



Highlands News

May 2007

The Official Newsletter of the District of Highlands Council
RURAL LIFE NATURAL BEAUTY STRONG COMMUNITY

A message from Mayor Mark Cardinal

Sandi Chesley, our Deputy Clerk, is leaving Highlands for New Brunswick at the end of May. Sandi is one of our stalwarts—a person who is always ready to help, to sort things out, and to laugh at a joke. With all the changes in staff at the municipal office in the last few years, Sandi has been the rock solid mainstay for us all. She is a repository of information about the Highlands and all the various permutations and combinations of bylaws, developments, and subdivisions. It will be hard to replace her, and I and all Councillors, present and past, thank her most sincerely for her work and her contributions, often above and beyond the call of duty. Have a wonderful new life on the East Coast of Canada, Sandi. We will miss you greatly!

Sandi’s last day will be May 18th. Feel free to send her messages at the District office until then. The District is advertising for Sandi’s replacement as we speak and we will update you when a new hire is made.

OCP Review

Council has brought the latest draft of the Official Community Plan (OCP) for the District of Highlands to a Public Hearing stage. Public Hearing follows 1st and 2nd reading and precedes 3rd and 4th reading or adoption.

the use of other regulatory measures that can be used by the municipality, such as development permit areas or heritage designations to name a few. (DOH OCP, March 2007).

The DOH OCP has been a work in progress for over 5 years now. The OCP is one of the most important documents in a community. It sets out community objectives and broad statements of policy to guide council’s decisions about land use, zoning, development, and servicing. The OCP provides residents and prospective investors with a framework for making their own decisions. It is also a legal vehicle for setting out

Approximately 60 people attended the Public Hearing on April 23rd, 2007 to provide comments about the current draft of the OCP. Council is not at liberty to receive any additional information about the OCP once the Public Hearing has been held. However, it is anticipated that the OCP will be on an upcoming Council agenda in May for further discussion and consideration of 3rd Reading. Please watch our District website for more details.

Highlands News available on email

If you would like an electronic copy of the *Highlands News*, Official Newsletter of the District of Highlands Council, please email Sandi Chesley at the Municipal Hall at schesley@highlands.ca.

Contacts

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Councillor Joe Kadar	Ph. 391-1409	kadardev@shaw.ca	Fire Chief Barry Ford	Ph. 479-5741	b.v.ford@shaw.ca

2007 Property Tax Notices

Your 2007 Property Tax Notice will be mailed out at the end of May. For 2007, the tax **due date is 4:30 p.m. on July 3, 2007**. After this date, any outstanding 2007 property tax amount is subject to a 5% penalty. Another 5% penalty will be applied after 4:30 p.m. on September 4, 2007. Arrears and delinquent taxes are currently accruing daily interest at an interest rate set by the province.

Important

If you have moved or bought your property this year, please ensure that the District has your current mailing address by calling the Municipal Office at 474-1773.

The Home Owner Grant (HOG) must be completed every year! Please claim your Home Owner Grant by completing the reverse side of the property tax notice and mail-in or drop by our office (1980 Millstream Rd). If not claimed by the due date, the total outstanding amount is subject to penalties. You do not need to make a payment to claim your home owner grant.

Reminder

As of last year, you may pay your property taxes at your bank or credit union. The bank or credit union will require the bottom of your tax notice to process and will accept Home Owner Grant applications only if accompanied by a payment. Other payment options: by mail or at the Municipal Hall, 1980 Millstream Rd. The municipal office accepts cash or cheque only, or postdated cheques (please include roll# on cheque for reference).

New For 2007

Police Tax Levy

Effective for the 2007 tax year, the province has introduced a new funding model for policing costs. Taxpayers in municipalities with populations under 5,000 and in rural areas will pay *up to* 50% of the total annual provincial policing costs for these areas. (Municipalities with populations of more than 5,000 pay 70-100% of their policing costs.) The actual police tax charged on your tax notice is *less than* 50% due to: a provincial traffic fine revenue sharing initiative and a reduction in the rural police tax rate to recognize the contribution made through the provincial rural tax. ***This***

levy will show on a separate line on your tax notice as 'Police Tax'. For further information choose Financing Local Police Service under Publications of the following website

http://www.pssg.gov.bc.ca/police_services/publications/.

