

**RM of Springfield
Council Meeting Notes
October 8, 2024**

WITHOUT PREJUDICE (E&OE)

The RM of Springfield cancelled the Committee of the Whole meeting that was scheduled to be held on October 8, 2024. Although there is no meeting to report on, I felt it would be beneficial to do a report on issues of concern to me instead.

PROCEDURE BY-LAW 24-10 SPECIAL MEETING

At 3:37 p.m. October 8, 2024 I received an e-mail from the RM of Springfield announcing that a special meeting regarding the proposed amendments to this By-law, deferred from the September 17, 2024 Council meeting, **will be held at 6:00 p.m. Monday, October 21, 2024 at the Dugald Community Club, 544 Holland Street, Dugald, Manitoba.** Those amendments were vehemently protested by over 100 Springfield residents attending that meeting, some of whom were ejected from the Council chamber due to a policy of the Mayor's which was not officially passed by resolution to allow not more than 50 people in the Council chamber. I am hoping the turnout to this meeting will be as good as it was on September 17, 2024. **One of the main issues is the removal of Question Period.** That is the only part of meetings of Council where residents are allowed to ask questions and only then about the agenda of that particular meeting. In other municipalities, during the discussion of items on the agenda, residents may, by holding up their hand, speak to that particular item. I know, I have attended meetings of council in other municipalities. Springfield introduced Question Period after removing residents' ability to comment on agenda items at the time they were being discussed, instituted by Mayor Fell. On October 9, 2024 the Mayor of St. Andrews was on television at one of their council meetings. People are standing right behind the council table and the room is packed with people both seated and standing. I wonder which mayors and reeves the Mayor spoke with because he said he was told they do not have question periods, but surely they would have also mentioned that they allow questions from their constituents at any time during the meeting.

PINEWOOD LODGE

Council and Department Heads are scheduled to be away from the RM of Springfield spending two or three days at a Retreat at the Pinewood Lodge in the Whiteshell, ostensibly to discuss the Budget for the upcoming fiscal year. (SEE PICTURES BELOW) However Councillors Miller and Kuczynski tried to talk the CAO out of the retreat and so they are **sharing** a ride there to attend the budget discussions but not staying overnight.

When I was a Councillor, this retreat was arranged for the incoming Council but also included heads of departments, and I am sure they are attending this one as well. They also hired a facilitator, if I am not mistaken, a woman. At the time, being new to things, I just did whatever was arranged by the CAO and attended it. Everyone that went drove there themselves, so mileage there and back, and the meals were all provided, including coffee breaks with refreshments. Evenings were totally a social event. As I recall, it was a two-or-three-day event. I was assigned a huge bedroom as I recall. One door of my room led to the common rooms and the other to the exterior of the building. The following description comes from their Website, luxury accommodations to say the least. Price is not mentioned. *Our 16-suite facility boasts an indoor salt water swimming pool, whirlpool, steam room, and hospitality suite. All of our Guest Suites offer: Kitchenette with microwave, bar fridge, sink, dishes, in-room coffeemaker, telephone with free local calls, high speed internet, two televisions and satellite receivers.*

As you can imagine, this facility does not come cheap. I tried finding any mention of price in the advertising on the Web but of course there was none. I sent CAO Draper an e-mail late in the evening of October 7th. asking for the total cost of the retreat, including mileage and per diems but as of yet, have not received a reply. These budget meetings could have been held in our own Municipality. The Oakbank Baptist Church has a large room in the basement that would have sufficed and they could have taken a break for lunch and gone to any number of fine restaurants in Oakbank. I believe the Church has facilities for making coffee for breaks. **PROPERTY TAXES SHOULD NOT BE USED FOR THIS PURPOSE.** Any monies the RM has come from ratepayers who derive **ABSOLUTELY NO BENEFIT FROM SUCH USE OF THEIR TAXES.** Ms. Draper tried to justify the use of the facility as she said it was necessary to find a place where there would be NO DISTRACTIONS. I cannot imagine anything more distracting than Pinewood Lodge. Oakbank Baptist Church basement, on the other hand, has no distractions during weekdays, I would imagine. Neither would the Dugald Community Club if it were available. Further, staff should be paying attention in meetings. Any that are distracted are not doing their jobs properly.



The Lodge is located in a lovely wooded area, near to a lake. The entire facility could be described as a distraction, the elegance of the building and where it is situated.



This is the exterior of Pinewood Lodge. It is an extremely beautiful facility, in my opinion in and of itself, very distracting. I feel there is no way of justifying the rental of this lodging to hold meetings on the upcoming budget. The CAO, who in all likelihood arranged the entire outing, and the Mayor, who signed off on it, are guilty of gross misuse of ratepayer dollars in my opinion.



