

Grand Forks Social Service Advisory Group Oct. 22, Oct. 30 and Nov. 7

This hard-working committee has met three times since the last Council meeting. At the top of the agenda is the identification of a location and a provider for an emergency shelter. Members of the committee have written letters to area churches as well as other NGO's inviting them into the conversation of sharing space and resources for this winter's shelter. Letters have also been sent to regional and provincial service providers to seek their services managing the shelter. At the request of city staff, an informal count was made from three different sources. The Blessings Boutique identified 25 of their clients as needing a roof this winter. The security contractor identified 7 individuals as 'sleeping rough' on public property. Finally, last year's record from the Warming Center showed a steady enrollment of 10-12 individuals every night the shelter was open. Staff also were able to clarify zoning challenges and to present some of the criteria for evaluating potential locations. This past week, Council and staff have been discussing the use of two venues operated by the Interior Health: the old Women's Transition House and the old Mental Health building on 3rd. There are serious limitations with both sites. Meanwhile, BC Housing has made it clear that there are three requirements for their funding an emergency shelter: a location, a provider, and a motion of Council approving the arrangement. I am confident that the people around this table will achieve their objectives and provide an advisory service on the many social issues confronting our community in the years ahead.

The Recreation Commission Oct. 22

The first hour of this meeting was taken up with a presentation of the Urban Arts proposal for a Community Center. The commission was impressed with the detailed planning and long-term vision. The public can expect to hear more about this exciting proposal in the year ahead. The balance of the meeting was a discussion of the shortcomings of Bylaw 932 which is the bylaw that establishes the representation and role of the Recreation Commission. One of the frustrations of the current situation is the lack of a 'Recreation and Culture Committee' that the City's representative is supposed to come from. Not only does this committee not exist, but many of the historic functions of that committee have fallen to the Rec Commission staff who now program city ball fields and district gymnasiums. It is hoped that there will be closer liaison with city staff around bigger events such as the Fall Fair and Cannafest.

The Gilpin Grasslands Oct 25

Anyone who has lived in this town for the past two decades knows the controversy about agricultural and recreational use on this fragile ecosystem. In 2008, after months of public consultation and debate the Ministry of the Environment published a draft Wildlife Management Plan for the Gilpin-Morrissey area. Although some of the recommendations of this plan were implemented, a plan to manage the grasslands for wildlife values was not adopted. In a field trip to Lost Lake with Barry Brandow, four councilors got to see firsthand how volunteers are managing to preserve these grasslands and return some areas to natural vegetation.

Remembrance Day

Although I could not attend this year's ceremony, I wish to acknowledge the service of our countrymen in our military. I have always been especially proud of how our community gathers so respectfully and quietly around our cenotaph each year. Young and old watch solemnly as once again the country acknowledges its debt and vows to struggle onward for the sake of peace.