

Councillor's Report

May 7, 2018

Julia Butler

The 2018 AKBLG conference took place in Fernie this year between April and 18th and 20th. For ease of reading I have summarized the highlights below:

Keynote speaker: Chief Joe Pierre, St Mary's Band

Joe comes from a long line of story tellers and his personable approach made him both informative and interesting to hear. He highlighted the importance of thinking in seven generational thought; both seven generations in the past and seven generations into the future. Coupled with stories of his parents and grandparents growing up on the reserve, was the political climate of the time. While his mother was attending the school, now converted into a prosperous casino, she could look across the small river to see her home but was only allowed to visit a couple times a year. Although the Tnah Ha people have lived there for hundreds of generations with their own rules, organization, place names and governance structure, the federal government made their traditional blood line chiefs illegal and required them to elect their representatives. Although they retain the knowledge of who the bloodline chief is, elections are now held every two years to elect half of the council. This process allows overlap in the four year terms, to provide continuity. It is also noteworthy that Joe and the elders are carrying on their traditional language, which is so important to the identity of a nation.

Plenary Panel Discussion: Learning from Ft. McMurray and other Fire Disasters

A panel of four experts guided us through the four steps in dealing with an EOC event:

- Planning and Preparedness

- Loss Prevention and Risk Mitigation

- Response

- Recovery

Over 70% of the time homes are ignited from falling embers, sometimes in blizzard like spark conditions. The 30-60 m surrounding the home is the ignition zone and landscaping and watering should be planned in such a way as to keep evergreens away from the zone and plants within it green and debris free. More information on how to keep the ignition zone safe, can be found in the "Firesmart Community Recognition Program BC" or "Firesmart in 9 easy steps". <http://gabriolafire.ca/2015/07/firesmart-nine-steps/>

The three key successes for the EOC in the Boundary are:

- Evacuation mapping program

- EOC staff team trained and prepared

Partnered with Red Cross

Cranbrook was the first community in the AKBLG to do an extensive fuel management and treatment study of their surrounding area. In all, 33 000 hectares were identified as needing mitigation. The overall cost for this was estimated at 28 Million, whereas the cost of responding to a fire with a three day evacuation would exceed 51 Million!

As a result of last years wildfires, direct expenditures totalled 568 million and 168 million was spent on emergency management. This however, in no way reflects the total costs of the fires which is too numerable to calculate. As a preventative measure, more prescribed burns are required and many more contractors to perform the work.

Cannabis legalization was again a hot topic for presentations, as our UBCM president updated us on the work of the provincial committee she is involved with, as well as a talk by a legal expert in the field. The province has five key areas they are focussing on: health and safety, decreasing crime and the illegal market, protecting children and youth, addressing impaired driving and supporting economic development. They have done a lot of public engagement in key areas and as a result came to these conclusions:

Minimum age of consumption and purchasing – 19

Personal possession – limit 30g

No open cannabis in vehicles

4 plant limit for home growers – must be hidden (landlords and local governments may restrict)

Distribution will be through the liquor distribution branch, liquor control board will be responsible for licencing, rural stores may sell both pot and alcohol but in urban settings they will be sold in separate stores.

At the federal level there are five committees of the senate making recommendations that will be voted on at the June 7 meeting. This is expected to be followed by a couple weeks of amendments, followed by an eight to twelve week transition period for the provinces, after the new legislation receives royal assent. It won't be until mid September that we see true legalization take place and another twelve months before edible products become legal. The federal government will be responsible for the legislation surrounding packaging, marketing, public awareness campaign, licencing and product type. Bill C 46 will amend the impaired driving laws. Right now, there are four oral screening devices being tested. The UBCM is recommending for municipalities to designate spaces for consumption because right now the provincial laws haven't been finalized and open consumption remains the same as for tobacco. The UBCM is also recommending tax sharing of at least 50% by the province to offset a myriad of costs to cities including increased policing and licencing costs. The FCM has a tool developed for local governments on cannabis legalization. It would prove helpful to us moving forward, in trouble shooting the details, for example, the different regulations for micro producers under 2200sq ft.