This is the front entrance, sales shop, the room where the sessions are held, and lastly what the room I had when I participated looked like. Plain and simple, **this is a "perk" for staff**, nothing more, nothing less. The room with the fireplace is where the social evenings were held.

UPDATE ON SPRINGFIELD POLICE SERVICE

The information in italics below was provided to me at my request by CAO Draper. The reason I inquired is, although I was a staunch supporter of the Springfield Police Service years ago when it operated independent of the R.C.M.P., I no longer am as it is just filling in the shortfalls in staff that is currently being experienced by the R.C.M.P. We are already paying for the R.C.M.P. through our Federal and Provincial taxes. Now we are paying for the SPS through our property taxes. Further, I heard from someone that Chief Hitchon was on administrative leave due to an accident and inquired as to how long. I believe it has been 5 or 6 months now. Ms. Draper did not answer that question.

The Springfield Police Service consists of the Police Chief, Sergeant, and 2 constables. Yes, the Springfield Police is seconded to the RCMP. That is an RCMP document and not available for public viewing. As a previous member of the Springfield Police Board, I expect you will understand as well as anyone how the two departments work together. The Springfield Police 2023 budget consisted of \$761,561 in expenses and \$132,560 in revenue, for a cost of \$629,001. To date in 2024, \$447,567 has been spent (\$523,856 in expenses and \$76,289 in revenue).

I FEEL WE SHOULD DECOMMISSION THE SPRINGFIELD POLICE SERVICE AND GO BACK TO HAVING ONLY BYLAW OFFICERS TO ENFORCE NON-COMPLIANCE.

DONALDSON DRAIN

A resident informed me that where the RM expropriated land, parallel to PTH 15 and approximately ¼ a mile or more north, to straighten the Donaldson Drain so it now travels directly west to the Cooks Creek Diversion, a ditch that is two truck widths or more across is in the process of being constructed, with somewhat steep walls. On the north side of the ditch a road has been constructed, sufficient to allow two lanes of traffic. Evidently people that are neither staff nor property owners have been hanging out there with ATVs and dirt bikes. The resident is NOT IMPRESSED with having strangers frequenting the back of the property at all hours. In addition, this project is costing around \$1 million dollars which could increase as at least one landowner has hired a lawyer. Further **IT IS TOTALLY UNNECESSARY**. The Drain worked the way it was originally constructed, travelling north of the PetroCan, crossing PTH 12 and running diagonally northward to Cooks Creek. As it is, the Diversion has been flooding the home and property on the east side of it, on the north side of PTH 15, and the owner, Mrs. Vaags, came to Council to bring that to their attention in the hopes something would be done to improve her situation. Instead, diverting the Donaldson Drain will likely make matters even worse as she demonstrated. Those on Council that voted for the relocation of the Donaldson Drain, **HOW DO YOU SEE THAT AS FULFILLING YOUR CAMPAIGN PROMISES TO WORK FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE MAJORITY OF RATEPAYERS IN SPRINGFIELD?** I can hardly wait for October 2026 and I just hope we get some good candidates willing to serve their Municipality for 4 years. In spite of the fact the remuneration equates to a living wage, it is a thankless job **BUT ONE THAT IS A MUCH-REQUIRED SERVICE TO COMMUNITY**.

ENTRENCHED STAFF

I believe one of the biggest problems is the fact that certain administrative staff have become accustomed to making decisions independent of the Council that is elected by the people to run the affairs of the Municipality. At least 2 members of Council have decided to accept the advice of that staff as the only way to rule. The one member that has been on Council for two prior terms tends to ally himself with the group that has the upper hand, in this case he perceives the Mayor and CAO. One can never know the inner dynamics of what is going on behind the scenes but it seems evident that the mandate set by Mayor Fell years ago, that is, development at any cost, is being promoted by this majority on Council, fostered no doubt by certain developers, one being Rossol who wishes to put in residential development to the south and west in Dugald. Despite the protestation of residents, every effort is being made to hasten this development, including the Dugald Water Treatment Plant and the expansion of the wastewater lagoon, that is required before any substantial further residential development occurs. The existing residents of Springfield are being **REQUIRED** to finance this Water Treatment Plant although it will in **NO WAY BENEFIT** those outside of Dugald and Oakbank. My opinion is that if the developer is going to **BENEFIT**, the developer should **PAY!** However, the Mayor and majority of Council are promoting this DOWS initiative (Dugald/Oakbank Water System) and residents have until October 24, 2024 at 11:59 p.m. to phone in and vote for or against this project on a resident-initiated referendum. **I URGE EVERYONE TO VOTE.**



SIO SILICA PROJECT – VIVIAN, MANITOBA

Not much is being said about this project these days. One resident suggested to me that the straightening of the Donaldson Drain is being done to facilitate that project but I am not sure how that might be. The Drain is designed to take water from east of PTH 12 which is primarily low land, particularly to the south, thus enabling less desirable lands to be developed.

