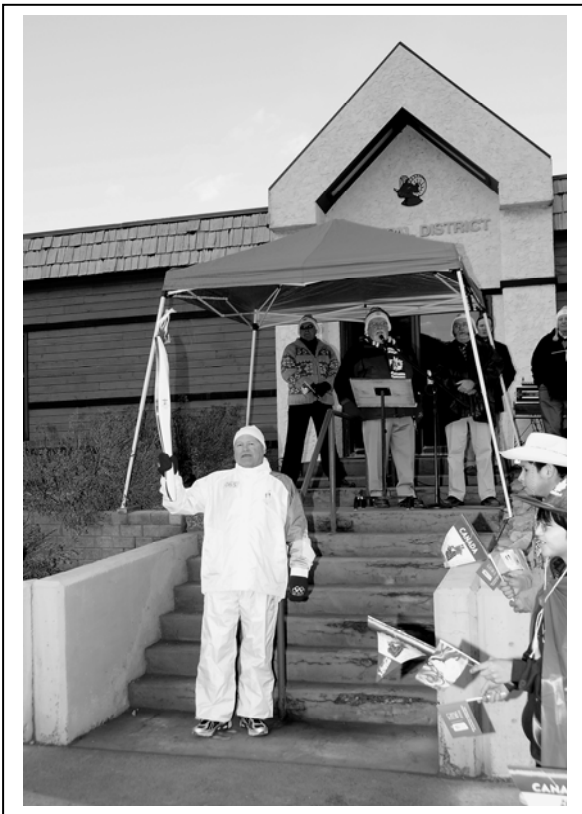
The final torchbearer arrived at our municipal office to a rousing rendition of O Canada.

Here is just a brief excerpt from Reeve Dene Cooper's Welcome:

*"Today we welcome Canada – and the world in the best of the Olympic Spirit and Canadian pride. Indeed, this is Canada's third games; the first in 1976 in Montreal (summer games), the second in 1988 in Calgary, and the third in Vancouver in 2010. The 21<sup>st</sup> Winter Games motto is "With Glowing Hearts." Across the Bow Valley is Heart Mountain. As a local symbol, Heart Mountain signifies to all that come this way that there is one heart; one Municipal District, one Bow Valley, and today one Olympic Winter Games. In that unity of mind, body and spirit, we join all of Canada and the World in celebrating the best of athletic endeavours and ideals.*



*The Municipal District of Bighorn is proud to be one of the over 1030 Canadian communities to host the Vancouver 2010 Olympic Torch Relay presented by Coca-Cola and RBC and supported by the Government of Canada. I note the Torch will travel for 106 days, travel 45,000 kms and be carried by 12,000 Canadians".*



Our thanks go out to the many, many people involved in making this happen. Local industry was on board giving staff time to attend and planning their business activities around the event. The Exshaw School was out in full force sporting red and white capes, all the Bighorn staff and Council stepped up to organize, prepare and volunteer for the event. Rafter Six Ranch for pulling together 4 horses and riders at the last minute and giving the event a distinctive western feel. It was great to see so many Bighorn community members from all over MD in attendance.

Bighorn has compiled many, many photos of the day and put a link on our website where you can find the album. Please feel free to download and print any you like.

**[www.mdbighorn.ca](http://www.mdbighorn.ca)**

If you have any to share, please email them to [bighorn@mdbighorn.ca](mailto:bighorn@mdbighorn.ca)

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## October 18, 2010 Municipal Elections: Are You Ready to Run?

Municipal Elections will be held on October 18, 2010. If you are considering running, here are some important things you should consider before you file nomination papers.

Are you qualified?

To become a candidate you must be at least 18 years of age on nomination day, a Canadian citizen and, except in summer villages, you must have been a resident of the municipality for the six consecutive months preceding nomination day.

Are you eligible to be nominated?

You would not be eligible to become a candidate under any of the following circumstances:

- If you are the auditor of the municipality.
- If you are an employee of the M.D. of Bighorn, unless granted a leave of absence.
- If your property taxes are more than \$50.00 in arrears or you are in default, for more than 90 days, or any other debt in excess of \$500.00 to the municipality.
- If you are a judge, senator, or member of the legislative assembly, you must resign that position before you take office as a member of council.

### Dates to Remember

**Nomination Day: September 20, 2010**

**Election Day: October 18<sup>th</sup>, 2010**

Do you have the time?

The demands on your time will be heavy: the amount of time a Councillor spends, on municipal business, averages a minimum of twenty hours a week. As a Municipal Councillor, you will be required to attend both daytime and evening meetings. You will be elected for a three year term of office and during that time you will be required to attend:

- Regular meetings of council.
- Meetings of other boards and agencies to which you were appointed as council's representative.
- Conferences, conventions, seminars and workshops for training and discussion.
- Social and other events promoting your municipality.

You will also need to spend time reading material and talking with residents, the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO), and others. This will all be part of the necessary preparation for meetings so that you can make informed decisions. Don't forget the time you need for your personal life, work, etc.

Do you understand the position?

As a member of Council you will have the opportunity to significantly influence the future of your community. Your power as a member of Council depends on your ability to persuade the other members of Council to adopt your view. All decisions must be made at meetings, held in public, at which a quorum is present.

Do you understand the powers of Municipal Council?

The Canadian constitution delegates responsibility for municipal institutions to the provinces. Through a variety of Legislation, the Alberta Legislative Assembly had delegated some of its authority to Municipal Councils. The act you will use most often is the Municipal Government Act.

