

ROSSLAND COUNCIL CONNECTS

July 2018

Issue #38

Message from Mayor Kathy:

What a fabulous **Canada Day celebration!** A good crowd trekked up Mt Roberts, 1,100 visitors enjoyed the events at the Museum and Discovery Centre during the day and for the music, food, drink and fireworks in the evening. Rossland turned out in style to celebrate Canada's 151st birthday. Many thanks to all the volunteers and sponsors who make this event, bigger and better each year.

It was wonderful opportunity to reflect on what our country stands for in the world. Established 151 years ago as a large and successful confederation, we haven't always lived up to our ideals. Our treatment of the original, First Nations people was atrocious. However, by learning from history we can move on, make amends and build an inclusive country for all. Canada remains one of the best examples of a liberal democracy in the world, even when so many others are regressing into military dictatorships, or illiberal democracies. Now, more than ever its important to value our rights and freedoms and take nothing for granted.

Demcracy starts at the local level! Don't forget, our **municipal election coming up in October**. Consider running: It's your chance to contribute to your community, have some fun and make a difference. A healthy democracy needs good people to take the time to serve. It's important to have candidates that represent varying points of view and who can work together respectfully and constructively.

Remember: City Hall is now located at 2196 LeRoi Ave (across the highway from Mook Thai). Please call 362-7396 and follow the menu prompts to make an appointment. We apologize for the inconvenience. **Council meetings will continue to be held in the Miners Hall.**

Council News:

Council has recently had some lively discussions about **water meters and readers**. Modernizing our current system so that it supports our water supply and infrastructure sustainability goals is going to take upfront investment. That investment will ensure that we minimize the costs of wastewater treatment, maximize the viability of our vulnerable surface water supplies, and reduce the wear and tear on our water distribution infrastructure. This initiative is supported by many of our guiding documents such as our Official Community Plan, Strategic Sustainability Plan, Watersmart Action Plan, Climate Action Plan and Asset Management Policy.

Having meters, adopting our Watersmart Plan, and engaging in resident education programs have helped us reduce our water usage and contributes to the success of recent grant awards (which means less reliance on taxpayer funding). Our system is old and very leaky. With recent grants we are working to identify problem areas and incorporate the repairs into our capital asset management planning process. Water meters are not just about water conservation, it is also about resource management. Human, ecological, and infrastructure resources all benefit from a clear, accurate understanding of how much water is being used, by whom, and when. This allows us to know where there are opportunities to improve.

There are many reasons to conserve water. We get our water from streams which rely on snowmelt. With climate uncertainty, we can't be sure we will always have the abundance we have today. Conserving saves taxpayers' money; for one thing it postpones the day (and the large expense) of upgrading and expanding our filtration system. For another thing, we contribute to the regional wastewater treatment plant operational and capital costs based on how much effluent we add to the system. The treatment plant, based in Trail and shared with Warfield, is about to undergo substantial and very expensive upgrades (\$40M+) to bring it up to secondary treatment standards. We have the dubious honor of being one of only a handful of primary treatment plants that continue to dump wastewater into an international body of water having undergone only primary treatment (the Columbia River). The less water we use, the smaller our share of the costs will be.

While we considered other ways to promote water conservation and how to price for this precious resource, in the end we decided to follow best practices, upgrade our meter readers and move this utility to a cloud-based system that includes a consumer user portal for live data monitoring. This will increase our ability to measure and price for water infrastructure in an equitable and accurate way, and it will provide staff with the needed tools to make our corporation more effective and efficient.

At one point we thought Fortis' Smart Meters had interfered with our water meter readers but that was a false alarm. Our low watt system used a common bandwidth that has seen an increase of traffic from many sources that may be at the root of our issue. For the last year we have estimated water usage while we explored an explanation for why our meter readers failed. To be clear, it is the reader, which will be replaced with a chip, not the actual meter itself that failed. Unfortunately, no definitive cause was determined other than the component has reached the end of its lifespan and cannot be replaced under warranty because the technology is outdated and no longer supported by the manufacturer.

