

NEWS *letter*



M.D. of Bighorn

Issue 31, December 2011

2011 – The Year in Review

The year started off with a two day Council visioning session shortly after New Year’s Day: the new Councillors took time to get to know one another, and put forward their thoughts on the long-range view of the M.D., at the facilitated session. The session was also important for the understanding of the M.D.’s financial position, and went a long ways to addressing some of the 2011 budget concerns that the new Councillors had.

Unfortunately, the two major projects that were anticipated to wrap up in 2010 were not completed, by year’s end, and carried on into 2011: work on the Exshaw water project was continuing, well into the late summer/early fall period, while the Township Road 252 project in West Jumpingpound is taking longer than anticipated, due to some unforeseen problems. While the Exshaw water project is not completely finished (some site work remains to be done, at the time of writing, in and around the reservoir site), the M.D. is pleased to note that 55 properties have hooked up and are now receiving water from a municipal source, and that nearly all of the streets in Exshaw have been resurfaced with new asphalt, as the streets were rehabilitated following excavation to install the waterlines.

Upgrades to the M.D. office building have commenced: a new heating/ventilation/air-conditioning system was recently installed to

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Holiday Office Hours

The M.D. offices will be closed, for the Christmas/New Year’s stat holidays, at the following times:

Monday, December 26th	Closed
Tuesday, December 27th	Closed
Monday, January 2nd	Closed

For emergency situations involving roads or municipal utilities/facilities, please call 403~673~3611 in the Bow Valley, and Calgary Direct 403 233~7678 and you will be directed to a 24 hour line. All other emergencies, please call 911.

replace the 23 year old unit that had worn out: while there are still some bugs to work out of the new unit, we remain optimistic that the climate inside the building will be vastly improved. The office addition, which comprises of four new offices for current staff (who are currently crowded into the front end of our building) will be commencing shortly.

Work is continuing on the development of a new Municipal Development Plan: the steering committee kicked off the project earlier in 2011, and has progressed rapidly in getting a document drafted. It is anticipated that the new M.D.P will be ready by mid-year in 2012.

The M.D.'s emergency response was severely tested in mid-July, with a large wood-fire at the Francis Cooke Landfill, just east of Exshaw. A large pile of wood that had been stockpiled for recycling caught fire: it took fire-fighting forces from the M.D., Rocky View County, the Town of Canmore, Townsite of Redwood Meadows, Kananaskis Fire Department, Sustainable Resource Development (their aerial attack as well as ground crews), and a number of private contractors approximately four days to extinguish the fire. The fire was also a good test of the Exshaw water system, as water-trucks were filling from that system regularly through the four days, drawing a considerable amount of water for fire-fighting purposes.

Council continued to be sensitive to an uncertain provincial/global economy, as the municipal tax picture again reflected restraint: while the municipal residential/farmland taxation rate went from 1.5191 in 2010 to 1.555832 in 2011, the total municipal taxes, on residential/farmland, in 2011 was only \$19,400 more than the previous year (\$586,064 in 2011; \$566,664 in 2010).

There were fifteen Council meetings this year (12 regular, 2 special and the annual Organizational meeting), and only five public hearings. Seventeen bylaws were either passed or considered in 2010: five planning ones, five financial ones (taxation rate, a tax-exemption, fee schedule, and two local improvement-related ones), and seven board/committee/commission terms of reference bylaws.

The M.D. lost a valued long-time member this past year: Hugh Pettigrew, who served just over ten years as the Director of Operations, left to take a similar position with the M.D. of Foothills. Hugh was an integral part of the M.D. team, and was responsible for many changes and upgrades in our municipality, such as the first municipal water system (in Harvie Heights), a new fire hall in Benchlands, street improvements in a number of areas, and other innovations. He will be missed.

M.D. Welcomes New Director of Operations

The M.D. is pleased to welcome Bill Luka, P.Eng., as the new Director of Operations. Bill replaces Hugh Pettigrew, who has gone to the Municipal District of Foothills as their Deputy Director of Public Works & Engineering, after ten years with Bighorn.

