

MUNICIPAL DISTRICT OF MACKENZIE NO. 23

ANNUAL RATEPAYERS MEETING

FORT VERMILION RECREATION COMPLEX

April 15, 1997

PRESENT:

Reuben Derksen	Reeve
Betty Bateman	Deputy Reeve
Elmer Derksen	Councillor
Ernest Dyck	Councillor
Bill Fedeyko	Councillor
Bill Neufeld	Councillor
Jake L. Peters	Councillor
Frank Rosenberger	Councillor
Walter Sarapuk	Councillor
Reg Scarfe	Councillor

ALSO PRESENT:

Dennis Litke	Chief Administrative Officer
Eva Schmidt	Recording Secretary
John Maine	Manager of Corporate Services
Roger Borchert	Manager of Public Works
Gerald Loewen	Financial Consultant
Paul Driedger	Development Officer
Kevin Smith	Development Officer
Chris Kelland	Agricultural Fieldman
George Commanda	Utility Officer

Approximately 130 Ratepayers

CALL TO ORDER:

1 a) Call to Order

Councillor Rosenberger called the meeting to order at 7:09 p.m.

1 b) Introductions

All Council members and M.D. staff introduced themselves.

MINUTES:

2 a) Election of a Chair for this Meeting

Councillor Rosenberger called for nominations for a chairperson for this meeting.

1st call: Maarten Braat nominates Noreen McAteer
Noreen McAteer accepted.

2nd call: There were no further nominations.

3rd call: There were no further nominations.

MOTION RP97-10

MOVED by Daryl Zielsdorf that nominations cease.

CARRIED

Noreen McAteer took the Chair.

Adoption of Agenda

Noreen McAteer asked if there are any additions to the agenda.

Dennis Litke, Manager, pointed out that the Public Works Manager's report should be added to the agenda between item 4c) and 4d).

MOTION RP97-11

MOVED by John Simpson that the Public Works, Agricultural Service Board, Financial, and Planning and Development Reports be accepted as information.

CARRIED

MOTION RP97-12

MOVED by Maarten Braat that the agenda be adopted with changes.

CARRIED

MINUTES

3. Minutes of 1996 Ratepayers Meeting

Any errors are omissions from the 1996 minutes

3 b) Adoption of Minutes

MOTION RP97-13

MOVED by Maarten Braat that the Minutes of the 1996 Fort Vermilion Ratepayers meeting be accepted as written.

CARRIED

REPORTS

4. Annual Reports

4 a) Municipal District Report - Reuben Derksen, Reeve

Reeve Derksen read the Municipal District Report noting the beginning of construction of the Zama access road, the agreement made with the Town of High Level for the operation of the High Level Airport and the agreement made with the Province for the Municipal District to operate the Tompkins Landing Ferry. The Reeve reported that a Development Appeal Board Hearing had been held in regard to a liquor store in La Crete, this matter appears to have been stalled at this time, a meeting was held in Zama regarding the development of lots advising that the lots would have to be presold before development would take place and to date no lots have been presold. Reeve Derksen reported on road construction and flood control projects, paving project in the hamlets of La Crete and Fort Vermilion, and the success of the brush control project.

MOTION RP97-14

MOVED by Reeve Derksen that the Municipal District Report be accepted as presented.

CARRIED

c) Manager's Report - Dennis Litke, C.A.O.

Manager Litke read the Manager's report noting the change in administration in 1996, closure of the High Level office, Wadlin Lake campground, reduced time spent "winging" winter roads, and the Amateur Sport Grant that was distributed to the various recreation boards.

MOTION RP97-15

MOVED by Dennis Litke that the Manager's report be accepted as presented.

CARRIED

b) Council Member Reports

The Chair asked Council members to present their individual reports.

Councillor Rosenberger reported on the replacement of water lines in Fort Vermilion, pavement of the road in 1996, projects for 1997 include paving the post office loop, and drainage at the Rec Plex. Councillor Rosenberger stated that if there is enough infrastructure money he hopes more paving will be done in the area and the Water Treatment Plant will be upgraded.

