

**2024 ANNUAL RATEPAYER MEETING  
SPECIAL AREA NO. 4, SUB-DIVISION NO. 1, 2 and 3  
Gem Centre, Consort  
May 23, 2024**

Jordon Christianson called the meeting to order at 1:30pm, welcoming the 6 ratepayers in attendance.

Barry Redel nominated Doug Noble for Chairperson; seconded by Shirley Evaskevich. **CARRIED.**

Erin Van Koughnett read the minutes from June 20, 2024, ratepayer meeting. Minutes were declared adopted on a motion by Gloria Nelson, seconded by Barry Redel. **CARRIED.**

**OLD BUSINESS**

Shaune Kovitch gave an update on brush cutting issues – Special Areas has purchased a new brush cutter as contracting this service out was not an option, has been highly effective.

Discussion on reinstating Strychnine – Province and MP are both pushing the federal government on this matter.

**Doug Fawcett moved that the Special Areas Board make a request to the federal government to reinstate the Strychnine program. Seconded by Barry Redel. CARRIED.**

**ADVISORY COUNCIL MEMBER REPORTS**

**Gordon Long, SD #1**

- **Acadia Foundation:** Occupancy rates similar to last year; expects increase in the near future.

**Doug Noble, SD #3**

- **Special Areas Board:** There has been Board interest to increase the paving on the secondary highways.
- **Medical Board:** The Nurse Practitioner is set to start at the Consort Medical Clinic at the beginning of June.

**SPECIAL AREAS BOARD REPRESENTATIVE REPORTS**

**Jordon Christianson, Chair**

Jordon welcomed Gordon Long as the Advisory Councilor representing Special Area #4, Subdivision #1, replacing Graham Schetzle.

Jordon presented PowerPoint reporting on the following:

- **Special Areas Board Member Changes:** Daryl Swenson has served his 10-year term on the Board; the Advisory Council elected Kevin Wilson to replace Daryl as a board member.
- **Municipal Partnerships:** Special Areas is committed to the relationships with urban neighbors. Industrial tax transfer funding which doubled in 2023 generates revenue to share with the urban municipalities. The focus for 2024 has been working with the municipalities on a regional approach to emergency management.
- **Acadia Foundation:** Partnered with the foundation to complete a new assisted living/dementia unit. The new unit will include 14 new rooms. The province is providing funding to the project through a capital grant. The estimated cost of the project is \$11.4 M; however, the province will only be covering \$4.3 M, Special Areas to fund the balance on the addition. Site preparation has begun, and the project is expected to be completed in 18 months.
- **Consort & District Medical Centre Board:** Discussed funding of NP; SAB and the Village of Consort will aid in funding the NP for a two-year trial.
- **MD of Acadia & SA Irrigation Project:** Phase 1 of the project has been completed, now working on Phase 2. Phase 2 includes the engineering, design, environmental and regulatory considerations, and the financial portion of the project. Phase 2 is expected to be complete by 2025. Once Phase 2 is complete, more concrete planning on the business side of the project will be explored.
- **Tax Recovery Land Sale:** The 3- year Tax Recovery Land Sale Policy was approved by the Minister in July 2023 and opened to the public in September 2023.

Discussion on breaking restriction policy.

Discussion on TRLS: In the past tax recovery land sales, mainly cultivated lands were purchased so most lands that will be sold in this sale will likely have some sort of breaking restriction on them. The assessment value used for this sale was explained; estimated average price in 2004 sale was \$20,000 and \$100,000 in present sale. Approximately 45 applications have been completed out of the Special Area No. 4 office so far. If the sale follows the previous sales trends, there will be a 30-40% uptake. SA tries to make the sale happen but adjacent water bodies, unique environmental features, fish and/or wildlife habitat, and presence of gravel can lead to refusal.

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

Shaune presented a PowerPoint on the following:

### **Roads**

- 13 km of road construction, including Kirriemuir Ring Road and road to Connell residence in SA #4. One of the road crews will be utilized for the Sheerness Industrial Park.
- 35 km of recrowning, road surfacing includes 28.8 km GBC and 29 km paving (Hwy 855).
- Recycled Asphalt Paving Program: Altario and Monitor.
- The Road Surface Agreement with Alberta Transportation expired and has not received renewal; discussions are ongoing. Creating a 10-year paving plan for the GBC Program and plan to present to Advisory Council in the fall.

### **Water**

- Reviewed projects scheduled for 2024: Construction of the Scotfield Water Station. Shirley McClellan Regional Waterline Extension from Pemuken to Compeer – engineering has been completed, waiting for funding.
- Currently investigating future potable water systems in SA.