The MD of Bighorn is made up of four wards. They include:  
Ward 1: comprised of the Hamlet of Exshaw,

Kananaskis and Seebe settlements, and lands in townships 25-26 Range 9 to the north of Exshaw.  
Ward 2: comprised of the hamlets of Dead Man's Flats, Lac Des Arc, and Harvie Heights; lands around the Trans-Canada Highway between those hamlets; Rafter Six Guest Ranch; and M.D. lands in Range 10.

Ward 3: comprised of the West Jumpingpound region south of the Trans Canada Highway and west of Highway 68; and the M.D. lands in between the Bow and Ghost Rivers.

Ward 4: consists of the hamlet of Benchlands and all M.D. Lands north of the Ghost River, found in Townships 27-31; and a small portion of lands in Township 26 Range 7.

Watch for information updates at [www.mdbighorn.ca](http://www.mdbighorn.ca) as the election draws nearer.

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## 2010 Spring/Fall Clean-up

### Rules For 2009 Spring And Fall Clean-Ups And Landfill Hours

1. Only brush will be picked up.
2. MATERIAL THAT IS IN BAGS WILL NOT BE PICKED UP. PLEASE USE COMPOST FACILITIES FOR LEAVES AND GRASS.
3. Other Materials will not be picked up and remain the responsibility of the resident to take to the appropriate recycling, or landfill site. Household garbage goes in the normal waste stream to Calgary.
4. No materials may be place on roadsides after midnight on Sunday.
5. There is a limit of one load per household. A truckload is considered to be 8'×7'×4'.
6. Material for pick-up should be no longer that 8 feet in length and neatly stacked alongside the roadway in a manner, which does not impair traffic or become a safety concern. Branches and bushes stacked with all the trunks parallel will be easier to pick-up with our Skid Steer. ANY BRUSH LONGER THAN 8 FEET WILL NOT BE PICKED UP.
7. There is no charge for this service.

<b>LOCATION</b>	<b>CLEANUP WEEKEND</b>	<b>PICK-UP DATES</b>
Benchlands	May 22 & 23 September 18 & 19	May 25 September 20
Harvie Heights	May 29 & May 30 September 4 & 5	May 31 September 7
Lac Des Arcs	June 5 & 6 September 11 & 12	June 7 September 13
Exshaw	June 12 & 13 September 25 & 26	June 14 September 27
Dead Man's Flats/ Kananaskis Settlement	June 19 & 20 October 2 & 3	June 21 October 4

### **FRANCIS COOKE REGIONAL LANDFILL**

#### HOURS OF OPERATION

Monday through Saturday

8:00am to 4:00pm

For more information call 673-2708.

## Update of Land Use Bylaw Review

A comprehensive review of the MD of Bighorn's Land Use Bylaw – the document that regulates the use and development of buildings and land within the municipality – is nearing completion. Planning staff would like to extend a sincere thank you to all those who attended and provided comments to staff at the six public open houses which were held between February 1 and 10, 2010.

The comments received at the public open houses will be considered by staff and the bylaw review Steering Committee (the MD of Bighorn's Municipal Planning Commission) and changes may be made to the draft Land Use Bylaw. A revised version of the draft Land Use Bylaw will then be presented to Council for the first of three readings, and dates and times for formal public hearings will be chosen. The public will once again be invited to provide further comments on the revised draft bylaw to Council at one of the public hearings. The public hearings are likely to be held at three different locations during this spring. Council may then request changes to the revised draft bylaw prior to the bylaw receiving second and third reading.

Please direct any questions comments, or concerns regarding the Land Use Bylaw or the review process to Tracy Woitenko, Community Planner for the MD of Bighorn at (403) 673-3611 or Calgary direct at (403) 233-7678, or by e-mail at [tracy.woitenko@mdbighorn.ca](mailto:tracy.woitenko@mdbighorn.ca).

## New Streets and Roads Bylaw - Anti-Idling Provisions

In September 2008, public notice was given that the MD of Bighorn intended on passing a new Streets and Roads Bylaw. In November, the bylaw received third reading and came into effect. One new provision pertains to idling vehicles.

During the period of May 15<sup>th</sup> – October 15<sup>th</sup> in every year, no operator of a Commercial Vehicle shall stop or park or leave his Vehicle at a standstill with the engine running or idling for longer than five (5) minutes, anywhere within a Hamlet in the M.D.

The provisions of this bylaw pertaining to stopping or parking of vehicles and the restriction of idling vehicles does not apply to any of the following vehicles while being used in work requiring that the vehicle be stopped or parked and idling:

- (i) Emergency vehicles;
- (ii) Public Utility vehicles, including utilities such as telephone systems, electrical systems, natural gas systems, and cable-vision systems.
- (iii) Municipal and other government public works vehicles;
- (iv) Towing service vehicles.

The provisions of this bylaw pertaining to the restriction of idling vehicles does not apply to a refrigeration vehicle that, while in use, complies with the stopping and parking requirements of this Bylaw.

## How to Contact Us

### Reeve

Dene Cooper ..... 673-3968

### Deputy Reeve

Maria Dunki ..... 932-6863

### Councillors

Hugh Pepper ..... 932-3700

Paul Ryan ..... 673-2287

Paul Adams..... 673-3512

### Bighorn Office – Exshaw

Local ..... 673-3611

Calgary Direct ..... 233-7678

Fax ..... (403) 673-3895

Email ..... [bighorn@mdbighorn.ca](mailto:bighorn@mdbighorn.ca)

Website ..... [www.mdbighorn.ca](http://www.mdbighorn.ca)

### Mailing Address:

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