

RM of Springfield Committee of the Whole Meeting

January 28, 2020 1:00 p.m.

WITHOUT PREJUDICE (E&OE)

ITEM 7.5 COST OF LIVING INCREASE ON AGENDA OF COUNCIL MEETING THIS COMING TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 4, 2020. ALTHOUGH THIS IS NON SPECIFIC, I BELIEVE COUNCIL IS GOING TO DISCUSS AN INCREASE IN THEIR INDEMNITIES AS WHEN THEY PREVIOUSLY DISCUSSED THE INCREASE IN THEIR INDEMNITIES, PART OF THE DISCUSSION INCLUDED ANNUAL COST OF LIVING INCREASES.

There was only one item on the agenda of this meeting which lasted 14:41 minutes according to the audio file and includes that portion after the Closed Meeting. There has not been a Committee of the Whole meeting since December 10, 2019. That particular meeting had only 2 items on the agenda. These are the meetings where discussion about projects and issues and proposed actions are supposed to take place to enable the public to engage in the conversation. INTERESTING TO NOTE HOWEVER that representatives of Friesen Drillers and senior staff such as the Finance Manager, the Public Works Manager, and the Recreation Director were in attendance in the audience. Aside from the Development Officer and the CAO, that is the entire management staff aside from the Facilities Manager and the Human Resource Officer who started in August 2019 but has yet to be formally introduced at a Council Meeting or in the Clipper. There is no technical staff/managers in the Waste and Water/Engineering Department.

4.1 Snowmobiles - Mayor Fell received a call from a constituent who lives on Rosewood Way along the east side of Oakbank in Aspen Lakes. Her complaint was that snowmobiles are often running along the back of the houses there, often at night, which wakens them. Mayor Fell believes that is not the actual trail. She wants signage to indicate that is not a designated Snoman trail. CAO Draper said the Springfield Police Service are currently reviewing the Snowmobile bylaw and feel the attached map should be updated. The Acting Chief said most of the regulation of snowmobiles is under the Manitoba Highway Traffic Act. Blaine Moffat, Director of Public Works, said the current bylaw allows people residing in Oakbank to drive their snowmobiles from their residences to the trails and back. They can come in as far as the bake shop from the north and as far as the Esso Station from the south and are NOT allowed to use the sidewalks, only the ditches on the west side. The comment was made that unfortunately people who are not from the municipality may not be aware of the rules, therefore Acting Chief Froese and the SPS should be enforcing the bylaw. **Vince Bennici** - Mentioned his and other businesses had recently been broken into but the SPS has not been over to investigate and wondered what hours they are on duty. He was referred by the Mayor to the Police Board or SPS. **Heather Erickson** - I sent an e-mail to the Chair of the Police Board a year ago and it has still not been completely answered. **NOTE: The Springfield Police Board no longer allows the audience to ask questions or participate in any way.**

BECAUSE THE MEETINGS ARE SO SHORT, THIS ALLOWS ME TO DISCUSS ISSUES NOT ON THE AGENDA IN MY NOTES. FOLLOWING THE ABOVE, COUNCIL WENT IN CAMERA AND RETURNED AND ADJOURNED.

PEAT PROCESSING FACILITY

In 2018 an equestrian riding stable on Oakwood Road west of PTH 207 was sold and the property is now registered to Berger Peat Moss Ltd. This company was issued licenses to mine peat on Peguis First Nation land in 2013 and began clear cutting and building roads despite new environment licenses requiring the filing of satisfactory wildlife, habitat and vegetation inventory with Manitoba Conservation before disturbing the land and plant studies, transplanting of any endangered species and medicinal plants, new buffers on all riparian zones, and the setting up of extensive water testing and monitoring systems. In fact, there was a moratorium on peat mining in the province of Manitoba for a couple of years. The harvesting of peat bogs requires their drainage which mainly causes changes in regional hydrology and quality of surface waters. The leaching of phosphorus and nitrogen causes eutrophication problems into the watercourses and decomposing organic matter consumes their oxygen reserves. The load of solid peat particles causes silting of downstream water bodies. Peat bogs act as filters for water entering into our lakes and rivers, the peat in bogs is an important place for the storage of carbon which prevents the release of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere that contributes to global warming, they provide a unique home for a wealth of plants, animals and insects, they provide an important feeding and stopping-off point for native and migrating birds, and they contain layers of historical data.