Bill brings considerable experience to the position, having worked eight years in the municipal public works/engineering sector (with the Town of Canmore and the City of Red Deer) and another eight years in the private sector (with Ledcor Industrial and engineering firm Urban Systems Ltd.) His history includes knowledge and experience in streets/roads, development management, water/waste-water operations, and other municipal public works.

A resident of Canmore, Bill will be starting with the M.D. in the middle part of December.

Council Briefs

Council activity from the August, September, October 2011 Council meetings

(Please note that unadopted Council minutes, in their entirety, are usually posted on the M.D. web-site within a week of the Council meeting being held. Go to www.M.D.bighorn.ca/, and click on "Minutes" under Virtual Bighorn on the right hand side of the page.

In the October 2011 Organizational meeting, Council re-appointed Dene Cooper from Ward One as Reeve, and Erik Butters from Ward Four as Deputy Reeve. There were very few changes on the M.D.'s Organizational Chart, as far as assignments and membership were concerned: the Organization Chart is attached to the October 11 Organization meeting minutes, and can be viewed on the M.D.'s web-site.

Council received two delegations during the fall meeting schedule: Mr. Richard Pauls of EcDev Solutions came forward to answer questions regarding his company's proposal on completing the Business directory and import substitution projects, as the next steps in the M.D.'s Sustainable Economic Development/Tourism Strategy, and a trio of representatives from the Bow Valley Waste Management Commission provided an update of the Commission's current operations and future potential growth areas, which include the possible addition of a kitchen organics waste compost facility, bio-solid composting and development of an improved recycled asphalt product.

Council later accepted the proposal from EcDev Solutions as amended, for completion of the business directory and import substitution parts of the Sustainable Economic Development / Tourism Strategy report.

Council completed a thorough review of all its Board/Committee/Commission mandates and terms of reference: the process, which began back in March, saw eight new bylaws passed, re-establishing/revising the terms of reference for the Municipal Planning Commission, the Subdivision/Development Appeal Board, the Heritage Resources Committee, the Agricultural Services and Environmental Advisory Board, the

Community Services Board, the Weed Notice Appeal Committee, the Municipal Excellence Committee, the Bighorn Corridor Environment Committee, the Finance & Economic Development Committee, and the Streets and Roads Committee. Two other bylaws were dealt with, during this period: a bylaw was approved to grant tax-exempt status to Kings Fold Retreat, a centre on Highway 40 that provides a place for rest, renewal and spiritual discovery, and all three readings were given to a bylaw to amend the Exshaw Industrial Park water and waste-water local improvement bylaws, to recognize changes that may come about when properties are subdivided in the Industrial Park. The amendment ensures that, when any Industrial Park property is subdivided, any applicable local improvement taxes will be also be adjusted, with the appropriate costs being equally split between the properties created by subdivision.

An issue of major concern was still on Council's agenda during the fall period: the Legacy Trail extension continued to be discussed by local elected officials, who are concerned over the long-term ramifications of the Trail extension through the M.D. (the last issue of the M.D. newsletter had a considerable explanation of the situation). M.D. Council passed a resolution indicating the that Bighorn could support only the "South Side Solution" for the Legacy Trail connection/continuance, being a paved trail constructed on the south-side of the Trans Canada Highway from the trail's current terminus at the Banff National Park gates to the Travel Alberta Information Centre site in Canmore. Council also withdrew its earlier resolution, which indicated it would agree in principle to the M.D. taking ownership and maintenance responsibility for that portion of the Rocky Mountain Legacy Trail that is proposed to be built within the Municipal District between the Banff National Park East Gate and the existing trail in Harvie Heights on the condition that the M.D. of

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Bighorn not be responsible for the associated proposed pedestrian bridge over the Trans-Canada Highway.

Council established the date of January 26, 2012 as the date for the Public Auction of Tax Recovery Properties, with the Public Auction to be held at the M.D. Administration Office in Exshaw. While at the current time there are five properties on the list, often the outstanding taxes are paid in full before the auction date, and the auction is cancelled.

