

**RM OF SPRINGFIELD COUNCIL NOTES**  
**Tuesday, January 5, 2021 (Cancelled)**

**WITHOUT PREJUDICE (E&OE)**

**THE FUTURE** - In the December 24, 2020 issue of the Clipper on Page 9 is an article by Tony Zerucha titled "**CanWhite answers questions, key issue remains uncertain**". Some of the answers provided by **CanWhite Sands** are dubious at best. For example, the CanWhite spokesperson, Brent Bullen, states the company will pay for a natural gas line from Dugald to Vivian at no expense to taxpayers or the municipality (which is the taxpayers) and I don't believe that for a minute. It reminds me of **Parrish & Heimbecker** who publicly agreed they would be **responsible for upgrades to Poplar Road**. It now turns out that cost is being added to the taxes of residents at large. Residents are paying for upgrades to a road that benefit a multinational grain company as they are being permitted to locate a commercial enterprise on land zoned agricultural next to our new municipal wells and to the detriment of residents in the vicinity. Promises are not always kept, obviously. **CanWhite** is also looking into bringing a fibre optic line into the Vivian facility which would provide Vivian and environs with High Speed Internet. I have a feeling MTS already has fibre optic lines along our Provincial Trunk Highways in Springfield. I could be wrong. **CanWhite** has contracted AECOM to do a hydrological study of the Vivian area where they are proposing to locate a silica sand processing plant and mine silica sand but of course their findings would tend to favour the company that is employing them. (See below as CanWhite is not the only company that has used AECOM services of late.) In point of fact, **under this Council**, there have been **several major blows to the finances** of the municipality, i.e. the ratepayer. There was a significant **loss** of potential revenue when we **sold 12 acres of aggregate reserve land to Pineridge Hollow** for small change, \$220,000 or thereabouts. Just think of what one truck load of **gravel costs**. Multiply that by twelve acres and significant depth, not to mention the **market value** of land adjacent to Birds Hill Park. Then there was the **renovations** to the old Oakbank Credit Union building. The **skate park** cost taxpayers **\$350,000**. (See below as there were two \$40,000 gifts to the Municipality for the skate park from the Kinsmen.) There were significant **wage increases for staff and indemnities for Council members**, a **22% plus** increase. Mayor Fell is now bent on spending **\$19 million plus on a Recreation Centre** which is, considering the recreation facilities we already have, **not necessary**. The only extra it would provide is an indoor turf facility which would benefit the Coyotes Soccer Club, a private enterprise which is operated by the Walls family, including **former councillor Shandy Walls**, to enable year round soccer. Further the new facility could affect the bottom lines of the community clubs we already have as rental of the floor surface could be competition and loss of revenue for existing facilities. **Preferential treatment** is already being extended to **Ms. Walls** in that her company, **Garbage Girls**, is able to collect waste from residents and take it to our municipal transfer station whereas **Emterra Waste Management Co.** which is responsible for collecting municipal waste on the provincial trunk highways and town sites on a contract basis must take their collections to Winnipeg for disposal. Obviously friendship has benefits. **Berger Peat Processing Company** has been allowed to locate on Oakwood Road which will exponentially increase the traffic on a stretch of municipal road not rated for such high volumes of vehicles daily. Undoubtedly in the not too distant future improvements to the road and intersection will be required and I doubt the company will be paying for the cost of the upgrades. Residents of that area are understandably upset and rumour has it they are not willing to just accept the fact they have lost the battle to maintain the life style they have enjoyed for many years. There could be **significant legal costs** involved which again is borne by taxpayers. One only needs to check the list of accounts on one meeting agenda every month to see how much money is spent on **legal costs**. In two years this **Council has cost this RM a significant amount of money** and they have **two years remaining in their mandate**. There is only one way for taxpayers of this municipality to exercise the only weapon they have, i.e. numbers, which come into play in 2022 when the next municipal election is held. If this Council gets the message that their political futures are at grave risk due to their decisions and actions, this could **influence their decisions** from now until October 2022. **Faint hope** as it does not seem to have influenced the Premier in his decision making and I have it on pretty good authority that Mayor Fell is of the same political stripe. Council have started out this year by cancelling the first meeting, and then on January 7th cancelled the January 12th meeting, **presumably because there is no pressing business to conduct**. That does not prevent me reporting as I am an independent and feel there are issues that are worthy of discussion.

