

Directors Report Jan 2024

EA Directors/LGLA Leadership Forums

Many of us will be away next week for the EA Directors/LGLA Leadership Forums being held in Richmond BC next week.

Some of the key topics that are an interest to Area D are

- Impact of Emergency Management Legislation on Regional Districts
- Housing Updates and Rural Development
- Fire Safety Act Updates
- Planning and making sense of the Current Provincial Legislation

I will be providing a summary of this Forum along with other topics at my Townhall Meeting Feb 3 at the Oyster Bay Resort.

If you have not booked your seat for this event which starts at 1:00 pm please send me an email to jrice@srd.ca

Seating is limited and they are going fast.

Regional Housing Service Update

After the results of the Alternate Approval Process this Regional Service was approved.

For those interested , 111 voters from Campbell River voted against the project, with 81 from Cortes Island, 66 from Quadra Island and 133 from the Sayward area.

Director Whalley from Electoral Area A was the only Director who voted “ No”

The service could be used to invest in workforce housing, seniors housing, affordable (social) housing and others. It would apply throughout the Strathcona Regional District and it is to be used only where there is a need.

The SRD has no plans to automatically borrow capital funds or go into debt at this time.

If and when funds are to be borrowed the tax requisition to service that debt will be the same rate based on property assessment throughout the Regional District. That rate has been set at Five Cents per One thousand of property assessment.

The other important aspect of the Regional Housing Service is Bylaw 512 which allows the Regional District to apply for both Federal and Provincial Grants.

Many of the Development Applications that are moving forward in Area D do qualify for grants through the Accelerated Housing Fund.

While it is still very early in the process if successful this money will go back into Area D for further planning and investments into our aging infrastructure.

Taxes 2024

There are certainly many pressures on this years taxes.

Some of the drivers for the increases that are affecting taxes are

- Library Service - this service is projecting a large increase for 2024. That increase is approx 18%.
- N 911 – . Increase costs are being driven by the fact that 911 services across Canada are moving towards E911 (Enhanced 911 services) to embrace the fact that current 911 services does not support the new digital communications.
- Solid Waste Management - (Landfills, Recycling) The costs to implement and maintain services continue to increase. The Province is very good at creating New Legislation to address (Carbon Reduction, Greenhouse Gases to name a few) however there is very little financial support offered to local government.
- SRD Corporate Services – moderate increase to allow for some new staff acquisitions.
- Strathcona Gardens – With new construction getting ready to start and the increase in interest rates the required tax requisition for this service is increased for 2024.
- Campbell River Fire Service – This service is seeing a 28% increase for 2024. Increases will continue for the next how many years as Area D as per the Campbell River Fire Service Agreement must contribute to the cost of the “New Firehall” that the City of Campbell River is planning.
- Coastal Animal Control – this service went up 35% for 2024
- Area D Transit Service - this service went up 12% for 2024 and I expect further increases for 2025.

Area D Community Parks will see a decrease this year in tax requisition as the service now has a healthy reserve and requisition set for 2024 will meet the Capitol improvements that have been planned.

For those interested I will **not** be **supporting** this years **Budget** or the **Five Year Financial Plan** due to the lack of transparency and my concerns over the increases for Campbell River Fire Service and Coastal Animal Control.

Looking at the Campbell River Fire Service in particular the major stumbling block to not approving this years Budget and Five Financial Plan is I I am greatly concerned that without prior notice and consultations with the Area Director and those residents affected that the City of Campbell River is already collecting monies towards the New Firehall Construction that is being contemplated at this time. With an estimated price tag of \$24 million it is possible that under the current Fire Service Agreement that approx 1,300 homes will see continued rising costs for the next how many years to help fund this New Firehall. The estimated contribution under the current Service Agreement is 7% of the projected \$24 million cost.

I am pushing for a Fire Service Review to happen this year and hopefully a new service contract will be the product of that review.