Although it will be the M.D.'s turn to host the Central Alberta Association of Municipal District & Counties' (CAAM.D.&C) fall zone meeting in 2012, the M.D. formally requested consent to switch hosting dates with Wheatland County, which is scheduled to host the 2013 Fall Zone meeting. The CAAM.D.&C, which is comprised of thirteen rural municipalities and three special areas stretching across central Alberta, generally brings about a hundred delegates together for a single day session, in the spring and fall, prior to the full AAM.D.&C conventions in Edmonton. The M.D. requested the change, as 2013 will mark Bighorn's twenty-fifth anniversary of incorporation, and it will be a chance to host the CAAM.D.&C during the celebrations.

The M.D. will have a new contractor providing summer and winter road maintenance in the North and South Ranchlands area. Al Saunders Contracting & Consulting Inc. was awarded both contracts, previously held by two other contractors, for a three year period commencing in mid-October of this year.

While the Exshaw water system has been functioning for a while now, there are still some issues to deal with: one of the two contractors is still working on minor concerns, such as paving and landscaping at the reservoir site. In the discussions around the system, and general conversation of looking for another well-site, in case problems occur with the current site, concern arose over the continuing functioning of the system, should some catastrophic incident occur. Council has asked staff to continue to research the

reliability of the Exshaw Water System, and develop contingencies appropriately.

Also with respect to the Exshaw water project, Council accepted the BDO Dunwoody draft Construction Compliance Audit report regarding the Water Project Construction Contracts, as presented/discussed. The M.D. had asked its auditors to conduct a special audit of the construction contracts and all associated invoices on the \$13,000,000 project, to ensure due diligence had been completed. The auditors reported that, with the exception of a couple of minor errors, the expenditures had been properly carried out under the contracts.

Council has awarded a contract to undertake the Municipal District of Bighorn's heritage management plan to Donald Luxton & Associates Inc. This is the third stage in the Municipal Heritage Partnership Program: the management plan will focus on what the M.D. should do to recognize and protect its heritage inventory, among other things. The costs of the work will be \$30,000, which is split between the M.D. and the Province, each paying 50% of the cost.

The Bow Corridor Ecosystem Advisory Group's (BCEAG) Wildlife Corridor and Habitat Patch Guidelines for the Bow Valley were before Council for consideration of approval; however, Council has tabled consideration until the land swap with the Province of Alberta is complete. The M.D. has been working with the Province on exchanging municipal lands around Dead Man's Flats (lands which are recognized as being Wildlife Corridor/Habitat Patch lands but retain developable lands status at the current time) for other developable lands in the valley. Council has determined that the draft Guidelines will have to wait until the exchange is complete.

Council agreed to reintroduce the development of an East Regional Transfer Site at Dead Man's Flats, to the Bow Valley Waste Management Commission. The Commission has been searching for a site for a transfer station for a number of years now, and has received grant dollars from the

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Province, to develop a site. The M.D.'s suggested possibility, at Dead Man's Flats, is a considerable distance east of the existing developed hamlet, and would not bring traffic through the community.

With the departure of the former Director of Operations Hugh Pettigrew, Council appointed Bylaw Enforcement Officer/Fire Chief Rick Lyster as the M.D.'s Director of Emergency Management (formerly Director of Disaster Services). The Director of Disaster Services was a function that was assigned to the Director of Operations: it was felt that this function would be a better fit within the Fire Chief's role.

Following receipt of a proposal from a party that has interests in the BHB lands at Dead Man's Flats, Council directed Administration to meet with the Town of Canmore to discuss the feasibility of, and conditions to, connecting the Hamlet of Dead Man's Flats to the Town's water and sewer system. The M.D. has been examining

services to the hamlet, and recently completed a servicing master plan for Dead Man's Flats; however, the cost of providing a new water system, and a new tertiary-level waste-water treatment plant, would place a considerable cost burden on the hamlet.