While we considered manually reading the meters, advice from our staff and independent water management experts, (with experience of manual measurement in other locations, not the manufacturer of the product) swayed a majority of Council that hand reading would not be sufficiently accurate for us to implement effective conservation pricing. It would not provide usage data in a timely manner which is needed to manage the water consumption, pinpoint leakage on private property, and manage the infrastructure capital. In addition, manual readings would allow lots of leaks on homeowners' properties to go undetected for months at a time that not only waste water but add cost to the operation of the water utility and to homeowners. Its analogous to buying a new car with only 3 wheels. Yes, it's a car, but it's inadequate to meet a drivers' needs. Best to adopt the right tool for the job!

Council has been talking about conservation water pricing for years. It is more effective to use time-of-day pricing, seasonal pricing and user interface (so users can see what they are consuming). Yes, if we keep growing and/or using more water we will eventually have to upgrade our water treatment plant anyway. But there's a cost to doing it sooner rather than later. Every year we delay a \$1.5 million outlay means another year without servicing that debt.

Staff has been working on this issue for the past year. We had \$300k for this project built into our annual capital replacement program. The better solution was more expensive (\$421k) and will require an annual subscription fee of \$26k. The additional 127K is coming from our current Gas Tax reserves, money that comes from the Federal and Provincial governments and earmarked for special projects such as this one. That account currently has approximately 980K. It took two meetings to hammer out this decision because we needed more information, some key staff were not at the first meeting, and we had questions about the feasibility of flat rates. The majority of Council voted to go with the staff recommendation and modernize our water utility.

We can be proud that our water usage has generally declined, even while our population has increased (although usage is creeping up a bit lately). It's great that we're already a comparatively low water-using town, relative to the rest of the Kootenays - the stats bear this out. But the stats also say the Kootenays are among the highest per capita water users *globally* and we pay very little for the privilege of being so profligate.

In other news: Council heard from several delegations: Our regional economic development organization, **the Lower Columbia Initiatives Corporation** provided an update of the projects and efforts underway to attract new businesses and retain existing ones in our region. The MetalTechAlley project is an innovative and successful economic development model. **The Greater Trail Minor Hockey Association** made an informative presentation on the importance of the Rossland arena to this regional program and it's economic impact. The number of kids and teams has been stable for the last 5 years. About 10% of Rossland children are enrolled in Minor Hockey.

Staff and Council have started working with **MODUS**, a consultant, on our recreation project. MODUS will work with our community to determine, analyze and balance our **recreational needs and desires with what we can afford**. The engagement process will be comprehensive, inclusive and multipronged. We will be reaching out from August to mid-September. The process will probably include a referendum question in October's election. Stay tuned for details.

Council turned down and **application for a liquor license extension to 3am** as being inconsistent with our mixed use downtown core.

Council awarded the tender for the **Library Renewal** project to Hi-Tech Contracting for \$230k. This will see a wonderful expansion of the kids' section in the library and other needed improvements. Congratulations to the library (and City staff) for being so successful obtaining grants.

With the generous donation from private landowners Anthony and Helen Clugston, combined with some City owned property, Council has created the **Rossland Forest Park**, by dedicating some land on Deerpark Mountain as parkland. It was previously zoned resource and rural residential. This parcel is near Drakes Trail. The intention is to expand the greenspace if other property owners want to donate their parcels to the park.

Did you know that over 50% of all the plastic ever created was made in the last 15 years and that it will last for 1,000s of years, potentially indefinitely? Microbits of plastic, as it eventually breaks down, end up in our water systems and the food chain. (National Geographic) This is something we can live without! With the exciting news from Victoria that they can **legally ban single use plastic bags**, Council has directed our staff to prepare a similar bylaw for Rossland. There will be plenty of consultation on this change but if you currently use plastic bags, please start thinking of alternatives.

Over the last 10 years several groups have approached Council to ban plastic bags- some of these efforts have been instigated by our youth, concerned about the state of the planet they are inheriting. This is a small step, but one in the right direction.

Council also approved a recommendation to join the **Blue Dot** movement which is a nationwide effort to guarantee that governments protect the right to a clean environment for all Canadians. The tenets of this effort will be incorporated into our guiding documents. Luckily, our guiding documents already reflect many of these concerns. <http://bluedot.ca>

Council has adopted some significant bylaws: **Smoke and Vape Free Outdoor Places** (limiting where anything can be smoked or vaped in town); amending our Zoning bylaw to define where **recreational cannabis** can be sold in town (farther than 150m from schools), our **Tax Revitalization** bylaw, setting rules about tax exemptions for certain commercial projects; and a revised **animal control bylaw** raising the number of dogs allowed on a property from 2 to 3. Go to www.rossland.ca to read the details.

