

2009 05 03 May councillor letter

COUNCILLOR NEWSLETTER

Lana Yakimchuk, Division 2 Councillor

May Day brought us a real promise of spring, and I am hoping the promise comes to pass as I have been heartily tired of winter for some time. Besides, it's great to see the little calves bouncing around in the greening fields, and to be part of the busy time spring brings to the farm.

April was another full month, with consultations throughout the county as well as workshops both in and out of the county.

On March 31 we held a meeting of the steering committee for Water Valley/Winchell Lake Area Structure Plan. We discussed the results of the visioning session held in Water Valley on March 7, structured the draft plan using this input (as well as the guidelines from the Municipal Government Act and the Municipal Development Plan), and will be ready to bring the draft plan back for further work with the community in the very near future.

The Land Use Bylaw Committee is also very near to producing a draft plan for public consultation. We have been meeting monthly, and doing a huge amount of homework between meetings in order to have the definitions and the details of the draft worked out. Then you will be invited to provide more input into the bylaw and to tell us what we missed or what needs to be changed. Again, every municipal bylaw must comply with the provincial statutes.

I was fortunate to attend the Community Planning Association of Alberta Conference in Red Deer this April. It was an enormous learning experience, with presenters from within the county and outside it. With the current emphasis on environmental, economic, social, and governance sustainability, it was interesting to see both urban and rural planners thinking in ways to support this. Some of the ideas are old and proven, including walkable communities and self-contained high density nodes where people are within walking distance of all services, shopping and work. Some of the ideas are very intuitive, including the need for human beings to have access to the natural environment, even if it is just to look at it. Naturally, not everyone agrees with all that is presented at any of these conferences, but the discussion and the thoughtful input into the individual sessions is extremely helpful for people who are involved in constructing, and supporting, a variety of planning bylaws.

On April 8, our MP Blake Richards came to the council chambers to present the county with a cheque for \$670,260. The cheque is our share of the federal gas tax transfer, and is meant to be spent on infrastructure. It came three months earlier than in 2008, and was approximately double the amount of last year. We are always very pleased to see representatives from both levels of government in the council chambers, and this visit was doubly welcome.

All the regular stakeholders in the Chinook Creative Arts building came together on April 17 for a Visioning Workshop facilitated by a representative from the provincial department for community spirit. It was a very intense workshop, with clear ideas from all participating groups about the need for a facility which

encourages the arts, as well as providing space for several other activities, including playschool and the community library. It is clear that everyone loves the old school building that Chinook Creative Arts has so lovingly maintained and cared for while it used it for many years. Although the groups had strong agreement on the vision for the building, some work still needs to be done on how this will happen, and more workshops may be scheduled when all the people can find spots on their calendars to do it.

I stopped in at the Chinook Creative Arts Building on the last Tuesday of the month as I happened to be in Water Valley. The library was open and quite busy, parents were waiting to pick up their children from playschool, and there was a water colour class in the kitchen area. The building was bright and sunny with light streaming in at all the windows, and the whole building seemed to be alive in the way that only a school can be. The community owes thanks to every group that uses that building, to the people who schedule the uses of the rooms and establish programs in it, and to the people who work at the library. This is what community is all about.

On March 25, Chinook Creative Arts held its annual Art Show. The featured work this year was a wide array of photography, including work done by the Cremona students. It was very impressive. The ambience of the school was again wonderful, with coffee and snacks served in the kitchen and music coming from the playschool rooms.

The Municipal Area Partnership is now ready to work on a regional sustainability plan, using The Natural Step framework as a working platform. The MAP committee is acting as the steering committee for this work. The plan is to develop a sustainability program for our area (including the county and towns) which takes in all the pillars of sustainability (social, economic, environmental, governance). I will keep you updated on this, as it is a good way of thinking, but I am still learning about how it will be implemented. Some of you attended a workshop on Economic Development last fall which will be integrated into this process, and you will be invited to continue with this work. The Natural Step is simply one way of sustainable planning, and the information can be found on line by searching The Natural Step, or TNS.

Finally, on May 1 I attended a workshop in Cochrane on Managing the Headwaters. We developed a plan to set direction for managing lands which contain headwaters for the different rivers in the province. Water, air and land are the priorities of the Land Use Framework, and protecting, even enhancing, the sources of our water is vital to our survival. Unfortunately, we don't have a strong history of actively pursuing this course. The purpose of the workshops is to help communities work together to ensure we continue to have clean water. This may include new management plans for headwater lands, reclamation projects, extension of water management programs to all riparian areas, and finding ways to compensate landowners so they do not have to pay to take care of the water someone else drinks.

Councillor Blain has informed me that the BearSmart Family Day was well attended, with many children participating in the activities and learning about bears at the same time. There were attendees from all over the county, including

Cremona and Water Valley areas. Congratulations to all the poster contest participants and winners.

Remember to call the county if you wish to participate in the dust control program this year. Calcium can be purchased now, to be applied by the county as soon as the weather and the schedule allows.

As of May 1, I began my six-month service as deputy reeve. Councillor Kathy Blain served the previous six months, and did a very fine job too. It is a job I enjoyed tremendously in the previous council, for a three month period that time.

Have a great month, and remember that to contact me you may call 403-337-2368 or 403-660-7959, or write to me at 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.