**The primary issue** I see for the upcoming year is Mayor Fell's desire to see a **Recreation Centre** rise **to the east of the Administration Building** and to the **north of the Firehall in Oakbank**. I may just be accused of having conspiracy theories but my instinct tells me that corporate interests the likes of **Parrish & Heimbecker**, **CanWhite Sands**, **Berger Peat**, and **perhaps even Pineridge Hollow** have promised to provide funding for this facility in return for obtaining concessions that benefit their businesses. I think back 12 years to when the owner of Oak's Plaza and developer of Crystal Lakes, the late Bob Handler, pledged a million dollars over a period of 10 years for a new Recreation Centre in a Smart Park to be located on SW corner of Cedar Lake Road and PTH 206. We still do not have the proposed Recreation Centre. Councillor Wilson researched the viability of the current iteration of the **Recreation Centre**, i.e. a floor surface and a turf surface serviced by tiered seating in between with a few other features such as a restaurant and found that **such facilities in Winnipeg are underutilized** and do not pay their way. Soccer clubs are unwilling to travel any distance, even between districts in the City of Winnipeg and such facilities are **heavily subsidized by taxpayers**. Nonetheless these facts have not dampened the desires of, in particular, the Mayor to leave as her legacy a brand new recreation centre located adjacent to the Municipal Building. She does have 10 school age or under children of her own that could benefit, I suppose, from such a facility as she lives within 2 miles of Oakbank. I believe this will be her major mandate for the upcoming two years. **The question is, are ratepayers sufficiently informed and concerned as to the effect this will have on their cost of living insofar as property taxes.**

On that note, I will patiently await the agenda of the first meeting to be held **January 19, 2021**. Until then, here is a **RECAP OF 2020**.

## RECAP OF 2020 UNDER THE DIRECTION OF MAYOR FELL

**PERSONNEL** - Since this Council was elected, in 2 short years, the RM of Springfield has lost a **CAO, Russell Phillips**, an **Economic Development Adviser** who left soon after the departure of the CAO, a **Human Resource Officer, Lynn Lemire**, with years of experience and a Masters degree in the field, a **Chief of Police, Mark Kane**, a **Fire Chief, Jeff Hudson**, **2 members of the Water and Waste Department** and as a result, the **Head of Water and Waste, Santokh Randawa**, a professional engineer, and a full time **Springfield Police Officer, Sara Monkman** who had served 4 years plus. There is currently an advertisement - employment opportunity in the Clipper for a **Planner of Economic Development**. The Ad is for one position although it directs interested parties to the RM website for more information regarding "these positions" and would appear to mirror the responsibilities of the current Development Officer, Dan Doucet. The position is responsible for "evaluation and coordinating development proposal reviews, building some sort of rapport with developers to achieve the RM's strategic objectives and policies, it requires extensive knowledge of The Planning Act, Municipal Act, municipal bylaws, legal knowledge regarding planning, and enforcement, and seemingly also is responsible for coordinating permit applications, determining compliance, organizing projects and communicating with stakeholders." **What is there left to do for Mr. Doucet and his current assistant, Johanne Marin?** If I had the credentials of a professional planner, I would be somewhat dubious about applying. On the other hand, if the Planner has credentials, perhaps Mr. Doucet should be worried about his position as he has no professional planning credentials. He is a C.E.T., a certified engineering technologist, a Red River Community College accreditation.

