**Mayor's Minute – November 27, 2019**

In 2011, the District of Summerland adopted a Community Climate Action Plan. Since then, the District has implemented many climate action initiatives to work towards reductions in greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, a significant contributor to the global rise in temperature and extreme weather events becoming more commonplace.

In the last two years alone, the District has successfully lobbied for increased public transit and expanded our active transportation infrastructure (trails and bike lanes); promoted energy efficiency rebates and begun consulting on the BC Energy Step Code; and, through a number of initiatives, is reducing the volume of organic waste going to the landfill. In renewable energy, Summerland is a pioneering community in BC, developing a 1 MW solar PV farm with battery storage, and modernizing our net metering policies to encourage residents to install solar.

Ongoing and innovative investment in community resilience and alternative energy continue to be highlighted in Council's Strategic Priorities in 2019-2022.

On November 25, after many months of work with the Community Energy Association including a full-day stakeholder workshop and open house, District staff presented a draft update of the Plan to Council. Participants at the February workshop included community members and representatives from many groups, including the Community Climate Action Advisory Committee; Interior Health; BC Transit; FortisBC; Summerland Chamber of Commerce; RDOS; Summerland Environmental Science Group; First Things First Okanagan; Summerland Secondary School; District staff and members of Summerland Council, among others.

Because the Plan focuses primarily on climate mitigation (emissions reduction), to better reflect content its title has been changed to the (Summerland) Community Energy and Emissions Reduction Plan (CEERP). It is one piece of an in-progress low carbon resiliency (LCR) strategy for the District, which will include measures to adapt to climate change while also reducing GHG emissions.

Feedback on suggested key priority climate actions and GHG emissions reduction targets was collected through a public open house. Residents were also invited to share their ideas on where the District should take a leadership role and how citizens can support climate action in the community. This last statement is critical: the most effective way to reduce GHG emissions is through conservation, that is, use less energy.

Of the possible actions presented at the open house, the highest level of public support was given to:

- Supporting active and assisted transportation
- Expanding organics diversion (from the landfill)
- Increasing urban trees
- Encouraging electric vehicles
- Encouraging solar installations in the community
- Marketing a retrofit program to address energy use in buildings
- Using infrastructure lifecycle costing for new developments (the projected long-term financial impact for maintaining and replacing infrastructure).

Using community and stakeholder feedback and engagement, climate data, best practises, and municipal staff consultation, 26 priority items were identified and are presented in the CEERP. Details, such as timeline, actionable steps, outcome (effort, costs, GHG reductions), the District department responsible for the item, and possible partners or founders are also included in the draft Plan.

The discourse on climate change has almost exclusively been around the environmental impacts of extreme weather events such as floods, landslides, storms, and wildland fires; however, the discussion must include how these events impact human health and wellbeing.

This message was reiterated many times at the 8th annual Livable Cities Forum that staff and I attended in late October. The Forum brought together who are working, through resilience projects, on building better communities.

Climate change strategies also improve physical and mental health. For example, walkable or bikeable communities can reduce obesity and improve mental health. Protecting local agriculture increases access to healthy, local food and reducing air pollutants and improving air quality helps to decrease respiratory illness. Something as simple as planting more trees in urban areas can provide protection from extreme heat, lessening its impact on those with cardiovascular illnesses. Transportation and housing costs are the two largest expenditures for most residents, so creating compact communities with access to public transit—and increasing housing options and density in amenity-rich areas—is key to creating affordability.

The District is hosting an Open House to discuss the draft Community Energy and Emissions Reduction Plan on Wednesday, December 4 from 3 pm to 7 pm. Formal presentations are at 4:30 pm and 6:00 pm. All are welcome to attend, and we look forward to receiving your important feedback.