Increase in Threshold for HOG Phase-out

For properties assessed at \$950,000 (threshold) and above, the HOG is reduced by \$5 for each \$1,000 of assessed value in excess of the threshold. The basic grant (\$570) is therefore eliminated or phased-out for properties assessed at \$1,064,000+, and eliminated for those eligible for the additional grant (\$845) (seniors, veterans and persons with disability) whose properties are assessed at \$1,119,000+.

Expansion of Eligibility to Low-Income Seniors, Certain Veterans and Certain Persons with Disabilities – HOG (\$845)

A new measure ensures that low-income seniors and other qualified individuals who own and reside in properties that have increased in assessed value beyond the threshold, but who may face financial hardship, receive their homeowner grant.

How it works.

As in previous years, once you have received your property tax notice, mail or bring your HOG application to our office (1980 Millstream Rd) before the due date. If that homeowner meets the low-income criteria, he/she should then contact the Provincial government to claim the remainder of the decreased (or phased-out) HOG. Details about income eligibility can be found by visiting the provincial website at www.sbr.gov.bc.ca/hog or by calling 1(888)355-2700. ***NOTE: Application forms will be available June 15, 2007 from the Ministry of Small Business and Revenue website or call 888 # above.***

Property Tax Deferral Program Change

Effective 2007, the age at which a homeowner may begin to defer the property taxes on their principal residence is lowered from 60 to 55 years of age. For details on the Tax Deferral Program go to www.sbr.gov.bc.ca/rpt/ or call 387-0555. Applications are also available at our office.

In Brief

Forest Fire Season Has Started

May brings the advent of the forest fire season. It is very important to make sure that your yard activities and personal uses of your property do not contribute to a forest fire. Take time to inspect the area immediately surrounding your home and remove any kindling sources. Clean your gutters—they offer a source of tinder for forest fires. Yard fires are by permit only. However, we will move to a zero burn situation in the near future. *Please report any suspicious fires immediately.*

Volunteer Firefighters Applauded

As we move into high forest fire season, let's not forget the continued efforts of our community volunteer firefighters. For most of the winter they have responded to many roadside accidents and first medical response calls. We have over 30 volunteer fire fighters in our community, but we always welcome more. This is your chance to give back to the community you live in. Of special need right now are day-time first medical responders. Please contact Chief Barry Ford for more information at 479-5741.

Permits for Soil and Material Deposits

Recently there have been a number of unauthorized soil and material deposits with the District. All residents are reminded that a Permit to deposit soil and other material is required before the material is brought in. Failure to obtain a Permit results in costly bylaw enforcement proceedings and much unnecessary conflict. Please

ensure that you enquire at the District Office before material is brought into the District.

Cycling Has Returned – Wednesday Nights

Highlands is a great area to enjoy the outdoors and open space. This is once again evident with the Wednesday night cycling races in the west Highlands. Please watch for cyclists on Caleb Pike Road and Millstream Road on this night and be conscious of cyclists on our roads at all times.

Protect Your Water Well

As Spring rolls around it is very tempting to get the fertilizers and pesticides out and attend to your lawns and gardens. Since we are a groundwater supply community, the use of these chemicals is strongly discouraged. There are many plants native to the area that do not require fertilizers and use far less water than traditional garden plants. Ask your local garden store for more details.

Congratulations to Lakewood Elementary Staff, Students and Parent Volunteers

Lakewood Elementary school held yet another spectacular musical presentation for their students this year. *Aladdin* was the chosen production. Special acknowledgement to **Marcela Strasdas**, a Highlands parent for her extensive work on the set design, painting and artwork.

If you have news about your school - please forward it to the DOH office and we'd be happy to publish it!

