

Wishing you a Happy New Year! and sharing news... a collection of my updates over the past few months all in one shot :-)

Event on January 22, 2018 - "Septic Sense: Solutions for Rural Living Workshop":

You are invited to attend the Septic Sense Workshop at the Priddis Hall on Monday, January 22, 2018, at 7 pm, Free of charge, about understanding and taking care of your septic system. Two other options of dates/times available if you can't attend the 22nd. Pre-registration is required.

7:00 pm, Mon. January 22, 2018 at Priddis Community Hall

7:00 pm, Wed. January 24, 2018 at Davisburg Community Hall

7:00 pm, Mon. February 12, 2018 at Highwood Memorial Centre

- Did you know the average person puts 340 liters of sewage through a private sewage system (septic system) every day? For a family of four living in a two-bedroom house, that amounts to 1,360 liters per day and just under half a million liters per year!
- Rural property owners are responsible for ensuring their systems operate properly and safely. If you have a septic system on your rural property, you will benefit from attending this workshop. Presenters will teach you how to understand, assess and properly manage your septic system, enabling you to protect your investment in your property and the valuable natural assets associated with your land.
- Learn what you can do to properly manage and maintain your septic system. Attend the Septic Sense workshop hosted and presented by M.D. of Foothills, with technical expertise provided by the Alberta Onsite Wastewater Management Association (AOWMA) and materials developed by Land Stewardship Centre (LSC).
- During the workshop we will cover: What a septic system is and how it works. Regulations. Design and installation. Appropriate use of your septic system. Maintaining your septic system. Troubleshooting
- To attend the workshop, register, Free of charge, at: www.mdfoothills.eventbrite.ca

Event on February 6, 2018 - "Working Well Workshop":

You are invited to attend the Working Well Workshop at the Priddis Hall on Tuesday, February 6, 2018, at 7 pm, Free of charge, about understanding and taking care of your water well system. Two other options of dates/times available if you can't attend the 6nd. Pre-registration is required.

7:00 pm, Tues. February 6, 2018 at Priddis Community Hall

7:00 pm, Wed. February 7, 2018 at Davisburg Community Hall

1:00 pm, Tues. February 13, 2018 at Highwood Memorial Centre

- Find out if your groundwater is at risk and learn what you can do to protect your well
- Attend this free water well management workshop hosted by the MD of Foothills and presented by the Working Well Program, with technical expertise from Alberta Agriculture and Forestry, Alberta Environment and Parks, Alberta Health Services and licensed water well drillers.
- This hands-on, informative workshop is designed to help water well owners better understand and manage their precious groundwater supplies.
- For more information and to register, Free of Charge, visit: www.mdfoothills.eventbrite.ca

Public Engagement on Secondary Dwelling Units, March 2018:

This topic has long been of interest to many of us. We want to explore how our residents feel about allowing secondary dwelling units and use that feedback to develop a strategy to move forward. Secondary dwelling units can take a few forms: within the interior space of the principal dwelling (AKA "Secondary Suites"), as a detached unit located on the same property, or within an accessory building (ex. above a garage). Some benefits: helps us to age in place, provides supplemental income, allows family members to live near each other, increases property value, allows downsizing of living space without moving, provides a way to increase affordable housing without subsidies, is a potential way for low impact densifying of population without subdivision and can be an efficient use of existing infrastructure. On the flipside, there are challenges to consider and therefore this may not be appropriate for all areas: meeting building and fire safety codes, having adequate water and wastewater servicing additional to the primary dwelling use, fear of change

of character in an area, lack of parking space in hamlet settings, increased traffic, increased number of buildings per lot, additional people and animals, etc. Thank you to Coreena Carr and all planning staff working to prepare for our public engagement. I look forward to hearing from you at a session that will be held in Priddis at the end of March. More details soon.

