



Highlands News

November 2006

The Official Newsletter of the District of Highlands Council

RURAL LIFE NATURAL BEAUTY STRONG COMMUNITY

A message from Mayor Mark Cardinal

First of all, I can't tell you how proud I am of Highlanders who helped each other during the recent snow storm and subsequent power outages and other difficulties. I have heard of a number of Highlanders who helped their neighbours in many ways—checking on them, providing assistance with tree and snow removal, and even sharing their food and accommodations. Thanks, too, to the municipal staff, Victoria Contracting (road crew), and BC Hydro for dealing with dangerous conditions in many locations in the Highlands.

On the surface, it has been a relatively quiet month for Council, but Council has embarked on two very important initiatives. First, Council and staff have been working towards establishing this Council's strategic plan and setting our priorities and goals for the next two years. These decisions will help Council to decide what it wants to achieve before the end of its term and will help this community to work towards those goals. Council will be holding a Council workshop to work on our annual report, at which time we will finalize the priorities and goals. I will report back to you in a later edition of this newsletter.

The second initiative was a day-long session with a consultant, Mr. Sandy MacIver, on Council cohesion.

Council spent the day discussing what we do well together, what we do not do well, and how we can improve in areas which need improvement. What can we do by way of process and our approach to our work as a Council that will contribute to the Highlands being a better community? We established a code of conduct and discussed our common values: Respect, Trust and Fairness. All in all, it was a very successful day in which Councillors learned a lot about each other. I believe that if Council implements what we learned, we will have a very successful term and lead the community in healing historical wounds. If we as Council set a good example, the community will surely follow.

I would like to congratulate our staff member Sandi Chesley for her appointment as Acting Corporate Officer. Sandi has been with us for nearly six years now and has done a wonderful job at any tasks asked of her. As well, I thank all of our staff for their continued dedication to the great job they do for your community. We have a very small staff that carry out a terrific work load. In addition, I would like to report that our new CAO Chris Coates has settled in very well. I know I can speak for all of Council in saying that Chris brings an experienced professionalism to the Highlands. We all find his perspective and advice very valuable.

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@district.highlands.bc.ca.

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Capital Region Emergency Services Telecommunications (CREST)

The CREST board last met on November 8th and was presented with the recommendations of its Governance Committee. Highlights of the recommendation were changes to the Members Agreement on the structure of the governance of CREST. Currently, the voting requirements for operating budgets, capital budgets, and borrowing require 100% of the members approval which is impractical and does not match voting requirements in member municipalities. The proposed changes would see voting requirements for operating budgets changed to a simple majority, unless annual levies in the operating budget were to increase more than 2 times the CPI (Consumer Price Index), in which case 2/3 of the number of members must agree. The same is true of Capital budgets. The voting requirements for an increase in borrowing would require 2/3 of the members to agree for the budget to pass. It was also suggested that voting requirements for changes to the cost allocation method

will require 2/3 of the number of approving members, who must also cumulatively represent 50% of the total levies. These suggested changes were supported unanimously by all board members who took part in the vote. One board member abstained from voting.

In order for the proposed changes to the Members Agreement to be realized, it will require 100% of all members to agree.

The Highlands' issue with regard to the cost allocation method has yet to be resolved, although we have agreed to the current cost allocation for a one-year term. It was expressed strongly at the last CREST board meeting that the Highlands agreed to the one-year term in good faith but that our issues with regard to cost allocation would need to be recognized prior to changes to the governance structure. These issues will be in front of Council in December or January.

Millstream Meadows

The Millstream Meadows Site is located at the south end of the Highlands on Industrial Road. It was the former sludge disposal site for the CRD, but has not been in use by the CRD for a number of years. Last year, the Province, through the Crown Contaminated Sites Program (CCSP) administered by the Ministry of Agriculture and Lands announced that they had targeted this site for a detailed contaminated sites investigation, funded through their Brownfield Program, a part of CCSP. The District wrote a letter of encouragement to the Ministry indicating that we are a groundwater supply community and that we support remediating that site to protect our groundwater and, further, to allow us to use the land to its fullest potential in the business park/light industrial area of our District. The District had not heard a response from the letter sent last spring.