Dr. Pip, a very knowledgeable university professor, among many other residents, had objections to the project, some of which were as follows: *“Oxygen will be introduced into the Sandstone aquifer with the reinjected groundwater. The separate patent application also describes potential direct injection of pressurized air pulses into the aquifer to loosen the sand, and potential horizontal reach beyond the borehole axis. Air pockets may lodge against the shale ceiling, and become enriched with radon and hydrogen sulphide gases.”* *“Aeration and agitation of the water will displace dissolved radon gas and hydrogen sulphide; the latter gas may generate increased nuisance odor complaints in neighboring wells during and after operation. Radon will be silent and cannot be detected by smell or taste.”* *“Modelling to predict water quality changes resulting from oxygen in the reinjected water is not based on measured data, but on assumptions which underestimate the dissolved oxygen content.”* *“Oxygen will oxidize soluble iron and manganese to form insoluble precipitates, which may discolor untreated tapwater and further increase turbidity.”* *“Oxygen will promote pyrite oxidation in the shale layer, which may contribute to water chemistry changes due to*

acidification, and heavy metal and trace element mobilization.”“Oxygen will create favorable conditions for proliferation of iron and manganese bacteria and fungi, should they be introduced into the aquifer with infected tools and equipment, or be already present in nearby infested domestic wells.”“In the end, the proposal fails to provide substantive information on multiple key aspects of the project, many very basic assumptions are flawed, data are severely lacking, and the proposal has not been adequately considered, researched, or presented. The public are being asked to buy something in a sack. Even so, the proposed project will impose invasive and permanent changes on the aquifers, facilitate groundwater contamination, inflict environmental and ecological damage, mar and scar people’s properties, subject residents to unconscionable inconvenience, intrusion, nuisance, and stress, and create future liabilities and risks for landowners.”**IN ESSENCE, TO ME THE MAIN ISSUE IS THE EFFECT THE MINING MAY HAVE ON THE DRINKING WATER FROM THE SANDILANDS AQUIFER THAT SUPPLIES THE SOUTHEASTERN QUADRANT OF MANITOBA.**



While for the moment, it would appear that the project will not proceed, I have never believed that SIO SILICA WOULD GIVE UP even though it appeared that for the time being, it had been stopped. They have too much invested in it. I appear to have been proven correct, because behind the scenes, the company has been politicking and particularly when it comes to First Nations. And the other day, Premier Kinew appeared on TV promoting mining as being the future of Manitoba. **I DO NOT BELIEVE SIO SILICA HAS GIVEN UP ON THE VIVIAN PROJECT.**

RECEIPTS FOR PAYMENT OF PROPERTY TAXES

A resident recently found out that the RM is no longer automatically issuing receipts for payment of property taxes. If one is eligible for a Farmland Tax Rebate, they require a receipt in order to apply for it. Further, it is only good business practice to provide receipts. I questioned the CAO about this change in policy as in previous years, I have always mailed a post-dated cheque and after the end of October, at some point a receipt for my payment was mailed to me. This was her reply.

*This was not a policy change. This was an administrative change to **save on postage costs**. If people pay in person, we stamp their bill paid. If people pay online or by mail, a receipt is only mailed out if there is a balance remaining or they have requested a receipt be provided. Yes, we did used to mail out a receipt for every payment, but it was not a requirement. We have since made the change to try and save postage costs as I mentioned. I believe this change was made 2 years ago but anyone that requests a receipt will be provided one.*

Wow, maybe a \$1,200. saving! CAO Draper sure knows how to save money, pardon my sarcasm!

ZONING BY-LAW NUMBER 08-01

The current Zoning Bylaw, that received Third Reading February 3, 2010, has not been updated to reflect the current Development Plan Number 18-09 that received Third Reading February 5, 2019. That is the reason there are so many variances and conditional uses at every Planning meeting. It should have been done as soon as possible after the signing of Development Plan 18-09. It is now October 2024, and we are on the second Council since it was enacted. Subsequent to a Public Hearing held in Chambers June 25, 2024 to receive representations and objections to By-Law 21-25, a Special Meeting with respect to the proposed Zoning Bylaw to replace 08-01 was held on September 24th, 2024. Martin Sandhurst from the Planning Department of the RM monopolized this meeting with his lengthy presentation, at which several objectors again brought up valid objections to the proposal. Second Reading was deferred and the meeting was adjourned. The wording of this By-law, as indicated during the meeting, is extremely important, especially the use of verbs such as “shall” versus “may”. It will be interesting to see if suggested changes are made to the document before they reconvene the meeting for Second Reading.