High Country Rural Crime Watch is working with the MD of Foothills:

Due to crime escalation, your MD of Foothills Councillors have requested that we work with our 3 Rural Crime Watches (High Country, Okotoks & Foothills) local to the MD of Foothills to promote a presence of our Rural Crime Watches (RCWs) and that a liaison from our Protective Services assist with bringing all 3 groups together on April 10, 2018 for a discussion with RCMP, Fish & Wildlife, RCWs, Councillors, MLAs and public/RCW members/Community Associations. Look for more info soon about the regional meeting. Council has appointed Protective Services Coordinator, Officer Darlene Roblin, and Operational Supervisor, Officer Darcy Beaudette, as your law enforcement liaisons for the MD of Foothills, with the intention to better communicate our Crime Watch Association initiatives throughout the MD of Foothills. A map will be added to the MD's website, which will highlight the 3 RCWs along with contact info. At present, information is given to new residents about each RCW. More social media and other means of promotion will be used. We look forward to all of these measures to assist with creating a better defense of personal safety and our rural properties.

- For more information about our local High Country Rural Crime Watch, please visit: <http://hcrcwa.ca/>
- Also, we are now on Facebook (As your HCRCWA pres., I am the administrator for this page): <https://www.facebook.com/HighCountryRuralCrimeWatch/>
- In the News: [CBC Article on Rural Mail Theft](#)

Snow Plowing Explained:

My summary of snow-removal policy with thanks to Mike Gallant: When a mid-size snow event of 10 cm or more occurs, the MD's fleet of 21 pieces of equipment (9 plow trucks, 10 graders and 2 skid steers) will take a minimum of 72 hours to clear all roads (approximately 4,400 lane kilometers). Smaller equipment is engaged if less snowfall. In significant snow events, staff is instructed to make a pass in and out on all their dedicated roads to ensure all residents receive the same level of service and to accommodate emergency vehicles if required. The larger highway trucks look after all the major roads that have higher traffic volumes and speed limits, which take priority over internal subdivision roads due to higher risk. Snow plowing on private driveways is the landowner's responsibility. Landowners must NOT plow their snow across or onto a municipal road or ditch, as this creates a hazard. The MD does not maintain Provincial Highways, which are the responsibility of Alberta Transportation's maintenance contractors. De-icing salt and sand-chip materials are applied to intersections, curves, hills and any other portions of roadways that require treatment to improve safety. MD staff will respond to *localized emergency situations* after regular hours, specifically limited to: Life or property in imminent danger, icy conditions on main roadways or intersections, infrastructure at risk due to washout or slide, or the environment at risk due to contaminant spills. Please use caution when approaching road maintenance equipment as the operator's visibility is restricted. Contact the MD at 403.652.2341 to report a road that requires plowing. For after-hours emergencies, call: 1.888.808.3722.

Burn Permit Policy under Review:

Our Burn Permit policy is currently under review due to the effects of a recent large-scale burn of green brush piles west of Priddis, which started on Dec. 29, 2017. I was able to understand the impacts to others because I experienced an intolerable level of smoke and fumes filling my own house and had to shut off my furnace at -35 C due to choking, burning eyes, being nauseated and worse conditions outside. I called in to our 911 dispatch to find out if there was a fire next to my house and turns out it was the continuing effects from smoldering burn piles held down on lower-lying areas by an inversion. Everything in and outside of my house smelled of smoke and I had a headache over many days. Residents, even more greatly impacted in the area near the burn and in the surrounding area over many miles have contacted me about the fire, smoke, health and safety concerns related to the large burn in such cold temperatures, during an inversion and which lasted over 20 days for some. The Burn Permit was temporarily revoked and reissued when weather conditions appeared to have changed, with a limit imposed of 5 burn piles at a time. However, the inversion continued and then it was requested that the fires be extinguished, although piles continued to smolder for days, prolonging the effects. No one is disputing the right to burn brush and the landowners' explanation that they were

doing “Fire-smart” work, but there is need to evaluate a few things that may be improved upon since we now have this learning experience. I have asked for Council’s consideration and requested our staff input to review this situation and guide us in evaluating our next steps. Affected residents were invited to write letters to our Council in an effort to convey their concerns and suggestions. Some also attended Council on January 10, 2018. I hope that we will now take action around these main points regarding Burn Permits: the weather conditions of “Cold” and “Inversion”, related health and safety concerns for our residents and fire responders, effects of the scale of burn (# of piles), seasoning of wood, threshold temperature affecting ability for response by our Fire Department, how permission is given and monitoring done for large-scale burns, better communication with neighbours by landowners doing large-scale burns, changes to our Burn Permit, website info and related procedures with our Fire Department and Foothills 911, etc. Our Rural Fire Board is reviewing this situation to make recommendations that will come back to Council.

