

## RM OF SPRINGFIELD COUNCIL MEETING Tuesday, May 19, 2020

### WITHOUT PREJUDICE (E&OE)

The audio file of this meeting is 9 minutes and 49 seconds. **THERE WAS NOTHING ON THE AGENDA AS ENCOURAGED BY PREMIER PALLISTER AND MINISTER ROCHELLE SQUIRES THAT COUNCIL TAKE A 25% REDUCTION IN THEIR INDEMNITIES OR VOLUNTEER REDUCTION IN HOURS OF STAFF. THERE WAS NOTHING ABOUT BILL 48 AS MENTIONED IN MY APRIL 7, 2020 NOTES OTHER THAN A RESOLUTION TO ASK THE PROVINCE TO DEFER DISCUSSION UNTIL AFTER THE PANDEMIC ISSUE HAS PASSED AND BECOME MORE MANAGEABLE TO ALLOW PROPER DISCUSSION. PERHAPS THEY SHOULD BE DOING AS MAYOR HART OF EAST ST. PAUL IS DOING, "Hart said East St. Paul is reviewing Bill 48 internally and will share a formal position once that is complete." PERHAPS OUR COUNCIL SHOULD BE REVIEWING THE BILL AND ARRIVING AT A FORMAL POSITION ON IT as it could have serious implications to planning decisions in our municipality. Or is reviewing the bill internally, discussing and penning a formal position too onerous a task for our Council to manage, considering the lack of discussion and length of their public meetings?**

**4.1 By-law 20-05 Fire Hall Borrowing By-Law (1st Reading) - Colleen Draper -** *Be it resolved that First Reading be given to By-law No. 20-05 being a By-law of the RM of Springfield to provide for the expenditure and borrowing of funds for the purchase of land and construction of a fire hall and or renovation of an existing building for a fire hall within SW 1/4 16-11-4E in the Industrial Area.* **Councillor Wilson -** Yes, thank you Madame Mayor. In 2017 Council saw no option but to borrow for this needed safety infrastructure. In the 2020, given our draft Financial Statement there is apparently a considerable sum available from Accumulated Surplus in past years. Um as a I'd like to know as part of the discussion of this, can we have a brief summary of how this considerable sum that is now suddenly available from Accumulated Surplus, how this came about. Why this money was in Accumulated Surplus in the first place and how much is it and why is it available now rather than 2017? **Mayor Fell -** Jody, I believe we've gone over this quite a few times. Could you give us a brief explanation again of that? **Jody Thiessen -** Ya, to I know nothing formally I don't think in recent years summarize everything uh there was a review of the Financial Statements dating back to 2004 but the majority of the uh Accumulated Surplus arose due to under spending of capital projects prior to 2014 and in recent years under spending of operations expenses and additional revenues that were unbudgeted as a brief summary. It is directly to reflect in prior years concern to ensure there was sufficient Accumulated Surplus to meet the needs for the reserves for the transfer from reserves and general reserves (here someone is fiddling with the recording device) was announced that the municipality is required to have. Um so that was a big concern back in 2016 and 17 of recent years. Um a further review has identified the majority of the surplus increasing over the years due to under spending by capital and operating. **Mayor Fell -** Thank you. **Councillor Wilson -** Well at the end of that is uh so there's um refresh me as to the actual amount that is uh now deemed uh appropriate to withdraw from Accumulated Surplus based on this review? **Jody Thiessen -** Um I'd have to review to go to the actual documents or actual requirements of the 2020 budget now um so I can't, I don't want to quote or give a number off the top of my head but I can probably forward that information to you guys. **Councillor Wilson -** Ok but in the Financial Statement for the year saying we're taking "x" amount out of Accumulated Surplus and like last year it was \$1 million and this year it is how much? **Jody Thiessen -** So it'll be ah um over \$3 million dollars in the 2020 Budget. **Councillor Wilson -** Right. Ok well given that situation and given this um uh that's there's ah at least a couple of million more being taken out or available uh to be taken out this year and other years uh and all of this money has been received from taxpayers uh acting in good faith in providing their taxes to the RM it's now clearly available for municipal purposes now I see no need or reason to borrow \$2.1 million dollars and uh by doing so cost the taxpayers as much as over half a million well over half a million dollars more in interest to pay for that loan for this project and thereby add to the present list of 10 additional things all taxpayers have to pay an additional levy on in addition to their basic tax bill and therefore I am not in favour of borrowing this money. I want to, I would much rather **use the Accumulated Surplus money that is available this year as basically a one shot one time deal and pay for this outright** to save ourselves some money. **Mayor Fell -** Is there any other comments from Council? **Councillor Williams -** I just wanted a confirmation that the Municipal Board doesn't have a problem with this change in wording. **Jody Thiessen -** Um we won't find out, I guess, until it actually goes to the Municipal Board for that but the um from the Province just on change in wording we did take the by-law ...the further description of what we want ...so they were ok for our (someone keeps slamming doors and making noises while people are speaking) on how the wording was so. **Councillor Williams -** So there's not an opportunity to get the Municipal Board's view, it has to be the by-law is passed before ... **Jody Thiessen -** Ya, ya we definitely .... **Colleen Draper -** We give first reading and then we send that to the Municipal Board at this point. **Councillor Williams -** Thank you. **Mayor Fell -** Thank you. Are there other comments? **Councillor Fuhl -** Ya, I'd just like to make a comment that in us changing the scope in allowing us to buy something that's pre-built already versus building and buying property just changing the scope. **Mayor Fell -** Thank you. Is there other comments from Council? All those in favour? Opposed? **CARRIED 5-1**