<https://fcm.ca/home/issues/emergency-preparedness-and-response/cannabis-legalization/cannabis-legalization-primer.htm>

After the official opening ceremonies on Thursday, we began the AGM business meeting, accepting the agenda, minutes, financial report, draft budget, constitution and bylaw amendments, nominations

report and then debating resolutions. Seventeen resolutions were brought forward. Similar resolutions on speculation tax were combined, as well as scheduling of the legislative assembly, to allow for MLAs to attend area association conventions. Other motions included: Charter changes for interior lot lines, venting index, increased court access, amend criminal justice branch charge assessment guidelines, additional crown lawyers, taxes for fossil fuel companies (defeated), cannabis tax revenue sharing, developing a rural needs act, crown lands for cannabis production, compensation for damages resulting from voltage variations and amendments to the wildlife act.

Following the business meeting, we had a plenary discussion on exercising emergency powers for community evacuation. The AGLG (Auditor General for Local Governments) has a best practices “Perspective Series” that details the four phases of an emergency and also gives guidance to businesses on how to prepare for evacuation. Perhaps this is something that our Chamber or DBA liaison would be interested in discussing with their members. Also discussed, was the communication and coordination between other groups in the community, such as the school district and hospital during an evacuation. Governing legislation for such an event is the Emergency Program Act and the Local Authority Emergency Management Regulation. The RDEK explained how they used U Tube as a tool to publish educational videos last year and they were quite popular. Communities need to plan for managing utilities remotely, as well as payroll. Often families living pay check to pay check can be negatively impacted, if payroll is not completed on time, due to evacuation. Planning for a long-term evacuation also provides unique challenges, as does dealing with people who refuse to evacuate. RCMP cannot make people evacuate and although they may prove successful in saving their properties, more often than not, they get in the way of professionals, prove a danger to themselves and others and can damage essential equipment. Once people are evacuated though, they are not permitted back into the zone.

The possibilities of tech and innovation in emergency management panel, discussed the idea of an open data policy for local governments. Cities are publishing their statistics, studies and other information to allow the public free access without staff time. It is being promoted as a tool for economic development, as companies can easily research before coming into city hall. New Westminster partnered with BCIT to develop apps for better services. A hundred millennials were recruited and developed twenty-five apps to help people gain access to specific city data tailored to their needs.

I did enjoy another session this year on media relations for politicians. Encouragement to be proactive rather than reactive or inactive when sharing information was encouraged. Many other techniques for clear and concise communication were also demonstrated.

On Monday April 3, I attended the Kettle River Watershed Authority’s Public Meeting from 3pm-7:30pm. The implementation of the Kettle River Watershed Management Plan was the priority of the meeting. Coordinator, Jessica Mace did an excellent job of engaging the crowd and communicating their progress. The day started with a site tour, led by Jenny Coleshill, of riparian habitat that is under rehabilitation. Of course, the dynamics of flooding was a hot topic with the crowd as well as the city’s requirements for building in the flood plane. Vegetation along the rivers edge is important habitat but also helps mitigate erosion of property during a flood. Following the tour, we heard presentations from:

Chris Marsh, RDKB Manager of Emergency Programs - Flood Preparation

Jenny Coleshill - Granby Wilderness Society - Importance of Riparian Areas

Rich McCleary - BC Government Regional Drought Manager and Nicole McCallum - Kettle River Watershed Authority Project Officer - Drought Management

Hamish Aubrey - BC Government FLNROD - Groundwater Licencing

Tara White - BC Government FLNROD, Senior Fisheries Biologist - Invasive Bass

I was late for the last regular meeting because I wanted to take the time after the presentations to connect with the First Nations representative from the Okanagan Nation Alliance, of which the Sinixt people are a part. I encouraged her to connect with our council to develop a relationship and discuss land claim issues in our area. Many of the workshops at conventions focus on First Nations/local government relationships but, as of yet, I have not received any communication from the Sinixt people in our area. It would be nice to develop that working relationship.

Finally! Baseball season is upon us and both kids and adults alike have descended upon Angus MacDonald and Dick Bartlett Parks. Unfortunately, many teams have once again been faced with drug paraphernalia and garbage in the dugouts. There has been talk about how the city is going to deal with this issue. I believe public works is in the process of securing the dugouts and would like to ask our manager of operations what is being done, how much it will cost and when the project will be completed? Baseball in Grand Forks is such a great way to get outside this time of year and enjoy the encouragement of team spirit and a few laughs with friends. What if council and staff were to field a team next year?!

Respectfully submitted,

Julia Butler