

Councillor's Report

October 30, 2017

Julia Butler

I was honoured this last week to attend three wonderful events by outstanding organizations in our community. On Thursday, Community Futures celebrated their 25th anniversary with a very informative reception featuring presenters from past and present. It is astounding, the amount of economic development this one group has promoted in Grand Forks over the last 25 years. As well, their retention of employees is a testament to the great work environment that they themselves promote. Steady, consistent support to businesses and individuals over such a long period of time, with loans and programming has made a huge impact in our region. Having to head out of town, I was unable to attend their annual awards night that evening but I would like to extend my congratulations to Ted Invictus, as this year's "Volunteer of the Year"! Council had many amazing nominations to choose from but over all, I had to say that Ted has made the biggest impact in a variety of organizations in Grand Forks and the Boundary.

Last Monday, I showed up to the fire hall, expecting to just go have a look at the new training facility at the airport. I really didn't expect to have the opportunity to don full gear and ride in the truck to put out my first structure fire! Alex from Juice FM and Kate from the Gazette both joined me at the hall along with our fire chief and a crew of guys to give us a crash course in fire fighting. I felt like a child, needing help to get dressed, as we fully suited up in protective clothing, boots, breathing apparatus and helmets. After being fully strapped together, I seriously wondered if I would be able to handle even wearing the whole suit. It was so constricting and claustrophobic not to mention heavy! We jumped in the trucks and headed up to the site. The guys were great at explaining to us the basics of safety and procedure, before lighting up the sea-cans that had been constructed to mimic a house fire. Hose in hand, five of us entered the burning structure that we were told was around 500 degrees. The air from the breathing tank helped to clear the fogged mask and the fire became visible. We stayed low to avoid the thermal layer above our heads that was significantly hotter. Our experienced leader on the hose explained to us, via radio, what he was doing. He had to be careful how he doused the flames so as not to drop the thermal layer down. Then he blasted out the window to create ventilation. After playing with the fire for a while to demonstrate different things, he put it out and we all retreated, ensuring to keep control of the hose which seemed to weigh a hundred pounds and have a mind of its own. With sweat dripping all over, we demasked, debriefed and grabbed some much needed water. I was starting to get used to the uniform but could hardly imagine having to work for hours, doing strenuous labour with it on.

Next, we learned how to work as a team, fan our spray and proceed like a shield up to a burning gas meter. We were successful but our poor leader got drenched by the rookie crew. I was really getting tired with how much the guys kept pulling on the hose! I really thought we should have been moving a bit slower.... until it dawned on me that that hose really did have a mind of its own and I needed to brace myself more and fight back against the immense pressure!

A car fire was next and I tried to listen to directions from my partner over the radio. High temperatures and high prices make communication equipment seem archaic. The guys said they get used to listening for key words and keep chatter to a minimum, in order not to miss calls for help but at a busy scene, I can see how it would really be difficult. I was sad to see the training come to an end and as we stood

asking questions, I for one was relieved I didn't have to do the hardest part. Do you know what they say really determines a true fireman? After drenching in sweat for eight hours or more on a call, dealing with the emotional trauma of any given situation, there is still a couple hours of cleanup back at the hall. The unglamorous task of dealing with hoses and gear, exhausted, at all hours of the day or night is when you really find out if you have what it takes!

I'm truly grateful to Dale, our fire chief for setting up this opportunity. As a councillor it gives me a little glimpse into what takes place behind the scenes and helps build relationships and communication with our staff and volunteers. I warned Dale that now I will be asking many more questions on his reports!

Switching gears, I dashed home to get ready for Gallery 2's AGM. It was a packed house to bid farewell to our long- time curator Ted Fogg and welcome in the new director/curator Tim van Wijk. Terry Woodruff also gave her last financial report to the board, as she moves from her role as director back to being a board member herself. Her professional management has left the organization in good standing financially and she thanked her wonderful staff and volunteers for all pulling together to make it possible. Teresa Rezanoff chaired the meeting and also thanked William Caley for his many years of service to the board, before welcoming in some new members. As with Community Futures, this organization demonstrates its efficiency, with staff retention and retiring members still vouching to stay on as volunteers. After the meeting was adjourned, there was time to take in the art exhibits and get to know everyone a little better. The City of grand Forks donates a lot of money to operate our art gallery but I am happy to promote such a highlight of our city that is run so smoothly despite the constant juggling of priorities. I have full confidence that the teamwork demonstrated by this board will further its success into 2018 and continue to shine as a jewel of the Boundary region!

Respectfully submitted,

Julia Butler