

Councillor Suzanne Oel – M.D. of Foothills Div. 4 Update - 2018.09.27

Greetings! Sharing my “not-so-brief” (grab a coffee first) News Update with info from the last few months:

Lively topics out for Public Consultation:

In June 2018, the M.D. of Foothills hosted a series of public engagement sessions on a number of topics that are relevant to landowners throughout the M.D. At all four events, information was presented and feedback requested on the following topics:

- Proposed name change to Foothills County
- Proposed changes to the M.D.'s Dog Bylaw
- Changes to the M.D.'s Community Standards Bylaw
- Policy direction regarding secondary suites
- Policy direction regarding the sale and consumption of cannabis

Alberta Transportation Construction on Highway 762 and Highway 549:

Construction on the full length of Highway 762 (23 km) began in May 2018 and is now complete. This included overlay paving and line painting. Highway 549 construction of 350 m and bridge repair is yet under way.

Recent WIDFIRE Event Review - Lessons learned:

From May 27 to May 29, 2018, residents in the west country of Foothills were on high alert for a pending wildfire that started early morning of the 27th, in the Champion Lakes – Maclean Creek recreation area, approximately 15 kilometres southeast of the intersection of Hwy 22 and Hwy 762. I first heard about the wildfire from residents who had seen smoke and were wondering what was going on, early Sunday afternoon. In the meantime, Foothills Fire was just being called in, as the wildfire was under the jurisdiction of Alberta Forestry at the time but had grown rapidly from 10 to 20 hectares in size. We sprang into action, with setting up our Emergency Coordination Centre and news went out through our local High Country Rural Crime Watch, Safe Communities Alert Network (SCAN), wildfires.albert.ca, AEA app, and I kept my Councillor Facebook Page as current as possible throughout the days. Our Emergency Management team issued a voluntary evacuation order due to the uncertainty of the fire spreading, with winds forecasted at 100 km/hr from a cold front coming in and the heavy ground smoke affecting visibility for drivers and possible respiratory concerns for some residents over the period of a few days. It was very nerve-wracking for people, and some residents moved their animals just in case of a turn for the worse. Many of us recalled how fast the fire spread in Waterton last year... Tinder-dry conditions and a late leafing-out of trees this year in the west country led to the fire spreading rapidly to approximately 60 hectares in a short time. At the peak of the wildfire on May 28, around 28 firefighter personnel worked tirelessly to reinforce a guard/fire break and continue suppression efforts with air tankers and helicopters doing bucket drops and dozers boxing in the lines. The Foothills Fire Department assisted in preparations along Hwy 762, from Hwy 22 to Hwy 549, by visiting residents and structures, to notify people of the situation and look for possible risks that could arise depending on location of homes and tree lines. Thankfully, Mother Nature cooperated by lessening the winds and sending in cooler temps along with some moisture. On May 29, news of the fire being contained and the state of emergency cancelled came as a huge relief to all. Provincial fire fighters continued to work for days yet on the site, while residents enjoyed a better night's sleep and hope for getting back to regular life. It turns out the wildfire threat was an educational exercise for residents in being prepared for an emergency, rather than what could have been a devastating outcome. While there are likely differing perspectives on how this all unfolded, I think we can agree that our emergency responders do a great job and particularly in this case, we thank them for protecting us from harm! I hope that with some reflection about this event, too close to home, this will motivate us to get our own emergency plans in place and remind us to consider how to deal with people, animals and property in an emergency, whether from fire, flood, gas leak, or whatever. We can't always rely on someone else being there immediately for us, because the timing or scale of an event may be beyond the abilities of our departments to handle all the impacts of situations that can go out of control.

Throughout the event, people wanted to know what was happening and where to look for information, so they could assess their course of action. In order to help you to be resourceful, here are some links to find Emergency Alert information and to be prepared in case of a future event:

- Safe Communities Alert Network (SCAN) on Foothills Website: <https://www.mdfoothills.com/emergency-management/emergency-alerts.html>
- SCAN direct Website: <https://member.everbridge.net/index/1332612387832073#/login>
- If you need any help with SCAN, there is a help line so that you can discuss your questions: 1.866.715.1911
- MD of Foothills Website emergency updates: <https://www.mdfoothills.com/index.html>
- Become a High Country Rural Crime Watch Association member and receive info fan-outs: <http://www.hcrcwa.ca/membership.html>
- HCRCWA FB: <https://www.facebook.com/HighCountryRuralCrimeWatch/>
- AEA: <http://www.emergencyalert.alberta.ca/>
- Weather: https://weather.gc.ca/warnings/index_e.html?prov=ab
- Rivers: <https://rivers.alberta.ca/>
- Wildfire: <http://wildfire.alberta.ca/>
- Wildfire MAP: <http://wildfire.alberta.ca/wildfire-status/status-map.aspx>
- Wildfire Smoke Guide: <http://craz.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/2017-09-19-Simplified-Wildfire-Smoke-Guide.pdf>
- AEMA: <http://www.aema.alberta.ca/>
- Cellphone Alerts: <http://www.alertready.ca/#home>
- Get Prepared: <https://www.getprepared.gc.ca/index-en.aspx>
- FireSmart: <https://www.firesmartcanada.ca/>

