

Directors Report July 2024

Rising Costs to Contracted Services

For many in the community when it came time to pay this years taxes it was hard not to notice that a few items are now dominating those tax bills. While those households in the south portion of Area D (from the Driftwood Restaurant to the Oyster River) are doing better on contracted services it is the households that rely on the City of Campbell River for Fire Protection that are now experiencing significant increases.

In **2022** the tax requisition for the Fire Service Agreement was **\$496,613**. According to budget reports in 2022 this service was forecasting that in **2026** the tax requisition would be **\$537,212**.

Unfortunately the tax requisition for **2024** rose to **\$695,757 without warning**. This was a **35%** increase over the previous year.

The current budget reports are forecasting that for **2025** this service will increase to **\$927,510** and for **2026** this service will increase to **\$1,215,959**.

Contracted services play a very important role for small communities like Area D. I am sure that many would agree in the community that these services need to be predictable in terms of rising costs each year. The latest rate hikes that were experienced in the 2024 budget cycle were completely unexpected and those same rate hikes will continue for the next how many years .

The Fire Protection Service agreement with the City of Campbell River was established in 1977. While this legacy service agreement has served the community well over the years, it has become rather apparent that the terms created back in 1977 are now presenting significant challenges to our rural community.

The Campbell River Fire Department continues to grow with a large contingent of professional career staff, complex equipment needs suited to a growing municipality, and the latest increases that area D residents are now seeing on their taxes is to fund another Firehall.

Unfortunately under the terms of the existing agreement Area D does pay approx 7% of those costs.

Do the math, from **\$496,613** to **\$1,215,959** by **2026**. This is an unacceptable increase for any service.

I know there are those in the community that are demanding action to these rising costs. It is a priority to renew this legacy agreement with more suitable terms that recognize our rural nature and our needs. This unexpected increase is stretching households budgets and depleting the ability to focus on other services that are also important to the well-being of this community.

I will be organizing a petition in the community. It is time for the community to speak in a constructive unified manner to these rising costs. Lets send a clear message to the City of Campbell River and the Strathcona Regional Directors.

I will have more information for the community soon!

I would love to hear from the community their thoughts on these rising costs for Campbell River Fire Protection Service.

I will looking for volunteers who can devote some time in Sept to help with this important issue.

Please send me an email jrice@srd.ca

Short Term Rentals

In response to the Bill 35 from the Province, Electoral Area's regardless of if they had opted into the primary residence requirements of bill 35 were still obligated to update zoning and bylaws to regulate short term rentals.

Up to bill 35 short term rentals for many Electoral Areas was not a permitted use.

To prepare for these changes the SRD did do a public survey that was well received in the community. The survey had 140 participants with 84% of those participants being permanent residents. A clear majority of participants which was 60% stated they had no concerns with short term rentals and there was a desire to have short term rentals across all residential zoning.

As per the communities wishes on short term rentals they are now legal in Area D.

Bylaw 565 Campbell River Area Bylaw 1991 Amendment # 75 was given third reading and passed at the Regional Board Meeting July 24th 2024.

I would expect that over the next few months there will be more information to share with the community on short term rentals.

If you have a concern that you would like to bring to my attention then please send me an email jrice@srd.ca or you are welcome to call me 250.203.1598