

**2023 ANNUAL RATEPAYER MEETING  
SPECIAL AREA NO. 4, SUB-DIVISION NO. 1, 2 and 3  
Consort, Alberta  
June 20, 2023**

Jordon Christianson welcomed those in attendance, calling the meeting to order at 1:30pm with a total of 13 ratepayers in attendance.

Jason Bishell nominated Graham Schetzle for Chairperson; Jim Deleff seconded. **Carried.**

Taryl Abt read the minutes from June 16, 2022 ratepayer meeting. Minutes were declared adopted on a motion by Jason Bishell, seconded by Jim Deleff. **Carried.**

**ADVISORY COUNCIL MEMBER REPORTS**

**Laurie Ference, SD #2**

**Alfred Brown Handibus Society:** Working on getting more transportation for seniors.

**Medical Board-** Hired a private consultant to assist with nurse/doctor retention. Currently have only one doctor at the Consort Hospital. Looking at possibilities of Oyen doctors helping in Clinic.

**Ag. Service Board:** Ag. Fieldman, Justine Comeau gave report: Strychnine update- PMRA reviewed in 2020/21, deregistered the program completely. Has been canvased to appeal the decision but failed. Stopped selling in March 2022. ASB's and municipality sent letters in opposition. Caused by off target kills. CARA website has webinar on other product options available. ASB summer students started in May. Clean Farms changing disposal process in 2025. Special Areas ASB has a new social media channel "Chewing Cud" which includes information on weeds, pests, and the happenings of the ASB staff. Discussion on concerns of mowing ditches and the fire hazard it poses. Discussion on the chemical container disposal process transition.

Joan Bousquet presented concerns regarding the fire bans in Special Areas and Gooseberry Lake Provincial Park and how they are not consistent with each other. Discussion on the process of placing fire bans and whose responsibility it is to create these bans. Discussion on relationship between the Alberta Parks and Special Areas on the operations/maintenance of Gooseberry Lake Provincial Park. Jordon thanked Joan for bringing concerns forward. Gooseberry is challenging, still AEP facility and does not give us a lot of rope, valid points, and concerns. We are limited in pest and tree/deadfall/grass control. Continue to approach minister and Nate Horner on SA taking full control of GB and Little Fish Lake. SAB covers operational costs, but it is still AEP asset. Fire prevention is needed. Continue conversations with AEP. Will take concerns and questions to further discuss and find a safe and feasible solution.

**East Central Housing Society:** Currently looking for new members to join.

**Municipal Planning Commission:** in the final phase of the Land Use Order review

**SMRWSC:** Motion was made at the SMRWSC meeting to extend regional line from Pemukan to Compeer.

Discussion on if the fire departments are allowed to use the SMRWSC line as a water source for fires close enough to hook-up. Shaune will follow up on this.

**Jim Deleff moved that the Special Areas contact MP Damien Kurek regarding the cancellation of the Strychnine Program. Seconded by Murray Sankey. Carried.**

**Graham Schetzle, SD #1**

**Acadia Foundation:** Clinic construction in Oyen is moving forward. Occupancy rates in the lodges are still low post COVID-19. Allan Stober has replaced Chelaine Woods as the CAO for the Acadia Foundation.

**East Central Ambulance:** Procuring new ambulances is a struggle. Decommissioned after 10 years. New ones in 2024/25/26. Staffing shortage, union negotiations underway.

**Big Country Waste:** Cell E development will proceed in a couple weeks, completion 6-8 weeks. Cell D fire caused damage to the liner, therefore unusable. Only have enough space until Sept/Oct.

**Doug Noble, SD #3**

**Special Areas Board-** Have been dealing with the emergency shut down in Oyen and the lack of doctors and nurses in the area. Met with the minister on the Tax Recovery Land Sale proposed policy, did not receive a no and did not receive a yes.

Discussion on if the doctors who live in the houses Special Areas built for them are occupied or not, one of the doctors are still living in one and one of them is rented as of now.

## **SPECIAL AREAS BOARD REPRESENTATIVE REPORTS**

### **Jordon Christianson, Chair**

Jordon presented PowerPoint reporting on the following:

- SA governance and municipal partnerships.
- **Acadia Foundation:** Developing assisted living facility and dementia care attached to the Oyen Lodge. Acadia Foundation received funding from the government of Alberta through the capital grant and the Special Areas Board will assist in financing the project as well. Still doing some site development and hoping construction will begin in the fall.
- **Oyen Hospital:** Emergency closed January 10, 2023, Special Areas worked with the town of Oyen, MD of Acadia, the minister, AHS, and local support staff to find solutions for this problem. After investigating into some funding options, solutions to secure the medivac into the Oyen airport and partnering with stakeholders in the region to provide housing for contract staff, on April 17, 2023, Oyen Hospital was able to resume 50% of acute care beds to reopen.
- **Oyen Airport:** Challenges with wind towers, weather station and instrumentation will assist with problem and allow for safe service. GPS and instrument approaches will be applied to Oyen, Consort & Hanna that will also assist with alerting of potential issues during permit stage.
- **Consort Hospital:** Continue collaborating with Village of Consort on Consort Hospital situation.
- **Irrigation Project:** Finished report for Phase one in 2022. Phase 2 (technical & engineering design) ongoing. This new development will cover 108,000 acres over the MD of Acadia and Special Areas. Discussion on if irrigation projects reservoirs will include recreation areas.
- **Tax Recovery Land:** Draft TRLS policy-4<sup>th</sup>-awaiting ministerial order approval; discussion on breaking restrictions-board is committed to maintaining caveats- title will be revoked with initial cost reimbursed, land would be reclaimed to native grass and returned as grazing lease.

