

## Councillor's Report

August 20, 2018

Julia Butler

The past couple weeks have been filled with public meetings. On July 25<sup>th</sup>, I attended the economic development meeting at the curling rink. Many provincial reps were there to discuss and answer questions from the business community. Ron Broson, lead of the BC economic development branch discussed how cross agency groups were developed last year, after the wildfires to deal with recovery. This strategy is again being employed. Joanna Morrow from DFA discussed how missing documentation is slowing down payouts. She also explained assistance to small business that is run by the owner and the main source of income and assistance to farm owners. First they ask: Could the losses have been insured? Or available through another program? Larry Olsen told us that money for marketing and an events coordinator for Grand Forks will be coming soon. The Assistant Deputy Minister for Disaster Recovery was also present to address the crowd and then our own Cavin Gates opened it up to the floor to answer the question: What are your next steps that are preventing you from recovery? Some of the responses received were: MONEY!! - Lots of businesses have applied for DFA but none have received any funding. DFA stated that to date 1.7 Million has been paid out for residential claims. Businesses also required better advertising. Paul from the bowling alley needs people to fix up the alley because he is busy fixing his house. He said GO FUND ME has been very helpful.

On July 25<sup>th</sup>, I also attended the town hall meeting at the high school. The recovery team gave their update and options derived from the hydrology report were given by the recovery manager. Unfortunately, the information presented was far too vague and residents left with very little information on what council was considering moving forward. After the meeting all councillors felt we wanted to rectify this situation and decided to call a special in camera meeting to discuss the best way to engage the public before the next regular meeting. We were told by staff that the town hall meeting was vague because the hydrology report had not yet been presented to the RDKB board and moving forward the public would be far better informed. After getting a good grasp of the situation with Dobson Engineering, we had meetings with the individual neighbourhoods affected and Mr Dobson to explain the option for them and gather their independent view of what they want to see for their future. These are hard conversations to have and I really want the people affected, to be the ones to decide their future every step of the way. Weekly updates from the recovery team have also been helpful and although we are all frustrated with the snail's pace things are moving at, the complexities of each situation does require immense coordination and planning.

The topic of forestry practices was brought up at a couple of the meetings and although it isn't being given a lot of focus at this point in time, I believe that long term, we will have to address this issue. We have a systemic problem and an intricate connection between the health of our forests and the health of our rivers. Right now, I see us putting a band-aid on our initial injury of the flood. We need to address immediate dangers first by keeping people safe, warm and dry for this year. Long term, we need to decide on moving or rebuilding houses above the new Q200 flood level and on appropriate places for diking. Within this longer range vision, I believe that we also need to look at hiring a forest hydrologist to determine the health of our watershed and then take those results to the provincial

government to help them make decisions on how to better prevent flooding in our area. With fire season now upon us, more forest is being destroyed and roots that previously held the ground together will soon be gone, increasing the silt and gravel washed down into the riverbeds. With the different recovery team leaders, I believe we are already taking a holistic approach to this situation. The provincial government has corresponding people to work with each of our team leads and I'm hoping that as time goes on, the environmental portion of the recovery team will be paramount in focussing on the health of our forests, while balancing the health of our economy.

The Rec Commission is not meeting for the summer, so I have nothing new to report in this area. Our next meeting is scheduled for September.

Respectfully Submitted,

Julia Butler