

Council focuses on what matters

By Mayor Holmes

February 2, 2023

After an election, every new Council has an unlimited number of issues to tackle and projects to work on, and they all seem as important as the next. Each individual council member brings to the table what we've heard from residents as well as our own ideas and vision for the community. There are also previous council initiatives to consider, and there are incentives and directives (carrots and sticks) from senior levels of government to nudge Council in certain directions.

Factor in budgetary and capacity constraints and it soon becomes apparent it's impossible to do everything. So Council needs to focus on what's most important for the community. We need to prioritize.

Drawing on our experience and commitment of purpose, the new Summerland Council has sat down with senior District staff and mapped out the priorities that will guide the municipality over the next four years.

With realistic timeframes for starting and finishing each project, each action fits under one of four overarching priorities, as follows:

1. To protect and enhance core infrastructure and essential services

- pave more roads, starting with Dale Meadows and Jubilee W.
- complete an organics processing facility
- develop a watershed protection plan
- extend sewer, including to Deer Ridge
- extend water separation for agricultural irrigation
- review development cost charges

2. To provide good governance

- staff retention strategy
- improve public communications
- work with the Chamber of Commerce to explore a hotel tax (MRDT) for tourism promotion
- focus on inter-governmental relations including Indigenous reconciliation
- review various bylaws and policies (eg. second electrical service)

3. To provide an adaptable and affordable community

- prioritize affordability, eg. BC Housing projects and free transit
- pursue the development of sustainable housing/eco-village
- engage the community on infill development
- implement the energy strategy (solar project, net metering review)
- implement the Climate Action Plan with a focus on adaptation
- advocate for a Food Hub
- explore alternative municipal revenue opportunities

4. To enhance our quality of life

- hold a referendum for a new Rec Centre
- work with partners and government to establish a primary care centre
- implement the Parks and Recreation Master Plan (dog park, tennis courts, Rodeo Grounds)
- implement the Downtown Neighbourhood Plan (Wharton Street upgrades, entrance to Memorial Park)
- implement the Waterfront Concept Plan (Kiwanis pier, year-round washrooms)
- implement the Trails Master Plan (Giants Head Mountain project phases 3 and 4)

Council weighed its priorities at committee-of-the-whole meetings on Nov 24 and 25, less than three weeks after our inaugural meeting. They were finalized on Jan. 12 and formally adopted at the regular Council meeting of Jan. 23.

The priorities are now being rolled out to municipal departments for preparing their annual workplans and budgets. They will be reviewed quarterly and updated when required, and our Annual Report will outline progress made over the course of each year.

Doug Holmes is mayor of Summerland.