**4.2 Taxation By-Law 20-11 (First Reading) -** *Be it resolved that First Reading be given to By-Law No. 20-11 being a by-law of the RM of Springfield to establish rates of taxation and impose taxes for 2020.* **CARRIED 6-0**

**6.1 List of Accounts -** *Whereas disbursements have been reviewed for the period April 9 to May 12 be it resolved that all accounts listed on the attached printout from Cheque 149662 to 149818 totaling \$1,178,775.03 be approved for payment and the following EFT entries be approved: April 6 Petro Superpass \$114.90, April 14 RBC Visa \$9,181.09, April 30 Red River Coop Fuel \$13,135.95, and be it further resolved that April payroll in the amount of \$306,941.79 be approved.* **Mayor Fell -** Thank you. Is there any further discussion from Council? All those in favour? **CARRIED 6-0** **(NOTE: As with most items on the agenda, there was no discussion AT ALL. I sent an e-mail to Councillor Ralke questioning several items on Tuesday, May 19: Could you please explain the following entries and answer my questions. Page 1 149680 Connexion**

**Western Star \$212,310.56 What is this? 149705 People First HR Services \$13,440. What services does this cover? Do we not have an HR person for recruiting. Page 2 149730 Strategic Community Consulting \$25,334.00 What services did they provide? Page 3 149814 SM Ventures Inc. \$28,325.80 - What services were provided? Further there are payments to WSP Canada Group Limited \$20,980.98, and \$33,876.27 but there is also one to WSP Canada Inc. \$15,284. What is the difference between the 2 companies and what are these payments for? Again I see large payments to Tri M Trucking, \$30,347.63 and \$10,567.61 while the payments to other local companies that provide similar services are significantly less. How do you explain this? I have frequently asked for an investigation of how contracts are awarded. This should be conducted if only to eliminate the suggestion of favouritism. Legal expenses - I see payments of \$16,709.53 and \$3,570.81. How do you explain the need for this amount of legal advice/work? While you cannot provide specific details, you should be able to explain the purpose of the need for all this legal representation. Is the RM currently engaged in lawsuits? Thus far I have received no reply.)**

**THEY THEN WENT INTO CLOSED MEETING AND RECONVENED. ADJOURNED.**

**FINANCIAL PLAN HEARINGS** (held at 1:00 p.m. and 6:30 p.m. in the Oakbank Fire Hall truck bay)

As reproduced below, subsequent to attending the evening session of the Financial Plan Hearings which was, due to the response of fire fighters to an incident and the terrible echo which was to be expected in a fire hall truck bay, not satisfying, I sent the following e-mail.