Our planning and building inspection departments have been crazy busy: It's another huge year for construction. We've been approving **development permits and variances** for properties around town including one for a 12 lot subdivision at Caldera with all appropriate environmental conditions included. Several properties that were previously zoned for guest houses but did not indicate an interest in continuing, were re-zoned back to residential or rural residential. This gives others in those neighborhoods the chance to apply to offer short term rentals.

Our usual **policy review procedure** covered the re-confirmation of existing policies concerning **3rd party charges, 3rd party call outs, snow removal for roads, sidewalks, and stairs** and our **Asset Management Investment Policy** which outlines our approach to renewing our infrastructure in a comprehensive and systematic way. We adopted a new policy on **video surveillance** to protect city employees and property. We already had some cameras but had no policy to protect the privacy of citizens.

Council had a robust discussion about **speed limits** as part of our annual policy review. In the end we decided to reconfirm the **30km speed limit throughout town**. The speed calming tactics we have included in our recent infrastructure projects have helped somewhat, (bump-outs, wider sidewalks) but speeding is still a problem. Our streets are narrow, steep and have lots of unconventional intersections and few sidewalks, so calming is good. It appears to be human nature that whatever the posted limit, people tend to exceed it by at least 10km. Anecdotal evidence indicates that by lowering the posted limits, vehicles have slowed down, even if they don't actually go 30km. Here is an interesting stat: A person hit at 30km has a 90% chance of *survival*. A person hit at 50km has an 80% chance of being *killed*. We have lots of pedestrians, cyclists, pets and kids on our streets. Slow down and admire the view!

Council reviewed the **Q2 Management Report and Q2 Budget Update**. City staff has done an impressive amount of work despite the collapse of City Hall roof. That said, we are understandably behind on some projects. Much of the operations of the City have continued to work seamlessly from the public's perspective but it is still incredibly challenging for staff. Your patience is appreciated, as is maintaining civil interactions with all city staff. Please be kind.

Council is setting up a **committee to create a Rossland Community float**. We invite any community group that would like to get involved to contact Mayor Moore or Councillor Greene. The intent will be to have float for our local events and to participate in regional parades in a fun and creative way. A shared float seems like a good idea!

City Hall continues to undergo engineering and replacement cost analysis. We haven't begun to consider the best action going forward, nor do we know the final amount of our insurance claim. Options are to rebuild City Hall on the same site, buy or build a new facility elsewhere. There are many things to consider and this process will take time.

Did you know?

Very exciting news from the **Rossland Museum and Discovery Centre**- We are overjoyed with the announcement that **Teck Metals** is donating \$700k over 2 years for Phase 2 of the renewal project. This very generous donation helps fund the very exciting Mining Experience which will serve to replace the now permanently shuttered mine tour.

The Heritage Commission and the City are the recipients of a **\$33k CBT grant to create a Heritage Management Plan**. This will be a wonderful project to create a road map of how best to conserve and benefit from our many heritage assets.

If you have a **licensed short term rental** and would like to be listed on the City of Rossland and Tourism Rossland's websites, you must sign a release so we can post your information and direct visitors your way. Please contact info@rossland.ca

Rossland skate park: Many thanks for the fantastic work by all of the volunteers to get the landscaping installed at the new skate park. The park and the landscaping look fantastic. That's People Power at it's most productive!

Rossland Recreation is going green! The 2018 Spring/Summer Recreation Guide can now be found online: info@rossland.ca If you would like a paper copy, please pick one up at City Hall during business hours.

Smoke / Vapour testing of sanitary sewer mains throughout the City. Vapour testing will help to identify possible leaks in the sewer system, and is a very important part of keeping the system running efficiently and reducing costs. The City received significant grant funding for this project. The work was scheduled for July 23, 2018 and July 27, 2018. Official notice was emailed to our mailing list and dropped in everyone's PO Box.

Be in touch! City Hall 362-7396. Contact Council through www.rossland.ca Next Council meeting: **Monday August 16th** at 6pm at **Miner's Hall** Come join us- all are welcome! Public input starts at 6pm where you can briefly share your thoughts, For longer topics, get on the agenda as a delegation. Contact City Hall to learn how.