

**RM of Springfield Committee of the Whole
Tuesday January 12, 2021 CANCELLED**

Council obviously feels there is nothing of importance that needed to be discussed for the first two weeks of 2021 but then posts an agenda for January 19 that has 8 rather important items of new business, a delegation, and the final reading of the Use of Firearms By-law. **Well, I have a question that I could not have asked unless it was an item on the agenda BECAUSE MAYOR FELL HAS DONE EVERYTHING IN HER POWER TO ENSURE that the public cannot be heard during Council meetings and even when they do ask questions related to the agenda, the answer is never available at the meeting and they are asked to e-mail their question to the Administration.**

FIRE DEPARTMENT

QUESTION: WHERE IS THE "FIRE RESCUE COMBO VEHICLE" that was ordered in 2018? THAT IS THE TITLE OF A REAL LIFE DRAMA BEING PLAYED OUT IN THE R.M. OF SPRINGFIELD. Have you seen our new Fire Rescue Combo Vehicle?

THE CLUES: Council Meetings where this subject is mentioned:

November 20, 2018 - Council unanimously approved resolution to purchase for a cost of \$477,498.69 plus applicable taxes, based on Chief Jeff Hudson's assurance there was a need for a rear staircase to access supplied stored on top of the unit which could only be provided by "E-One", Keewatin Truck Service being the only supplier in Manitoba of this particular vehicle. On Agenda, 9.4 Purchase of Commercial Combo Rescue Apparatus.

December 11, 2018 - Chief Hudson appears before Council to justify his choice of vehicle stating "I was informed that Council wished to discuss the purchase prior to moving forward with it." even though in the same meeting Mayor Fell advised Councillor Ralke that "the purchase (had) already been completed".

December 18, 2018 - Picture of similar vehicle, the one ordered for \$477,498.69 being manufactured in Florida, presented to Council.

January 15, 2019 - In Departmental Reports - Fire Chief reports that E-One was awarded the tender and the apparatus will be delivered in late 2019.

February 4, 2020 - Darryl Speer of Oakbank inquires as to the status of this Fire Rescue Combo Vehicle and is told by the Mayor he must send an e-mail to herself and the Administration.

March 3, 2020 - Resolution passed to purchase an "additional Tri-max Fire Suppression System" from Keewatin Truck Service up to maximum of \$40,000 plus applicable taxes and/or fees. NOTE: I spoke to a company that builds fire trucks in Manitoba and was told this truck could have been built in Manitoba. The Mayor would not allow Madsen, the Deputy Fire Chief, to present a report he had prepared in this regard.

September 8, 2020 - My notes draw reference to the lack of forthrightness on the part of Council regarding the "estimated time of arrival" of this vehicle.

October 6, 2020 - Mr. Speer notes lack of Departmental Report for Fire Department and no update on the delivery of the Fire Rescue Combo Unit.

November 17, 2020 - Question raised in my notes of Council meeting and no response.

November 24, 2020 - In response to question re List of Accounts as to why Keewatin Truck Service is being paid \$540,805.32 for a Specialty Fire Truck that none of us taxpayers has yet seen or have proof that it has been received and found to be in good order, the CAO stated *Fire truck has been received and is at the Oakbank Firehall being finalized for operation. We will be placing a notice in the paper with picture soon. It is now January 22, 2021 and the truck has not yet been on public display as would have been expected complete with pictures in the Clipper.*

