

Committee of the Whole Meeting April 14, 2020 (Cancelled)

WITHOUT PREJUDICE (E&OE)

NOTE: The Committee of the Whole meeting scheduled has been cancelled. **There would have been nothing on which to report had it not been for the notice of the 2020 Financial Plan Hearing and Construction of New Fire Hall - Change in Scope - By-Law 20-05 for the RM of Springfield in the April 9, 2020 issue of the Clipper on May 12th. at 1:00 p.m. and 6:30 p.m. Much to my surprise, these Hearings are being held at the Oakbank Fire Hall.** The location of the hearings came as a complete shock. Years ago, before the new Administration Building was constructed, well before the new Fire Hall was there, the Province denied access to PTH 206 for the new RM building and the plans therefore had to be changed. The Administration Building entrance, rather than being on #206, had to face east and Springfield Drive had to be constructed to access the building. During the discussions regarding the Fire Hall being built to the south of the Administration Building, the Province agreed to allow emergency vehicles ONLY to drive directly on to their provincial trunk highway. I have e-mailed the Minister of Infrastructure with a copy to the Premier to inquire if their policy in this regard has changed and await a reply.

I know for a fact that the meeting room in the Fire Hall, which is I believe smaller than the Council Chamber and not nearly as suitable as there is no raised area to showcase the Council and CAO, has been used for Aggregate Task Force meetings, COPP meetings, Committee meetings, even lately a Police Board meeting, all of which have members of the public, Council and the Administration attending. Below is the e-mail I sent to Mayor Fell with copies to the CAO and Council.

Heather Erickson <heatheranderickson@gmail.com> Sat, 11 Apr, 13:33 (2 days ago)

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

I read your notice in this regard in the April 9th edition of the Clipper. I wish to attend both the 1:00 p.m. and the 6:30 p.m. sessions and would ask that you register me.

However, I am wondering why you are holding it at the Firehall. The only suitable large space in the Firehall is where the trucks are stored. This would mean moving all the fire equipment into the parking lot to enable spacing for the hearing. The space is highly unsuitable as the acoustics would be impossible...the ceiling is very high and it is hard to hear anyone speaking from a distance in there. Then there is the matter of parking. With all the fire equipment in the driveway, there is little space for parking. Further that access on to 206 is only to be used by emergency vehicles.

There is a far more obvious and suitable space, that being the Cooks Creek Community Hall expansion. That hall could accommodate at least 200 people at a time, spaced out a hockey stick from each other. The acoustics are far better as the ceiling and walls are lined with special material. The parking lot is much larger. I feel you would then only require one meeting and a presentation could occur on the stage, far removed from the public, where Council could also sit. It is not too late to change arrangements as at least one or two more Clippers will be out before then and you could also advertise on the RM web site.

I would ask your immediate consideration of my suggestion.

The following is the reply I received from Mayor Fell.

Tiffany Fell 11 Apr 2020, 15:04 (2 days ago)

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

Hello

Thank you for the email. You will be only eligible to attend one of the time slots. The second one please feel free to attend live via our online meeting we will be hosting or listening to the recording once it is posted. You can let Colleen know your preference for which hearing slot you would like to attend in person.

We will be hosting at the firehall beside the municipal building. Thanks for your comments regarding the location.

Regards
Tiffany

As you can see, I suggested an alternative to the Fire Hall in Oakbank, that being the new addition to the Cooks Creek Community Centre. It has a high ceiling, it is very large and could easily accommodate spacing of in excess of 100 people (removing the necessity for two meetings), it has a raised stage at the far end where Council could sit spaced apart and removed from the audience and where the audio visual presentation that normally is part of such hearings could be projected, the entrance foyer is spacious, there is plenty of parking available, and those attending do not have to exit on to a major Provincial Trunk Highway. There is still time to advertise a change in venue as I pointed out in my e-mail. Further a considerable amount of the funding came from the RM of Springfield taxpayers. **MAYOR FELL DOES NOT APPEAR TO HAVE EVEN CONSIDERED THE SUGGESTION OR CONSULTED THE REMAINDER OF HER COUNCIL** as I wrote at 1:33 p.m. and she responded at 3:04 p.m. on a Saturday.



MY QUESTION: Do my readers think Mayor Fell is being reasonable? I have attended Financial Plan Hearings since at least 2008 and have never seen more than 25 or 30 people in attendance. Even if 50 were to attend, there is still ample room at the Cooks Creek Community Centre to provide for ample social distancing at one meeting, and therefore only one meeting would be required, requiring less staff and Council time, and thus less chance of COVID 19 transmission. It would also provide an opportunity for ratepayers to see how a community came together to expand their existing facility to meet their needs and those of others in the municipality at a fraction of the \$25 million proposed for the new Springfield Recreation Centre in Oakbank. The total cost of the Cooks Creek Community Centre expansion and improvement to the existing facility was under \$3 million to which the RM contributed \$350,000., plus \$100,000. for improvement to the parking lot. There is no reason why Council should not take advantage of this facility. **ANOTHER QUESTION:** Why does Mayor Fell feel the meeting must be held in Oakbank? There are 5 distinct communities in this Municipality and no one of them should be given more weight than the other. The programs offered at the Cooks Creek Community Centre are available to all residents of the municipality and all take advantage of that.

ACTION: It is my opinion that if you, my reader, feel Mayor Fell is being unreasonable and unfair, take a few moments to e-mail her at: tfell@rmofspringfield.ca and copy it to all councillors and the CAO at: vralke@rmofspringfield.ca; pwilliams@rmofspringfield.ca; hbredin@rmofspringfield.ca; rwilson@rmofspringfield.ca; gfuhl@rmofspringfield.ca; cdraper@rmofspringfield.ca. Let her, and the remainder at the council table, know how you feel **IMMEDIATELY** and perhaps the venue can be changed to a more suitable location. Other possibilities would be the Dugald Community Club and the Anola Community Club, which both have ample room for parking and are more spacious than the Fire Hall meeting room. I believe adequate spacing would be possible at those venues as well.