

JANUARY 9 & 10, 2018 RM#220 RATEPAYER ASSOCIATION MEETINGS

1)Welcome and Introductions:

RM#220 Ratepayer Association (RM#220 RPA) meetings were held on January 9, 2018 in Regina at the Four Seasons and on January 10, 2018 in Silton at the Silton Community Hall. Garry Dixon, Bob Schmidt, and June LeDrew were introduced and acted as information presenters at both meetings. The Regina meeting, open to the public, had over 50 people in attendance and the Silton meeting, also open to the public, attracted 40 people. The attendees were told the meetings were being audio recorded.

Presentations, discussions, and questions were presented on the following topics:

2)What is a ratepayers association? How can ratepayers associations work for ratepayers?

Reference was made to a Government of Saskatchewan publication, "A Citizens Guide to Shaping Council Decisions" and the options available to rate payers to hold their RM councils responsible to their electors.

What is the RPA #220? (See power point attached.)

3)How to Shape Council Decisions – Ministry of Government Relations (See power point attached.)

4)Review of April 26, 2017 RPA Meeting in Silton:

i.The 3 petitions (Interim Development Control, Garbage Bylaw, Fox's Point and allocation of municipal land) **requesting public meeting**, submitted in April led to an RM public meeting on June 17, 2017. This RM public meeting would never have happened without the petitions being submitted to the RM. The meeting was held 5 months after the petitions were submitted to the RM.

ii.Landfill & Lagoon updates:

Landfill: Since the April 2017 meeting, 7 of the initial 12 members of the Last Mountain Regional Landfill Utility Board have withdrawn their membership. With the RM #220 being the largest remaining member this has resulted in the RM#220 costs to maintain the landfill from 25% share to 55% share. In early 2017 the Water Security Agency found the landfill in contravention of the environmental requirements. Repairs to bring the landfill back into compliance were \$245,000.00.

Lagoon: is solely operated by RM #220. Initially the 4 villages within the RM were to contribute toward the capital cost of lagoon construction. To date, the RM and villages have failed to reach a cost agreement. Confusion remains whether the RM is collecting dumping fees from all the septic haulers.

iii. Property tax update:

2017 was a property assessment year. The assessment in the RM went up 100 million dollars over all. This resulted in some properties being assessed a lot higher and some lower. I think RM council did a reasonable job of keeping taxes in line through the mill rate and mill rate factors they set. (Overall the lakeshore assessments went up 23% - 28%, agriculture was up 120%.)

iv. Petitions submitted to the RM to have Financial and Management Audits performed:

Following over 4 months of denial from RM council to conduct these audits and tens of thousands of ratepayer dollars spent on legal fees by the RM trying to determine the petitions insufficient, RM council has by consensus of councilors, stated they would be willing to meet and start dialogue with RM#220 RPA members to determine the scope of the audits. RM#220 RPA members wish to have council pass a resolution, rather than a consensus. A resolution, unlike a consensus, would be recorded in RM council meeting minutes. The RM #220 RPA also wish to have council choose an auditor prior to any meeting to

keep all parties on the same page and speed up the audit process. The RM#220 RPA will make every effort to keep the cost reasonable to have the audits done. (See power point attached.)

v. Division boundary changes within the RM:

The present RM boundaries have been in place since 1910 based on school districts. Presently there is no legislation in place for RM's to review RM boundaries as there is in federal and provincial legislation. Some RM's, like Edenwold, have changed their boundaries to meet the changes within their RM. Not only would these division boundaries give more equal representation by population, it would also make the work load of councilors more equal. Right now in the RM of McKillop, each of the six divisions represent anywhere from 4% to 54% of the total number of ratepayers with 3 councilors representing 14% of the total ratepayers.

A proposal was presented to have the division boundaries changed within RM#220 to better distribute RM ratepayer representation on RM council, which would also make the work load of the councilors more equal. It was defeated Aug. 21, 2017. The 4 councilors whose % of ratepayers represented went up voted against the proposal, the 2 councilors whose % of ratepayers represented went down voted for the proposal. The Reeve voted against the proposal.

A "Petition for Referendum on RPA 220 Boundary Proposal – 2018" was made available for those present that wished to sign it. Further opportunities will be made available for those wishing to sign the petition. RM council has to act on this. They have to take it to a vote of the RM ratepayers. If it is voted in it has to go to the government, Municipal Affairs to approve it and becomes law. If it is defeated that is the end of it. (See power point attached.)

vi. Other business:

-RM council has often stated that **membership support** behind the RM #220 RPA is very small and only a few people bring forward issues to RM council. A signup sheet to show support of the ratepayers association was available for those that wished to sign it. More than 80 people have shown support already with more every day. The more members RM #RPA has the stronger the groups voice is.

