

**2022 ANNUAL RATEPAYER MEETING  
SPECIAL AREA NO. 4, SUB-DIVISION NO. 1, 2 and 3  
Consort, Alberta  
June 16, 2022**

Jordon Christianson welcomed those in attendance, nice to have in person meetings again.

Laurie Ference nominated Doug Noble for Chairperson, Graham Schetszle seconded.  
**Carried.**

Chairperson Doug Noble, called the meeting to order at 1:33 p.m. in the Gem Center with a total of 7 ratepayers in attendance.

**ADVISORY COUNCIL MEMBER REPORTS**

**Graham Schetszle, SD #1**

**BCWM-** Long time Chair, Gerald Campion recently passed away, expressed his appreciation for his work; RFP going out for new transfer station in Veteran; toured new station in Consort and new garbage truck; Starting a new design on a new cell E, construction on cell D completed last year. Trying to educate the public on garbage disposal rules. Discussion on concerns of decreased capacity of transfer stations, wind issues carrying waste (littering adjacent lands), and not being able to back vehicles up into transfer station. Discussion on use of waste cell, locals vs urban.

**Acadia Foundation-** Continue to meet monthly. Occupancy rates are a concern with 58% across all three lodges, many covid related issues. Working to promote these facilities. Received grant for assisted living and dementia units (20 units total) in Oyen, but will not cover full cost of the facility. This project was identified 15 years ago in a needs assessment review conducted by AHS for Oyen.

**East Central Ambulance-** Haven't met in 6 months. Negotiated new agreement with employees. Discussion on ambulance wait times in our rural areas, no concerns have been reported.

**Medical Board-** New doctor arrived in February, works one day a week in Consort. There have been some challenges between doctors.

**Ag. Service Board-** Virtual ASB meeting was held to review resolutions and discuss strychnine and drought mitigation prior to ASB Conference. Discussion on strychnine availability.

**Laurie Ference, SD #2**

**Alfred Brown Handibus Society-** haven't had a meeting.

**Municipal Planning Commission-** Wind energy developments keeping them busy with several projects throughout SA. Discussion on Wind Farm project in area.

**SMRWC** - Extension to Rochon Sands, meetings held to discuss options regarding route and fill station.

**ECHS** - Glad to be back open with full capacity rentals. Have finally been able to hold annual fundraisers.

**Doug Noble, SD #3**

**Battle River Watershed Alliance-** attended organizational meeting.

**Special Areas Board-** Meet every second Tuesday of every month.

**Endangered Species Committee-** Strychnine has been hot topic. Bird population is declining, study shows that insecticides and loss of habitat correlate to population decrease. Grazers such as cattle help with prairie ecosystems.

Minutes of the June 12, 2022 meeting were declared adopted on a motion by Corinne Kelts, seconded by Laurie Ference. **Carried.**

**SPECIAL AREAS BOARD REPRESENTATIVE REPORTS**

**Jordon Christianson, Chair**

Jordon reported on the following:

- Municipal Election was held in October 2021, with 5 new council members elected throughout the 13 subdivisions. Laurie Ference replaced Barry Redel in our area. Jordon explained the process and terms of Board appointments. Special Areas acknowledged the failures in regards to the Senate nominations and referendum voting. Discussion on restructuring council members in relation to population of each area.

- Village of Cereal transitioning into the hamlet of Cereal. Took over operations January 2021, still in transition phase with administration out of SA3 District Office.
- Red Tape Reduction Initiative to save time, cut costs and increase efficiency. Special Areas is on track to reach goal of 30% reduction by March 2023.
- Environmental impact assessment was completed for SAWSP, resulting in economic challenges and not a lot of opportunity for revenue. Therefore, the Board decided to shelf the project for the time being.
- Reviewed the Regional Irrigation Feasibility Partnership Project. Partnership with SAB, MD of Acadia, Canada Infrastructure Bank and AB Ag & Forestry to develop irrigation in the region with access from the Red Deer river. Community engagement sessions within the project area were held in 2021. Recommendations are still in the final stages.
- A Tax Recovery Land Sale policy has been drafted and presented to the Minister of Municipal Affairs.
- Discussion on water sources in the area. These sources should be investigated not just for irrigation but for positive recreational opportunities.