Finally, a public hearing on the M.D.'s proposed annexation of lands from Rocky View County was slated for November 8th, to occur just before the regular Council meeting of the month. The M.D. is looking to acquire jurisdiction over approximately 70 acres of land in Rocky View County, resulting from the construction of Township Road 252, which services only M.D. residents.

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Winter Road Maintenance

As the white stuff starts to come down and stick to the ground, our snow maintenance contractors are in place and ready to respond: Volker Stevin will be once again providing snow maintenance throughout the Bow Corridor and this year we have a new contractor, ASC (Al Saunders Contracting), who will be undertaking snow maintenance operations in both the South and North Ranchlands CMA's (Contract Maintenance Area). For the reason that ASC is new to the area the M.D. asks all municipal residents to please bear with us as during this time, (as with any new contractor) delays and missed areas may arise

In accordance with M.D. bylaws, property owners/vehicle operators must not block or obstruct any municipal roads, so please park where designated and away from driving lanes to allow for effective snow removal. Your assistance in this matter is much appreciated and will make the roads better for everyone.



Should you need additional information in this matter please feel free to contact the M.D.'s Operations department or the M.D.'s Bylaw Enforcement/Safety Codes Officer, at 403-673-3611 (or 403-233-7678 Calgary direct) during office hours.

Please drive carefully and have a safe winter season

Financial Notes

A Day in the Life...

Our receptionist picks up the mail and while opening envelopes, comes across one containing a cheque from ABC Limited. She tries to ring in the payment, but finds ABC Limited is not in our records and the cheque does not contain a telephone number or any information about why it has been sent. The envelope only contained the cheque.

She makes her way around the office, asking everyone if they know why ABC Limited is sending the M.D. a cheque, but no one knows. M.D staff have no choice but to return it to the sender, asking for clarification. A couple of weeks pass and one day the cheque turns up in the mail again, only this time it includes a note that the payment is for the owner's, Mrs. Jones', personal utility account in her name, and includes the account number. Who knew?

By this time the payment is late and a 6% penalty has been applied.

We like a good mystery, but when payments are received without any indication of the account they are to be applied to, we are stumped. We have no choice but to return the payment asking for clarification.

To avoid having your payment returned and penalties potentially applied for late payment, please make sure to include the tear-off portion of your notice/bill or mark your payment with your account number so we can be sure to credit the correct account, and in a timely manner.

Tax Payment Reminder

In August the M.D. of Bighorn sent reminder letters to those whose taxes for 2011 have not been paid and who aren't on our monthly direct debit payment program (TIPPS). Thank you to those who have since paid their taxes. If you haven't, remember that any unpaid tax account balance after December 31, 2011 will be subject to a 9% penalty on January 1, 2012.

**Are you moving?
Do you receive a bi-monthly
utility bill from the M.D.?**
*If you answered yes to both of
these questions, then we need to
hear from you.*

When people move, they inform their other utility providers, but often forget to inform the M.D., which bills for water and/or sewer services every two months in the hamlets of Harvie Heights, Dead Man's Flats, and Exshaw. The other utility providers do not inform us of your pending move; it is up to you to do so.

You are responsible for the utilities up until the day you move, so please call us and let us know that you will be moving, the last day you are responsible for the utilities, and your new address to send the final bill.

Want to know how the M.D. did Financially in 2010?

The audited 2010 financial statements can be found under the finance section on our website, M.D.bighorn.ca. If you have any questions about them, we encourage you to contact our finance department.

Do You Know Who Is Buried In Exshaw?

Many of you may not know that there is an old cemetery just west of Exshaw. It was in use from 1906 to 1935, after which time it was replaced by the cemetery in Canmore. The M.D. of Bighorn's Heritage Resource Committee has been pursuing information on the Exshaw Cemetery over the last year in order to secure the cemetery's history before it is lost. We have combed old Improvement District files, Exshaw school projects information from the late 1970's, brought in microfiches of old Rocky Mountains Park of Canada records, as well as used the information from the book "Exshaw Heart of the Valley" by Alexander and Cooper (2005). We are still checking with Canmore Catholic, United and Presbyterian churches to see if they may have old funeral records from 1905 to 1935 that may include Exshaw residents.