We are also in the process of setting up an event in the west country to discuss wildfire and crime. More soon...

About your Property Assessment and Taxes in the M.D. of Foothills:

22,766 people call this beautiful rural municipality “home”, according to 2016 census results. Our municipality features the foothills and prairie of sunny, southern Alberta, covering an area of approximately 3,600 square kilometres. We are next-door to the City of Calgary and 13 other municipal neighbours, and we’ve been around in our current form since 1954 (64 years). Our records show approximately 15,300 taxable rolls here; that is, separate-titled properties to which property taxes are applied.

How are property taxes are calculated?

Each year during budget process, Council approves an amount of revenue required to operate the municipality. The 2018 operating and capital budgets total \$73.48 M: \$40.29 M for municipal operations, \$10.39 M for capital projects, \$1.03 M for debt repayment, \$20.78 M for schools and \$0.99 M for seniors housing. Once the Province sets the school requisition request, which we must collect for them, we then calculate what is needed to pay for schools, seniors housing, plus our municipal expenses in our operating and capital budgets. The income expected from utilities, grants, licence fees, permits, etc., is subtracted and the remainder represents the *amount* to be raised in property taxes. This *amount* is divided by the total value of all the assessable property in the municipality to arrive at the overall tax rates. Council may set different tax rates for these four classes: residential, farmland, non-residential (land &/or improvements with commercial/industrial use) and machinery & equipment, subject to the maximum farmland and M&E values calculated by the Province. Foothills County does not levy a business tax. Sometimes more than one tax rate applies to parts of the same property, as the activities, buildings and land-use may determine. The majority of assessment in Foothills is “residential”. Your assessment is based on characteristics of your property, improvements and market value trends related to the first 3 acres of your land, farmland rates on the balance land, and the status of your parcel improvements as of December 31, 2017. In 2017, market values had an overall increase of less than 0.5 %. To determine taxes, your property assessment is multiplied by the mill rate. 2018 mill rates increased a small amount: 0.5% for residential, farm and non-residential properties, with the M&E mill rate increasing more, at 5.96%.

What do property taxes pay for?

This year, 44% of your residential property tax bill pays for schools and seniors housing. The remaining 56% pays for Foothills County operations/services and capital expenses (directly or shared with other municipalities) to support the residents of our large rural area and our nine hamlets: Aldersyde, Blackie, Cayley, De Winton, Hartell, Millarville, Naptha, Priddis and Priddis Greens (includes Hawk’s Landing). Services include: general administration, seven

councillors, public works department, road construction and sustainable maintenance of over 2,000 kms of road (snow removal, grading, gravel, bridge repair, culverts, equipment, vehicles, oil, dust control product, responses to Mother Nature's surprises), fire protection (includes equipment), emergency 911 call answer service and fire dispatch, emergency management, protective services - bylaw enforcement, agricultural services (maintenance, mowing ditches, brushing, weed control, educational workshops), recreation and parks, planning and development administration, building permits with safety codes officers, assessment department, tax department, corporate services, mapping department, regional landfill and Frank Lake effluent pumping system management, two garbage transfer stations, family and community support services, cemeteries, libraries, community clean up, Stars ambulance, inter-municipal planning, administration of provincial funding, water operation services for bulk-fill stations and water monitoring (paid by users), water and wastewater services to some hamlets with full cost-recovery, shared admin building and two workshops, informative website, Western Wheel subscription (providing minutes, upcoming hearing and development notices), plus numerous committees and boards in the support of our communities (councillors each sit on 14-20 of these), etc...

As we grow and face an increase in demand for services, we must plan for the future in order to be equitable throughout our municipality, take our residents' views into consideration, mitigate impacts and consider regional efficiencies. Your input has been included in our Municipal Development Plan, Growth Management Strategy, Inter-Municipal Development Plans, and recently on several new topics, through consultation. We continue to collaborate with different levels of government and our neighbours to achieve resolutions to problems, including the rural crime issue and being at the table to plan together with the mandated Calgary Metropolitan Region Board. Your Council and Staff are especially conscious of your desire to keep taxes from increasing and keep levels of service adequate. We're planning for and encouraging industrial/commercial development in our Hwy 2A Industrial Corridor, looking for industrial assessment to offset and reduce taxes on residential assessment, if possible.