2018.01.17 – OWW Article link: [MD evaluating fire permits for large burns](#)

Large Animal Emergency Preparedness Update:

On November 21, 2017, emergency response agencies, leaders and field personnel attended a workshop in High River, hosted by the MD, which provided an overview of the equine industry in Alberta and with the goal to assist municipal bodies to incorporate equine into their existing emergency plans. As you may recall, our High Country Rural Crime Watch hosted an initial meeting with the Alberta Equine Federation and local emergency responder leaders earlier in 2017, which led to an introduction of this topic and further action from our MD Foothills Ag Services and MD Emergency Response coordinators. The November meeting was well-attended and many people gained new information. Organizers have discussed that some future plans may include having an equine specialist on call, work will continue on our emergency planning in consultation with municipalities that have large animal strategies in place, and will include planning citizen workshops, etc. Good news all round :-)

Dust Control Product Performance:

The MD of Foothills is using a product called “Clearview” for “dust control” on our gravel roads. Residents can request 100 m of “dust control” on a public road, near their residence. Our Public Works team applies dust control spot treatments to approximately 850 public road locations, plus other approved roads that fit within budget. Our Deputy-Director of Operations, Mike Gallant, is pleased to report that this product is working well and we are fine-tuning the application process as we gain experience. Due to the effectiveness of Clearview, we are using less and seeing cost savings because the product lasts longer than previous products we have tried. In 2016, we used 1.7 million litres and in 2017, we used 930,000 litres. With this success, in 2018, we may be able to increase the amount of kms of road we treat and keep working on better utilization of the product. Lastly: Did you know you can enter into an agreement with the MD to pay for additional (above the 100 m the MD provides) dust control on public roads near your place, with the caveat of the MD determining need for grading when necessary? You can contact our Public Works Department to learn more about this: 403.652.2390

Change in Procedure for accepting Email Submissions for Planning & Hearings:

In October, I requested that our planning staff investigate a change in procedure for the Planning and Development Department to allow for the acceptance of email submissions for planning and development related documentation and Council correspondence relating to public hearing matters. I am pleased to announce that we made the change on December 13! Previously, Council correspondence relating to public hearing matters was only accepted by fax or letter and email or other electronic formats such as PDF were not accepted. To increase efficiencies and accessibility for both planning/development staff and landowners/applicants, the department recommended to change the practice to allow for the acceptance of email submissions. Our staff will now need to revise and update planning and development application forms, information booklets/brochures and applicable sections of the Municipal Website to clearly outline submission requirements. I believe this positive change will encourage landowner involvement and result in less frustration. Thank you to all our planning staff and to Samantha Payne for her work on this report!

Dark Sky Petition link:

Consider adding your electronic signature to the petition to protect the dark skies around Calgary, in the MD of Foothills, asking our provincial ministers of Environment and Transportation to reconsider the street lighting they plan to install on

the SW Calgary Ring Road. For more info and to sign the petition, visit: <https://www.change.org/p/shannon-philips-protect-the-dark-sky-sites-around-calgary>

Canada Post Parcel & Mail Pickup Centre in Priddis:

Just a reminder, if you haven't heard the good news, Priddis Business Connection Inc. is now our local parcel pickup location as of Nov. 20, 2017. For most of us, this is a relief to have closer to home convenience. However, if you prefer other locations, you can still use "flex-delivery" to designate where you want your parcels sent.

