

qathet Regional District
ELECTORAL AREA 'A' NEWSLETTER
for December 2020
from Patrick Brabazon, Director

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

Pandemic

COVID-19 is still with us. We are into the “second surge” of this deadly virus. Individually, and collectively, we are all doing our bit to overcome the scourge. We wear masks in public, sanitize our hands at store entrances, and exits, and avoid large meetings and gatherings.

Now if we could just get the powers that be to meet us part of the way. I have heard the frustration of our community that we just don't know the extent of the virus among us. We are part of the Vancouver Coastal Health (VCH) regional health authority which covers most of Metro Vancouver, and the coast up to Bella Coola. VCH is the body that translates Provincial Health Orders into directives for us to understand and follow. Therein lies the problem. Facing the large outbreak in the lower mainland, VCH issued an order restricting public gatherings. The directive included both large and small communities throughout the lower mainland. Also included was something called the “Community of Howe Sound”. Uncertain was whether or not the directive included Powell River, or if it included the regional district electoral areas. After some delay and further communication, it was determined that what they were probably trying to say was that certain Regional Hospital Districts were included in the order.

The Powell River Regional Hospital District (PRRHD) covers almost the same area and people as the qathet Regional District. All Directors of the qRD are also Directors of the PRRHD with the addition of one Director appointed from Tla'amin Nation. In an effort to avoid the confusion and misunderstanding we have experienced, I have written to the Minister of Health requesting that not only should directives refer to Regional Hospital Districts, but that the mitigation efforts should be tailored to them. We are two ferries and several hours away from the lower mainland; Directors of the qRD believe that we should not be included in blanket orders intended to resolve a problem not related to our community. We have asked that we receive more accurate and up-to-date information regarding the COVID-19 situation locally and can report that the BCCDC is now releasing local weekly case totals every Thursday.

FIRE [or not]

On a happier note, our volunteer fire departments are making further progress on training and qualifications. I have announced before that the Northside Volunteer Fire Department (NVFD) has arranged for a training facility to be located in Area A. It should be on site by the end of 2020 and Chief Jim Brown is engaging other fire chiefs throughout the qRD to ensure that all departments understand that this regional facility is available for them. More NVFD fire fighters continue to receive their full service qualifications, which greatly increases the protection they provide to all of us. Thank you volunteers. One last note, the roof should be up on the new auxiliary hall just south of Lund. Once completed, the new hall will provide a safer and better organized facility for the fire department's equipment in Lund and the location will allow for improved emergency response to the Okeover side of the fire service area.

You Rang?

Oh the frustration of lack of cell phone coverage in our area. When TELUS decided to withdraw from their proposal to build a new facility in Lund, I surveyed local property owners and quickly discovered other sites which did not offer the complications which had defeated the previous proposal. However, they declined to consider them. I did not give up. Now they are back and have selected a site on qRD land at a high point in the Klah Ah Men Lund Gazebo Regional Park. If we in the community and qRD can come to agreement on this, I think that we will be well served. TELUS is required to consult the local residents and qRD Board has to agree to an acceptable lease for the site. To see what TELUS has proposed go to the Planning Committee agenda at <https://qathetrd.civicweb.net/document/111329>.

A bus to . . .

In the previous Green Sheet, I referred to improvements for our local Paratransit service between Lund and Powell River. This time, I am referring to the lack of public transport between Lund and Vancouver. With the failure of the last attempt at a commercial bus service, there were discussions with other bodies regarding some form of public endeavour. Then COVID hit. Now we are back at it.

In recent discussions with Sunshine Coast Regional District, we agreed that both regional districts needed a proper through service connecting to public transit in Horseshoe Bay. Our position was that it start in Lund in the morning and return later in the day. Both regional districts recognized that this would not be a simple service to create, given that it would require the participation of two Regional Districts, BC Transit, and BC Ferries. However, the will is there and in past discussions with BC Ferries I believed that it was achievable. Now BC Transit has offered some positive comments. Of course, nothing is going to happen until the various players close the books on the pandemic and we can all make serious plans for the future.

Bits and Pieces

There are several proposals which have been shelved due to COVID. Now some of them are back up for discussion. The Lund Community Centre is first and foremost. The building is in need of improvements and as always, perhaps this is the time for a major rethink of what we have and what we want. Although the land and building are owned by the qRD, the building and its services are operated by the Lund Community Society (LCS). LCS has several suggestions for expansion and improvement to the facility but the problem is how to properly present these to you. We can't have an open house or any sort of large gathering, and we can't proceed without hearing from you. Stay tuned.

As well, there is the matter of the soon to be replaced decrepit Lund fire hall. What do we do with the land? Have it appraised and transfer/sell it to the Northside Recreation service? Sell it and bank the funds with the fire department? Once again, stay tuned.

Driftwood Communications Ltd. is working with the qRD to identify internet connectivity service gaps in our region. To help identify gaps, they are asking for our input on our internet services through a connectivity survey. You can fill out the online survey or download the paper version of the survey on qathet.ca. Surveys will also be available at various locations and community notice boards near you and will be open for responses until January 15, 2020.

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