Friendly reminder: Property taxes are due September 30, 2018.

Boards and Committees:

To expand on the above information about "what your taxes pay for", I'd like to share a list of the boards and committees of Council to give you a picture of the many topics that our municipality deals with and the extent of the work going on. In addition to their other duties, Councillors each sit on about 14-20+ boards and committees and our staff assists with some of them. Residents may also participate and, if you are interested to put your name forward, you can check to see them advertised around December every year.

The following is a list of the 64 current boards and committees, in alphabetical order: Annexation Negotiation Committee – Black Diamond, Assessment Review Board, Audit Committee, Blackie Recreation Board, Blackie Seed Cleaning Plant Board, Bow River Basin Council, Calgary Inter-Municipal Negotiating Committee, CMRB - Calgary Metropolitan Region Board, CMRB - Land-Use Committee, CMRB - Servicing Committee, CMRB - Governance Committee, Calgary Regional Airshed Zone (CRAZ), Cayley Recreation Board, Crescent Point Community Foundation Committee, Community Futures- Highwood Board, Community Standards Appeal Board, Cross Conservation Area Board, Dark Sky Initiatives Stakeholders Working Group, Development Appeal Board, Dunbow Recreation Board, Emergency Advisory Committee, Family and Community Support Services Committee, Foothills Agricultural Services Board, Foothills Cemetery Board, Foothills Land Trust, Foothills – Okotoks Recreation Society Board, Foothills Regional Emergency Services Commission, Foothills Regional Services Commission, Foothills Regional Water and Wastewater Collaborative, Friends of Champion Park Society (Board of Directors), High River Regional Airport Board (Director), High River Inter-Municipal Negotiating Committee, High River Recreation Board, Highwood Management Plan – Public Advisory Committee, Highwood Management Plan Phase II - Sheep River Study Group, Historical Committee, Inter-Municipal Industrial Lands Project Committee, Leighton Art Centre Board, Longview Inter-Municipal Negotiating Committee, Longview Recreation Board, Marigold Library Board, Mayors and Reeves of Southern Alberta, Millarville Recreation Board, M.D. Cemeteries Committee (Blackie, Cayley, Pine Creek & Davisburg cemeteries), North West Foothills Recreation Board, Okotoks Inter-Municipal Negotiating Committee, Okotoks Public Library Board, Okotoks Post-Secondary Ad Hoc Committee, Okotoks Recreation Board, Priddis - Red Deer Lake Recreation Board, Regional School Site Planning Task Force, Rocky View County Inter-Municipal Negotiating Committee, Rural Fire Board, Safety Committee, Sheep River Health Trust Board of Directors, Sheep River Regional Utility Corp., Spitzee Riparian Stewardship Committee,

Staff Review and Council Remuneration Committee, Subdivision Appeal Board, Turner Valley and Black Diamond Inter-Municipal Negotiating Committee, Turner Valley Oil and Gas Group (TVOGG), Vehicle Weight Order Committee, Vulcan and Willow Creek Inter-Municipal Negotiating Committee, and Westwinds Communities (formerly Foothills Foundation). More info can be found on our website: <https://www.mdfoothills.com/council.html>

What I do as your Foothills Div. 4 Councillor:

I prepare for and attend weekly full-day Council meetings, have on-going interaction (work, support, meetings) with residents, community associations, businesses, school divisions, provincial & federal departments & representatives, attend 2 annual "Rural Municipalities of Alberta" conferences, and work on current issues... I work as a member on these Boards & Committees, which were confirmed at our annual re-organizational meeting in October 2017: Bow River Basin Council, Calgary Inter-Municipal Negotiating Committee, Calgary Metropolitan Region Board – attending board meetings and 3 CMRB Committees (Land-use, Servicing & Governance), Calgary Regional Airshed Zone, Community Standards Appeal Board, Cross Conservation Area Board, Dark Sky Initiatives Stakeholders Working Group, Foothills Regional Emergency Services Commission – Chairperson, Foothills Regional Water & Wastewater Collaborative – Chairperson, Highwood Management Plan Public Advisory Committee (voting authority), Highwood Management Plan Phase II Sheep River Study Group (voting authority), Inter-Municipal Industrial Lands Project Committee, North West Foothills Recreation Board, Okotoks Inter-Municipal Committee (Alt), Priddis - Red Deer Lake Recreation Board, Subdivision Appeal Board and Rocky View County Inter-Municipal Committee.