#### **Darcy Ferguson, Finance & Administration**

Darcy reported on the following:

- Impacts of pandemic and oil and gas prices on 2020-2022 budgets. Worked through concerns of financial position due to pandemic and low gas prices resulting in a strong financial position.
- Reviewed the 2021 financial statements, will be posted to website once received from Auditor General. 2021 budgeted for a deficit but resulted in a \$4.5 million cash surplus. Cash position is up significantly and accumulated surplus has increased by \$10.3 million.
- Reviewed revenue and expense summaries- Have an operational surplus of \$30.2 million. Provincial grants received for irrigation projects, unfortunately did not receive grant funds for the extension of waterline east of Monitor. Some challenges faced for 2021 included supply chain and recruitment issues.
- Discussion on oil industry bad debt collections. Some have negotiated collection terms but unfortunately we are unable to collect if they are sent to orphan well.
- Discussed the impact on the 2022 budget. Have budgeted for a \$5.1 million deficit with intentions of advancing projects and drawing down the surplus to allow considerations for post covid operations and expenses.

#### **Owen Francis, Director of Municipal Services**

Owen reported on the following:

- The main stressors in the Municipal Services department are supply chain issues; both capital and human resources.

#### **Roads**

- Road construction operations are getting back to normal, continue to have crew staff shortage.
- Secondary Highway Agreement - On year 3 of 4 year agreement with AB Transportation.
- Shaune Kovitch reviewed all the 2022 recrowning, surfacing, and construction projects on the map.

#### **Water**

- New truckfill stations in Chinook and SDS, replacing some old systems through grant funding.
- Working with Cereal to alleviate water and sewer system challenges.

#### **Emergency Services**

- Glen Durand, SA Fire Chief has officially retired, Rob Palmer has been chosen as his replacement.
- Regional Emergency Management Agency has been formed with appointment of members from partnering municipalities.
- Community Peace Officers have created partnership with the Town of Hanna to supply bylaw enforcement. Focus for 2022 is to increase enforcement on surfaced roadways and construction sites.

#### **Parks**

- John retiring after this season, replaced by Melissa Lee.
- 20/21 Record years of usage in our parks, fuel prices likely will affected usage this year.
- Carp continues to desimate Blood Indian-causing growth issues of trout. Will have another netting next summer. Investigating option of adding pickerell and wall eye.

- Implemented new online registration for POA, worked as intended with no issues.
- Ten year agreement in place for SA to operate Little Fish Lake and Gooseberry Lake Provincial Park.

**Trent Caskey, Director of Property Administration**

Trent reported on the following:

- **Assessment** update – presented chart of assessments from 2014-2021 showing transition of decreasing assessment base. 2021 was a slight decrease from 2020. \$100 million loss in assessment for Oil & Gas.
- **Community Pastures** – rate increase to \$.95, increase by \$.05 yearly until reach \$1.00. Most pastures have a planned reduction due to drought.
- **Lease Rate Reviews** – Cultivation lease rate increased 5% due to private rental rate trends. Grazing lease rate has increased 3.34% due to slight increase in cattle prices.
- **Land Use Order** – Review of current LUO is underway. Hoping to have out for public consultation at end of year.
- **Wind Energy Developments**– presented map of current wind development project in SA. Sharp Hills project is within SA 3 & SA4. These projects bring 1 billion worth of assessment.
- **TRLS**– Policy has been drafted and reviewed, Board has met with Minister. Trent explained the difference between last policy and the current proposed policy.
- **Oyen Railyard Project**– Railyard has been redeveloped and is now privately owned, expected to create many economic opportunities.
- **Cultivation Lease Conversion Policy**– Policy was updated to allow up to four quarters to be converted, only for previously broke parcels.

Discussion on wind farm projects disposal and reclamation plans.

Discussion on lease usage options and sublet rates.

**New Business**

Discussion regarding concerns with quality of building permit inspections.

Discussion on expenses related to fighting fire on private land, costs for this service are included in property taxes depending on factors of negligence such as a clear disregard of fire ban.

Discussion on hunting on public lands, causing many issues for the leaseholder. Cannot unreasonably deny access but can place rules of entry.

The meeting adjourned at 4:11pm by Doug Noble.

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**Taryl Abt, Administrator**  
**SPECIAL AREA NO. 4, CONSORT**