AAMDC Conference:

Our Foothills Council and staff reps attended the bi-annual convention of the Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties, held in Edmonton, Nov. 14-17, 2017. Some highlights for you (next 8 items):

PERC (provincial education requisition credit):

A well-received announcement came from Municipal Affairs on Nov 15, where they at last acknowledged the losses of our rural municipalities over the past few years. Municipalities (your tax \$) had to pay the education portion for Oil & Gas companies that were assessed by the province to pay linear or machinery and equipment taxes and were remiss in their payments. These taxes are assessed by the province, collected by municipalities and submitted to the province. This year the properties were reassessed so as not to have the municipalities on the hook to pay their education taxes. However, we were still out the education portion payed in previous years on their behalf. So, retroactive to 2015, we will now hopefully be able to recover the taxes through this program called "PERC" to the tune of about \$870,000 that MD taxpayers have had to cover.

Lively Resolutions Session:

All 69 rural municipalities have the opportunity to bring forward issues to our association to lobby the provincial government. We meet 2x a year at our local zone meetings to bring resolutions forward and then, if passed at the local level, these resolutions make it to the convention floor, where they are presented and voted upon. Some hot resolution topics at this session on Nov. 15, were: disagreement with centralization of Industrial Property Assessment, request for coordination of planning for species at risk through the regional land-use plans, the length of time it takes for Water Act approvals for work done on municipal land, request to GoA to develop a communications plan to advise Alberta's agriculture sector of actual and intended changes to workplace legislation, lack of interest to merge the urban municipal association with the rural association because the rurals don't want to lose their voice (but still want to work together), interest to explore off-highway vehicle fees for a user-pay system on public lands, request for specialized clinical counselling and therapy for distressed emergency first responders, desire to review the Alberta gaming and liquor commission regarding charitable gaming to be more equitably accessible to rural organizations, concern over the lack of time being allowed to get organized for cannabis legalization, desire to stop the implementation of proposed federal tax reforms, request to integrate emergency social services into emergency management at the provincial level, concern with impacts of the builder licensing program, concern about reduction of representation of rural Albertans in Alberta's Legislative Assembly, support for the Trans Mountain Expansion Project, etc...

Bear Pit Session with Provincial Ministers:

One morning during our conference is dedicated to meeting the government ministers in a forum setting where rural municipal councillors have a chance to ask questions on current issues. We filled the one & half hours with topics ranging from health care troubles to sustainable support for ag societies to roads & bridges to local special issues to "thanks" for the FCSS (family & community support services) funding. Some questions were answered; many were not. But decorum was kept through a well-organized moderated process by the AAMDC board. Following this, the Premier of Alberta gave her address to the Shaw convention centre crowd of rural councillors from all across Alberta, staff, urban & other guests and media.

My question to Alberta Environment & Parks:

At the Bear Pit Session on Nov. 16, I posed the following: “Management of aggregate resources” has been a topic of interest to AAMDC for some time, with a resolution put forward in 2010 and “Got Gravel” report in 2013. In 2017, your department went out to stakeholders for discussion on surface water body aggregate policy, fish & wildlife considerations, reporting requirements and reclamation requirements. Your report “What we Heard on the Sand & Gravel Program” captures many comments, with the bottom line that stakeholders want more engagement. My question is: What is our plan? Our next step? We need gravel! It’s a major resource for municipalities and industry. BUT, are we just going to mine it until it’s all gone? OR, can we PLAN to: reclaim, innovate, substitute material, create new material, get industry involved and strategize and plan for the future? AEP Minister Shannon Phillips answered with a “Yes”, and that this file had not gotten enough attention and their department will continue to work on it. That was a good answer for now. I will follow up on this over time.

Alberta Transportation Meeting:

We had a chance to meet with AT staff about various Foothills projects. I brought up a few in our NW area. We still consider the request to improve the bridge over Fish Creek at Priddis on Hwy 22 to be a top priority. This continues to be on the “unfunded list” with the province. Next step would be updating engineering estimates. Not happening yet. Further, I thanked AT on your behalf for the work done on Hwy 762, in the approximate amount of \$11M. As you may have noticed, the road is finished with a lift of pavement, completed in 2017. The second lift will be applied in 2018 to finish off the project.

