Municipal Update

Friday, January 22, 2016

From the Mayor's Desk

Hello!

Council got its latest look at the Administration's recommendations for 2016's municipal expenditures this week. Council meetings are usually a barrel of laughs, but there were some suddenly sober faces around the table. We knew we faced some must-do infrastructure projects, and we knew that some of the community projects we were hoping for might not happen, but seeing it in black and white.... Wow. We saw a lot of stuff for the first time on Tuesday. For example, the long-undermined and recently-collapsed storm drain on Lower Oceanview may cost as much as $160,000 to fix properly. For example, there are six municipally-owned bridges in Lions Bay, and they all need work. As well, we will soon be entering into collective bargaining with the Canadian Union of Public Employees, Local 389, for a new agreement going forward from January 1, 2016.

Some expenditure is long planned: we will consider moving forward with a new Official Community Plan this year, and much-needed fixes at Lions Bay Beach will be put forward in the draft budget. But Council members are already sharpening their red pencils for next meeting (Feb. 2), when we will see the expenditures and revenues together in a draft budget. Red pencils or no, it looks like we should all be prepared for a tax increase this year as the chickens come home to roost. I want to re-emphasize that property tax is not determined by assessments. Assessments only determine each property's relative share of property tax. I also meant to mention in my last note that the BC Assessment Authority, which sets assessment values, has a goal of matching assessment values to market values. Gone are the days when the two numbers bore

little relationship, and our assessments will continue to change as our market values change. In case it's not obvious, rising property values are a good thing.

Rising taxes are another thing, so back to this year's budget after the red pencils are done. As you may know, typically about half of Lions Bay's annual budget is funded by property taxes, with the other half by the Small Communities Grant, utility fees and other revenue. The only property taxes that hit our budget are a general municipal tax and a fire protection tax--school tax, TransLink tax, policing tax and the rest pass straight through to the Province, and we have no say in that amount. Last year we raised $1.20 million in general municipal and fire protection property tax, 98% of it on residential properties. A 1 percent residential property tax increase thus raises only $11,700, an average of $21 per residential property. A 10 percent increase raises $117,000. How much was that storm drain again...?

Council's position is that it will not be prudent to draw down our reserves any further-indeed, pending year-end financials we think need to replenish them. So if we're to start funding what we already know we need in 2016, plus the projects coming out of the Infrastructure Master Plan at efficient economies of scale, we are going to need more tax revenue, and we also need to consider new loan funding in 2017. We also hope that some of the forthcoming infrastructure funding largesse from the change in federal government will trickle down to Lions Bay, and Council has asked for an increase in the number of "shovel-ready" plans that can be pointed at grant programs when they arise, the typical chicken-and-egg grant funding situation.

Council also approved the Administration's recommendation for utility rates for 2016 for the purposes of the next draft budget. We will consider a bylaw at the next meeting for the removal of the parcel tax for water, such that all water would be charged as a utility fee. Brunswick Beach residents would still be subject to the water system parcel tax applicable to their properties. Affected residents will receive further information from the municipality soon.

For the first time water utility payments would be set to cover both operating and capital costs, and rates would go up 12 percent. I've said it before: it's expensive to supply water in Lions Bay. But the spending is now on hardening of the intakes, configuration of the mains network to allow the entire Village to be fed seamlessly from either intake, setting up tank bypasses to be able to maintain disinfection levels with less use of chlorine. It is money being well spent. Under the draft budget, Sewer rates for residences on the Kelvin Grove treatment plant would go up 5 percent, for similar reasons. This increase won't cover all planned costs and capital investment, but the Sewer Fund has a surplus to draw on. Garbage rates would go up only 2 percent,

not bad considering the added cost of diverting ever-increasing proportions of our waste stream away from landfill into recycling and composting. The Zero-Waste Committee guides solid waste policy in the GVRD, which gives an idea of where we are headed. First-world luxuries come at a price.

Regards,
Karl

UPCOMING COUNCIL & COMMITTEE MEETINGS

All meetings take place in Council Chambers unless otherwise noted. The Village Office is open until 6:30pm on *Regular Council Meeting* nights.

- Parking Plan Committee - January 25, 2016 at 7:00pm

SENIOR SOCIAL CIRCLE

The 55+ Club has a new name! We are now called the Senior Social Circle (SSC) and led by our fearless leader Louis Peterson along with John Phillips, Tony Cox, Hilda Mayo, Maria Morden and honourary member Councillor Helen Waterson. Please do not hesitate to join this wonderful group of people or attend one of our weekly sessions.

If you would like to be added to our direct mail out list please let me know by replying to me, Karen Jeffery, and I would be happy to add you. As well, if you have a service or suggestion you would like to offer, please share it.

Have a fabulous week everyone and watch for those rainbows!

January Schedule

See what's happening on our social sites:

THE MUNICIPALITY OF THE VILLAGE OF LIONS BAY

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