Freedom of the District Award

The Freedom of the District was unanimously awarded by the Mayor and Council to Mr. Bob McMinn at a Council meeting in April. The Freedom of the District is the highest award given to a member of a community under the Community Charter.

For those who do not know Mr. McMinn, and there cannot be many who do not, you would recognize him as the man-around-the-District puttering away at fixing, building, and studying ways to improve the community.

His current efforts are an extension of his service to the District from when he and Nancy first moved to the Highlands. He was one of the founders of the Highland District Community Association and was the first mayor of the Highlands. His other roles are numberless, including his interest in finding activities for young people in the Highlands through the Parks and Recreation Association. He has also helped to preserve the heritage of the District through the Highlands Heritage Park Society, and has personally helped in so many ways to make the Highlands what it is today.

A day to celebrate this honour will take place on Sunday June 24th at Mr. McMinn's "second home" – the Caleb Pike House and grounds. More details will follow shortly.

Update on Groundwater Study

The Groundwater Task Force Group and the DOH have applied for a \$70,000 provincial grant to complete the first phases of the proposed Comprehensive Groundwater Study. At the time of printing of this newsletter, the DOH was awaiting news on the success of the grant application. However Council decided to undertake this work in 2007 even if the grant is not received, leveraging funds from the Gas Tax Fund. If the grant application is successful, this would enable Council to re-allocate \$70,000 in Gas Tax Funds to other Highlands community projects. We are hopeful that, given the sustainable nature of our project, the Province will look favourably on our application.

The Highlands District Community Association (HDCA) will be hosting an information session at **7pm on Tuesday June 19th** at the Pike School House to explain the Groundwater Study to the community. The Task Force and the project team from Golder & Associates will be there to consider your comments and questions. All are welcome!

The Groundwater Task Force Group (Community members Eric Bonham and Warren Lee, DOH Planner Laura Beckett, and Councillor Michelle Mahovlich)

Grant Opportunities Update

The DOH applied for several grant options in February of this year. We are still awaiting word on some grants. However, we are very excited to announce that we were the successful recipient of the **Olympic Live Sites Program** grant. Thanks to the efforts of Mr. Bob McMinn, who spearheaded this application, the DOH will receive 50% funding to construct an all-weather soccer field. The remainder of the funds, up to \$150,000 have been accounted for in the 2007 & 2008 budgets.

Council will spend a few months looking at some recommendations from the **Community Centre Task Force** regarding the potential location of a Community Centre/Hall for the Highlands. It may be possible to construct a soccer field at the same location as a Community Hall making an overall better facility. The public will have an opportunity to provide their input through a questionnaire soon to be circulated by the Community Centre Task Force.

BC Spirit Square Program— The DOH applied for a \$15,000 matching grant to our \$15,000 to allow funds for planning a new Community Hall/Center. We are awaiting confirmation on this grant. However, Council has decided to incorporate the entire \$30,000 in the 2007 budget to allow the Community Task Force to keep working on their assessment of appropriate sites for a

community centre and to undertake some preliminary planning. Should we receive the grant, we will re-allocate the \$15,000 to other areas of our fiscal budget.

Local Motion Program— The DOH applied for a large grant to construct a roadside trail along Munn Road. Although we have not officially been denied this application, the Province has made positive announcements for other successful communities and the Highlands has not being included in those. We have assumed for budget purposes that this project will not proceed. Council will reconsider this project in 2008.

Towns for Tomorrow—This grant is for municipalities with populations of 5,000 or less. It is intended to improve the infrastructure of small communities, including upgrades to and new buildings and roads. The funding is an 80% grant to a maximum provincial contribution of \$400,000. The DOH applied for a \$157,000 upgrade to the Bellamy Bridge (on Finlayson Arm Road) hoping to get \$125,600 of that under the grant program. This application is still being adjudicated.

Council would like to acknowledge the hard work of community residents and staff meeting the very short deadlines for grant applications.

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