Heather Erickson <heatheranderickson@gmail.com> Thu, 14 May, 17:25 (6 days ago)

to Tiffany, Val, Peter, Howard, Glen, Rick, Colleen

Subsequent to attending the Financial Plan Hearing the evening of May 12, 2020 at the Oakbank Fire Hall bay, I have been reflecting on your responses when questioned about the Springfield Recreation Centre and Splash Pad as noted on the capital projects portion of the 2020 Financial Plan by Mr. Kalinski of Hazelridge. You assured him that nothing would proceed without government grants from the other levels of government and even if they were attainable, you would be holding a public hearing to discuss it before anything would proceed. This, however, does not explain the \$61,265. paid to produce a conceptual plan and hold hearings in the various areas of the municipality which is also in this year's budget contrary to the recommendations of the Recreation Master Plan, in which yourself and two of your current councillors were participants. Why would this Council think it wise to expend this amount of money and ignore the feedback that was obtained at public meetings prior to when you were elected? There has been no grassroots feedback or fundraising to even support the idea that such a centre is in high demand by the constituency that would be using it. Further even if grant funding were to be obtained, \$9,000,000. would still have to be borrowed if not more and that would cost taxpayers exponentially in service charges. Unlike the vast amount of fund raising that was conducted by the community of Cooks Creek for many years to fund an expansion to their Community Centre, the population of Oakbank, the closest urban density to the facility, have not demonstrated their support for such a centre which, despite grants, will cost the municipality at large tax dollars, by conducting fund raisers and registering a tax deductible account in which to save the monies raised. I urge Council to table this project for at least 5 years, while in the meantime putting aside modest amounts annually into a dedicated reserve should the community demonstrate their dedication to such a project by conducting ongoing fund raisers for the initiative.

In the 2019 budget there is an amount of \$390,000. for a skate park. This year there is an additional \$40,000 allocated for the skate park. Can you please explain the purpose of this amount? Also in the 2019 Capital Budget is listed on P13 Springfield Recreation Centre - Estimated Total Cost \$150,000. to be Borne by General Fund. Question: What was that for and why did it come from the general fund and not the Recreation Reserve? The July 2, 2019 meeting of Council had a resolution *Be it resolved that the Council of the Rural Municipality of Springfield award the design and construction services of the Springfield Community Recreation Centre up to a project cost of \$428,000 plus applicable taxes and be it further resolved that the Council of the RM of Springfield approve an additional \$71,000. plus applicable taxes for Green Globe certification.* (LM Architectural Group is the company mentioned in the agenda package for that meeting although they do not include to whom the award was given in the resolution.) The report states that "the total cost of consulting and design would be expensed in the 2019 and 2020 physical years. A total of \$150,000 has been approved in the 2019 budget. The remaining \$278,000 would come from gas tax funding." What is the sum total of the monies paid to this firm in 2019 and how much has been actually paid thus far this year? Why are we spending almost a half a million dollars for something for which there is no expressed grassroots support? In the 2020 Capital Budget is listed Springfield Recreation Centre Plans/Consulting \$61,265. How does this equate to the figures in the previous sentences? Also why would design and construction services precede Plans and Consulting? In my opinion, the consulting and plans have already been paid for as we spend \$60,000 on the Recreation Master Plan which lays out a formula for future recreational investments.

I would like to hear from each individual councillor as to their answer to my questions and opinion on my request to delay the project.

**AS YOU MIGHT EXPECT, AS OF THIS MAILING I HAVE HAD NO REPLY FROM EITHER THE MAYOR, COUNCILLORS, OR THE C.A.O.**

**My analysis of having these hearings in the Oakbank Fire Hall is as follows:**

- The venue was totally unsuitable from the viewpoint of comfort, acoustics, and disruption of the services of our Fire Department.
- I can only surmise at the cost of the audio equipment, headphones, wiring and hours of preparation to set this up and take down.

