

qathet Regional District
ELECTORAL AREA 'A' NEWSLETTER
for July 2022
from Patrick Brabazon, Director

This newsletter is 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.

A Hall for the Community

Small communities all over British Columbia usually have some gathering place where the locals come together in celebration of just being local. For decades, Lund's place was the old wooden hall that stood alongside the highway above the hotel. Age and changing times did not treat it well and eventually it was abandoned. A community hall was still needed, and there was only one location ready for move-in. Some twenty years ago, the qathet Regional District bought the Lund school and created the Northside Recreation Service to finance it. To operate the new Northside Recreation Service (Lund Community Centre), the qathet Regional District contracted the Lund Community Society, which brings this story to today.

Just like the old hall, the present one has aged too. The current hall no longer meets environmental and structural requirements and is in need of upgrades to better serve the growing and diversifying Lund community. Then there is the matter of the financial base for the Northside Recreation Service extending beyond Lund down to Southview and over to Okeover.

The Regional Board has accepted that the hall needs an update and agrees that enlarging it would serve the growing community. The Lund Community Society had presented a proposal for a new building complete with drawings. Unfortunately, matters are not that simple. Local governments are the stewards of the public assets and are required by law to ensure that all buildings, etc., comply with regulations for structural integrity, environmental protection and are covered by an asset management program for proper maintenance throughout their working lifespan. To satisfy all this, the qathet Regional District brought in qualified assessors to evaluate the existing building, and propose a plan to improve and enlarge it to meet the needs of the community. With their report in hand, the qathet Regional District sought and obtained a grant from the federal government. This grant will provide \$4,199,082 towards a new Lund Community Centre, which in total may cost up to \$5,855,814 to complete the build. The qathet Regional District will need authority from the taxpayers—you—to borrow **up to** \$1.1 million to cover any ineligible costs and project cost overruns.

There are two ways to seek that authority to borrow. An assent vote (referendum) is simple, and a vote could be held as early as next year. The Alternate Approval Process (AAP) costs less than a referendum, and could be held as early as this year. With the AAP, the qathet Regional District would determine the likely number of voters in the Northside Recreation Service area, and having announced that figure, would set out a period of time in which voters could file an objection to the borrowing. If ten per cent or more of the voters object the qathet Regional Board could then decide to hold a referendum to seek a broader opinion, or it could decide to drop the proposal and reconsider the whole matter. Without your approval there will be no borrowing, and without borrowing the current proposed Lund Community Centre renovation and enlargement will not proceed.

The federal grant is conditional upon the project starting in April of next year, so your approval must be obtained in time for the borrowing to be secured prior to then. In either scenario, referendum or alternate approval process, there will be extensive public notice via letters to voters, posters, newspaper ads, etc. The voters will be informed.

Garbage & Recycling & . . .

Back in May, I participated in a tabletop exercise, set up by qathet Regional District staff and the Let's Talk Trash team, to plan for the operations at the Resource Recovery Centre above Willingdon Beach. This was a real tabletop exercise with the site plan laid out on the table and many Lego pieces serving as markers for structures and vehicles. Participants in the exercise were from the Solid Waste Management Plan Monitoring and Advisory Committee (SWMPMAC) that includes Regional Board members, qathet Regional District staff, representatives from our member municipality the City of Powell River and private sector members with experience in Solid Waste Management and members of the public with an interest in waste management. SWMPMAC has a wide range of practical experience. The goal of such an exercise was to mitigate any glitches before they become real life problems. Who goes where and when was the question on everybody's mind. Using the Lego pieces the participants identified glitches. For example, my Lego car had to pull an extra maneuver to position me to dump my garbage and that conflicted with folks behind me. The most positive developments came from the comments of the big-rig operators with their need for a clear run and adequate room to maneuver. The value of this sort of exercise will be clear in the final product when your car replaces that Lego piece at the new Resource Recovery Centre.

What to do . . .

With the old fire hall in Lund that is. The question was seemingly answered last July when the Regional Board transferred the property from the Northside Fire Protection Service to the Northside Recreation Service. Since in British Columbia, regional district services are distinct, the asset transfer required the Recreation Service to pay \$165,000 to the Fire Protection Service. At the time, there were proposals to refit the building for public use in conjunction with the operation of the adjacent community hall.

The next step was to secure a proper engineering assessment of the structure in order to allow for planning for any future uses. That assessment came before the Committee of the Whole this month and it was not a pretty read. The short version is that the qathet Regional District will be at considerable risk if the public occupies the building. The full report is available as part of the agenda package and can be found through the qathet Web Portal at: qathetrd.civicweb.net/document/136609/

So, what to do? Regardless of the state of the building, the property has value and the Regional Board will have to decide on its use or dispose of it. That \$165,000 payment went to offset the costs of the Fire Department, so selling the property would benefit the Northside Recreation Service. However, it is public land in the center of Lund, and there are arguments in favour of retaining the land for some future purpose. This is where I get to remind us all that the Northside Recreation Service is funded by taxes from all of Area A, except Savary. A lot of us have an interest in this decision.

Time's up?

Not quite, but close. No, I'm not going to burden you with another lengthy admonition about the election. I will just remind you that the deadline for nominations is September 9th and the vote is on October 15th. I am available to answer questions about the role, who does what and when, etc.

Spring is here I said last time. Who can tell? The garden doesn't say so, the skies are grey, the ground is wet. However, there is still time for summer to heal all ills and put some joy back into our affairs. This is still the best place on earth to live.

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