

Councillor Report to 06.11.18 Hammett

Chris

Since the catastrophic event of May 10 much of my time has been spent in the downtown core, picking up and delivering sand bags, and assisting with inventory and fixture removal from flood impacted businesses.

On Monday, May 28 the Downtown Business Association (board and members) were invited to attend a meeting at Community Futures to discuss the immediate and long term impacts due to business closures as a result of the flood, impending second wave, and the long road to recovery. The take-away points from this meeting were:

Community Futures Boundary :

- is offering no interest/no fee short term loans to affected businesses on a case by case basis to cover cashflow,, insurance deductibles, and bridge funding.
- Dealing with government agencies to secure funding
- Working with Go-Fund-Me accounts, including gfcu
- Has a labour force that can assist with moving furniture/fixtures etc
- Connecting with landlords to find alternate locations for displaced businesses

Boundary Country Regional Chamber of Commerce:

- Chambers BC has set up a challenge for all chambers to raise funds to be distributed to businesses impacted by the flood.
- Has found a non-profit that will provide business and household furniture, and a trucking company that will make a one-time trip. They will need a list of items required.
- GF Flooring is part of a buying group that will provide flooring at cost for a limited time to flood damaged buildings.
- Let the chamber know if you have relocated

Downtown Business Association:

- DBA would like information from their members as to what their immediate needs are, and up to the next 3 months.
- Lynn Relph met with MLA Linda Larson who would like a list of businesses who are having trouble with their insurance companies so that our political representatives can put some pressure on them.
- Let the DBA know what you need help with so they can channel this info to the appropriate agency/group.

Immediate challenges:

- Insurance claims being denied
- Some businesses were still without phone or internet
- Property taxes will be due before some businesses are re-opened. Will there be any assistance?
- Some of the streets and sidewalks still need to be hosed and cleaned from contaminated silt
- Some businesses have had their claims approved but their landlords have not, thereby creating a further delay to re-open

There was a very strong turn-out for this meeting and naturally many business owners/landlords were upset and frustrated and looking for re-assurance that remedies are going to be put into place to prevent another event such as this. Nobody wants to rebuild only to find that they are

experiencing this again at some future date. The members wanted a letter drafted to be sent to governments of all levels outlining their needs and concerns.

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*On Wednesday, May 30, representatives from the DBA, BCRCC, City of Grand Forks, RDKB, and CFB met with Ron Burleson, Executive Director for the Provincial Disaster Recovery, Larry Olson, MFLNRO Regional Manager for Regional Economic Operations, Chris Marsh, EOC Manager, Chris Johnson, EMBC regional manager, and Tim from Disaster Relief Funding. The take-aways from this meeting were:*

- The recovery process is a very long process – they are still working on the 2017 fire season recovery
- They’ve looked at recent disasters and created the disaster recovery department to kickstart the recovery process
- Recovery needs to be community lead
- They work with communities to help them access the resources available
- Helps to identify the gaps ie: Red Cross, Salvation Army etc
- Makes recommendations to the province as to what agencies to bring in
- Looking at hiring a community recovery manager/coordinator
- Communication is a challenge. The community manager would be responsible for creating the messages
- A representative from the Insurance Brokers of BC will be invited to attend the next community meeting
- DBA letter of needs and concerns should go to Mike Farnsworth, but share with all agencies present
- The EOC has employed a surveyor to determine the levels of the water throughout the community to assess how to mitigate impacts in the future
- They will connect with other communities to see what resources were available to them with regards to anticipated loss of income, since in some cases the next few months are what drives the bus for the entire year

*I felt that this was a very important meeting because although many questions couldn’t be answered immediately, the representatives from these agencies took these questions with them and will report back with the answers.*

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A Financial Assistance Check List/Survey has been compiled and is being taken around (or emailed) to landlords and business owners to help identify some of the insurance issues, and help the DBA determine just how much financial assistance is required to bring back the economic vibrancy in our downtown core.

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*Further to my Notice of Motion at a previous meeting I would like to bring this motion forward at the June 11 meeting.*

**“That Council instruct staff to research and prepare a report to the COTW, including a draft bylaw, for a revitalization tax exemption for downtown landlords who were impacted by flooding and wish to further improve their structures (interior and/or exterior) that comply with the city’s form and character policy. This tax exemption bylaw will only be available for 5 years and will expire in 2023.”**

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