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

Darcy reported on the following:

- The pandemic has still had an impact on current operations and supply chain.
- Darcy presented the 2022 Audited Financial Statement
- Strong financial position \$37.7 m surplus

Discussion on oil debt-bad debt levy for commercial and industrial assessment to help pay debts.

Darren presented on:

- Revenue summary: assessment value trends- approx. 85% of assessment base is industrial; non-residential mill rates; Expense summary; Impact on 2023 budget.

Discussion on the revenue expected from the renewables assessment.

### **Shaune Kovitch, Director of Municipal Services**

Shaune introduced and gave background on himself. Shaune replaced Owen Francis as Director of Municipal Services. Shaune reported on the following:

#### **Roads**

- Presented on 2023 road construction (22.5 km), recrowning, surfacing, and Recycled Asphalt Pavement program.
- Discussion on shortfalls in staffing and supply chain management.
- In the final year of Alberta Transportation partnership, looking at renewing this partnership again. The paving of highway 855 has been approved.
- Shaune Kovitch reviewed all the 2022 recrowning, surfacing, and construction projects on the map.

#### **Water**

- Reviewed 2023 water projects
- Preliminary plans on extension of SMRWSC

#### **Emergency Services**

- Rob Palmer replaced Glen Durand as the new Fire Chief, Kyle Rohl replaced Rob as the Deputy Fire Chief.
- The new Fire Hall has been built in Cessford, and plan are underway for an addition to the Firehall in Consort.
- We currently have 2.5 Peace Officers, with goal of adding another.
- Special Areas Road Use Order has been approved by the minister; gives Special Areas the authority to enforce outside the *Traffic Safety Act* – 5 loads a day triggers road use agreement.

#### **Parks**

- John Armstrong has officially retired; Melissa Lee has been chosen as his replacement.
- Working with the province on allowing Special Areas to oversee some improvements at Gooseberry Lake Provincial Park.
- Working with provincial biologists on invasive species in Blood Indian
- 100 000's of carp continues to be netted each year

Discussion on fire- suggestion for a Sedalia firehall

**Trent Caskey, Director of Property Administration**

Trent reported on the following:

- **Assessment:** Increased due to recovered wells and pipelines being active again. Tax notices were mailed the week of May 15<sup>th</sup>, appeal date is July 21<sup>st</sup>.
- **Wind Energy:** Presented a list of the wind energy projects in Special Areas and which projects are now functional. If construction is completed, assessment will take place in 2023.
- **Community Pastures:** Rate has increased from \$0.95/head/day to \$1.00/head/day. Now that we have reached \$1.00, revenue will be assessed. Stocking rate has decreased and may have to exit early due to drought. Displayed list of all pasture reductions. Buffalo Atlee pasture requested to be turned into a co-op.
- **Lease Rate Reviews:** No increase in cultivation rate from 2022, 14% increase in Grazing Lease rate from 2022 due to an increase in cattle prices.
- **Land Use Order:** Last update took place in 2013, review began in 2021. Required updates for large scale energy developments, focusing on cutting red tape, easing restrictions for ratepayers, updating to adhere with current MGA. Public engagement for proposed draft will take place over the summer of 2023 via open house. Discussion on the Solar Farms. Discussion on the amount of agricultural lands that these projects could be taken out of production.
- **TRLS:** Proposed policy is currently sitting in the minister's office for review. Three year- 4 quarter sale, disposition trading-volunteer list could grant you a bonus quarter. 7% interest rate, breaking restriction give you 1/3 discount.
- **Oyen Railyard Project**– Railyard has been redeveloped and is now privately owned, expected to continue providing many economic opportunities. Looking at expansion possibilities. Discussion on the reasoning for extending the line to the cities. Possible to export humiliate, grain and other products.
- **Sheerness Industrial Park**- 320 acre industrial park-construction to begin 2024.
- **Cultivation Lease Conversion Policy**– Policy was updated to allow up to four quarters to be converted, only for previously broke parcels.

**New Business**

Discussion on lease rental rates considering the drought situation.

Discussion on brush cutting issues, could external contractors be an option to help. Request to address this issue more seriously.

**Murray Sankey moved that the Special Areas Board takes a serious review on the priorities of brush cutting. Seconded by Jim Deleff. Carried.**

Discussion on the lack of resources for companies that come to the area and don't know where services are or what recreational events are taking place in the area. Can direct these inquiries to the Economic Development Officer or to any of the Special Areas offices.

Discussion on concerns regarding tree growth and options for spraying on lands within the hills. In the past, an aerial sprayer was utilized to do some spot spraying and it seemed to work well.

**Murray Sankey moved that Special Areas Board explores options for brush control to preserve native species. Pat Rutledge seconded. Carried.**

The meeting adjourned at 5:41 pm by Kathy Simpson.

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