

## 2009 04 06 April councillor letter

### COUNCILLOR NEWSLETTER

Lana Yakimchuk, Division 2 Councillor

March was a busy time for our county council. We conducted all the regular business of council, held several councillor open houses, participated in several workshops and also each did our own municipal jobs, including committee work and community visits.

My committee work this month included Mountain View Region Emergency Services Commission (MVRESC) otherwise known as the ambulance commission, Municipal Area Partnership (MAP) and Water Valley/Winchell Lake Area Structure Plan (WV/WL ASP).

MVRESC has come under the auspices of Alberta Health as of April 1, 2009. So far the transition has been smooth. We have a two year contract with Alberta Health, under which there should be no noticeable changes, and a continuation of the excellent services MVRESC has been providing (but paid for at a provincial level rather than a municipal level).

MAP has commissioned a Recreation and Culture Master Plan which should eventually serve as a guiding document when the region plans its recreational and cultural facilities and services. Many of you may have seen the draft plan, as it did the rounds of the communities recently. Another project the MAP committee has been working on is municipal sustainability. Currently we are working on *The Natural Step*, a sustainability education program. Several of our member municipalities have already launched sustainability programs and the rest will be following suit.

On March 7 we held a workshop to begin the visioning for the Water Valley/Winchell Lake Area Structure Plan. There were over 60 residents in attendance, and together we began the difficult process of drawing a picture of what this community cares about and feels deeply concerned about. Water, sewage, the environment, recreation, and economic development were at the top of the list. It will take much more work, but this was a good start. I hope that more people will come out the next time we bring this plan on the road. It would be great to get a broader representation, including participants from the agricultural community and the areas outside the high density development node.

With the encouragement of the province, Mountain View County will be going to full permitting for building and development standards. Residents will be able to acquire all the permits in one stop through the county offices. On March 2, councillors and staff had a workshop to familiarize ourselves with this new service. This will give us better control over development standards in the county.

On March 9, we heard a presentation from Brad Stelfox (professor of environmental design – U of C, U of A) on sustainable development (or possibly, unsustainable development as many of the examples he showed us were what not to do). It is clear that rural sprawl is just as threatening to us as urban sprawl, and that it is important to minimize the effect of population growth by allowing for small clustered lots nestled in large green areas rather than large scattered

subdivisions randomly scattered throughout the country. This will give residents the advantages of access to open areas while limiting the cost of providing services. As well, it provides the opportunity to leave wide animal corridors open, thereby minimizing the interaction of wildlife and human beings. Although human beings sometimes lose in these interactions, it is far more common for the animals to come out on the short end. As our Bear Smart activist, Councillor Kathy Blain often says, "A fed bear is a dead bear."

On the same day we also heard a presentation from Dr. Cathy Ryan, who talked about alluvial aquifers (the rivers that shadow our surface rivers underground) and riparian areas. There are many studies going on in the province about how the water under the ground works, and we can only hope that when we need to reference some of the mapping, it will be ready and available for us to make some very important decisions.

This past month I have had the privilege of working with some of the members of the community who are very busy keeping it viable. I have attended a meeting of Water Valley Community Association with most of the stakeholders in the Chinook Creative Arts building. A decision was made to hold a visioning session under the guidance of a neutral facilitator provided by the department of community spirit (provincial) on April 17, to help the stakeholders put together a strategic plan which will accommodate the aspirations of all the users and managers of the building.

I also met with Tanya Shand (Cremona FCSS) and Shelley Wakefield, who works with Cremona Seniors, as well as other municipal officials, to discuss the needs of seniors in our community. Both women have an enormous understanding of the needs of this area and of the people they serve, and are very busy developing programs and services. Cremona FCSS has put out a newsletter which should have been in your mailboxes at the beginning of April. It is a very informative bulletin. Ms. Wakefield will also be presenting Cremona seniors with a survey on their housing and service needs, to which I hope people will thoughtfully respond.

Councillor Gwen Day and I held a joint Open House on March 16 at the Bethel Missionary Church. We had a brief slide show presentation based on the County Strategic Plan and some discussion which followed. Thanks to the attendees who asked some excellent questions and provided good (and sometimes complimentary) feedback. I hope all of you are using the porchlight program bulbs you picked up, as well as the rural emergency plan tubes. There will be another opportunity to meet with us this fall, to be advertised in the county pages.

Finally, I was lucky enough to watch our Junior Varsity Girls' Basketball Team win a game at the Zone tournament in Cremona on March 14. It was one step in a very happy progression which ended with Cremona winning the Zone finals. All of our basketball teams have played well this year. It is a pleasure to see our young athletes participating in the school and community sports, working together and being healthy. Thanks to all of our volunteer coaches and all the people who work to keep these teams going. It is time well invested.

Have a wonderful April. Perhaps by May the snow will be gone.

If you wish to contact me, call 403-337-2368 or 403-660-7959, or write to me at [LYakimchuk@shaw.ca](mailto:LYakimchuk@shaw.ca) or Lana Yakimchuk Box 190 Cremona AB T0M 0R0. If I missed a call or didn't provide an answer you asked for, don't hesitate to call again. I really do want to respond to everyone.