

qathet Regional District
ELECTORAL AREA 'A' NEWSLETTER

for April 2019

from Patrick Brabazon, Director

This newsletter is being sent to all residents of *Electoral Area A* of the qathet Regional District. At the end of this newsletter you will find my telephone number and my e-mail address. I welcome your comments.

FIRE

The Northside Volunteer Fire Department (NVFD) operates out of two fire halls; the #1 (main) fire hall is on Plummer Creek Road, and the #2 fire hall currently on Larson Road in Lund. The Lund fire hall was built in the 1970s and is not only undersized for storage of modern fire vehicles and equipment, but also has significant structural deficiencies that need to be addressed. The qathet Regional District (qRD) is proposing to build a replacement on a 2.5 acre property on Hwy 101, approximately 700 metres south of the current Lund fire hall. The new property was generously donated for fire department use in 2018 by a group of local residents.

As a resident in the NVFD service area, you were invited to attend an open house to learn more about the proposed replacement fire hall and the borrowing required to pay for the construction. However, I expect that some did not get the word so I am repeating much of it here

The intent is to borrow up to \$753,153 over a 30 year period to pay for the costs of constructing the new Lund fire hall. The long term borrowing will come from the *Municipal Finance Authority* and will require elector assent. The Regional Board will seek your assent through the *Alternative Approval Process (AAP)*.

Soon the NVFD service area will have an opportunity through the AAP, to oppose the borrowing necessary for the planned construction. Further details will be mailed out about the AAP. If you own land in the NVFD service area which you rent out, please ensure that your tenant is informed of the information being supplied in this mail out.

When seeking elector assent the usual practice in this Regional District has been to hold a public information session followed by a referendum. Referenda are not cheap. The AAP allows for ten percent of voters to say no and thus force a referendum. If fewer than ten percent object the borrowing will proceed.

Savary

Roads and policing have been an ongoing concern for Islanders and a frequent agenda item for discussions between the Regional District and the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure (MoTI) and the RCMP. Sometimes we gain a bit of ground. MoTI is providing more gravel for resurfacing what are truly deplorable road conditions. As well, I recently met with Island representatives [ASIC] and the RCMP for a broad discussion of public safety issues. Once again, we arrived at a common understanding of the situation and some agreement for improvement. Over the years the RCMP have always stretched their limited resources to do their best in what is not an easy situation given an island with huge population swings.

Water

Most of us in Area A draw our water from our own wells. Not all though, and there are two 'water improvement districts supplying water to residents and commercial operations. One of these systems is in Lund. Like others across British Columbia the Lund Water Improvement District has struggled for years to maintain an aging system even as increasing regulations and standards make what was difficult, now boarding on not possible.

Over the years the trustees [operators] and the Regional District have sought funding sources to provide for the necessary upgrades and improvements. All we achieved have been some proverbial band-aid patches. Fifteen years ago the Province told me that it estimated that it would cost some two billion dollars to fix all of the suffering improvement districts. Sorry, no fix for Lund.

Now that's changed. There is some new funding available and thanks to the decades of hard work on the part of the trustees and the constant pressure exerted on the Province by the Regional District, the intolerable situation has been recognized and in return for qathet Regional District taking over the service a grant in the order of \$16,500,000 is on the table but not guaranteed. Since the total gross project cost will exceed \$17,000,000 the qRD will have to borrow \$500,000 to cover the rest.

Before any of that happens the people [subscribers] on the Lund system will have to give their assent, either through a referendum, Alternative Approval Process or by petition. It is the subscribers who will be paying the local share of the bill. Prior to that will be the consultations and discussions necessary to ensure that those directly affected have a clear understanding of the situation and the actions required. With their agreement granted the qRD can begin the process of converting the LWID into a Regional District service with a promise of safe potable water delivered in a sustainable manner.

I could fill several pages with the benefits of accepting the grant and proceeding with the conversion to a Regional District service, but I will leave most of that to the public consultation period. For now I will list some salient details:

- Detailed asset management planning for dams and all the infrastructure downstream of them.
- Energy efficiencies through new pumps, less leakage throughout.
- Climate change: increased water storage and fire flows and catchment area protection.
- Changes to Finn Bay main line to provide for a loop system for improved water movement thus reducing flushing and thus less wasted water and wear and tear on pumps.
- Bike/Walking pathways over the Finn Bay loops

Thank goodness. I expect that most of our gardens are way, way behind and we are wondering where to start. One way to start is thinking about another hot dry summer and what can we do now to safeguard our homes. Pretty soon there will be another ban on open burning so now is the time to start a general clean up and burning. Gather up all of the fallen branches, twigs, etc. and burn them while you can do so safely. The qRD's 2019 FireSmart Program is now offering free FireSmart property assessments and can even offer rebates for property owners who make FireSmart improvements to their properties. Contact the qRD's FireSmart Coordinator at firesmartpr@gmail.com or call 604-414-7839 for more information. Be proactive.

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