-A **donation** box was also available for those who wished to donate to offset costs for meetings, office materials and legal fees. Over \$500.00 was donated. The option of online donating through GoFundMe was also presented. The way to do this can be viewed by googling ratepayers.

-Currently **eight**, either ethic or conflict, **complaints** have been **submitted against the reeve and/or councilors**. Council has chosen to have the consulting firm "Dunsford and Cunningham" investigate the complaints rather than follow the RM #220 procedure policy and deal with them internally. Reeve Arndt stated the recommendations from the consultants would be adhered to.

-**One of the attendees** at the Siltion meeting was RM #220 **Reeve Howard Arndt**. Although meeting attendees had been asked to keep comments and questions until after the presentation, Reeve Arndt insisted on interrupting the proceedings several times. Each time, Mr Arndt was reminded not to interrupt and he would be given time to comment, along with the other attendees, after the presentations.

-An **Organization Chart** was presented. Reeve Arndt commented it was a "function" chart prepared by himself. It was pointed out to Reeve Arndt that these functions required people to do them and RM has been recently hiring consulting firms, at a huge cost, to fulfill these functions.

-How can ratepayers stay informed? Ratepayers were urged to attend RM meetings and contact their councilor or reeve for information.

-“When are the RM meetings held?” Regular meetings are scheduled for every 2nd Monday but there were also 17 “unscheduled” meetings in 2017, with relatively short public notice. Visit the RM website where minute agendas are posted a couple of days prior to the meeting. Minutes that are more than 2 years old are removed from the RM website, which is not common practice in most RM’s. Approved RM minutes are often slow to appear on the RM website.

6)“What can ratepayers do to help the RPA?” Signing petitions, placing your name on RPA email list to receive information, volunteer professional services, administrative help, people with special skill sets, passing on relevant information to RPA with reference to where you found it, legal funding, room rental. Donations can be made here at the meeting or at the RPA GoFundMe website.

-Since September 2017 there is a slew of contractors working for the RM at a “huge” cost. The RPA has asked for contracts for these but have received none. Specifically, the RPA have asked for the Administrator’s contract only to be told “there is no contract” but yet she continues to be paid at a rate of \$75.00 per hour.

-In closing, the presenters encouraged ratepayers to phone, or email: an RM councilor, the reeve and/or administrator. Councilors are responsible for all ratepayers not just the ones in their division. Sometimes it is helpful to have the opinion of more than one councilor.

COMMENTS, CONCERNS, COMPLIMENTS – REGINA MEETING JAN. 9. 2018

Questions and comments occurred throughout the presentation:

Q: Have you taken your concerns to the RCMP? A: Yes, we have approached the RCMP in Southey.

Q: Although the Reeve is no longer the chair of the Landfill Utility Board he is still the Reeve and chair of the RM? A: Yes, as Reeve it is his duty to act as the chair. **Q: So he has stepped down as the chair of the Landfill Utility Board? A:** yes

Q: With the audits being done, at least we would know where the money is going? Q: The way they (the RM) is acting isn’t that showing a little guilt?

Q: What did they say about the error in judgement? What is the recourse? What is the penalty? How are they going to reimburse the ratepayers? A: When we (RPA) met with the lawyer about this the response was, “Well lawyers make mistakes.” **A:** You can go into the office and ask to see the letter regarding insufficiency and the RM can release it, but they don’t have to.

Q:There was no explanation (regarding the lawyer’s letter that stated they had erred in saying the petitions were insufficient)? Q: You were not given the whole document” A: No.

Q:They hired her (the administrator) back? A: Yes, for 30 days however she is still there. We asked for her contract and were told, “There is no contract.” When asked at an open meeting, “Does she have a contract”? The answer was, “No.” When asked a written contract? The answer was, “No.” When asked does she have a verbal contract? The answer was, “Well yes, I guess she has a verbal contract.”

Q & Comments: I know you have talked about a financial audit and a management audit, and I know at the June meeting some of us attended the audits were discussed. After we left the meeting and were driving home, someone said, **I think their biggest problem is their questionable ways of managing.** What flows from that is questionable handling of financial handling. **Is there prove of willful, illegal conduct related to finance?** If there is then maybe a forensic audit is necessary. **Our big question was their incompetence at management?** I would like to see put at the table, any management, that they have a 5 year plan, like our OH has. **We never hear of a 5 year strategic plan for the RM?** They should have 5 key bullets. This should be in place and the key players should have their own plan to achieve these. Also should have a way of measuring to see how they are doing. Should be ratepayer input in all this and everything should be made public..... **From a management stand they are so archaic.** **A:** The government has put out training sessions like this and there are councilors who never attended any. We need compulsory training sessions for councilors, and SARM agrees. It is coming but it is always voted down at SARM conventions because of those people who don't want to have to attend. **Q/Comments:** I would like the RPA possibly to approach the RM about the importance of a management plan and make that very clear so that when a management audit is done they are going to bring someone in who will come up with some very clear directions and it is extremely transparent and communicated to everyone. **A:** And a management audit will do that. If you direct the auditor to do that, that is what they will do. Auditors will give recommendations and guide lines, but they (RM) still has to follow them.

