

Mayor's Report – October 15, 2024

On September 25, a District of Summerland delegation consisting of myself, Deputy Mayor Trainer, Councillor Van Alphen, CAO Graham Statt, and Director of Development Services Brad Dollevoet met with three senior officials from the Ministry of Mines to discuss the provincial decision to approve a gravel pit in Garnet Valley.

During our meeting we outlined the multitude of environmental, economic, infrastructure and jurisdictional concerns and relayed the anger in the community. We were surprised to learn the Ministry had limited ability to pull a permit once it has been issued, even when we were able to demonstrate significant errors.

While they said they cannot cancel the permit, the Ministry officials did say they could potentially add further conditions, and that they would go back and look at the decision. We have formally requested that the following conditions be added prior to any work occurring:

- completion of a geotechnical study
- completion of a hydrological study
- completion of a full archaeological impact assessment and traditional ecological knowledge assessment
- public information session hosted by the proponent
- increase in the reclamation liability to \$100,000.

We made it clear to the Ministry that we believe these conditions must in place before any gravel extraction can take place and that, regardless, we remain completely opposed the project and reserve the right to challenge the decision using any legal means necessary.

On Oct 1, CAO Statt and I met with Chief Gabriel and representatives of the Penticton Indian Band (PIB) about the gravel pit, and that evening I and several councillors attended the community meeting organized by the Garnet Valley AgriTourism Association, the Summerland Sportsman's Association, and others. We continue to coordinate efforts and work with all interested parties and it is encouraging to see that the gravel pit has become a provincial election issue.

On October 3, I attended the regular board meeting of the Regional District of Okanagan-Similkameen (RDOS) where directors supported revisions to the Elected Officials Code of Conduct after having to spend \$12,000 in legal fees over the past year to deal with Code of Conduct complaints.

The revised code removes the role of an adjudicator from the investigation and resolution process and incorporates their responsibilities into the role of the solicitor. There is also a greater obligation to try to resolve complaints prior to engaging the solicitor.

The new code also provides guidance for local elected officials running for provincial or federal office and when they should seek a leave of absence from their board or council.

The Code applies to the RDOS, Village of Keremeos, Town of Osoyoos, Town of Princeton, and City of Penticton. Summerland and Oliver have their own Codes of Conduct however it's always an option for us to use the regional code instead.

Finally, this morning I was joined by Deputy Mayor Trainer and Councillor Peake at Summerland Middle School to help out with the student vote that Ms. Thorpe organizes not only during provincial elections but also for municipal and federal elections. Student in grades 6 and 7 voted in the mock election and it was great way to introduce them to the electoral process and establish good voting habits at a young age. The idea is that they get used to voting and as they become voting age, it's already a habit.

And with that, I will conclude with a reminder to get out to vote in the provincial election, if you haven't done so already. Advance polls are open today and tomorrow at St Stephen Anglican Church, and general voting is Saturday with polls at the Anglican Church, Middle School, Trout Creek Elementary, and Waterfront Resort.

Mayor Doug Holmes