**EXPENDITURES** - I went through the List of Accounts for the year 2020, not counting the one in the January 21, 2020 Council meeting which stated it was for December 2019. The 2020 accounts brought to Council to date cover **up to October 31, 2020** according to the Finance Manager. When I first became a Councillor, I asked the CAO to do an investigation of how the work of the RM insofar as Public Works is allocated to contractors. I was particularly interested in investigating work given to a company called Tri M Trucking, my attention having been drawn to a road extension budgeted to cost \$4,000 which ended up costing in the neighbourhood of \$27,000., both the original work and the repair having been done by that company. I never received any satisfactory explanation. As it was told to me, once a year contractors are invited to submit their schedule of charges to Public Works for various work they can perform. The Manager of Public Works then decides who will be assigned the work. I roughly added the cheques that have been paid to this company from the beginning of 2020 to October 31, 2020. **Tri M Trucking** has received cheques totalling **\$471,717.26** thus far. **Would the taxpayers not be better served if the jobs were advertised for tender/open for bids?** One recipient, **L. Chabot Enterprises**, received cheques totalling **\$121,227.13** even though, if I am not mistaken, there is legal action outstanding against this company regarding a substantial unpaid sum. Here is an excerpt of my notes: **June 16, 2020 5.5 Update on Legal Proceedings - Chabot Statement - Mayor Fell** - I have a statement to read out on behalf of Council and the Administration for the record. *Discussions with Chabot Sand and Gravel Ltd. and L. Chabot Enterprises has led to the commencement of legal proceedings in the Court of Queen's Bench of Manitoba regarding the removal of aggregate material and resources from municipal land without authority and proper compensation. A claim has been filed by the RM of Springfield for the value of the aggregate material that was removed from municipal land, it's value calculated by municipal staff in collaboration with geological specialists and a legal surveyor. This matter is now before the Manitoba Courts. The RM of Springfield will attempt to bring this matter to a quick resolution and until then no further statements are planned. Council for the RM of Springfield is committed to protecting the ratepayers by ensuring that assets for our municipality are used for municipal purposes.* Thank you. I understand the amount listed for this claim at Court of Queen's Bench is in excess of a million dollars. **Nicole Chabot** of that company and the former councillor **Shandy Walls** were the founders of the current **Springfield Chamber of Commerce**, the **Executive of which is President, Jan Regehr of Pineridge Hollow, Vice President - Darrell Hiebert, GeeTee Holding Inc., Secretary - Scott Aikman, Glacial Aggregates, and Nicole Chabot is Past President.** **Where is the "arms length" when the RM of Springfield is a member of the Chamber.** If you look at the Directory, you will see listed as members Sunrise Coyotes, Garbage Girls and Shandy Walls Consulting, all owned by Shandy Walls and family, Video King owned by Councillor Fuhl, **Pineridge Hollow** that was **sold 12 acres of aggregate reserve land** by this Council for a **ridiculously low price**, Tervita Corporation that was given permission to locate a **hazardous waste facility in our Industrial Park** in spite of the warnings of the then Fire Chief, and aggregate companies such as CanWhite Sands, Glacial Aggregates, Chabot Enterprises, and Inland Aggregates, and VanRyssell Farms Inc., the owner of whom has been lobbying residents in favour of Berger Peat Processing. **Legal expenses** paid out thus far are **\$38,480.43**. That is before any possible litigation in regards to the location of the Berger Peat Plant. Why do we require so much legal advice? **(SEE NOTE ABOVE REGARDING LITIGATION AGAINST CHABOT ENTERPRISES)** The Municipal and Planning Acts are fairly straight forward and easy to read for most people. **Stantec Consulting** has received cheques totalling **\$63,173.57**. According to Wikipedia, Stantec Consulting provides professional consulting services in planning, engineering, architecture, interior design, landscape architecture, surveying, environmental sciences, project management, and project economics for infrastructure and facilities projects. **Scatliff+Miller+Murray** has received cheques totalling \$12,298.61 and was formed with the **sole purpose** of developing bold new concepts and high-level designs for urban revitalization and sustainable development. **Do you as a taxpayer feel we require such consultations to determine the future development of our RM?** Why did the municipality spend so much money on the Development Plan which is just barely 2 years old? Wasn't that to guide our future actions? **Why are we paying out so much to consulting companies?** There is a cheque for **\$26,334.00** paid to **Strategic Community Consulting**. What kind of consultation was that? Speaking of consulting companies, cheques totalling \$175,441.94 were paid to WSP Canada Group Ltd. (sometimes listed as Inc.) which describes its services as MMM Group Ltd. offers engineering consulting services, structural, mechanical, electrical, transportation, traffic, municipal, landscape, environmental engineering, planning, project management, landscape design, surveying, contract administration, and commissioning services. It would appear the RM spent the following to three companies for road gravel, road grading and the like, **Springfield Earthworks \$218,471.40, Glacial Aggregates \$61,817.55, and Garven**

