

No name change for MD

Foothills: Council vote split over issue

By Krista Conrad

Staff Reporter

The MD of Foothills will not be changing its name in the near future.

MD council voted last week to keep the municipality's official name, the Municipal District of Foothills No. 31 after months of debate. However, council agreed to shorten the name to Foothills on welcome signs posted beside highways at the MD's border.

The vote came after council first considered shortening the name or even changing it to Foothills County in December.

"It was a split vote so this was a compromise between changing to Foothills County or staying with the MD of Foothills No. 31," said Mayor Larry Spilak.

Coun. Jason Parker and Suzanne Oel sided with Spilak in favour of changing to Foothills County, stating it would be shorter and easier for residents and visitors to identify with.

"A lot of people out there don't understand what an MD is or what it does, and some confuse it with medical doctor," said Oel.

"Whenever I explain what an MD is, I always end up explaining to people that it's a county."

Oel said she is pleased council was able to compromise with the entrance signs, which are slated to be replaced within the next year regardless of any name change.

She said the new highway signs at MD boundaries will read either "Foothills Welcomes You" or "Welcome to Foothills." "We need to change our signs anyway, which are in disrepair and already taken down in some places," said Oel. "So it's an expense we're trying not to do twice, changing out the signs. If we just use 'Foothills,' it works with any potential future changes."

The wording on signage will be short and direct, which she said was one of the main goals of the name change.

Coun. Rick Percifield said the tradition of the MD name was important to him it carries a sense of pride in the Blackie area he represents.

The name also helps distinguish the MD of Foothills from nearby Vulcan County, he said.

"Certainly in my area, you can say someone is in the MD or in the County, meaning Vulcan County, which is right next to us," said Percifield. "There could have been some confusion there, and it makes us distinct."

Coun. Ron Chase agreed with Percifield, preferring the traditional name.

He said the "MD," as residents and businesses in the area refer to it, is a commonly used short form, and there was no need to officially change to Foothills County for simplicity.

The thought of rebranding also caused him some concern, since his experience dictated the process could be more costly than anticipated in the long run. The MD projected the total cost of a complete name overhaul to be \$20,000.

He said the cost wouldn't be justified for what he considers to be an unnecessary move.

"Just because one or two people think it's a good idea to call it something else doesn't mean it is," said Chase. "It's like the one-off laws that get changed because of one incident. It doesn't make sense."

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Business Profile

A boutique for women of style

What began 35 years ago as a home-based business selling Birkenstocks has blossomed into a 1,600 square-foot fashion boutique in the heart of Okotoks.

This month, Ginger Laurier celebrates 15 years in Okotoks and four years in Calgary - Britannia Plaza.

Owner Donita Beaulieu says she is excited by the growth and proud of the clothing store that started with such humble beginnings.

"Women are beautiful inside and out. It has been really fun for me to work with them," said Beaulieu. "Watching the industry of fashion grow and change has been very exciting."

Beaulieu said she enjoys keeping up with current trends and shopping for the footwear, clothing, accessory and jewellery lines she brings in to the store.

Each item is handpicked for Ginger Laurier in Okotoks.

"I travel to markets in Canada, the United States and Europe. It's definitely sourced specially for the stores," said Beaulieu. "I hope to bring in beautiful unique lines that are not seen anywhere else."

It takes a lot of work to source distinctive items for two stores, but Beaulieu says she enjoys the challenge and loves coming to work every day.

For her - and her employees - Ginger Laurier is more than a store or a job.



Ginger Laurier owner Donita Beaulieu stands in her Okotoks store on March 30. Beaulieu and her team are proud to bring unique fashion lines and a personal approach to customer service to their boutique.

"It's just wonderful to help women be transformed," said Beaulieu. "There's probably no nicer feeling than when they come out of a change room and they feel amazing, and they're so happy."

What makes Ginger Laurier special is the team of women working together to make a difference in another woman's day. For Beaulieu and the Ginger Laurier team, that means connecting with the women who shop in their store.

"Sometimes women just need to have a connection with a friend, someone you can just have that conversation with," said Beaulieu.

Their personal approach to service - knowing their customers' sizes and preferences, calling women to let them know a piece came in that would suit them - is part of what makes the store unique.

"It's been a really fun journey, and we have amazing customers," said Beaulieu. "We are all really proud of Ginger Laurier."

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