Crime prevention pilot project to take place in Foothills:

Our Foothills Council is conducting an RCMP Pilot Project in response to RURAL PROPERTY CRIME and other hot issues. The Pilot Project will consist of hiring additional RCMP shifts to target areas of concern noted by Council and RCMP and to create more police presence throughout Foothills. We made a motion to go ahead with this on Sept. 5, 2018, for the months of October to December 2018, and then to evaluate the program at that point. We hope this will help fight crime!

Rural property crime stats increase from last year in our area:

While the Alberta RCMP Administration just announced that the overall Alberta rural property crime stats have gone down somewhat from last year at this mid-year assessment point (link: <http://www.rcmp-grc.gc.ca/en/news/2018/alberta-rcmp-releases-mid-year-report-card-crime-reduction>), the rural property crime in our Turner Valley RCMP Detachment response area has GONE UP! Check out the Stats Chart, which I posted on my Facebook page on Sept. 7, to see the rural property crime stats for 2018 in comparison to the last few years. Regarding property crime, break & enters are on par with last year and the number of thefts of under-\$5,000 have increased. Of course, not everything is reported, but this shows the general state of things. In other words, KEEP VIGILANT and report suspicious activity to RCMP. Call 911 if in progress. Call the complaints line if it's not urgent: 403.933.4262.

New RCMP Crime Map on Foothills website:

Just wanted to let you know about this Alberta RCMP Crime Map. This map can be accessed on the M.D. of Foothills website with the link below. When you visit this page, you can zoom in on the map on the right side of the page and see stats on the left side of the page. Stats are on this website for around 14 days, marked with an icon which identifies the type of incident placed at the approximate location on the landscape. Where you zoom in on the map on your screen, the number and type of incidents will be shown for that portion, with a sub-menu of the date and file number. You could keep this map as a "favourite" on your internet browser to check on what's going on around us locally. Link: <https://rcmp-k-div.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=1eb6ba3cc1124b48babce52d1f571d47>

New 911 Standards in Alberta recently announced:

Over the last two years, the Alberta Emergency Management Agency worked with 911 call centres to establish standards, which are to be in place by June 2019, for all 21 call centres in the province. This will create consistency across the province and better prepare for the roll-out of Next-Gen 911 technology. The standards include time benchmarks, backup plans, emergency response plans, quality assurance plans, and dealing with frivolous calls. Our Foothills Regional 911 dispatch centre will have minimal work to meet these standards, since they already achieve time benchmarks for call-answer and call-transfer and have always had an internal quality assurance plan. For our centre, there are only two action items on the list – adjusting the reporting style and completing work on the back-up site to

ensure it is fully-functional. We moved to our new centre in Okotoks about a year ago and we've used our former centre in Black Diamond as a back-up. So, we just have to ensure that it can function as a full back-up centre. Overall, we're very pleased that Foothills Regional 911 is in the best position to serve our residents with highly-skilled operators and state-of-the-art technology.

OWW Article - interview: <https://www.westernwheel.com/article/new-standards-to-enhance-911-services-20180905>

More info re 911 and standards: <http://www.aema.alberta.ca/911>

Potable Water Reports now done:

Fish Creek Ranch - North Distribution Potable Water Study - Phases 2 & 3 has been completed and recently accepted by Council for information purposes. Two reports are now available, which look at three potential service areas in the NW of Foothills, including "Task 1 with Phase 1" and "Task 2 with Phases 2 and 3". We'll advise you of any next steps, such as future discussion meetings or grant investigations. You can find these two PDF Reports on my website:

<http://suzanneoel.com/docs/misc/2018-05-24-FCR-North-Distribution-Potable-Water-Study-Phase-1.PDF> (pdf-2.6MB)

<http://suzanneoel.com/docs/misc/2018-05-24-FCR-North-Distribution-Potable-Water-Study-Phases-2-3.pdf> (pdf-2.3MB)

Calgary Metropolitan Region Board (CMRB) update:

The "Interim Growth Plan" and "Regional Evaluation Framework" will be presented to the Board of 10 municipalities on October 4, 2018. These plans will soon be in play regarding development. You can see more about CMRB here:

<https://www.calgarymetroregion.ca/>

News about Secondary Suites:

At our September 12 Council Meeting, we reviewed "What We Heard – June 2018". Our planning staff prepared an excellent summary report of the second round of public meetings. Some of you attended the meetings while some of you replied to our online survey. So, check out this report, now up on our Foothills website:

<https://www.mdfoothills.com/services/planning-and-development/secondary-suites.html>

Next up is some further discussion on direction and a final draft policy for Phase 1, considering suites on parcels over 2 acres in size, which will then come to council in a Public Hearing likely Nov./Dec.