In August of this year staff of Lafarge Canada Inc. and the M.D. of Bighorn visited the cemetery to photograph and GPS (record the locations using satellite positioning technology) the remaining grave markers that could be found. There is no complete plan of all the graves and having these locations would be a good place to start. Staff at Lafarge Canada Inc. has asked its retiree group to provide any more information they can add to our list if they can.



Unmarked graves

We believe there were approximately 70 people buried there but few graves are still marked. The cemetery was in use from 1905 to 1925, with additional children's burials in 1929 and 1935. A large number of the occupants were children and adults who died during flu pandemics.

Major restorations of the cemetery were undertaken by Lafarge Canada Inc. in 1984 and 2003 when it was surrounded by a chain link fence and a plaque was posted listing some of the names of those buried there. The site is largely overgrown now with many aspen and pine trees as well as thick grass and bushes, and the M.D. plans to work with Lafarge and Public Lands to determine a long term maintenance program. The Cemetery sits on Crown land in an unused area of the quarry with roads on three sides.

Access is restricted, due to quarry safety concerns, but



Commemorative Plaque located near Exshaw Cemetery

visits can be arranged by contacting Lafarge Canada Inc.

We invite the public to view some of the information and photos collected on this M.D. website. On the M.D.'s website menu go to Historic Resources Committee/Historic Resources/ Exshaw Cemetery or just type in <http://www.M.D.bighorn.ca/content/2406/2410/2809/3160/default.aspx>. If you do not have internet access, ask Ulrika Gillespie at the M.D. office for the list of information.

If you or anyone you know can add to our knowledge base about the cemetery, please contact the M.D. office (ph: 403-673-3611). Your help would be most appreciated.

Bighorn's History

Heritage Resources Management Plan

Council recently hired Donald Luxton and Associates Inc. to work with Bighorn's Heritage Resources Committee to prepare a heritage resources management plan. The management plan is the third phase of Alberta Culture and Community Spirit's Municipal Heritage Partnership Program. The management plan will analyze what the status is of the M.D.'s Heritage resources and how best to move forward in achieving the M.D.'s goals of preservation and celebration of our heritage. There will be a public open house and online survey to determine the importance and values collectively placed on heritage in the area; to build public awareness of local heritage conservation efforts; and set goals and priorities based on public input. We will provide more information about that later, once the timing is worked out.

Collecting Oral Histories

Additionally, the Heritage Resources Committee will soon begin to collect oral histories from a few of Bighorn's residents. The Committee members feel that it is important to collect stories from seniors and others who have a good knowledge of the M.D. of Bighorn area, and they are eager to get this project underway. The Heritage Resources Committee intends to start small, with just a few interviews, and hopes that the oral history project can grow once the management plan is completed.

If you have any questions or comments about these two projects, please contact Ulrika Gillespie at the office or email ulrika.gillespie@M.D.bighorn.ca

2012 Dog Licenses – A Good Reason to Get One

M.D. of Bighorn dog licenses are due December 30th. Licenses are still only \$20 if your dog is spayed or neutered, and \$100 if they're not. If you have not licensed your dog before, we will need proof of spay or neuter along with a 2012 dog application from either Bighorn's website or office. This is a small price to pay to help ensure your dog finds its way home safely if it is lost and we find it.

Here is a little story of a recent lost dog in Bighorn

For about a week, a dog was spotted roaming around Exshaw. Bighorn staff was able to catch this very friendly dog, but as it had no tags and wasn't licensed, we had to take it to the Humane Society. As it turns out, the owner had been looking for it, but had not informed the office. If the dog had been licensed, and we'd been contacted, Bighorn would have been able to return it much sooner.

We are also aware that several times people have posted a lost dog notice on Facebook, but haven't informed our office. It is important to make sure that Bighorn has the information so we can help you get your furry friend home sooner.