At the recent Union of BC Municipalities convention in Victoria, Mayor Cardinal and three councillors met with

the Minister of Agriculture and Lands, the Honorable Pat Bell, to express our concern that there had been no action with regard to investigating the site further and, most importantly, to remediating it. The Minister indicated that, in fact, the CRD had indicated to them that they now wanted to reconsider use of this land as a sludge disposal site from the Provincially-mandated sewage treatment plant for the region. In the past weeks, the CRD has retained Associated Engineering to study the options for a new sewage treatment plant in the region. Part of that engineering study includes studying options for the sludge disposal or re-use, as well as potential sludge-disposal locations, including the Millstream Meadows site. Council will be writing to the CRD to voice our concerns about reactivating this land as the sludge-disposal site for the reasons stated: protection of our groundwater and allowing the District to use the land to its full potential, which would help diversify our heavily-laden residential tax base with some industrially-taxed lands.

In Brief

Amendment to By-law 36 to Regulate Roads and Traffic

This amendment (Bylaw No. 293) is intended to establish sight distances for new driveways and other requirements. It was considered at the November 6 Council Meeting.

Community Hall Task Force

The Community Hall Task Force has been meeting since April to look at issues related to a community hall for the Highlands. The next step is to present information and ideas and conduct a survey of residents regarding what they feel would make a successful community hall. An Open House is planned for February 25 from 1 to 4 pm at the School House.

New Year's Eve Party At Eagle Ridge Community Center for all ages

Council endorsed and financially supported an all ages, alcohol -free New Year's Party to be held at Eagle Ridge Community Center at 1089 Langford Parkway across from Canwest mall.

The event is planned as a variety show, with built-in audience participation and interaction. Featured entertainers perform stage shows as well as bringing their acts into the audience. There will be arts and crafts areas, face painting, gymnastic shows, Mad Science stage shows, big screen DJ, live music preformed by The Pony Club, magicians and illusionists Shane King and Lucus Kavanagh as well as a bouncy castle for kids to jump and play.

Come one, come all and enjoy a safe and fun family experience for New Year's Evening.

Municipal Hall Notices

- **DISTRICT OF HIGHLANDS—We will be closed from December 23, 2006 to January 1, 2007 inclusive.**
- **Property Tax Reminder:** This is a reminder that, as of December 31, 2006, all outstanding current taxes become arrears, and arrears become delinquent. Both arrears and delinquent taxes, as of January 2007, will accrue daily interest at a rate set by the Province. If you have any questions regarding your taxes, please contact our office. Late payments must be made at the Municipal Office. We accept cash or cheque only.
- **Advisory Committee Volunteers Required:** The District of Highlands is accepting expressions of interest from interested persons for four vacancies each on both the Fiscal and Environment Select Committee and the Community Infrastructure and Services Select Committee. Your expression of interest should include your resume along with a written description highlighting your interest and describing how your contributions would benefit the community and the group dynamics

of a committee as well. Please also note in your submission your availability to attend established monthly evening meetings throughout the course of the term of appointment, as well as which Committee you are interested in serving on.

The vacancies are for a two-year term, commencing January 2007. Appointments will be made by the Mayor and Council. Further information is available at the District Office or from the District's website at <http://www.highlands.bc.ca>. Submissions marked "Advisory Committee Membership" held in confidence will be accepted up to 4:30 p.m., December 22, 2006. You may submit as follows:

By Mail: District of Highlands, 1980 Millstream Road, Victoria, BC, V9B 6H1

By Facsimile: 474-3677 or by Email: schesley@district.highlands.bc.ca

C.D. Coates, Chief Administrative Officer

The 19th Annual Highlands Community Food Drive, Santa Run, and Hay Ride

Come One! Come All! Join in the fun and share in the spirit of giving.

Saturday December 16th

Santa Run and Hay Ride:

East Highlands 9:30 a.m.–12:00 p.m.

West Highlands 12:30 p.m.–4:30 p.m.

Times to be confirmed. Watch your mail or mail boxes for notices.

