Hello again:

It's been two weeks since the last meeting of Gibsons Council, so on Tuesday (St Patrick's Day), Council met again. Here's the agenda.

http://www.gowebtide.com/gibsonsdocuments/090317CouncilAgenda.pdf

The Mayor, at the urging of a group including members of the Gibsons United Church and the Sunshine Coast Conservation Association, made a proclamation
in support of World Water Day, March 22. A goal of World Water Day is to upgrade water from a human need to a human right in an official way, that is, to have the right to clean water added to the UN's 1948 Declaration of Human Rights. Council resolved to ask the federal government "to urge the World Bank to ensure access to clean, affordable water for the world's poor". It was agreed that nothing in the proclamation prevents the Town from charging for water at Well No 1.

Planning Committee

Neighbours of 555 Wildwood Crescent will be notified of Development Variance Permit application DVP-2002-02 which seeks permission to allow a hammerhead turnaround rather than the existing full cul-de-sac.

Council approved (Councillor Koopmans voting against) the delegation of Sign Development Permits to the Director of Planning in order to streamline the process for applicants to obtain approvals. Councillor Koopmans pointed out that the change will reduce Town revenues and that valuable advice from the Planning Committee (particularly the "civilian" members of the committee) will no longer be available to applicants.

Council approved amendments to the draft RFP (request for proposals) for the Harbour Plan, including the addition of "sea level rise resulting from climate change" to the terms of reference. Those interested in the Harbour Plan process should obtain a copy of the RFP from the Town. The public process will include an open house, though it looks like only "key stakeholders in the Harbour area" will take part in the planned charette process. Councillor Curry noted that while he been opposed to the first draft of the RFP, he is in favour of the amended version.

Parks & Community Services Committee

Three recommendations from the Community Policing Consultative Group were discussed. The first regarding issues around amalgamation of police

services was discussed at length. CAO Paul Gipps will draft terms of reference for a "task force" to review the issues and develop a process to go forward.

The Town was asked by the Sunshine Coast Youth Action and Awareness Committee to write to the SCRD to ask why no funding was budgeted for Spring Break. Councillor Koopmans noted that there was funding, but there was no provision for staff. The Town's letter will be written accordingly.

The Gibsons Minor Ball Association, with major support from Ryan Dempster and $17,000 in funding from the Town as well, is proceeding with a development permit process to install lights at Ryan Dempster Field of Dreams. A number of other improvements are also planned. A public open house is planned for March 28 at 7 pm at the Gibsons Community Centre. This project has very strong support, as it should. Fitness, youth involvement and the economic spin-off from tournaments are among the benefits of the project.

Administration reports

The Town committed to support Earth Hour 2009 and will turn off lights in the municipal hall from 20:30 until 21:30 on Saturday, March 28. Interestingly, this is pitched more as a climate change initiative rather than energy conservation. Hopefully the open house on the Ryan Dempster Field of Dreams lighting project won't take more than an hour and a half, or it may have to be called on account of darkness.

Council decided (Councillor Koopmans voting against) on the basis of a report from staff (pages 39-55 of the agenda) and supported by three consultant reports, to remove eleven alder trees from Winegarden Park for reasons of public safety. The cost of removing the trees is estimated at $3 thousand. Councillor Koopmans said that he would have supported option 1 in the staff report (i.e. to continue to monitor the trees and act upon the failure rather than remove them all now), noting that long term changes ought not to be made in the Harbour precinct while the Harbour Plan is in process. He asked why the issue had not been first brought to Parks and Community Services. The answer was that once the consultants' advice had been received, the Town needed to act to avoid any potential liability. The item generated quite a bit of discussion (though nothing was said about potential impact on views), including how to dispose of the wood. Councillor Currie had the best line of the evening, "Ask the Regional District to burn it."

Council approved a needed change in the property description in a

development permit application.

Paul Gipps reported that an application has been submitted to ICET (Island Coastal Economic Trust) for a grant in support of the Town's Geo-exchange District Energy Utility program. A request to ICE (Innovative Clean Energy fund) is also in the works. The project is estimated at just under $1 million. ICET can contribute 25% and ICE 33% of total project costs.

Inquiries

Brian Sadler asked if the discrepancies in the percentage of tax increases in different parts of the Regional District could be simply explained. Paul Gipps noted that the variances are based in part on assessment values. Mayor Janyk added that the factors are complex, so no simple explanation is really possible.

I asked to know the cost of the three tree consultants. As the information was not available at the meeting, I have made a written request. It was pointed out that Council is simply following its own legislation in requiring consultant reports before removing trees.

A member of the gallery recommended that Council should charge admission to
attend its sessions. "This is pretty funny" he said. We were all amused.

Correspondence

Of the six items of correspondence, Mayor Janyk noted with appreciation the letter from John Weston, MP, detailing the various grants available to the Town of Gibsons as part of Canada's Economic Action Plan. Six programs are covered in the letter, which is on pages 64-68 of the agenda.

Bylaws

Second and third readings were given to the Low-Speed Electric-Powered Vehicle authorization Bylaw No 1095-2008. In response to a question, it was reported that there had been no requests from the public to initiate this bylaw.

Unfinished Business

The Corporate Officer Michelle Jansson was appointed an authorized signatory for the Town.

New Business

Authority was given for members of Council to attend three meetings.

Council Reports

Mayor Janyk
- The SCRD has concluded its work on the budget and that the approximately 15% increase in taxes (about $100 per household) is attributed to recreation, transit and solid waste.
- The ICET Board meets March 20 and will continue its efforts to get money out working in communities. ICET will meet to brief Kevin Krueger, Minister of Community Development, who became the provincial government's liaison with ICET in January.
- The Mayor mused about a revival of municipal bonds. A report is available on CKAY's website at http://www.ckay.ca/news.php

Councillor Curry
- Community in Blooms is working on the entrance to the Gibsons Community Centre and will focus on "Five Corners" this summer.

Councillor Johnson
- The GLBA will be requesting funding assistance for its walking tour map of Lower Gibsons. The map is re-done every other year.
- The Town has received a plaque for its sponsorship of the "Going Green" portion of the Business Awards of Distinction.

Councillor Koopmans
- About sixty members of the public attended SCRD budget sessions and were instrumental in getting the SCRD to restore funding to maintain Gibsons Pool operating hours.
- The Museum Road Show leaves the Museum with about $10 thousand to raise this year.

Councillor Rowe
- The Corporate Services Committee is making every effort to keep any tax increase this year "extremely low".
- Councillor Rowe attended the recent Career Fair at Chatelech SS in two capacities - lawyer and municipal politician. He reported that several students were interested in the former career possibility, none in the latter.

Post script

Yesterday, Wednesday, 18 March, John Weston stopped in Gibsons on his way back to West Vancouver from Powell River to announce a total of $3.1 million in federal and provincial funding for the four governments on the Sunshine Coast. The funds comprise a mix of new money and extensions of grants under existing programs. CKAY has a good report on its website http://www.ckay.ca/news.php . Details of the $1.3 million in support announced for Powell River earlier in the day are at http://www.prpeak.com/articles/2009/03/19/news/doc49c14ac318250965496894.txt
In all of this it appears that Weston has worked hard to achieve the kind of communication and cooperation needed to secure provincial and federal funding for the benefit of all our local governments on the Sunshine Coast.

Cheers,

Hammy

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