

Councillor's Report

November 14, 2017

Julia Butler

The Rec Commission met on Thursday, November 2 to discuss a variety of topics but most importantly, the 2018 budget. Despite a solid effort by staff, we were not able to reconcile procedures this year with the health inspector for installing a new deck at the pool. The surfacing material we have used in the past, is being rejected province wide and the cost of grinding off three layers of this product and installing tile, saw cost overruns in the hundreds of thousands with no eligible installers able to do the work before our grant funding expired. Because of this needed expense and the cost of implementing an asset management strategy, the Rec Commission will be recommending an increase in our requisition for the 2019 budget. As an increase can only be requested every five years and is required to go to referendum at the RDKB level, the funds for the deck won't be in place now until possibly 2019.

Alternatively, the new wheelchair lift will be finished within budget by the end of February and we will know by the end of the month if The Bruins will be installing an ATM at the arena. This would not only benefit their sales but encourage business at the concession as well. Ultimate Hockey is also coming to the table with a proposal to advertise on the roadside sign, in exchange for rental skates and a monetary contribution. We are very fortunate to have many community partners support our facilities by sponsoring public swimming or skating events. I'm also trying to advocate for a Tropical February event which would see pool and air temperatures rise as well as heat lamps and palm trees on the deck combined with Caribbean music! For years I have heard complaints (myself included) that parents and kids freeze, not having a leisure pool for family play. I have been told that this isn't a cost factor but has to do with health regulations for a lap pool and chlorine requirements for increased bacterial growth. Would attendance increase if temperatures did? I'd like to find out!

On Friday, I attended a meeting of concerned residents at the Gospel Chapel, to discuss homelessness, drug abuse and increasing crime in our community. Many people involved in helping the disenfranchised were present to explain services provided as well as the upcoming plans for the Housing First Initiative. This program combines many important factors other than housing, that are required to help people stay clean, maintain their residences and experience positive social and community involvement. As this wasn't an official meeting of an organization, no minutes were taken and the hosts did their best to include everyone in a respectful way.

What seem to be two diametrically opposed positions are becoming entrenched around this issue in our community. One group views the situation with the utmost compassion for the poor souls who have found themselves in such a difficult situation but are perceived as downplaying the actual damage being done in our town through crime and abuse. The other group views the situation with the utmost contempt for the individuals terrorizing our town with drug deals, violence and theft. Tired of feeling blamed for not preventing the thefts they tend to lack compassion for the homeless in our town. I would suggest that both points of view need to be incorporated to find a long- term solution to the problem.

First of all, we are dealing with human beings who are someone's son, daughter, mother father etc. and we as a country need to find better treatment methods, with higher than a 17% success rate. I fully

support the Housing First Initiative as being one long term solution moving forward but this plan takes time to effect change. As well, I truly believe, that only a renewed value placed back on the family, through multimedia, educational materials in our schools and training for couples on how to have a healthy relationship, will help prevent the abuse and trauma of children, thus preventing them from self medicating as adults. But again, this takes time. The abuse, trauma and addiction witnessed by these children is most often passed on to the next generation and acted out on our streets so, in the meantime, we definitely, as a community, need to find a short-term solution to improve our situation. I am disappointed that council has not yet met with the RCMP to request more police services in our area but am still hopeful this will happen soon. We also need to connect with IHA, to find out how to get more mental health services here - now! Others I have spoken with are requesting a town hall meeting so that everyone has a safe place to voice their concerns and suggestions. I would certainly support this happening as soon as possible.

Other short- term solutions that were brought forward at the meeting included:

Citizens on Patrol – This group would be greatly enhanced by more volunteers. Although they do not confront suspicious situations they are an invaluable set of eyes on the street with a direct line to the RCMP.

Neighbourhood Watch – Councillor Hammett had some excellent suggestions on how to set one up in your area as well as sharing the reasons why it works so well.

Documentation – Writing down serial numbers or taking pictures of valuables so they can be properly identified if stolen. Locking up your possessions, phoning in suspicious activity or even photographing the activity. Although we all remember a time not too long ago when this wasn't required and I certainly begrudge having to lock my door and gate, prevention is partially my responsibility.

Respectfully submitted,

Julia Butler