Councillor Scarfe reported that there was very little road construction done in ward six in 1996 but more road construction is scheduled for this year as well as brush control in some areas including the Lambert Point road. Councillor Scarfe commented that last year the Fort Vermilion dump site was a mess but the employee that is there now has done a great job.

Councillor Sarapuk reported on the progress of Flood Control projects in his ward stating that the Machesis Flood Control Project design is complete and construction is scheduled for 1997, four miles of road was upgraded in 1996 with another seven miles are scheduled for 1997, brush control project to continue, and rocks to be cleaned out of the ditches.

None of the other Councillors presented reports but said they would answer any questions during the question period.

The Chair asked if the ratepayers wanted Financial Report highlights. There were latecomers in the audience that wanted to hear the financial highlights.

f) **Financial Report**
Gerald Loewen, Financial Consultant
1995 Audited Financial Statement
1996 Draft Financial Statement

Gerald Loewen presented highlights of the financial report.

MOTION RP97-16

MOVED by Gerald Loewen that the Financial Report be accepted as presented.

CARRIED

5. **Snowplow Flags for Seniors**

Roger Borchert explained the portion of the Municipal District of Mackenzie No. 23 Bylaw 065/96 pertaining to the Senior and Handicapped Snowplow Flag service, and requested public input during question period.

6. **Proposed Bylaw 053/96 - To Regulate and Set Business License Fees for Non Resident Hawkers and Peddlers Engaged in any Business in the Municipal District of Mackenzie No. 23**

Manager Litke explained that the proposed Bylaw 053/96 - to regulate and set business license fees for non-resident hawkers and peddlers engaged in any business in the Municipal District of Mackenzie No. 23, is being brought forward for public input during question period.

7. **Annual General Ratepayer's Meeting Format**

The Reeve explained that the issue of changing the format of the Annual Ratepayers meeting to an open house format was discussed at the Council level and was being brought forward for public input during question period.

The Chair recessed the meeting for coffee break at 7:46 p.m.

COFFEE BREAK

The Chair reconvened the meeting at 8:05 p.m.

5. **Snowplow Flags for Seniors**

A ratepayer thanked the Council for Seniors and Handicapped Snowplow flag program and stated that it was appreciated in North Vermilion.

Q: Thanked Council for driveway plowing for seniors but had heard that when a married couple, one being 65 and the other being younger, if the one that is 65 dies, the one that is not 65 no longer receives the service.

A: It also is for handicapped people.

Q: Warn the Councillors that it was not well advertised and to take that into consideration when projecting costs for next winter.

A: The program issued 52 flags this year and it will probably be more next year.

Q: Thanked the Council but believes the expense of eight calls per winter is too much.
A: The grader cost for snowplowing is probably less than was estimated.

MOTION RP97-17

MOVED by Eric Jorgenson that the Snowplowing Program for Seniors and handicapped be continued.

CARRIED

6. **Proposed Bylaw 053/96 - To Regulate and Set Business License Fees for Non Resident Hawkers and Peddlers Engaged in any Business in the Municipal District of Mackenzie No. 23**

Q: Don't think the peddlers are doing much damage, but they sell U.S.A. products.

Q: If there was a nominal charge then we would have a way of tracking unsavory peddlers.

Councillor Rosenberger stated that if the bylaw is passed the M.D. must have a Bylaw Enforcement Officer.

Councillor Fedeyko informed the public that the proposed bylaw is a tax on peddlers coming into the community.

Councillor Neufeld stated that the peddlers can still come into the community, there are many peddlers that are willing to pay the fee.

Q: If a Bylaw Enforcement Officer must be hired would it be viable, how many peddlers come into the M.D.?

A: Anyone working for the M.D. could be appointed to be a Bylaw Enforcement Officer. We don't have statistics, mainly the La Crete stores brought it forward because they are losing revenue.

Councillor Bateman said that the reason the people in Zama do not want it is because there are a lot of peddlers from High Level coming in to Zama.

Q: There are not many peddlers coming into this community.

A: We do have quite a few coming in. We would have to erect a sign at the town boundaries, and our staff can monitor the peddlers.

Q: Been in La Crete and bought fruit at half price at the truck from what it sells in the store.