Q: So the people (councilors) representing the fewer number of people are controlling the RM? **A:** Yes, it is a block vote. The vote is either 5 to 2, or 4 to 3. **Q: I hear they get together behind closed doors before the meeting to decide what they are going to do.** **A:** They do go into closed session and are now calling it "strategic planning".

Q: You can only vote in your division? **A:** Yes. However, any ratepayer, regardless of where they live (in the RM or outside of it) can run for councilor in any division. All councilors are expected to be un-bias in their decisions.

Q: Will the same law firm be looking at these petitions? **A:** They could, and the administrator might do that. But if they do the same as last time we can do a judicial review and we have a lawyer that will help us with that.

Q: Who set up those boundaries that are on the proposal? Whose idea was it? **A:** The RM 220 RPA after carefully studying who lives where? It's a representation by population. A fair representation.

Q: How do you plan to distribute the information about this petition to all the ratepayers? I think it is a good idea, but how are you going to circulate it so people can have a good look at it before signing it in the proper way? **A:** We need to get 140 – 150 signatures, then we have to get working on the campaign to let everyone in the RM know what we are trying to do. It is very likely the RM will come up with their own map (as was done in Coreman Park) and voters will have to vote on the map they want. **Q: I would encourage you to get as many signatures as possible, why just 140 – 150?** **A:** Thank you for asking that because at the end of the evening we are asking for volunteers to do that.

Q: How many signatures did you get for the first one? **A:** That was just for a public meeting and we only needed about 25 and we got 80. On the second one we only needed 240 signatures and we got about

425 each. Now with this referendum we need to have to get this out to all ratepayers in the RM. We only need about 110 signatures but our goal is to get about 450 – 500.

Q: So this is the first step to change and what we need are new councilors? A: Yes, but what we need is people who are willing to become councilors because with this referendum there will be 6 new divisions thereby requiring 6 councilors.

Q:Where are they getting all this money form? A: You the ratepayers.

Have you asked if you can sit on meetings with the contractors so you can give feedback? Even our councilors can't get answers.

COMMENTS, CONCERNS, COMPLIMENTS – SILTON MEETING JAN. 10, 2018

Questions to Reeve Arndt:

Q: What about the amount of money spent on legal fees? A: **Reeve Howard Arndt** (apologizes for abruptness and interruptions during the presentation) - RM on the hook for Sun Dale (\$55,000.00) because in the past contracts were not filled out properly and without legal counsel. Yes, it is expensive. No one wants to spend money on lawyers but if we had spent money on lawyers in the first place we wouldn't be in this position now. There are a number of them (situations) like this.

Q: Why do we need a lawyer at every meeting? A: **Reeve Arndt** - There have been a lot of questions about the RM having secret, private, etc meetings. We can categorically say that we are not doing anything at those meetings that we shouldn't be because we have a lawyer present.

Q: Why so many private meetings? A: **Reeve Arndt** - Because we are doing long term and strategic planning. When the RM organizational chart was made available to the public it created a lot of questions. Q: Isn't that the natural process of government?

Q: Why hire a lawyer for for 8 hrs when only needed for 1 hr Q: **Why isn't the Administrator there, as it is her responsibility to know the MA and advice council?** A **Reeve Arndt:** The lawyer is there to determine what constitutes Due Process

Q: Does the RM still have confidence in lawyers after the error in stating the petitions were insufficient? A: **Reeve Arndt** - If you give me your name, I will send you all the letters that were given to the public.

Q: Was the attestation on the petitions. A: **Reeve Arndt** - Yes it was, the lawyer made an error.

Q: Are we getting the petitions? A:**Reeve Arndt** - I would dearly love to work with you. **Presenter**

statement: Rate payers want to have a motion by council, not a consensus (on this matter). A:**Reeve Arndt** - I am going to ask council to make that motion. We definitely want to move forward with this.