It appears that Council has allowed this non-agricultural endeavour to locate on land zoned agricultural BEHIND CLOSED DOORS and without any consultation with surrounding land owners and taxpayers. I would draw your attention to my notes of the March 28, 2019 Planning Meeting and April 25, 2019 Planning Meeting wherein I brought to the attention of my readership that the following resolutions were passed after CLOSED MEETINGS.

Resolution No: 19-155 BE IT RESOLVED THAT the RM of Springfield agrees with the recent reclassification of peat moss by the Manitoba Government as an agricultural product. This resolution is based on "false" information as I personally contacted a representative of the Manitoba Department of Agriculture who engaged in lengthy research and discovered that peat falls under Mines and Natural Resources, not Agriculture. Agriculture is the process of producing food, feed, fiber and many other desired products by the cultivation of certain plants and

the raising of domesticated animals (livestock). Peat is an accumulation of partially decayed vegetation or organic matter that has built up over time. No one produces it although it is widely used to enrich soils and in horticulture to cultivate seedlings.

Resolution No: 19-195 BE IT RESOLVED THAT the definition of agricultural activities within the Springfield Zoning By-law be amended to include peat moss.

I have brought to the attention of the CAO and Council that this information is incorrect and that both resolutions should be rescinded but to date, they have not been removed from the books.

Just as in the case of the Parrish & Heimbecker Elevator and Bulk Fertilizer Storage Plant on Poplar Road, the sale of the 12 acres of aggregate reserve property to Pineridge Hollow, and the negotiations with CanWest Sands regarding a silica sand mine in the hamlet of Vivian, there has been no consultation with the public tax base and all were done prior to proper studies and approvals. These decisions, while maybe not felt immediately, will have implications to your property taxes and also your potable water supplies. The Provincial Government has removed any environmental safeguards that were in place before the current government was elected and thus are allowing these enterprises with far reaching environmental implications to proceed. **SECRECY, LACK OF CONSULTATION, OLIGARCHY** seem to be the new norms. The will of the majority of taxpaying people do not seem to be considered by elected officials.

JOHN Q PUBLIC (WINNIPEG METROPOLITAN REGION)

John Q Public Inc. is a co-operatively owned economic development corporation formed in 2018 by 13 members of the Winnipeg Metropolitan Region (WMR) with a goal to capitalize on collective strengths to enhance development opportunities that benefit the entire province. WMR is comprised of 18 municipalities that include and surround Winnipeg. **On February 5, 2019, Resolution No: 19-054 BE IT RESOLVED THAT Council of the Rural Municipality of Springfield authorizes payment in the amount of \$20,000.00 towards the John Q Fibre Optics Project.** This amount was paid on the List of Accounts of the February 19, 2019 cheque register Cheque #146991 \$20,000. John Q Public Inc. In a publication of the WMR dated June 20, 2019 it states: John Q's high-speed Internet project - **Connecting to Opportunity** - broke ground today at CentrePort Canada... This foundational first step moves the growing METRO Region one step closer to fast, reliable and affordable high-speed Internet. ... This project, a stand-alone portion of JohnQ's Connecting to Opportunity fibre optic initiative, lays the groundwork for further projects that aim to deliver high-speed Internet and connect Manitoba's businesses, farms, homes and institutions. ... "To get a project like this off the ground demonstrates the power of regional collaboration," said Colleen Sklar, Executive Director of the Winnipeg METRO Region. "**Connecting to Opportunity** will ensure the METRO Region and Manitoba has the necessary economic infrastructure required for businesses to come here, stay here, grow here, and in turn, secure our future." Presumably our \$20,000. and that of the other 12 members of JohnQ Public Inc. funded Connecting to Opportunity. At the January 23, 2020 Planning Meeting when discussion a tower on private property being used by Full Throttle Networks to provide high speed internet access to a number of customers, I believe 28, I asked Council if that would not be in direct competition to the initiative to which RM taxpayers have already contributed \$20,000. and was interrupted by **Mayor Fell who stated "that the Winnipeg Metropolitan Region (is) not embarking on an internet or fibre optic initiative.** The Mayor literally refused to discuss this topic any further when I asked if that meant our \$20,000. had been wasted. **NOTE: This is NOT OPEN AND HONEST GOVERNMENT. DECISIONS ARE BEING MADE WITHOUT PROVIDING THE PUBLIC WITH INFORMATION AS WHERE THE MONEY IS BEING SPENT AND HOW IT WILL BENEFIT RM OF SPRINGFIELD RESIDENTS. The public has a right to know about our involvement with John Q Public Inc. and the progress of their fibre optic initiative and when it would be available to Springfield residents.**