December 22, 2020 - In response to a recent e-mail sent to the CAO, Colleen Draper, regarding the Fire Rescue Combo Vehicle, Ms. Draper stated in writing it had arrived but Councillor Ralke said in a Council meeting that a few minor adjustments were being done on it. Why would a brand new truck need "adjustments" and **IT IS NOW JANUARY 22, 2021, ONE MONTH AFTER HER DECLARATION! Should "minor" adjustments take a month? IT SHOULD BE IN WORKING ORDER IF WE HAVE ALREADY PAID FOR IT: SEE LIST OF ACCOUNTS ON THE NOVEMBER 17, 2020 MEETING (151052 Keewatin Truck Service \$540,805.32 Fire Truck R/C 18-467). QUESTION: DO YOU PAY FOR A VEHICLE PURCHASE "BEFORE" YOU TAKE DELIVERY AND ARE SURE IT IS SERVICEABLE? This is what it states in the Fire Department Report attached to the agenda of the January 19, 2021 Council Meeting Agenda: Station 1 took possession of Rescue 1 in November with council touring the truck late November. The truck is all geared up and ready to respond. STRANGE THAT THERE HAS BEEN NOT BEEN A PHOTO OP AND ARTICLE IN THE CLIPPER TO ANNOUNCE THIS ADDITION TO THE FIRE DEPARTMENT FLEET. It also states: Station # 3 The new building in Ward 1 area as of Dec 15 we have possession of the building with renovations set to start in the New Year. The new location at 92 donvalley (AT A COST OF \$1,603,290.14) should allow for the expansion???** of the fire department and the improved protection for the area. **Does the Fire Department know something we do not? SHOULD NOT A RISK ASSESSMENT HAVE BEEN DONE PRIOR TO PURCHASING A BUILDING, AS WAS MENTIONED IN THE FIRE DEPARTMENT REPORT OF THE JANUARY 15, 2019 COUNCIL MEETING (Station #3, build: The building of the firehall for the Ward 1 area, has been revisited as the new council wishes to have an RFP written and posted for interested companies or individuals wishing to supply a "Location & Risk Assessment" study to ensure the proper placement of the firehall to meet existing and future needs of the municipality. The RFP will be posted in early 2019.) AND ALSO DISCUSSED AT THE JANUARY 8, 2019 COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE MEETING (6.3 Schedule (25% Rating) The Proponent should provide a proposed project schedule and plan that will ensure completion of the Risk and Location Assessment as per the agreed time frame.)? From the Minutes of the Committee of the Whole Meeting of January 22, 2019: 5.2 Fire Hall (Ward 1) Temporary Location Update: The Fire Chief noted that the current rental facility in Ward 1 is expiring. Council agreed that the current location is not appropriate to house the firehall any longer. A short term lease report will be prepared to address the immediate concerns. The Fire Chief will also prepare a report showing the long term lease options vs. building new. The report to show payback information, costs, and fire call locations. From the Minutes of the Council Meeting of February 19, 2019: The Fire Chief presented a report that stated in part: A resolution from council is needed to approve the relocation of the Ward 3 Fire Hall to a more suitable location while the Risk and Location assessment is undertaken for the permanent build. The Fire Chief has negotiated a new temporary location that would benefit the department. The newer 4,200 sq. ft. facility located at the corner of Redonda Street and Gunn Road would adequately house the apparatus and equipment, supply proper offices and training areas, as well as modern washroom facilities and adequate parking. Council passed a resolution for a 2 year lease on this building until May 31, 2021. TO BE CONTINUED.....**

REDUCTION OF WARDS

On Page 4 of the Clipper is a picture of our Mayor proclaiming her proposal for "Four-Ward system" is as a result of "feedback from municipal surveys". WHAT THE ARTICLE DOES NOT TELL YOU IS "How many people responded to the survey(s)". The Survey was a hastily contrived strategy to justify Mayor Fell's desire to reduce the number of wards (her preference being ultimately one big ward) and THUS REDUCE REGIONAL INFLUENCES on decisions made at the Council table. **WHAT IS NOT BEING SAID IN THE ARTICLE IS THAT THE ?? SURVEY WAS NOT "OPEN ENDED", IT ONLY ALLOWED YOU TO MAKE A CHOICE BETWEEN A DECREASE TO 4 WARDS, TWO WARDS WITH TWO COUNCILLORS EACH, OR COUNCILLORS AT LARGE. THERE WAS NO CHOICE TO REMAIN AS IS, WITH A MAYOR AND 5 COUNCILLORS. In short, in my opinion, your only choice was LESS REPRESENTATION. FURTHER YOU HAD VERY LITTLE TIME TO THINK ABOUT YOUR DECISION, ESPECIALLY SINCE IT WAS CARRIED OUT JUST BEFORE THE HOLIDAY SEASON AND THE NEW YEAR WHEN PEOPLE'S MINDS ARE PREOCCUPIED WITH THINGS OTHER THAN MUNICIPAL POLITICS.**

ANNUAL BUDGET FOR "INFOMERCIALS"

Mayor Fell and Council have just initiated a bi-weekly half page feature in the Clipper Weekly at a cost to taxpayers of \$12,500. annually. This is over and above what they would normally expend for advertising positions or making announcements regarding meeting changes etc. All the information contained in the features would be available to the public if they visited the web site of the RM of Springfield, including Minutes of Meetings, or followed Mr. Zerucha's reporting of what is happening in Council. **DO YOU THINK THIS IS A RESPONSIBLE USE OF YOUR TAX DOLLARS OR DO YOU THINK THIS IS MERELY A WAY OF PROVIDING COUNCIL WITH ADVERTISING FOR THEIR OWN SPURIOUS PURPOSES?** According to Mayor Fell, the purpose is to strengthen communication as they are there "to listen, respond and assist" which would appear to conflict with their actual actions/inactions to date. Under her direction, Council now conducts "closed" meetings prior to Council meetings in many cases and after in some cases. The actual decisions are made at these non public meetings and later "ratified" at open Council meetings. Secret meetings are being held with "business interests" before their plans ever become public. Council has even become members of the local Chamber of Commerce, a group that lobbies governments in their own interests.