Education Session on Cannabis Legalization:

Councillors and municipal staff have the opportunity to attend break-out sessions on a number of current topics. I chose this one because I wanted to hear the latest on where we are at with preparing for the legalization of recreational use, which is set for the summer of 2018 by the Federal Government. As you may know, medical use is already legal. Foothills has already been getting things ready and now there is interest being expressed by companies to set up. We have worked out a Direct Control zoning for this type of operation (more details available upon request) and recommend that they be located in our industrial area. During the education session, we had a chance to hear from a cannabis producer, a municipality that has already worked with their community to get a facility in place, and a representative from the provincial cannabis secretariat (under AB Justice & Solicitor General). The provincial government has put together a framework with goals of: keeping the product out of the hands of children, protecting safety on roads, in workplaces and public spaces, protecting public health, and limiting the illegal market. Legislation is coming forward on driving safety, under the Alberta Traffic Safety Act (setting blood content limits, measurement devices, etc.), and retail aspects, which will have Alberta Gaming & Liquor Commission oversight. Taxes are yet being “hashed” over, since the work of regulating and follow-through enforcement is being downloaded to the municipalities. The Fed’s proposed tax-ratio is not acceptable to the province and municipalities. Education is a top priority since there can be issues with over-ingesting of edible forms of the product, due to delayed onset of effects, and there are many aspects of the cannabis product to learn about. There are over one hundred different “cannabinoids” in (medicinal) cannabis. The main two active components are tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) and cannabidiol (CBD), which are found in varying percentages across different strains of marijuana. THC is a psychoactive cannabinoid that is responsible for the “euphoric” feeling, while CBD is a non-psychoactive component... Another issue facing municipalities is the location of the retail premises. AGLC oversight will mandate stand-alone stores with buffers to sensitive establishments, except in rural and remote areas. Municipalities can fine-tune this part and have the discretion to custom design with their residents’ input. The jury is out on how this will all work out, since apparently Canada has sizable, entrenched illegal recreational-use markets already in place. However, the established system may be upset by the new “Canadian Way”. Or, it may be a non-event. Perhaps producers will go legal and create businesses where taxes can be obtained and prices kept competitive? Despite diverse perspectives on this, we are all caught in a race to get something in place by next year. More info: <https://www.alberta.ca/cannabis-legalization.aspx>

Special Guest Speaker:

Major General Lewis McKenzie gave an inspirational presentation about leadership, on Nov. 16. In a captivating message mixed with excerpts of his tours of duty in peacekeeping and war, in positions of authority, the MG shared his wisdom and distilled points of characteristics and actions of true leadership. Very memorable! More info:
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lewis_MacKenzie

My Question to the leaders of the Provincial Opposition Parties:

On Nov. 17, we had the chance to engage the 3 leaders (United Conservative Party, Alberta Party & Liberal) in a moderated forum setting. A very lively event took place where we dove into issues. We received comprehensive responses on topics from pipelines to health to education to rural support to Canadian strategy... At this session, I had a chance to bring up the topic of Rural 911 Dispatch, which you will know well from our campaign earlier this year. We've pretty much been buried on this now, so I wanted to ask these parties what they thought about the centralization of ambulance dispatch, etc. I was pleased to hear that they would favour supporting local solutions and look at a common-sense approach. As you know, that is not necessarily common. I hope that at some point, someone will care enough to do something constructive to help solve these issues, which still continue. For more info:
<https://www.fixrural911dispatch.com/>

For Other News & Updates:

Please visit my website: <http://suzanneoel.com/>
Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/CouncillorSuzanneOel/>

With Best Wishes, Suzanne

P.S.1. I am also writing for the High Country News, our local monthly newspaper.

P.S.2. I am emailing you this information because I thought you may be interested in this update about the M.D. of Foothills and our area (and we have been in touch previously). If you do not want to receive a newsletter from me occasionally, please let me know and I will not send any more information, or change your contact info if needed. Please share this information with your neighbours if you wish.