

Residents looking for water solutions

By Krista Conrad

Staff Reporter

A long-sought solution to water supply issues in the MD of Foothill's far northwest may have finally been found, but it could come at a cost to residents.

The MD of Foothills has been leasing and operating a water treatment plant at Fish Creek Ranch (FCR) on Highway 762 at 194 Avenue since 2012 to provide treated water to seven lots in a nearby subdivision. The plant treats water from an off-stream raw water reservoir fed by Fish Creek.

In the past few years, more communities have expressed interest in tying into the FCR waterline and developer Rusticana Ranches has worked with the MD to investigate taking water north from the treatment plant. Construction of the pipeline has now gone to tender.

More recently, residents

at Square Butte Ranch approached the MD to look at piping potable water drawn from the FCR treatment plant southward along Highway 762. Priddis-area residents are also considering the possibility of paying for a pipeline to service the region.

MD Coun. Suzanne Oel said the MD is required to respond when residents express an interest in municipal utility services.

"The residents at Square Butte Ranch wrote a letter, an expression of interest to the MD of Foothills council to say they were interested in looking at service from Fish Creek," said Oel. "We decided to go through with a preliminary high-level engineering investigation, which is effective for the MD to make sure it's reasonable to proceed."

The engineering review will look at water capacity, the feasibility of building a 20km transmission pipeline

and 35km of branch lines, and the cost to residents for expanding the treated waterlines from FCR, she said.

Costs would be shared among residents interested in tying into the line, said Oel. The estimated cost of the local improvement tax, which would cover the cost of infrastructure, is \$62,500 per landowner spread over 20 years – about \$3,125 per year, she said.

"For most people that's pretty expensive and they're not likely going to be able to afford that for the average person," said Oel.

If residents decide to proceed, Oel said the MD could look into grant funding for the project, such as the Building Canada Fund or covering some of the cost through provincial MSI funding, to lower the total expense.

Once the pipeline is built from FCR water treatment plant, residents must also

pay for their own connections, she said. The MD is committed to bringing water to the property line of interested residents, but landowners will be responsible for installing meters and having pipe installed on their properties, she said.

"They are responsible for those costs," said Oel. "And then they pay into a long-term situation of placing that, too."

Residents would still be able to use their wells to draw water, she said, as long as there is no connection between the potable water system and the well.

The next step is to meet with the residents and provide a presentation of the engineer report to explain the potential service area and costs of the project, she said. It's important to keep residents informed, she said.

"We engage with them way more," said Oel. "If we were in the city they wouldn't even be talking to them, but we take engagement to the next level – we're meeting with them, we're explaining the

process to them and wanting to hear if this is really what they want to do."

She said the only way to move forward is to have active engagement from the community. In order to proceed with a local improvement, at least two-thirds of the area residents must be in favour, she said.

There are other considerations waiting on resident input, she said. There may be a need for more water licences, but the MD can't move ahead with applications until it knows the pipeline projects will proceed, she said.

"There's a lot of interest, but whether it is a reality has to be determined by the full engagement of all the residents and our MD of Foothills public works and engineering," said Oel. "And our council has to make its decision as well."

Doug Weston, president of Fish Creek Ranch, said the north end of the MD of Foothills has seen its fair share of issues that need to be resolved.

"It's the quality, quantity problems," said Weston. "There's been a water

shortage and quality problems here historically for years and years, since people moved out to this area it's been a problem for water. A lot of people don't have water, period."

He said issues drove a group of residents to begin a project in the late 90s for regional water service.

Though it's taken a few years to get there, he said it's a relief to see some pipe going into the ground soon, with the Rusticana project tenders due back March 1.

The water treatment plant was built to serve several hundred homes, so it definitely has the capacity to service more communities, he said.

"It was built to supply a safe and reliable water source for the area, so that's why we started it and it's an exciting time now," said Weston.

The open house for SBR residents to review the engineering report is scheduled for March 16.

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Trial set for 7-11 thefts

By Darlene Casten
Wheel contributor

A man accused in two early morning robberies at Okotoks 7-Eleven stores has pleaded not guilty and set a trial date.

Adam Armstrong, of Turner Valley, is charged with two counts of robbery, impaired driving, disguised with the intent of committing an offence, resisting a police officer,

two counts of possession of a dangerous weapon and two counts of assault with a weapon.

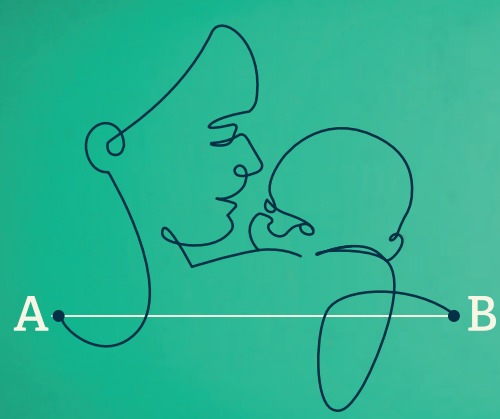
On Jan. 4, the 7-Eleven store on Elizabeth Street was held up by a man with a hunting knife at 1:41 a.m. Shortly after a second report of a similar suspect robbing the Milligan Drive 7-Eleven with a hunting knife. No one was hurt in the robberies.

The RCMP dog team

was called in and went to both 7-Eleven locations. Officers also carried out extensive patrols in the area. A suspect was identified driving in a silver Jetta nearby.

On Feb. 24, lawyer Jim Edgett entered not guilty pleas to all the charges on behalf of Armstrong's lawyer, Kim Arial.

A two-day trial will be held in Okotoks Provincial Court July 26 and 27.



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