

Councillor's Report for December 11, 2017
Beverley Tripp

Public Hearing for the OCP Bylaw Amendment and Zoning Bylaw Repeal and Replace

I have been mulling over input we received at the Public Hearing on Monday, November 27th, where a good number of concerned residents turned out to ask questions and provide feedback about the future of land use and housing options for the city of Grand Forks. I am pleased that staff have been vigorously pursuing possible remedies to the severe shortage of affordable housing in our community by bringing forward these proposed changes to the Zoning Bylaw and the OCP. Certainly, something is needed, and that was confirmed by several residents who expressed favour for the proposed changes which largely deal with densification and allowing tiny homes across all residential zones except R-1A. One attendee commented that this is a good start in the right direction. However, other residents expressed valid concerns about how this would change their neighborhoods. They were concerned about what input they would be able to have over these new dwellings, if any? Other questions revolved around form and character, tiny homes on wheels, and when a foundation would be required (after three years). Other issues raised were concerns about diminished values of single large homes; having tiny home development in some areas of the city but not all areas; the need for diversification, and the option of "tiny cluster home" neighborhoods. Someone asked if this is just a fad, and would people find that the building wouldn't meet their needs in the long run (no room for visitors, all our stuff, the baby, the growing family) etc.?

These are all valid concerns and opinions to take into consideration, and I now personally have some questions about the pace we are setting at getting these bylaws changed. We heard some strong cautions from residents that I believe warrant us now having a second look at what areas of the city may, or may not be desirable for tiny home development. Further, I have discovered that a workshop is going to be hosted at the end of January by Community Futures, on behalf of SPARC BC, that addresses housing needs for the Boundary area. At this workshop, a speaker from Stats Canada will provide a breakdown of the figures from the 2016 Census. I believe it would be wise for us to have these hard and firm statistics in hand to better base land zoning decisions on. I am also canvassing some local Realtors to get their thoughts on the impact of tiny homes. Moving forward on this is important, but I want to make the best possible decisions for the benefit of the entire city and hope that we will hold off on the Third Reading until we have this additional information.

Planning Meetings for Building a Safe and Secure Grand Forks

Since my last report, our organizing committee has had a couple of meetings and a lot of email communication back and forth. Plans are coming along nicely for "Building a Safe and Secure Grand Forks," to be held at the Perley Elementary school gym on Thursday, December 14th from 6-8 pm. We are excited about how it will come together to benefit our community, and pave the way for the much-needed, and long overdue community dialogue surrounding issues of increased crime and homelessness in our area. Please plan to attend!

Santa Claus Parade

For the first time, I participated in this festive, and fun kick-off to the Christmas season in Grand Forks. I had a ball throwing copious amounts of candy to waving groups of parade-watchers along the downtown parade route. Even more delightful was seeing the lights turn on for the official light-up at Gyro Park. Once again this year, the City works crew have done a fabulous job of decorating the park! Unfortunately – and I heard that this was quite a disappointment for some – Santa didn't show. But rest assured, he's making his list and checking it twice, so that when he arrives for the girls and boys on Christmas Eve, he'll have just the right toy to deliver!

Meeting with Linda Larson and Service Groups

At the request of MLA Linda Larson, several service agencies in Grand Forks, Sgt. Fenske, and several members of council met with her at Community Futures on Monday, December 4th. The purpose of the meeting was to get as many stakeholders together as possible to discuss issues surrounding homelessness, shelter, and the growing need for services in the Grand Forks area. MLA Larson chaired the meeting to get up to speed on what everyone is doing, and to identify any gaps in funding and servicing initiatives that are currently being discussed among the various stakeholder groups. This was an excellent meeting where some very candid sharing took place over issues of homelessness and services for those in that situation. Sgt. Fenske also provided very helpful information about his detachment's activities and challenges in addressing the criminal element in the community, and the need to remove the drug dealers from town. He will be reiterating some of this same information at the community meeting on December 14th, which I believe will be most helpful for everyone to hear.

Respectfully submitted,

Beverley Tripp