SPRINGFIELD POLICE SERVICE

At the January 21, 2020 Council meeting, **Resolution No.: 20-034** was carried: **BE IT RESOLVED THAT Council of the RM of Springfield will work with the RCMP, Springfield Police Service and other stakeholders to enter into an Agreement to work collaboratively with Springfield Police Service and the RCMP.** As mentioned in my notes of that meeting, I sent an e-mail to all of Council and the CAO as well as a cc to the Minister of Justice requesting they consider dismissing the current Police Board which has yet to accomplish anything but alienating members of the public by stifling their ability to speak at Police Board meetings, **AS THEY WERE FREE TO DO WHEN I WAS THE CHAIR OF THE POLICE BOARD.** I also contacted Greg Penner, the Vice Chair of the Police Board with reference to Ms. Wowchuk's breach of the Code of Ethical Conduct. He at least responded and advised he would be having a meeting with the other members of the Board with the exception of the Chair, i.e. Councillor Williams and Michael Breward, to discuss the situation and would advise me of their decision. Both Council and Mr. Penner were given to the end of January to respond. Neither he nor Council have responded to my requests other than to acknowledge them. Council, in my opinion, has its absolute nerve passing the above resolution when they as a body did not post a rebuttal to what Chair Wowchuk had stated in the November 7, 2019 article in the Clipper. By saying nothing, they in effect agreed with her position. Now suddenly they are supporting continuation of the Springfield Police Service as opposed to reverting to by-law officer(s) and promoting cooperation with the RCMP which is currently the police service funded through the Province. Mayor Fell is like a yo-yo on the subject, herself having appeared in the Clipper more than once questioning the SPS and the expenditures necessary for its continuation. Not that I am a subscriber but I understand she has been featured on certain Facebook platforms with negative commentary regarding SPS. Well, she did support the former Chief by allowing him to live at her residence for an extended period of time. But the mere fact that only now are they advertising for a Chief when Mark Kane left at the

beginning of September speaks volumes regarding Council's support of the municipal police service which of course is funded directly through municipal residential taxes. Early in her term, the purchase of the old Oakbank Credit Union building was finalized, half of which was dedicated to the Springfield Police Service, and the renovations of same.

IN SUMMATION

Considering that Mayor Fell and her Council seem to have had something to do with the loss of much of their professional staff, a CAO, an Economics Officer, a Finance/Asset Manager Officer, a Human Resource Officer, several professional engineers including finally Santokh Randhawa Singh, the surveyor, a Police Chief, indirectly his clerk, one of his officers, and the Fire Chief, one can only see why there were so few in the gallery of this meeting. There is no one left to man the ship!!!! Our potable water supply was under threat before Mayor Fell took office but she has managed to exacerbate the condition in one short year. I feel that reports by Friesen Drillers, WSP and the like should not be In Camera and the public should be included in discussions involving our water supply and any large expenditures of taxpayer dollars. Any major project being considered, such as Silica Sand Mines, Bulk Fertilizer Storage plants on Agricultural land, sales of valuable land for a song, and peat processing facilities which use large amounts of water and may not be environmentally friendly, should involve public discussion. Considering the capital projects in process and planned for the future, the lack of the appropriate staff to oversee these projects is of major concern.