

Greetings! Sharing my News Update...

***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. More details soon.

***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.

***For Other News & Updates:***

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

With Best Regards, Suzanne