Some good examples of weighted decisions made in favour of business are as follows:

Tervita Waste Disposal Facility - Springfield Industrial Park - Opposed by residents and other businesses in the area but approved by Council.

Berger Peat Processing Facility - Oakwood Rd. west of 207 - Opposed by residents and particularly those who reside in the area which is zoned rural residential and agricultural but approved by Council in spite of heavy opposition. (Currently the Province and Municipality are facing litigation in this regard.)

Pineridge Hollow - Sale of 12 acres at below market value of municipal aggregate reserve land adjacent to Birds Hill Park to Ms. Regehr to expand her restaurant and social venue facility to include a merchant's village and hotel/spa. (Who is going to pay for the upgrade of those substandard gravel roads to such an enterprise?)

Parrish & Heimbecker Grain Storage Facility - Poplar Road south of PTH#15 - Opposed by residents but approved by Council. This is located adjacent to two new municipal wells that are to serve as backup to municipal water in Dugald and Oakbank which are at present experiencing difficulties that affect local residents.

OTHER INAPPROPRIATE (IN MY OPINION) EXPENDITURES

During the reigns of Reeves Skrupski and McCarthy, the decision was made to move from the Municipal Office on Main Street and build a brand new building south of the Co-op off Springfield Road. Between the mistakes, the purchase of the property, the road to enable access to the building location (as the Province would not allow access from PTH#206), and the cost of the structure and landscaping, it cost taxpayers in the neighbourhood of \$8 million dollars for a building that houses only the Administration. Planning Department has moved from Oakwood Road to the former Oakbank Credit Union Building on Main Street which it now shares with the Springfield Police Service. However Public Works is still in the building on Oakwood Road. Where we once had 2 buildings, there are now 3 municipal buildings housing approximately the same amount of staff. Would it not have been more prudent to construct one building, such as the RM of Tache did, that housed the Administration and Public Works departments in one building, with a small office for the Police Service.

It has recently been revealed that a building in our Industrial Park to be repurposed as a Firehall with an office space for the Police Service has been bought for 1.6 million without ever being discussed in open Council prior to the purchase and without Council approval.

Council approved the design and construction for a total of \$499,000. plus applicable taxes for a Recreation Centre in Oakbank without any community buy-in or fund raising contrary to the recommendations contained in the Recreation Master Plan for which the previous Council expended a considerable sum. In that Plan, it was to have been an \$8 million project with design costs of \$150,000. While \$1 million has been dedicated to a skate park and splash pad adjacent to the Municipal Office, no funds have been budgeted to protect our only functioning municipal water source from predatory dredging by gravel operators, contrary to the Municipality's own regulations. This also seems to take priority over expanding our sewage lagoon.

OPENING DOORS TO LITIGATION

The actions of this Council, under the leadership of Mayor Fell, have introduced the distinct possibility of legal action being taken against the RM of Springfield by residents of the area adjacent to the Berger Peat Processing facility. Council approved this business setting up shop on land zoned Agricultural by feloniously passing resolutions declaring untruths. Peat is not an agricultural product, it is considered a mineral and falls under Mines and Natural Resources as a result.

The locating of a grain storage facility which is a commercial enterprise on again, land zoned agricultural, to the disadvantage of a number of families located in the vicinity, is also open to litigation. As a result, the taxpayers of the RM of Springfield are now being taxed to upgrade the municipal road leading to this facility. I feel the taxpayers of the RM should demand of this Council that they forfeit their wages to compensate for this egregious abuse of the powers given to them as elected officials. THEY ARE SUPPOSED TO BE REPRESENTING THE BEST INTERESTS OF THE TAXPAYERS, NOT A CORPORATE ENTITY.

Looming in the future is the effect of allowing CanWhite Sands to locate a Silica Sand Processing Facility in the hamlet of Vivian which has been downplayed of late but it still underway. This will forever change the nature of the surrounding area which is rural residential and agricultural, with some aggregate extraction. So far CanWhite is only applying for the processing plant but they intend to bore holes all over the eastern portion of our municipality and that of Reynold, Tache, Ste. Anne, Hanover, and points south to the border to extract silica sand for processing at that plant. The sand is located in the Sandilands Aquifer from which our municipality draws water for Anola, Vivian, Glass, and which also supplies the aforementioned other municipalities with drinking water. Any disruption to the aquifer will have a detrimental effect on the water supply of the southeastern quadrant of Manitoba which includes Springfield. Sacrificing drinking water for silica sand mining interests is unconscionable.

THERE IS A LITTLE LESS THAN 2 MORE YEARS OF THIS COUNCIL. QUESTION: How much more can the constituents of the RM of Springfield tolerate of Mayor Fell and her ill advised decisions and arbitrary actions?