

Strasbourg Town Hall Meeting 2016

The Town of Strasbourg hosted its third annual Town Hall Meeting at the Memorial Hall on the evening of June 20. More than 40 local ratepayers came out to hear the reports and ask questions, if they liked.

"Unfortunately, this will probably be the last time you see all of us together as a council, as there will likely be a different council next year after this fall's municipal elections," Mayor Ken Swanston said in his opening remarks. He then introduced the people at the front of the room: Administrator Jennifer Josephson, and Councillors Murray Kondratiuk, Roy Erickson, Kelvin Schapansky, Ernie Oblander, Cliff Eisler, and Lance Cornwell. He also introduced Constable Jack Clay, the new RCMP community policing officer in the Southey-Strasbourg Detachment.

One of the first items on Mayor Swanston's list of discussion items was 'bylaw enforcement' and specifically the process by



Strasbourg Town Council members

which the Bylaw Officer is asked to look into a matter.

"Any complaints against any properties or property owners must be in writing and signed by the complainant," Swanston said. "It can't be a verbal message. People actually have to come into the Town Office with their written complaint, and sign it. It will be kept anonymous and the Bylaw Enforcement Officer will not know who complained. These are the steps that we have to take so he can properly do his job. I know he doesn't make everyone happy all the time, but I think it has worked well for the Town, and I hope everyone agrees that it's positive step."



Strasbourg Town Hall Meeting

Swanston added that the bylaw enforcement work done to date has made the town a better, much neater, much cleaner place... exactly why the Bylaw Officers have been hired. He also complimented homeowners and businesses for looking after their yards and properties, saying that people coming to their yards have passed along their compliments as well.

Councillor Lance Cornwell, the Town's member on the Regional Landfill board of directors, gave a report on the ongoing struggles with water issues at the landfill site impacting the operation.

"For quite some time now we have been battling issues at the landfill," Cornwell stated. "We have problems with hydraulic pressure pushing water into the existing pit, and we've paid significantly more money for landfill costs in this past year. We are working to get the landfill more efficient, but things are not going according to plan. They left it way too long in getting the engineering done to get another pit dug. All of the waste that is picked up in town is going directly to the City of Regina Landfill, and it has been for an entire year. Right now they are stockpiling homeowner garbage at the Regional Landfill, but everything else in the Loraas trucks is going directly to the City. We've been battling with them for quite some time to get our costs down to where they should be."

A question was asked about rates being charged to local residents, compared to out-of-area haulers. Cornwell noted that they have been looking at the rate structure with a view to increasing it. Cornwell added that local ratepayers have the opportunity to haul their metal items to a local metal recycler at no charge. Information on that can be had at the Town Office. There was also a question and short discussion about the free-access weekend for local residents, with the point being made that perhaps the May long weekend was not the best

time. Council committed to considering an alternate time for the free-access event.

Mayor Swanston also brought up the matter of business licenses for direct sellers that come into Strasbourg to pave driveways, doing house siding, etc. "These businesses must have Town-issued license to do business in town," Swanston said. "But in no way does the Town endorse that business. If they are a shyster, we don't know that. We can't refuse to sell them a license, so just be careful when direct sellers come to your door. You should ask if they have a town business license, but do your background checks, Better Business Bureau checks, etc. so you don't get stung. Do your homework."

"Another couple of reminders," Swanston continued, "if you're doing some demolition in your yard... a deck, or a garage, come into the Town Office and get a \$25 demolition permit. It may sound silly, but, if you don't get a permit for tearing down a deck or a garage, we don't know you've done that, and your tax assessment will not reflect that. Getting a permit will save you money in the long run. Also, we just found out recently that the Town is not, according to the law, allowed to do property pin locations for property owners. It has to be done by an actual official survey company. Keep that in mind if you plan to build a fence or a garage or something else near the edge of your property."

The mayor also noted that the Town is continuously doing maintenance and upgrade work at the Water Treatment Plant, and it is judged to be very well-maintained by the Water Security Agency. The Town is currently looking at upgrading the Town's water treatment capacity, and has engineering studies down on several options, including a larger reservoir, or a water tower system like some other communities use. He said the lack of water capacity has been a major factor in not attracting additional development into the town, and the Town has been applying for any available grants. "We have money in reserves for this work, but certainly can't do this without significant cost-share funding from senior levels of government," he said.

The mayor ended his comments by making a pitch for people to consider running for council positions in the upcoming fall municipal elections.



Constable Jack Clay

Community Constable Jack Clay spoke briefly about his role as the community policing officer in the Strasbourg / Southey area, noting that once his training period at the Southey detachment office is completed he will be spending more time in Strasbourg and surrounding area, with a special focus on school liaison work.

The meeting also included a brief presentation from Michelle Sorenson concerning the Age Friendly Communities initiative that is underway in Strasbourg. Sorenson is the activity director at Last Mountain Pioneer Home.

"The Age Friendly Initiative was developed by the World Health Organization in 2006, in collaboration with partners in 33 cities in 22 countries, including Canada," Sorenson explained, saying, "An age-friendly community promotes health, participation and safety for all ages, but the target group is mainly seniors. Over 900 communities in all provinces in Canada are taking action to become more age-friendly, and Strasbourg started on the age-friendly journey in January this year, with a training workshop put on by the Saskatchewan Seniors Mechanism."

Sorenson said it is recognized that Strasbourg is already well on its way to becoming age-friendly, having identified a long list of accomplishments in terms of available services and community events for seniors. A local committee was formed, and information was sent to all ratepayers this past April. Sixty-two generally positive responses were received, along with a few suggestions.

"At this point we are continuing to review the information, list the ideas, and prioritize them," Sorenson added. "At a recent senior's conference in Yorkton, Strasbourg has been identified as one of the participating communities that has made significant progress in becoming age-friendly. I'm so proud of that!"

She added that the goals of the local committee include placing more pedestrian resting benches around town, and perhaps even at the churches, and having signs indicating the locations of public washrooms, with the overall long term goal being to allow seniors to remain living longer in their own homes in the community.



Michelle Sorenson