**Enterprises \$47,879.16** even though the RM has its own aggregate (gravel) pits and equipment. **FURTHER**, on the November 3, 2020 meeting, Item **8.3 Write-Offs for Glacial Receivables** - *Be it resolved that Council approve the following receivable accounts to be cancelled. Glacial invoice #6962 and #7507 in the amount of \$25,232.67.* **HOW IS IT WE ARE WRITING OFF THIS AMOUNT AND THEN PAYING AN AMOUNT TWICE THAT TO THIS COMPANY?** **Accurate HD Ltd.** that specialize in a wide variety of installations from water and sewer to hydro, fiber optics and geothermal to mine remediation, hydrovacating, earth moving, crushing/aggregates got cheques totalling **\$449,609.64**, some of which may have had to do with the Dugald water upgrades. But then what is the 3 payments to **Gateway Construction and Engineering Ltd.** totalling **\$955,719.73** which are earmarked Dugald Water Treatment Plant. **Electric service to the new wellhead sites**, according to a Waste and Water report from November on the December 1st Council meeting, is being finalized with Manitoba Hydro; a cost estimate is expected to be provided shortly but **anticipated to be in the \$200,000 - \$250,000. range.** Just recently I learned that the **Brown families on Poplar Road** are still having trouble with the water quality from the new well that the RM had to drill for them when their former wells lost function due to the location of the new municipal wells nearby. Apparently there is a large contingent on site trying to fix the problem. **Watt Bros. Ltd.** received a cheque for **\$34,051.50** which when I googled them is a business out of **St. Norbert** that specializes in municipal and commercial vegetation control and snow removal services. Residents who protest are being ignored in favour of business enterprises, just ask the residents of Oaks North who took exception at a vehicle storage facility being granted permission to locate on what was clearly an old tree lined farmyard site just north of their condominium. Won't that be a **pleasing site** when driving into Oakbank from Birds Hill Park, **an unsightly storage facility containing a mixture of cars, trucks, recreational vehicles, boats, etc.!** **ACCORDING TO COUNCIL**, THE R.M. HAS **in excess of \$2,155,000 million put in contingency fund and yet are borrowing money for the No. 3 firehall in the Industrial area.**

**RECREATION** - We paid **LM Architectural Group** (September meeting) **\$110,013.12** and **\$42,630.08** (June Meeting) presumably for the design of a Recreation Centre that has had no grassroots support in the form of fund raising. This is not in keeping with the recommendations of the Recreation Master Plan, **8.9 ULTIMATELY, GRASSROOTS LEADERSHIP FROM WITHIN SPRINGFIELD WILL BE CRITICAL TO THE SUCCESS OF ANY CAPITAL PROJECTS** that the previous Council produced with input from residents by virtue of a number of community meetings.

**BECAUSE COUNCIL HAS CANCELLED THE FIRST 2 MEETINGS OF 2021, IT ALLOWS ME TO RECAP WHAT THIS COUNCIL HAS DONE TO DATE. I WILL CONTINUE THIS RECAP IN LIEU OF THE JANUARY 12, 2021 MEETING.**

**TO BE CONTINUED.....**