Q: There should be a bylaw, we have to pay taxes and they should too.

Q: In response to how many peddlers are coming in, besides fruit and vegetable peddlers there are quite a few that sell general merchandise, I generally allow them to set up at the hotel except if they are selling weapons.

The Chair called for a show of hands of those in favour of Bylaw 053/96.

The Chairperson declared that the majority was in favour of Bylaw 053/96.

7. **Annual General Ratepayer's Meeting Format**

Q: The Annual Reports need to be available a week ahead of time. This type of meeting format is fine because some questions generate other questions.

Q: No concern with format but the reports are too brief.

MOTION RP97-18

MOVED by Eric Jorgenson that the Annual Ratepayer's meetings be continued in the present format.

CARRIED

GENERAL QUESTIONS

Q: How can you show a profit in the financial report for building roads?

A: Revenue include grants where a portion of the funding would be allocated and a portion would be deferred to the following year.

Q: Is the M.D. getting more money for revenue than what they are spending?

A: A lot of that revenue is funding received from taking over the road authority.

Q: I see in the report that there will be no paving done because of damage that was done to the roads and will have to settle. Will this have to be done year after year?

A: It does take time for streets to heal. Paving will take place on the loop road from funding received for infrastructure programs.

Q: Having worked in Edmonton for a number of years, I know they would not stand for it having to settle for a number of years.

A: We will go back and do some clean up. If you have a major settlement give me (Roger Borchert) a call and we will look at it.

Q: By what amount was the snowplowing under budget?

A: We have not broken it down yet.

Q: How can you mention that we saved money if you haven't broken it down?

A: The graders went out less.

Q: If the ferry operated normal hours would it have come in at budget?

A: That could be.

Q: I have brought my concerns to you about the settlement in our yard. We were told it was the contractor's responsibility. It has not been done. We have rocks, boulders, and pieces of metal on our yard.

A: We are guilty, we will try to do a better job this year. Upon the final inspection of your place I did not see any rocks. We will look at it this year.

Q: Read section 14 d) of Bylaw 039/96 that if something is added to the agenda a 6-4 vote does not pass the motion. This split vote happened on the recreation boundary motion removing \$28,000 from Fort Vermilion, Motion 97-062 the main office move to La Crete had quite a bit of discussion but did not have a 2-3 vote. This is a reprimand to Mr. Litke and Council to let this pass.

A: The item that is being referred to is to add to the agenda. Are you talking about the agenda?

Q: These things that have happened were not on the agenda.

A: Once the item is on the agenda the Council can deal with it.

Q: A major concern is in recreational concern for the people in the area and Administration cost increase. Will the roads and recreation be increased at the same rate as salaries?

A: The roads are very well maintained.

Q: What were the loans made for, when were they made, and why the interest?

A: They are mostly debentures for the hamlets of La Crete and Fort Vermilion water and sewer, the debentures were taken out when interest rates were high and cannot be paid out without high penalties. We are trying to bring them down without the massive penalty.

Q: What is Council's policy in terms of personally interfering with administration employees in their line of duty.

A: We are under the union and if there is that kind of interference it would be taken up with the union.

Q: At the March 1 meeting Councillor Neufeld said that he would hold Roger Borchert personally responsible for the road conditions.

A: If there is a problem with the road I have to notify Dennis Litke immediately, who would have to notify Roger immediately, because of the liability issue.

Q: Will our taxes go up? Council expenditures went up 58% will our taxes go up?

A: Don't know because the budget has not been finalized.

Q: Taxes went up 117% in two years with no increase in service.

A: We did not have a general assessment since the early 1980's so if your assessment changed during those years the taxes would increase.

Q: We accepted the increase the first year, but why the second year?

A: In reviewing past history, we found there was a reserve in the early 1990's and the crunch came when that reserve was depleted.

Q: Regarding the office move from High Level to Fort Vermilion and now to La Crete, fill me in on the savings.

A: There would be savings by putting the staff together, and in administration, and less duplication. The office move has not been finalized. A lot of administration used to be done in Edmonton and has to be done locally now and we know maybe some things have not been done the best, we are still in a growing phase and it will take another year or so to get everyone trained and everything going smoothly.

