



Highlands News

June 2007

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

A message from Mayor Mark Cardinal

Officials from KPMG Audit and Tax Consultants, and representatives of the B.C. Assessment Authority recently attended Council to explain their Financial Impact Assessment of the Bear Mountain development on the Highlands, and the impact of pending tax legislation on fractional ownership units which are used in part for tourism purposes.

During the Audit presentation KPMG advised "it is gratifying to see the financial improvements in the District and applauds Council's attention to getting there." I was pleased to hear these complimentary words because it reflects on the hard work this past year of Council and Chris Coates, our recently appointed CAO, in addressing the District's budgeting process and finances.

The KPMG assessment of the Highlands south project is that it "will have a significant, positive impact on the financial position of the Highlands." It is also expected to accelerate the development of the Highlands' Industrial Park allowing the community to reach a more financially sustainable status. This diversification of the Highlands' tax base will eliminate uncertainty of the fiscal future of the community and in protecting the vast green and environmental assets that we so much enjoy.

B.C. Assessment Authority officials advised that new property classification regulations are being drafted and they are not sure what impact that will have on taxation revenues from Bear Mountain until new wording is reviewed.

The KPMG assessment dealt only with tax revenues. When non-tax revenues, including amenities, building permit application fees and application fees for subdivision and development permit approval, the current municipal revenues projection reasonably confirm what was projected two years ago.

I attended a Capital Regional District Board meeting on June 13, 2007 expecting a vote on a regional bylaw dealing with an amendment to the Urban Containment Boundary. The Highlands has requested support of the CRD Board to amend the boundary to enable the provision of piped regional water to the developments in the south Highlands and in keeping with Highlands' south zoning and Master Development Agreement. The matter was deferred by the Board until July 11, 2007.

Highlands News available by email

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

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**** PROPERTY TAXES due JULY 3, 2007 ****

By now you should have received your 2007 Property Tax Notice. For 2007, the tax *due date is 4:30pm on Tuesday 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 4:00pm on September 4, 2007. Arrears and delinquent taxes are currently accruing daily interest at a % set by the province.

Payments and/or claiming of Home Owner Grants (HOG) can be made in person at the Municipal Office located at 1980 Millstream Rd between 8:00am and 4:30pm or can be dropped off any other time in the front door mail slot. Please note we accept cash or cheque

made out to the District of Highlands, or post-dated cheques (please include roll# on cheque for reference).

Other payment options are by mail (see mailing address on the tax notice) or at your bank or credit union. Your financial institution will require the bottom of your tax notice to process your payment and will accept Home Owner Grant applications only if accompanied by a payment.

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. In some cases, this is the only way the District has of updating your current mailing address and ensuring that the tax notice reaches you.

DISTRICT PROJECTS UPDATE

In cooperation with our Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) Chris Coates, Council developed a projects list to help prioritize and track projects currently being undertaken in the District and those pending discussion. Some of the projects currently underway or in the queue for discussion include:

1. *Official Community Plan (OCP)* – A public hearing was held in April. Council has referred the OCP back to a Committee of the Whole (COW) meeting for further discussions.
 2. *Financial Report on Bear Mountain Development* – KPMG prepared a financial report on the Highlands portion of the Bear Mountain Development. This report will be discussed at a COW meeting June 11th.
 3. *Comprehensive Groundwater Study* – Awaiting results of a grant application. Information session Tuesday June 19th. Councillor Michelle Mahovlich is the Council liaison.
 4. *Master Trails Plan* – Staff is working at reviewing this and implementing better control on trails standards. It is expected that this will come forward for discussion at a COW meeting in the Fall.
 5. *Wildfire Protection Plan* – the District received a grant in the Spring of 2007 to undertake a Wildfire Protection Plan. Community resident and Emergency Coordinator Mr. Val Fletcher is working on this project.
 6. *Emergency Planning* – Planning committee has met. Councillor Andrew Fall is the Council liaison.
 7. *Community Centre Planning* – The Community Centre Task Force has been meeting diligently and expects to come to the community in the early part of this Fall with a questionnaire regarding a proposed community centre in the District of Highlands. The Chair of the Community Centre Task Force is Mr. Michael Bocking.
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In Brief

New Pumper Truck for the Highlands

At a Council meeting June 4th, council approved purchase of a new pumper truck for the West Fire Hall. The pumper truck was included in the 2007 District budget. The anticipated cost for the new truck is \$385,000, which is less than the \$400,000 budgeted. Cost savings are somewhat based on the strength of the Canadian dollar right now.

