



Mayor's Report – November 28, 2022

Let's start with Light Up: Seeing the event back in its full glory with thousands of people downtown enjoying themselves and taking it all in – wow, what an evening! It really hit home what we've been missing the past couple of years.

I had the honour of 'flicking the switch' to turn on the Christmas lights, and thank you to all of you who joined me on stage. Actually, it's three switches not just one -- I didn't know that!

Congratulations to the Chamber of Commerce for their hard work to organize the event. And thank-you to all the sponsors, performers, vendors, downtown businesses, community groups, and municipal staff who all contributed to make the event such a success. Combined with Light Up the Vines, which continues this weekend, Summerland's Festival of Lights is a great example of our community coming together to put on one of the premier attractions in the Valley.

Light Up capped a busy week for Council where we spent two days workshopping our strategic priorities for the next four years. We will continue to fine-tune our strategic plan before adopting it sometime early in the new year, but I think it's safe to say we'll be focused on completing many of the projects that were initiated in the previous term.

We also spent two days last week working on next year's utilities budget. Over the next few weeks, we will be putting out communications and seeking public input on proposed changes to utility rates, including a public open house scheduled for next Monday, December 5th at 5pm.

Budget deliberations have also started at the Regional District and will continue this week. The RDOS has also made its regional board appointments and I have been re-appointed to the Okanagan Basin Water Board (OBWB). Summerland has traditionally held a seat on the OBWB and it's important we continue this trend as our watershed comes under increasing threat from activities like logging and wildfires.

Last Monday, I attended a Zoom call for B.C. mayors with Municipal Affairs Minister Nathan Cullen and Housing Minister Murray Rankin. They responded to questions regarding the provincial government's announcement that day that it was going to be setting housing targets for select municipalities. Needless to say, everyone had questions about how the targets will be defined, how long they'll last, how they'll relate to Official Community Plans and efforts to limit sprawl and address climate change, and the ability of local governments to require developers to provide amenities and services necessary for a development.

We were told the legislation would initially only apply to the eight to ten municipalities with the most urgent housing need, which will probably be the same municipalities where the speculation tax is applied. It's unlikely Summerland will be included in the first wave, but it's something we should keep an eye on.

On November 16th, I attended the opening of the Kelowna office of PacifiCan, which is the new federal economic development agency for British Columbia. PacifiCan is currently considering our grant application for the Food Hub and at the office opening I had the opportunity to meet briefly with the minister responsible, Harjit Sajjan. I spoke to him and his staff about the importance of agriculture to the Okanagan economy.

Finally, I would like to note the passing of a former member of this Council, George Witte. He served as a Councillor from 1990 to 1999, and he also served on the School Board and on the board of the Credit Union.

He also previously worked for the District as manager of the electrical utility. We send our condolences to his family.