Q: On a second or third residence if there is nobody living in it, it doesn't even have flooring, why should I be being taxed on it? The assessment is too high.

A: Possibly the assessor has not seen the place. You should appeal it and have the assessor look at it. There are two ways you can go about dealing with your assessment, you can bring it to our attention or appeal your assessment.

Q: At the March 1st meeting Councillor Rosenberger made a statement that the office cost is \$1,000,000.

A: What was said was that the office space expense was close to \$1,000,000.

Q: An amount of \$250,000 was spent on renovations in Fort Vermilion, on what was that?

A: In 1994 there were renovations made to create a council chambers in Fort Vermilion. You can get the information at the office. It would also include the purchase of the Ward building and the renovations to it.

Q: Are there any new ways to not penalize residents in property taxes, if improvements are made to the property you end up paying more taxes.

A: It is not a fair tax. I would like to see a tax system that would encourage people to improve their property but assessment is provincially legislated.

Q: Would like an update on the La Crete liquor store issue. How much has it cost the M.D. and where are the legal proceedings at.

A: The legal proceedings are in the hands of the proposed developer. The expenditure in legal fees is just over \$5,000.

Q: Would like a River Road erosion update.

A: Roger Borchert attended a meeting with the Minister of Alberta Transportation and Utilities but won't know the result of that until we hear back from him. Don't know what the schedule will be.

Q: Asked each of the Councillors individually if they are opposed to having their expense claims viewed.

A: None of the Councillors had a problem with the expense claim except the Reeve who pointed out that the Municipal Government Act states that Councillor expenses have to be made public on an annual basis and in his opinion that is sufficient.

Q: Why is the manager spending money on legal fees on this issue when 90% of the Councillors have no problem having their expense claims viewed?

A: The request was made for the less than 90% of Councillors.

Q: If the manager had taken the request to Council maybe they could have made a motion on it.

Q: Ernest Dyck, can you advise me when you can put in a per diem and for what items?

A: On meetings I can attend on behalf of the ratepayers of the M.D.

Q: Which committees are you appointed to?

A: We have a policy that when we are on a committee or council activities we can claim per diems.

Q: The Reeve attended a meeting at Farmers of Justice, saying that it was a ratepayers meeting.

A: I was contacted by a number of ratepayers and it was a ratepayers meeting.

Q: Did you call all Councillors to attend the meeting.

A: No I did not.

Q: Why did the two Derksen's and Mr. Neufeld put in a claim for attending the Farmers of Justice meeting but not Mr. Dyck.

A: Bill Neufeld said he was not a farmer, therefore the meeting did not benefit him personally.

Q: What is the \$500 retainer being used for.
A: Answering the phone, being a councillor.

Q: Quoted a memo to the Reeve and Councillors that was written by the C.A.O. The Reeve attended a final inspection of the Water Treatment Plant in La Crete and so did Mr. Peters, (ask Dennis)
A: That is your opinion.

Q: What are your water qualifications?
A: None, but we need to see what we got, if it looks good from the outside.

Q: Is this not what the employees and administration are hired and trained for. They should be doing it.
A: Manager Litke quoted section 201 of the Municipal Government Act.

Q: The Council should have the senior administration do inspections and not bill the ratepayers to do it themselves.

The chair called a recess at 9:30 p.m.

The chair reconvened the meeting at 9:48 p.m.

Q: Question the 2/3 majority vote, those motions are illegal. Also question the cost of an extra office, we are managing everything here. When we were an I.D. we were told it would be cheaper when all administration was local.
A: This was answered when we were an I.D. some jobs were done in Edmonton, now they have to be done locally.

Q: We want the motions rescinded that should have had a 2/3 majority vote.
A: As noted earlier, the issue has not been dealt with yet.

Q: Is the post office loop getting a new water line.
A: Installation of the post office loop water line is to start this spring.

Q: You said you will be paving the post office loop, is that where the water lines are going up?
A: Yes, that is right, the water lines are off to the side of the road.

