

Mayor's Report – May 21, 2024

The Southern Interior Local Government Association (SILGA) held its annual convention in Kamloops April 30 - May 3, and Summerland was represented with myself, Deputy Mayor Trainer and Councillors Barkwill, Betts, and Peake in attendance. I'm pleased to say four of the six resolutions put forward by Summerland Council were fully endorsed by SILGA delegates and will now be submitted to the Union of BC Municipalities (UBCM) for consideration. One of our resolutions, on allowing more flexible questions on referendum ballots, was narrowly defeated 44 votes to 41. So, although it did not pass, the closeness of the vote suggests it's an issue of interest that probably won't be going away.

On May 8, along with several other members of council, I attended a very busy open house held by the Food Bank, Turning Points Collaborative, and the United Church in regards to their partnership to build a five-storey 60-unit affordable housing project with space on the ground floor for the Food Bank and Resource Centre. The plans for the Henry Avenue project are progressing well and the goal is to start construction in the Fall.

On May 9, Councillor Van Alphen and I attended the regular Regional District of Okanagan-Similkameen (RDOS) board meeting where directors agreed to request the Okanagan Basin Water Board (OBWB) to amend the terms of its assistance grants to allow detached accessory dwellings on parcels of less than 1.0 ha to connect to the same on-site septic system that services the principal dwelling, in the same way it allows a secondary suite.

The Board also agreed to apply to the provincial government for an extension for Faulder and Heritage Hills to meet their Small-Scale Multi-Unit Housing (SSMUH) requirements under Bill 44 due to on-going challenges with the water and sewer systems in those communities. The Province allows local governments to apply for an extension beyond the June 30 deadline if there are extraordinary circumstances that would prevent compliance.

Also, the RDOS Board decided to defer a decision on entering into a new contract with Waste Connections Canada for curbside waste collection in rural areas, and asked staff to review the cost, benefits and risks of providing the service in-house.

Last Thursday, May 16, Councillor Barkwill and I joined a RDOS field trip to learn about three projects in Summerland being supported by the South Okanagan Conservation Fund. The first stop was in Garnet Valley where the Okanagan Similkameen Stewardship Society is working with community members and property owners along Eneas Creek to limit the spread of invasive yellow flag iris. We then went to the lower section of Trout Creek to see how the Okanagan Nation Alliance has been incorporating Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) to re-naturalize the 2km stretch of creek from the canyon to Okanagan Lake. The work has re-engaged the floodplain and restored salmon spawning and habitat diversity. Our final stop was across the highway at SunOka Park where we heard about the BC Community Bat Program and saw the roosting boxes installed at the park. Students at Summerland Secondary School are involved in a project to collect bat guano from the boxes. The guano is sent in to be tested for white-nose syndrome, which is considered one of the worst wildlife diseases in modern times and has killed millions of bats across North America.

Finally, last Friday, May 17, Councillors Trainer, Peake and Barkwill joined me for the official opening of the new tennis courts at Summerland Secondary School. The courts were built together with School District 67 and are available for both school and public use. The courts are yet another example of Council partnering with the School Board for the betterment of the community, and to illustrate that point, School Trustee Dave Stathers and I brought our racquets along to the official opening and tested out the new courts with a friendly rally. I can report the courts play very nicely for those with an all-court playing style like Dave and me, although I am sure they will also suit those bigger servers and power hitters.

- Mayor Doug Holmes