Fish/Priddis Creeks Stewardship Group:

We'll be meeting on September 28, from 1 to 4, for a water-related education session. You are welcome to join us at this or future meetings as we launch our science-based community group to learn more about our watershed. Local area landowner, David Swann, has invited us to participate for the purpose of learning and better protecting the Creek, a vital resource. The hope is to tie this group with existing watershed stewardship groups, such as Friends of Fish Creek (within Calgary) and the Bow River Basin Council, since no other stewardship group is currently active on this reach of Fish Creek. If you are still interested but have not been able to attend yet, please contact: davidswann571@gmail.com

News about the Priddis Multi-Purpose Building project:

Recent OWW interview: <https://www.westernwheel.com/article/priddis-gearing-up-for-multi-purpose-building-20180919>

Investigating an Idle-free Policy for our municipal fleet:

On Sept. 8, I requested that we authorize staff to investigate an idle-free policy, as time permits. As there is much good work that has been done by the [Calgary Region Airshed Zone](#) (CRAZ) and other municipalities on this, we are going to gather information and look at what we may bring about for an internal policy regarding best practices on operating our municipal vehicles. The goal would be to help us be mindful of using only what we need and, as a benefit, to save on consumption and cost of fuel = to save some tax dollars and reduce pollution. This summer, we provided Alberta Environment & Parks with a list of things we are already doing in rural municipal practices to reduce pollution and improve air quality, to add to their yearly report for the Air Quality Management Framework under the South Saskatchewan Regional Plan. This idea came about as one area that we could take a look at in more depth. Foothills is also a member of CRAZ, for which I am the council representative. It is important for us to be at this table because air quality knows no boundaries... See more in my recent interview with OWW:

<https://www.westernwheel.com/article/md-looking-at-air-quality-measures-20180926>

Be BEAR Aware:

Just a reminder that there's lots of wildlife activity this time of the year – BEAR, cougar, moose, elk, deer and humans out hunting. A number of residents have posted animal-sighting photos from their wildlife cams. Be safe everyone.

Info about BEARS from Jeff Porter with our Ag Services: It's that time of year when the days are getting shorter and cooler. For bears, that means going to sleep for the winter is just around the corner. Before that happens though, they are intent on getting as many calories as possible into their bodies to fully prepare for their long winter. Along the eastern slopes of Alberta, that typically means searching far and wide for food - any food, throughout September and October. For those of us in the business of dealing with human bear conflict - that can often mean a spike in conflict during the fall months as bears visit developed areas such as campgrounds, residential areas and farm yards. If there is any chance of obtaining food in these areas, bears will take it. Typical foods of interest include garbage, pet food, birdfeed, fruit trees, grain, beehives and chickens. If we can secure foods from bears and other wildlife they don't have a reason to stick around and will move on. Generally, if they find food they will return at some point. Failure to properly secure attractants can create unnecessary public safety concerns and potential property damage. It can also result in the relocation or destruction of bears. Relocating bears to unfamiliar environments so close to winter denning is not ideal and can have a low success rate. Properly securing attractants means not having to deal with any of these issues - a win/win for all concerned.

There are a variety of ways to secure food from bears:

- Garbage - place in closed building or in a bear proof container (plywood storage boxes, aluminum or plastic cans are not bear proof)
- Birdfeed - don't feed birds during the bear season (April 1 to November 15th) Chickens/ Beehives - use 5-6 strand electric fence at +6,000 V
- Fruit trees - pick fruit or consider removing tree and replace with non-fruit bearing flowering tree Pet Food - feed pets inside or put just enough out for one meal
- Grain - store grain in bear proof facility
- If you live, work, recreate in bear country, consider carrying bear spray and know how to use it, make noise when in areas of poor visibility, travel in groups where possible and keep dogs on leash. For more information on best practices for Living. Working, recreating in Bear Country, visit Alberta BearSmart <http://aep.alberta.ca/recreation-public-use/alberta-bear-smart/default.aspx>
- If you need to report a wildlife related public safety concern, please call the Report a Poacher # at 1 800 642 3800.

For Other News & Updates:

Please visit my website: <http://suzanneoel.com/> Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/CouncillorSuzanneOel/>
I also share these news updates through monthly articles in the High Country News, which is print or online.

With Best Regards, Suzanne