

## Councillor's Report

June 25, 2018

Julia Butler

It's been a very busy couple of weeks since our last meeting. Council has met informally on numerous occasions with residents and staff to discuss the ongoing recovery efforts and regular business of the city. Communications have definitely improved as we continue to tackle so many daunting issues. Our CAO has been great at sitting down and talking candidly with council about the progress being made at the EOC. The big questions that I keep hearing from residents are regarding temporary housing options, preparations for next spring's freshet and long-term city planning issues for Ruckle and the downtown core.

I attended a neighbourhood-organized meeting in North Ruckle, as well as the EOC-organized meetings in North and South Ruckle and the high school. Land toxicity was a big concern for the residents in North Ruckle and at the EOC community meeting, the representative from the Ministry of Environment tried to address the concern by promising a study that would be completed by the end of July. I was happy to hear that the concerns of the people had already been looked into by the ministry and would be explored further but the timelines I felt were too long and didn't give people the assurance they needed, while cleaning up their properties. Soil testing was requested immediately but the ministry felt it wasn't urgent. Although discussion became heated and staff was definitely under fire from residents emotionally torn by situations they face, I felt there was a lot of good information shared at all three of the meetings I attended. There was also a definite sense of neighbourhood comradery and caring that will help carry people through. The prayer flags made by the school children that are now hanging in the affected areas are really touching. Thanks to the teachers who put this project together.

I was asked this week: "What would we have done if Samaritan's Purse hadn't shown up?" Why is there no provincial or federal response to help home owners with the clean up process? Great questions I thought! Although I wasn't able to meet with the premier on his short visit to town, I do feel that the \$2800, offered monthly, to affected families will be a huge help. After the meeting at the high school, I spoke with the representative from BC Housing to find out why we haven't received any temporary housing units yet. I was impressed with his knowledge of responses in other disaster areas in Canada and around the world. He openly shared with me the many variables and pitfalls in supplying housing. Because of these variables, he felt that the premier's gesture of cash was the most effective way of allowing people to make their own choices around housing. Even though we have such a shortage of rentals and hotel space, he suggested that people renting RVs for the short term was the best way to go. Long term, I have confidence that the housing committee on the recovery team being formed by the EOC will have better solutions in place.

On the 18<sup>th</sup>, staff held an open house at city hall, to give the public an opportunity to come down and ask questions about the changes to our zoning bylaw. I attended with councillor Tripp and it was a great opportunity for us to get a deeper understanding of not only the people's concerns but also the rationale used by staff, in the changes proposed. Changes included zoning for cannabis production and distribution, as well as minor changes to allow mobile homes in flood affected areas. The public hearing held that night was a statutory requirement to allow official input from the community on the same

topics. Residents attending the public hearing only made statements on the zoning for cannabis. From what I heard at the open house and the public hearing I would like to put forward a notice of motion:

***That council direct staff to create a smoking bylaw to address the open public consumption of cannabis prior to legalization.***

Because of the flooding, the Rec Commission had not met in a couple months until June 14<sup>th</sup>. We welcomed Susan Routley as a new member at large. Susan is a long-time resident, with a background in education and a passion for the pool and arena. Kristy Luke attended as a delegation to give council an update on the learning garden and to request flood relief for the Kung Fu group who have been displaced from the Senior's Centre due to the flood. The Commission recognised that we may have other groups needing to use the viewing room and discussed how to fairly price the room for different groups while still providing flood relief. We decided to send the request to staff to see about running the program in house, to also help them with insurance requirements. The contract for the facility assessment study was awarded and extended to include the curling rink as well. The quote came in well under budget and will be 50% grant funded. The pool will soon be on the summer schedule and a special swim rate will be implemented for families on Tuesday evenings. Warm water weekends have also been a success and will be continued starting again in September. Unfortunately, the flood has resulted in another event being cancelled for the year. The triathlon at Christina Lake will not take place, due to lack of registration. The Woman's Fast Pitch tournament did go ahead though and was another huge success! Five teams competed at the Rock Creek Fair grounds from the 15<sup>th</sup> -17<sup>th</sup> and the Grand Forks Rattlers took home the trophy after a highly competitive and fun filled weekend. Slow pitch finals are also getting under way in Grand Forks with an eleven team, single elimination knock out.

I look forward to seeing everyone down at Gyro Park on July 1<sup>st</sup>, for this year's Canada Day celebrations and a day to celebrate our community spirit and resiliency!

Respectfully submitted,

Julia Butler