

Councillor's Report for August 20, 2018

During the past month, I have been continuing to advocate for residents affected by the May flood by promoting public engagement and personally visiting residents in, and from the flooded areas. During the month of July, I visited with several families who were residing on their properties in North and South Ruckle, seeking to understand their situations and hear their individual concerns. I discovered that these residents had been working tirelessly to clean and restore their homes to livable conditions. Some, in fact, were already living in their homes. Others were in various stages of repair and waiting for building permits to proceed further. I was able to let these people know that there was a community meeting scheduled for July 25th where they should receive preliminary information about the hydrology report that had been presented to Council by Don Dobson, the hydrologist hired by the Provincial Government.

Business Update Meeting

Prior to the evening Community Flood Update meeting on July 25th, I attended a Business Update meeting at the Curling Rink from 1-4 pm. There was a great turn-out of business owners seeking information about how to rebuild, and questioning where they could tap into funding to help in the process. Provincial Government representatives comprising a cross-agency group to assist with economic recovery were present to explain funding avenues to pursue for small businesses and farms. Dave Wheeldon, from the BC Economic Disaster Recovery Program outlined a plan for recovery that includes additional capacity, i.e. a paid resource person to work on economic development, along with a development project that would include a community center. This is very good news for our city and the surrounding area, and one that ties in nicely with Community Futures' current community center feasibility study that is already underway.

The DFA were also on hand to respond to business owners' questions, of which there were many. Many of the business owners were quite distressed and overwhelmed, and their urgent requests for financial assistance was overwhelmingly expressed, along with the need for updated legislation that proves helpful in times of crisis. Dave Peterson, Assistant Deputy Minister for the Provincial Recovery Program spoke about looking for ways to line up the needs with existing funding programs. The Province doesn't have a game plan for flood recovery, he said, but they want to work with businesses to help them get back on their feet. It is also important to note that **EVERYONE HAS UNTIL AUGUST 22nd** to file for DFA assistance.

Third Community Flood Update Meeting – July 25th 2018

During the evening meeting held at the GFSS High School auditorium, residents were given a general overview of flood recovery proceedings. People were informed that options being considered were: Full diking protection; return some areas to flood plain, raise homes to the 200 year flood level, and a canal by the airport. Numbers were being crunched, and Council would have something in front of the public soon. Some further general information was shared by each of the recovery team leads, but specific information about the flood and how it affected the community was, unfortunately not shared at that meeting, and there were more questions asked than answers given. People were visibly frustrated, and I was very disappointed because several of the questions brought forward at the meeting could have been answered had the hydrology report been shared. Afterward, I called together the other councillors who were present to discuss why the results of the hydrology report were not made public as had been given direction to do. We then collectively decided to hold an emergency meeting of Council, and the

result of that meeting was that each affected neighborhood would be met with individually prior the next public Flood Recovery Update on August 8th to present the hydrology report findings and give them a chance to debate the options that were being recommended for their particular area.

Neighborhood Update Meetings

Those meetings took place on Tuesday, August 7th, and on Wednesday, prior to the public update meeting on August 8th. In all, four very well attended, and highly productive meetings took place for the residents and businesses from the worst flooded neighborhoods (North Ruckle, South Ruckle, Johnson Flats, and the downtown business community.) It was very gratifying to hear the voices of business owners and residents expressing their views about what they wanted and how they would like to move forward. Residents were asked to consider two simple questions: What impact do these options have on you, and how can you work to make {this} happen?

For North Ruckle, options being considered are:

- Relocate the community and buy out properties
- Dike the community and rebuild everything to the new 200 year flood plain level.

For South Ruckle, the option presented was to build diking protection and rebuild homes at the new flood construction level, along with some properties being returned to non-residential, being considered too low to rebuild. Surprisingly to me, when a general vote was taken, each of the North and South Ruckle groups voted in the majority for a property buy-out. **However, it was noted that a survey would be going out to each home owner to respond to, and that Council would not make any final decisions until after the survey results were received and considered.** It was also reiterated that it would take a few years before any option would be substantially completed. In the interim, people must be provided with accommodations that keep them safe, warm and dry.

For the business community, diking protection and underground internal drainage works that will prevent water back up were identified as needful. New diking levels will need to be established, as well as new storm drains put in. Short-term plans should include continuous power capability during a flood event, and pumps on hand and running. Some businesses on the east side of the new diking will either be bought out, or the property will be raised and the river bank armoured.

The Johnson Flats meeting took place on Wednesday afternoon. This group was presented with the option of rebuilding damaged homes that warrant rebuilding to the new flood plain construction levels, doing some dike armoring, or relocation of homes outside the flood plain in a buy-out scenario. There is no question that all options would be long, complex, unusual and disruptive. That's why it is so important to have those affected give input.

Fourth Community Flood Update Meeting – August 8th 2018

Don Dobson presented the hydrology report findings through a power point presentation that included maps which showed the devastation of the flooding and proposed diking works, and other suggested options for the neighborhoods in question. After his presentation, there was time for many questions from the well over 100 people present in the audience. Neighborhood relocation and property buy-outs, as well as the ramifications of diking certain areas over others were discussed, with acknowledgement that final diking placement and designs have not been made and consideration needs to be given to the social impacts of the proposed solutions. Grace MacGregor, Director for Area C was present, and she thanked participants who brought up issues germane to the regional district and Area D, who also experienced devastation due to the flooding. One specific issue for the outlying areas is the wood debris that is now in the Kettle and Granby rivers, and how that needs to be dealt with.

Information Gathering

Council has also been in receipt of other reports for information, including the BC Economic Development Association's report, the "2018 Grand Forks Economic Disaster Recovery Program," a draft program overview for a "Flood Recovery Housing Strategy," and a "Summary of Needs" assessment for families displaced and in need of housing. These documents need to be further analyzed, but they, along with the hydrology report and input from flood-impacted residents and businesses, form the basis for a good foundation from which to begin to formulate more tangible and concrete plans and "asks" of the Province.

Council hopes to be able to determine the direction going forward, and have some recommendations to make public and take to the Province by the September 4th meetings of council.

Respectfully submitted,

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