

County Councillor June Letter

What an interesting May and early June we have been having. I hope the weather gives you what you need to make your living. Certainly, we have had a sampling of everything in the last while.

I have mentioned MAP, the Municipal Area Partnership, in this column at other times. I would like to reaffirm what I have said previously. This partnership consists of Mountain View County and all the urban municipalities within its borders (Carstairs, Cremona, Didsbury, Olds, Sundre). The small communities which are not incorporated are part of the county.

The Municipal Area Partnership board consists of representatives from each municipality (three from the county) and is supported by the CAOs of each council. The decisions we make are taken back to our individual councils as recommendations. It is the councils themselves which decide whether or not to approve those decisions.

MAP is a good venue for discussions that affect all six municipalities. These include things like recreation, shared roads and services, and economic development. Some of you have been able to participate in some of the discussions on economic development and recreation, and most of you will have more opportunity to do so in the future.

Recently the Municipal Area Partnership made a recommendation to its member boards to look at reconfiguring our current service boards from commissions or foundations to for-profit corporations. The cities often have utilities boards which are for profit. This works very well for them, as they can charge for their service, but they can also return their profits into the company, thereby eliminating the need to improve their services with tax dollars. The end result is that taxpayers actually pay less for their services, and can see reduced charges if they reduce their use.

Three of the commissions which would be discussed first would be Mountain View Regional Waste Commission, Mountain View Seniors Housing, and Mountain View Regional Emergency Services Commission (ambulance). The latter commission is now funded by Alberta Health Services and no longer requires municipal tax dollar requisitions to balance its books. Reconfiguring the commissions would allow municipalities to appoint board members who have the skills to run these individual businesses, while the municipalities maintain the authority to set the vision and direction. All three commissions are currently extremely well managed, but because the boards consist of councillors from each municipality, there is a constant change and relearning of very business-oriented duties.

If the municipalities decide to try to change the structures of these boards, they would have to ask for approval from Municipal Affairs in Edmonton, because Department of Municipal Affairs first established them, at our request. Naturally, this is a long process.

We continue to work on the Land Use Bylaw. There is an open house at the county offices on the day after I write this letter, which should give us some further ideas about the direction in which the bylaw will go. There is further

information on the county website about this process, should you wish to contribute. As well, feel free to call the county (403-335-3311) or me for further information.

The Water Valley Area Structure Plan is beginning to take form. There will be further public consultation on this plan as well. Please watch all the media for further information. The steering committee has recently asked for more information on the interaction between gravel removal and the aquifer, so that we can make good planning decisions.

I have recently participated in two conferences on sustainability. Sustainability is a catch word for many things. Municipalities have narrowed the definition down to running things in such a way that they supply everyone's needs, and will continue to supply everyone's needs in the future, without damaging the environment or the society (that's my paraphrase). We talk about sustainability in terms of the natural and the built environment, economy, culture and society, and governance.

One of my conferences was about maintaining the headwaters of our rivers: encouraging and rewarding landowners for the maintenance of the headwaters so they continue to function well as filters and storage systems for our surface water and aquifers. The second, Pathways to Sustainability, was about all four aspects of sustainability and how to implement innovative thinking to achieve sustainability. As the most basic level of government, municipalities must be involved in this process for the benefit of the people who live here, and the environment in which they live.

June continues to be busy, and very interesting. Please watch the county pages for information on what is happening in your county. Take every advantage to participate in the many activities which are happening, including the ones at the Community Engagement Site in June and then in September. If you wish to contact me, I would be happy to hear from you at (403)337-2368 or (403)660-7959. Please leave a complete message so I can get back to you with a response. You can also write to me at LYakimchuk@shaw.ca or Lana Yakimchuk Box 190 Cremona AB T0M 0R0.

Have a great summer.

Lana Yakimchuk
Division 2 Councillor