The wheel base of the new pumper truck is 28', which is 7' less than the current pumper truck making it much more manageable on the winding Highlands roads.

Deer Families

Once again there are many new members to our community. We ask that you pay extra attention to the young deer on your way to and from your home.

School Bus Registration Required

School District #62 (Sooke - Lakewood, Spencer, Belmont schools) requires pre-registration for all school aged children taking the school bus to and/or from their school. Registration forms should be sent in immediately and can be downloaded from the website at: http://www.sd62.bc.ca/Student_Registration.

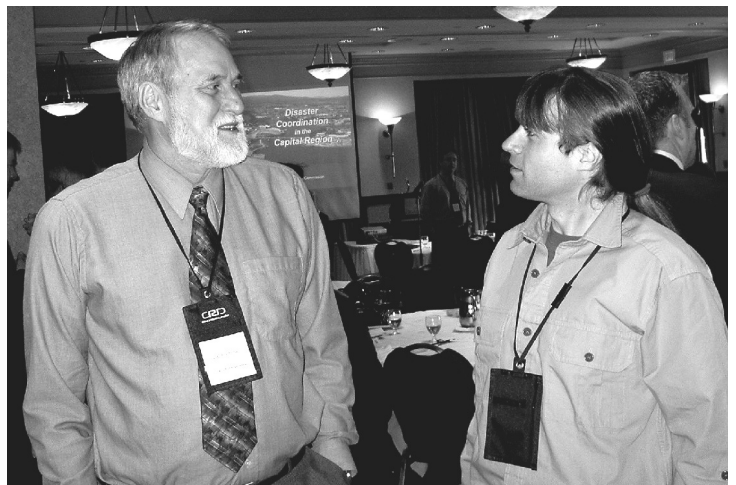
Kindergarten children are eligible to ride the bus, but in one direction only as the bus only travels at the start and end of the full school day. Morning kindergarten students can only get a ride to school and afternoon kindergarten students can only get a ride home from school at the end of the school day.

Mailbox Shelters

Some people may have noticed the new mailbox shelter at the southern entrance to the Highlands, on Millstream Road. This shelter was built and donated by Jack and Glenda Bell, Thetis Cove Joinery. Jack and Glenda are planning a second shelter on Finlayson Arm Road, near Millstream Road. Please send your views of these shelters to the Highlands municipal office, indicating what you like or not, especially if you are interested in donating material, labour or funds to enable construction of additional mailbox shelters elsewhere in the Highlands. Council would also like to thank Jack and Glenda for their energy, time and costs for donating this first shelter.

Forum of Councils

The Forum of Councils is held approximately once every few months allowing members of all CRD Councils to come together in a shared environment to discuss common concerns. On Saturday May 5th Councillors Fall and Williams and District Emergency Coordinator Mr. Val Fletcher attended the Forum of Councils session on "Disaster and Emergency Response". They shared some of the information at a following DOH council meeting.



Val Fletcher and Councillor Andrew Fall at the Forum of Councils

Groundwater Study Information Session

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!

New Deputy Corporate Officer

The District has selected Tina Neurauter as the new Deputy Corporate Officer, replacing Sandi Chesley who departed for the East Coast in May. Tina has over 17 years experience in local government in numerous capacities with the City of Colwood. Tina joins our staff on June 18th. The District had several highly qualified applicants receiving 23 applications in total.

Tina comes highly recommended by the City of Colwood and we look forward to her arrival.

Olympic Live Sites Grant Update – Twinflower Park Options

Council made a motion to request an extension to the March 31st, 2008 deadline for the grant approved under the above noted program. The submission was made by the Parks and Recreation Association supported by letter by the District. Approval for a one year extension, to March 31, 2009 was approved. This should enable the Community Centre Task force to consider upgrades for a park facility, be it at Twinflower Park or in conjunction with a new Community Centre.

Updates from the Community Centre Task force will be provided on an ongoing basis.

District Office Hours Changing

The District Office hours will be changing beginning July 4th. Official hours will be from 8:30 am to 4:00 pm. This will be for a six month trial period. The District encourages your feedback on the impacts of this change. In addition staff would be very pleased to try to accommodate special requests should they be necessary resulting from this change.

Council meetings for the summer months are scheduled for Monday July 9th and Monday August 13th.

We wish everyone a safe and enjoyable summer!

The Highlands News

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