### **Emergency Services**

- Regional training continues. Construction of the new Cessford fire hall this year and new tender delivery scheduled for 2025.
- Regional Emergency Management Planning continues with municipalities in SA region.

### **Enforcement Services**

- Challenges with recruiting and retaining new CPOs – Goal to have 3, currently only have one staffed.
- Special Areas Road Use Order has been approved. Agricultural producers transporting more than 10 loads a day, will need to contact their road foreman so maintenance can be adjusted accordingly. Developing an online notification system similar to the burn notification form for 10+ loads

### **Parks**

- **Prairie Oasis Park:** concession upgrades and engineering for shower house expansion.
- **Blood Indian Park:** new site location for store being investigated. Working on stocking program and seeing what changes need to be made to mitigate Carp problem.
- **Carolside Campground:** Plan to have sites serviced with power in 2025.
- **Little Fish Lake and Gooseberry Lake Provincial Park:** Making headway with the province on completing upgrades to the parks.
- Parks logos are undergoing a rebranding with funding provided through the Coal Transition Funding Initiative.

Discussion on waterline expansion to Compeer.

Discussion on increasing the tank size at the Loyalist truck fill station as there have been large operations that use it – Shaune will investigate.

Discussion on repairs to Highway 886 -planned for 2025/2026.

Shaune clarified what a Road Use Agreement is and when they are required. If agreements are not followed there could be fines associated.

Discussion on dust control due to increased commercial traffic – Should be contacting the companies using the roads as they are responsible for providing dust control.

Discussion on Kochia problem in the ditches – ASB and Municipal Services working together to mitigate this issue.

## **Trent Caskey, Director of Property Administration**

Trent presented a PowerPoint on the following:

- **Assessment:** Increase in assessment totals in 2024 due to the renewable projects receiving an assessment. The oil and gas industry has not been receiving assessment for the past three years, will begin assessing again in 2024.  
Tax assessments were mailed May 15, ratepayers to contact the assessor if they have questions, appeal deadline is July 22, 2024.
- **Community Pastures:** Rate has increased to \$1.05/head/day. Some pasture allotments were reduced for this season due to drought conditions.
- **Lease Rate Reviews:** No change in cultivation rate for 2024. 2023 grazing rental rate was reduced by 25% due to drought conditions. Cattle prices are expected to increase so the grazing rental rate will reflect that, expected to increase by 40%.
- **Land Use Order:** Public engagement took place in 2023. After 2<sup>nd</sup> reading, the Board recommended approval to the Minister. **TRLS:** This sale is a four-quarter sale and is in effect for 3 years.
- **Sheerness Industrial Park:** -construction began this year and is funded through the Coal Transition Fund. The industrial park is 320 acres and will be subdivided into 8 parcels. The rezoning has been completed and will be ready for those who have an interest in utilizing. There will also be a reservoir for this park off the Bullpound Creek.
- **MD of Acadia & Special Areas Irrigation Project:** Currently on phase 2 of the project, which includes project development. Geotechnical testing is being conducted, recommendations for financing are being discussed.

Discussion on cultivation and grazing rental formula.

Discussion on water license for the irrigation project and potential future allocations Trent explained the intent for irrigation use but would not be opposed to other opportunities as it may help fund the project.

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

Darcy presented a PowerPoint reviewing the 2023 audited financial statements:

- Special Areas is in a strong financial position, significant financial reserve due to the Tax Recovery Land Sales.
- Mill rates have increased but are below the rate of inflation - the strategy is to increase mill rates gradually when necessary.
- Expenditures have increased due to many different factors but primarily in the transportation department. Upcoming budget deficit of \$18,060,295, planning to draw down surplus with the paving of HWY 855.

Discussion on whether the carbon tax has affected our equipment purchases.

Discussion on SAB's involvement in policing and whether payment is made to the Provincial Policing Fund.

#### **Justine Comeau, Agricultural Fieldman SA#4**

Justine reported on the following:

- Decommissioning of pesticides containers sites – all jugs need to be returned to retailer at the end of 2024, although will keep the Monitor and Hemaruka sites open for disposals.
- Summer staff started at the beginning of May – once the weather permits, they will begin spraying.
- A new drone for lease inspections has been purchased which will increase efficiency.

#### **New Business**

Discussion on renewable energy projects in Special Areas and concerns with the solar component.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:42 pm by Gloria Nelson.

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**Erin Van Koughnett, Office Manager**  
**SPECIAL AREA NO. 4, CONSORT**