Q: Are you (RM council) not compelled to do this? Do you (RM council) have a choice? A: **Reeve Arndt** - We have a choice in the fact that we can challenge it. **Reply by presenter:** No you can't you only had 30

days. A: **Reeve Arndt** - Because it was claimed to be insufficient **Q: Are we getting the audits?** A: **Reeve Arndt** - I will do my best to go back and get by resolution rather than consensus. I want it done.

Statement by presenter: We would hope that the scope of the audits are what RPA requested, with no compromises. The RPA will work with the RM to keep the costs down. **Reply by Reeve Arndt:** Now this is

me. If we are going to do an audit, let's pick those items that are an issue and not do the whole thing because we talked about that.

Presenter gave definition of what the audits do and there purpose: The auditors make recommendations. A management audit is a learning tool. The financial audit is not the yearly audit, which is an annual financial statement, but rather a forensic audit, the auditor digs deeper. If there is a sign of wrong doing it is reported to the RM and can be reported to the minister of justice.

Questions to the RM#220 RPA Presenters:

Q: Do you have any idea how much it is going to cost for these audits? A: We went out and got 4 estimates ranging from \$15,000.00 to \$50,000.00. A quote of \$250,000.00 has been mentioned by the RM. We would never expect the ratepayers to put up \$250,000.00 to do these audits. The quotes we received are well within the spending that is going on now. The quote we received for \$50,000.00 was from George Cuff, a well renowned and respected, professional consultant.

Q: by Reeve Arndt - Is he qualified in Saskatchewan to do this audit? A: I will get you a list of the qualified accountants that can do these audits. The result of the audits is only as good as the actions of council to carry out the recommendations of the audit. The council has to make a motion to accept the report before acting on the recommendations.

Q: Long discussion of division boundaries. Clarification that a change in division boundaries triggers an election. **Reeve:** If the referendum goes through the vote would be held on the same day as the councilor election day. **Presenter:** But it doesn't have to be. Discussion followed on the timing of the referendum vote (ie before or after the councilor election day).

Presenter: council has now hired 2 consulting firms. One to do RM enumeration and another to conduct a survey on wants or wishes of the people. **Reeve:** We want to do an enumeration because we don't know who the voters are. I am glad to see you at this meeting because it shows people are interested in the community. It sure would be nice to have a voters list. **Presenter:** Need to address the various ways of voting (ie mail in ballots) and a voters' list would be helpful in doing this and could reduce the cost. **Reeve:** Why do people move out here and what services do they expect? The survey would assist the RM in determining these wants or wishes. **Presenter:** RM doesn't have to act on the results of this survey, as they haven't in the past. **Reeve:** Yes the trailer survey that was done in the past, I acknowledge that it was poorly done. (The reeve eluded to government's comments and options regarding restructuring of the residential areas in this RM.) There is different wants and needs in this RM because of the diversity of the ratepayers and therefore, there is a lot of friction. Changing the boundaries is not going to make this friction go away. **Presenter:** Whatever the boundary divisions end up being, councilors have to remember they represent all of the RM ratepayers, not just those in their division, and should approach things with an open mind and unbiased opinion.

Q: Can 2 (or more) organized hamlets go together to become a village? A: Yes, if they meet the government requirements to become a village and the RM accepts it.

Q: Can we have an election first regarding boundary changes prior to election of division councilors?

Q: How did RPA come up with the boundary proposal for this referendum? A: The proposal was based on the Fair Representation Act for equal representation. In the UH and OH we looked at the number of ratepayers and for agricultural we looked at the red dots on the RM map and applied 2 people per lot.

What we came up with was 4 divisions along the lake and 2 off the lake. The 4 divisions along the lake have seen the largest growth and have the likelihood for continued growth.

Q: Will working with the RM council speed up the process? A: The ratepayers have been asking RM council for this for 4 years. Council was supposed to put their own proposals together by October 2016.

Reeve: RM taxes collected from 50% from agriculture, 50% from resort communities. (OH & UH & Sun Dale?) **Presenter:** A lot of assumptions were made with this determination which have since proved these percentages are not accurate.

Statement: The red dots (on the RM map) represent yards not farmers.

Q: Who can sign the petitions? A: Anyone who can vote in the RM.

Presenters: Petitions are available here to sign. (Directions on correct way to complete.) Petition sheets are available for people to take and collect signatures.

There are sheets to sign for those wanting to support RM#220 RPA.

CLOSING: Presenter – Thank you to everyone who came out and showed your support. Thank you to the Reeve for attending and answering questions.

Presenters:

Why do we have to have these meetings in order to get information from the RM council?

I would like to see there not be a need for an RPA.

I know some RM's where the Reeve sends out a monthly newsletter.

I think that public meetings are a good thing even if the RPA has to pay for them.