Donations of non-perishable food items are greatly appreciated for the Western Community food banks. Food items for donation maybe left at the bottom of your driveway for pick-up by Santa's volunteer Elves. Please place in plastic bags.

A food donation box will also be available at the Municipal Office for the West Shore Christmas Hamper Fund.

Santa, Elves, Fire Trucks, Hay ride, Candy Canes, and

The Spirit of Giving

Sponsored by The Highland Firefighters Association

Remember to wear warm clothing!

Any persons wishing to volunteer please call Joe Kadar at 391-1409 or 812-6288

Lessons from the November Snow Storm

Many of you remember the New Years snow storm at the end of 1996. It was called “the storm of the century”. This November, the Highlands experienced a similar storm, with many residents trapped in their homes without electricity, telephone service or running water for up to six days. Driveways and roads were blocked by deep snow, fallen trees and power lines, leaving many Highlanders unable to get to work, school, or make necessary trips to town. In a number of areas, residents had to wait for fallen trees to be removed, power poles and lines to be reinstalled, and roads to be plowed before they could drive out. Fortunately, there were no medical emergencies, house fires or injury traffic accidents reported in the municipality during this time.

A special thanks is due to Val Fletcher, Highlands Emergency Coordinator, and Highlands office staff, as well as Langford Emergency Social Services, who arranged lodging for an estimated 20 Highlands families at Glen Lake Inn and the Bear Mountain Westin Hotel. We are also grateful to Victoria Contracting for clearing our roads, and to power line repair crews who came from as far away as Kamloops to render assistance.

It seems that no matter how much we think we are prepared for emergencies, these events catch most of us by surprise. Each type of emergency is unique. A wildfire, an earthquake and a snow storm will affect us differently. What is fresh in our minds now is the recent large snow storm. What can we learn from this event to prepare us better for the next snow storm? These are a few suggestions from residents.

- Watch the weather. In addition to the newspapers, radio and television, there is an Environment Canada weather office phone number (383-6717) and websites (weatheroffice.ec.gc.ca and accuweather.com) which gives projections for several days ahead on snowfalls, temperatures, wind, and weather warnings. Highlands typically gets more snowfall and lower winter temperatures than the Victoria weather station.
- Have more than one way to telephone. The phone lines sometimes work when the power is off. Have an old-fashioned phone with the handset connected to the base by a cord. Portable phones need power and do not work when the power is off. Cell phones work in most areas of the Highlands and can be kept charged from your vehicle battery.
- Keep the BC Hydro telephone number (1-888-769-43766) handy. Check with neighbours further down the line to determine where the power outage is.
- Consider having a generator on hand and an adequate supply of gas to keep essentials such as fridges, freezers and well pumps operating when hydro power is out. Make sure these appliances can be plugged into your generator. If you choose to hard-wire your generator into your house, have a qualified electrician do the installation since improper installation can create a danger to power crews working on the line (see upcoming article in December's newsletter).
- Keep a reserve supply of food, water, and essential medications to last your family for a week.
- Ensure that propane and other fuel tanks are topped up prior to the onset of bad weather. Fuel trucks may be delayed.
- If possible, have a wood stove in your house to provide heat and keep a supply of dry firewood handy.
- Make sure you have fresh, charged fire extinguishers on hand in your home.
- Have flashlights and battery-operated radios (and spare batteries), candles, and/or propane lights.
- Ensure that your vehicles (including tires) are in good condition for winter driving. Park close to the public road. Many Highlands driveways are long and steep. It may take a long time to find a backhoe to plow out your driveway, or for the snow to melt enough to drive out.
- Ensure that someone in your family has first aid training.
- It is mandatory to follow all directions from emergency, fire, and Hydro crews. Stay well back from downed power lines.
- Become involved in your local neighbourhood emergency preparedness group (contact Val Fletcher at 479-1725 or Sigurd at 405-2552).

We want to hear from you!!

Council would like to hear of any stories or experiences that you may want to share with the community. The hope is that by sharing your experiences and stories we will be a little more prepared for any possible future events such as this past snow storm. There are many heroes in the Highlands, and we would like to share this with the community. Please send your snow storm stories to mecardinal@shaw.ca for possible inclusion in our next newsletter. Thank you.