Q: Our M.D. Council/ Administration expenses are in the order of half a million dollars. We should look ahead, due an impact study on the office issue, was an assessment done?
A: Some people think the building will be moved, there is no intention of moving the building and it is not the intent of this Council to close the Fort Vermilion office. Consolidation of the offices is the results of the surveys that were done in 1996.

Q: Do you have an approximate cost of the office relocation.
A: There are things we have to do such as safe keeping of the records.

MOTION RP97-19

MOVED by Chad Hunley that the Council salary be reduced to \$18,000.

CARRIED

MOTION RP97-20

MOVED by Joe Ferdais that, if need be, the Council get a lawyer's opinion on the issue if a 6/10 vote is a 2/3 vote and that Council take a close look at the issue.

Second: Joe Foster

A: Was this a financial issue? The second part of the motion was to consider this in the 1997 budget.

Q: The agenda was approved before the addition.
A: This item was not voted on before the agenda was adopted. The chair called a vote on whether the item should appear on the agenda, no objection was made.

CARRIED

Q: Are you aware that there is a vault in this building that could be used?
A: No, but I would think that it is better to keep the records with the M.D.

Q: Why did Councillor E. Derksen make a motion to move the office.
A: Did not make a motion to move the office, the motion was to designate a main office.

Q: We understand that it is a move for staff, not buildings. Why did you make the motion?
A: Because we had to designate one office as the main office.

Q: Why not Fort Vermilion?
A: According to the survey done in 1996 the La Crete office is used more.
A: There was a survey done in May 1996, the analysis was done (get numbers from Dennis) The results of the survey done on office usage, were High Level - 133, Fort Vermilion - 279, and La Crete - 781.

Q: What kind of services were provided?
A: All kinds.

Q: Which ratepayers were the surveys sent to?
A: There was a survey sent out to the people of Wards 8 and 9.

Q: At one point it was said that two offices cost more money, now you are saying the Fort Vermilion office will not be closed. What are your long term plans?
A: The long term plan is to have one main office and two sub offices.

Q: Representatives from the government did a post incorporation review, quote section 2.4, things picked up by the review committee are apparently still quite in effect.
A: That review was done in August of '95, the statements refer to the previous Council and not to this council as this council was elected in October of '95.

Q: The main office should not be located on the edge of the M.D. The office usage would be for paying bills, Fort Vermilion has the finance department. The annual reports should be presented and summarized. The water line around the post office loop was only installed in 1980. Last year I asked why there was no housing report and there is still no housing report this year, would like to have an expense statement from Mr. Rosenberger. Request for the people in Development area about street numbering and how strictly will they make us keep to the plan that was made a few years ago.
A: The M.D. has passed a house numbering bylaw but we must put in street signs before we can enforce house numbering. This is being done together with E 911. The Fort Vermilion Area Structure Plan is not written in stone, it can be changed.
A: We will have a Housing report for next year. We were hoping that the people could purchase the houses but this must come from the provincial government which has not been done. There have been 24 lots and 4 houses up for sale for 2 years. Anybody could buy them, we had no control over the fact that they were all sold to the same person. Regarding the water line, it is ductile iron and is rotten, if we don't replace it now it will cost us more later.

Q: Ratepayers of Ward 5 have said Councillor E. Derksen said he will supervise the road building in his ward.
A: No, he will not.

Q: For what reason did Councillor E. Derksen ask Brad Tourangeau if he had passed his Level II exam?
A: Because I had trained him and was happy for him that he passed the exam.

Q: Was it not to have Marco Braat fired when Brad Tourangeau was qualified?
A: That is an Administration issue.

Q: Councillor E. Derksen do you believe in intimidating people?
A: No.

Q: You told me that what I had presented at the February 19 meeting was very close to being libelous.
A: That is not true.

Q: There is a lot of grey area on the firing of Marco Braat, why was he fired?
A: We are not about to relate any personnel issues.

Q: Was there are no Council intimidation involved?

A: Dennis Litke said the staff is his responsibility.

Q: Are we going to get some work done on the potholes in our roads?

A: Water is starting to run now and we will do maintenance on all the roads and streets in the M.D.

Q: You have asked for legal advice on various issues, such as the Liquor store, will the manager forward the legal opinions that were received?