- There is nothing to explain why a perfectly suitable venue, the Cooks Creek Community Club expansion, could not have served to hold a single Financial Hearing as it is large enough to accommodate easily 100 people properly spaced due to COVID 19 restrictions. I am sure there would have been no charge as the RM contributed to the project, and sound equipment was available.
- Some residents submitted written presentations which should have been read out at both meetings but were not. This was a commitment in the notice of the Financial Hearings.
- Having two sessions in the Fire Hall increased the cost due to the necessary sound equipment.
- The recordings are unintelligible due to the echo and having attended one, the responses were also extremely difficult to hear.
- A portion of the evening meeting, right after my presentation, is missing and has yet to be explained.
- The Fire Department had to respond to incidents both in the afternoon and evening sessions which necessitated them gearing up in the building and then rushing out to the parking lot where their equipment was parked and then returning to remove their gear.
- Because there were two sessions, those attending in the afternoon did not hear what was said in the evening and those attending in the evening did not hear what was said in the afternoon. Sometimes that can lead a member of the public to think of another question.
- THE NEED WAS NOT THERE as only 5 attended in the afternoon and 5 in the evening. As I pointed out to them prior, not more than 20 people have ever attended a Financial Plan Hearing in all the years I have attended and Cooks Creek Community Club had more than enough room to accommodate 20 even with COVID 19 spacing requirements and the Council Chamber could have accommodated all 10 people at one time suitably spaced. Council knew how many were attending as they required pre-registering.
- Other municipalities are holding their meetings after May 31st., having applied for an extension, and they can then be held in their Council Chambers. Some are already holding them in their Council Chambers or if not, in their local Community Centres.

#### **VIVIAN SAND PROCESSING FACILITY PROJECT**

A Virtual Open House is being held at 7:00 p.m. on May 26, 2020 for which one has to register. This should be of concern, in my opinion, to all residents of the Municipality but it is particularly of concern to those who obtain their drinking water from the Sandilands Aquifer. Note that the new Municipal Wells are located on the Sandilands Aquifer and will be supplying water to Dugald and perhaps potentially to Oakbank in the event the Heatherdale Road wells fail. The processing requires water so it will draw down the aquifer but also chemicals are added to aid the washing process and then the waste water is returned to the ground and eventually returns to the aquifer. This is the second spur line off the CN Main Line east that is being built. There is also one associated with the P&H Elevator and Bulk Chemical Fertilizer Storage Facility on Poplar Road which will require significant improvement and a turning lane off Highway #15. Who knows just how much additional train traffic there will be as a result of these new spur lines. To receive a link to participate you must send an e-mail to [info@viviansandproject.com](mailto:info@viviansandproject.com). You can learn more about the project at: [www.viviansandproject.com](http://www.viviansandproject.com) which launched May 18, 2020. That is not a great deal of notice!!!! CanWhite Sands is an Alberta based company and their project will destroy the life style of the inhabitants of the hamlet of Vivian, Manitoba. Mainly, however, is the risk to the aquifer which also services Tache, Ste. Annes, Reynolds, and other locations to the south. The P&H Facility is also located on top of the Sandilands Aquifer and bulk fertilizer is being stored at that location.

#### **PR 206 and Garven Road Improvements**

This just came to my e-mail from the RM of Springfield. IF YOU DO NOT THINK A ROUNDABOUT at this intersection is a good idea, I would strongly recommend that you immediately go on-line and express your views as Mayor Fell has repeatedly stressed a roundabout was in her opinion the way to improve that intersection.

This intersection is used by many large trucks with heavy loads that could well have difficulty using a roundabout. Manitobans are not generally well versed in the proper use of roundabouts. While there have been a number of serious accidents at the intersection, they are usually the result of people either failing to stop at the STOP signs on Garven or proceeding before it is safe to do so. In my mind, traffic signals would reinforce the need to stop when the light is red and only proceed when it is green. Perhaps warning signals could be installed to indicate a change in the light. There are already rumble strips on Garven, if I remember correctly, to signal the need to stop at the corner. I believe the traffic signals at PR206 and Springfield Road have effectively reduced the number of incidents at that intersection. Regardless, please take the time to make your opinion known.

# Share Your Views

## Intersection Improvements at PR 206 & PR 213 (Garven Road)



You are invited to share your views through an online public engagement hosted by Manitoba Infrastructure on intersection improvement alternatives for the intersection of PR 206 and PR 213 (Garven Road) in the RM of Springfield.

The goal of the project is to improve safety and traffic flow by modifying the existing intersection into a roundabout or by adding traffic signals.

The public engagement will take place online at Engage MB (<https://engagemb.ca>) from May 25 until June 5, 2020.

For more information please contact Josh Plett of Manitoba Infrastructure at 204-346-6266 or [EORegion1@gov.mb.ca](mailto:EORegion1@gov.mb.ca).

