

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

This newsletter is being sent to all residents of *Electoral Area A* of the qathet Regional District. It was intended to go out in September but the election dictated that it be held back until late October. So, with a little re-writing here is the last *Green Sheet*. My time as your regional director expires at midnight on Sunday November 6th. I offer my congratulations to the winner and my best wishes to all of the great people of Electoral Area A of the qathet Regional District. Let us not forget that qathet translates as working together. With qathet we can make good things happen.

Twenty years on . . .

Yes, it was the summer of 2002 that Jane and I agreed that I would stand for election as the regional director for Area A. I say agree because the idea was not original with us. We had decided to retire here and elected office was not on the agenda and certainly not on our minds. However . . . there were issues and controversies and as we settled in we became more and more involved in the goings on of our community. The major one, causing the most discord and downright animosity was the conflict between the aquaculture industry and residents of Okeover Arm. Simply put, the oyster growers—with the full support of the Province and the tacit support of the Regional District—were obtaining leases directly in front of homes along the shore. What should have been resolved by discussion and compromise was turned into a take-no-prisoners conflict thanks to the intransigence of some on the aquaculture side, indifference on the part of the government, and an attitude of “last ditch defence” in some home owners.

Part way through the campaign, I was contacted by a major oyster grower who wanted to talk. That changed everything. Finding that I was open to a negotiated compromise, the intransigent bloc was isolated, I became the director for Area A, and a couple of years later the Province had created a coastal plan which preserved the southeast waters of Okeover Arm for residential enjoyment.

Over on Savary Island, the matter of an Official Community Plan (OCP) had split the community wide open and tempers were high. The regional board had improperly delegated the planning to a group of islanders whose view of what was proper and acceptable was definitely not shared by the majority. The draft plan was rejected by the Regional District planning committee. I, as the brand new director, agreed that it should be tucked at the back of the shelf where it sat for a couple of years. When tempers had cooled, I asked Don Turner, the Regional District planner, if he could salvage something from the draft that we could take back to the islanders. Don worked his magic and in 2005, Savary got an OCP.

I mention these two matters because I believe that anyone in the position of regional director should be prepared to try and find the greater/common good at the centre of any controversy. Years ago I came to understand that the “best is the enemy of the good.” Insisting on all or nothing too often yields nothing.

Both of the above conflicts arose out of very local concerns; others will arise from electoral area issues and yet others out of the disparate interests of the area vs the regional district as a whole. These latter conflicts will reveal the true measure of a director’s ability to understand when to accept—perhaps even promote—a program or service that is not favoured by constituents, but will truly benefit the whole of the qathet Regional District. I make no claim to have always measured up to that standard, but I have tried to ensure that I understand the issue, the concerns of those opposed, and the goals of those in favour.

On the other hand . . .

One of the anomalies of the position of electoral area director is the requirement for an alternate. Selected by the director, this person is expected to step in when the director is absent and in so doing, exercises all of the authority of the director. I have been extremely fortunate to have the support of great alternates.

First up was Les Falk known to many as Les of the Laughing Oyster. Les set the standard for alternates: he received all agenda packages and was ready to step in at any moment with a clear understanding of the issues and a mind ready to listen to others before the vote.

When Les and Jan moved away, Harry Robertson stepped into the role and carried on in the same vein as Les. Once again, I could rely on my alternate to represent Area A while recognizing the greater interests of the regional district as a whole. Harry steadfastly served us until he decided that his duties with the Lund Water Improvement District placed him in a conflict of interest, so he resigned.

Greg Cran replaced Harry in 2021 but with COVID in full swing and Zooming being the order of the day, Greg has not had an opportunity to take my place at the table, but knowing he was there and able was reassuring.

Back at work . . .

An electoral area director is a lone figure. Unlike a municipal councillor who is one among many, the electoral area director stands apart as the lone representative of the area. I think that this singularity creates a special relationship between director and civil service. The senior staff are there to offer advice as to how things actually work, to make them work if so directed by the Board, and to generally ease the difficulties inherent in the transition from idea to practice.

In my twenty years I have been advised and aided by some of the best. There is not enough space to thank all of them, but my first Chief Administrative Officer (CAO), Frances Ladret has to be mentioned. Frances guided me through, so as to avoid the embarrassment of failure. It was Frances who, confronted with my latest brilliant idea, would say, "Patrick, I really think that you don't want to do that." - No, I didn't. For staff, our past Manager of Asset Management and Strategic Initiatives, Mike Wall, played a pivotal role in our region's waste reduction, through his efforts at the new Resource Recovery Centre.

The new director will find the qRD in the steady and knowledgeable hands of CAO, Al Radke, Corporate Officer, Michelle Jones, and Financial Manager, Linda Greenan.

I mentioned Jane at the beginning; I will do so again now. Jane has been with me all the way, both as my greatest supporter and my most astute critic. It was Jane who would point out the errors in my thinking and who would suffer the slings and arrows of public attacks on me and unpleasant Sunday morning phone calls to our home. Jane was there at the beginning, with me throughout, and at my side today. We were a team.

So that's it. It has been an honour to serve and a great deal of fun too. Thank you.

Patrick Brabazon

Regional Director, Area A

Cell Telephone: 604-414-5673—e-mail: pbrabazon@qathet.ca

qathet Regional District

202 - 4675 Marine Avenue, Powell River, B.C. V8A 2L2

Telephone: 604-485-2260 - e-mail: administration@qathet.ca