A; No, I cannot.

Q: Why?

A: They are for Council information.

Q: Is it in covered in the MGA?

A: Yes.

Q: Can you summarize the arguments?

A: Come into the office and we can talk about it.

A Ratepayer commented that he has worked for the M.D. and potholes could be filled with gravel while the water is running.

Q: At the February 19, 1996 Council meeting, information on recreation was requested by Councillor E. Derksen. The Fort Vermilion recreation grant referred to the budget meeting. On the February 29, 1996 Council meeting, item 6c) the boundaries were changed. On February 19 a request was made for \$125,000 and on February 29 the boundaries were changed. At the March 1, 1997 John Simpson referred to these minutes.

A: John Simpson said \$30,000 was lost and I said that was an absolute lie, not that John is a liar.

A: The recreation boundaries were moved and I think there should be no recreation boundaries. I don't think boundaries are an issue, we are still getting the money, we have no reserves, we may have to do more fund raising, but we are still getting the same money as before the boundaries were moved.

Q: The reason this issue was brought up at the March 1 meeting in La Crete, was that it demonstrates how this Council operates. The Fort Vermilion Recreation Board found out about the boundary change from the manager of the Blumenort rink. Council decisions need to come in writing to the people it affects.

A: Administration writes the letters, but maybe Council should have given them direction.

Q: What is to be done with dead animals and hides?

A: When you have dead animals or find dead animals on your property, they are your responsibility and you must burn or bury the animal within 48 hours.

Q: What do we do with dead animals found in the ditch, somebody told me to take them to the Vet.

A: You must bury or burn any dead animal that is in your possession.

A: If it can't be proven whose dead animal it is, it belongs to the M.D.

Q: Some of these answers are in the Annual report, why can't you look up answers in the reports?

A: At the beginning of the meeting a motion was made not to present the reports. We got our information about the same time as you did.

Q: I am encouraged that recreation activities work towards the entire M.D. and would remind you that Rocky Lane has a Recreation Board. I like the comment that recreation activities be given monetary funds.

Q: On the dead animal issue, even very large animals can be composted and small animals compost quite quickly. What is the program '97 Rocks all about?

A: This is a program to pick rocks out of the ditches to keep them from damaging the mower.

Q: When Councillor E. Derksen got elected he said he would get Marco Braat fired as well as Roger Lanctot and three other staff members, he can sit there tonight and smile at me all he wants, but that is what he said!

Q: These Recreation Complexes are owned by the MD. Any investment in the building could be considered an investment.

MOTION RP97-21

MOVED by Eric Jorgenson that the M.D. replace the sound system in the Fort Vermilion Recreation Complex.

Second: Daryl Zielsdorf

CARRIED

Q: Do you have any plans to put more recycling at the waste transfer stations?

A: Council has discussed that but transportation is expensive, cardboard can't even be burned anymore.

Q: Snow machines on private property are a problem, we even have business men and administrators go on property putting up ribbons. The RCMP and Forestry are willing to help to organize and regulate snow machines. The M.D. could be a central core to regulate snowmobiling.

A: This issue was brought up at a the AAMD&C convention. There are laws in place for trespassing. If we make bylaws we must have enforcers.

Q: We have public policing such as crime watch to help enforce bylaws, I am asking for leadership to organize snowmobile trails.

MOTION RP97-22

MOVED by Joe Ferdais that the entire community, starting with the M.D. Council, organize something for the snowmobiles.

CARRIED

Q: There are courses offered on proper handling of snow machines.

A: A snowmobiling bylaw was presented to Council and was referred to Community Policing, it is being checked into at the present time.

Q: There must be some good in the Council and Administration, they have done good in the past and we hope will do good in the future, it is a rough job you folks have and I would like to thank you for that.

Councillor Rosenberger thanked everyone for coming out.

MOTION RP97-23

MOVED by Maarten Braat that the meeting adjourn at 11:09 p.m.

Second: Joe Foster

CARRIED

These minutes were adopted this 10th day of June, 1998.


Chairperson, Maarten Braat


C.A.O., Dennis Litke John Maine