

RM 220 RATEPAYER ASSOCIATION MEETING
Silton, SK - April 26, 2017

On April 26, 2017 The RM 220 Ratepayer Association (RM220RPA@gmail.com) held a meeting in the Silton Community Hall. The meeting was attended by about 120 ratepayers from across the RM of McKillop #220. Bob Schmidt chaired the meeting and Garry Dixon provided background special support.

Chairman Schmidt outlined the **mandate of the RM 220 RPA** as “a group of concerned citizens who wish to better inform the ratepayer members on priority issues which are common and relevant to all and then proactively promote change and action based on solicited membership input”. Mr. Schmidt went on to say the “membership is open to all ratepayers of RM 220 who want to stay abreast of current issues and RM council decisions affecting the ongoing quality and growth of our community”.

An **agenda** was presented which included eight items for discussion:

- 1. Review and update of the three petitions requesting public meetings submitted in January.**
 - At the time of this meeting, the RM had not confirmed dates for the public meeting requested by the petitions submitted on Jan. 23, 2107. The three petitions are: Interim Development Control (IDC), Disposal of Designated Lands (Fox’s Point), and Garbage Bylaw. At a meeting with the Reeve in March, there were indications that he was waiting for the IDC bylaw to be returned by the Province and changes were planned, to the new garbage bylaw.

- 2. Discussion regarding petitioning the RM to undertake financial and management audits.**
 - Mr. Dixon described what each audit type would investigate and he gave reasons why these audits would be beneficial. The petitions are sufficient if signed by at least one third of the voter population of the RM. The ratepayer association is planning on releasing a petition on this matter and are looking for general support and local representatives from all over the RM to help collect signatures. If anyone is interested in participating in this campaign, please contact the ratepayer association by emailing rm220rpa@gmail.com . Training will be provided and brochures are available to hand out to help inform ratepayers of this important undertaking.

- 3. Discussion regarding the RM Administrator position and possible referendum petitions.**
 - Members of the RM 220 RPA felt that a full time administrator is required and discussion took place regarding how a petition for a referendum could be used to achieve this result. This may not be required because the next day on April 27th, an ad was placed in several newspapers, the RMAA website, and the SARM website for the staffing of an administrator. Advertising was not approved at any public meeting and not all councilors were aware of this happening.

- 4. Discussion regarding changing RM division boundaries and possible referendum petitions.**
 - The audience was told this matter would require considerable planning and ratepayer consultation. It is also something the RM 220 RPA is not actively pursuing at this time. The RM council may want to start consultation.

- 5. Discussion of RM meeting issues (secret meetings, closed meetings, canceled meetings, etc.)**
 - The audience was informed of the ever increasing number of “in-camera” and “private huddle” meetings being observed, since the last election. These meetings appear to be unwarranted as often there is no notice provided to the public or reasons for these meetings recorded, as if they “didn’t happen”. Legislation is quite strict on this matter in that authorized in-camera (closed) sessions can only take place for legitimate private matters within one of the exemptions in Part III of the Local Authority Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act or for true long-range or strategic planning matters. In-camera sessions cannot be included on pre-set agendas. At an open public meeting, a resolution must be made and voted on to move

to in-camera, with a specific reason given for the in-camera session and a statement must be made about what section of legislation is being used to move to in-camera and this reason must be recorded and included in the minutes of the public meeting. After the in-camera segment, to return to the open meeting, a motion must be made and this has to be recorded in the minutes as well.

- The ratepayers and voters must understand that members of council are accountable to the voters who elected them and the public accountability provisions in legislation provides you the voters, with the rights to observe council meeting, to access municipal documents, and to petition council. Recently RM council has held closed budget meetings to set the budgets which are required to set the tax levy. Budget meetings as such do not warrant the closing of the meetings as described above and because no reasons or information was provided to the public, this matter should be referred to the Sask. Ombudsman. Budget meetings during previous councils were not closed to the public.

6. Brief discussion on landfill and sewage lagoon issues.

- The audience heard about some members of the Last Mountain Landfill Utility Board recently withdrawing their membership. Apparently, these members are able to negotiate better haulage rates with Loraas disposal than what the Landfill Utility Board is charging. It was also expressed that some environmental issues have been identified at the current landfill location, which may result in significant cost to the RM ratepayers This warning was also stated by the Reeve at a recent RM council meeting.
- As for the sewage lagoon, there has been some of the same things happening with planned lagoon partners deciding to pull out and move to other facilities for their sewage dumping services. If this exodus of our planned partners continues, this may result in the RM ratepayers having to shoulder most of the construction and maintenance costs and these costs may be significantly higher than what was planned for.

7. Property assessment and property tax update.

- The RM has not completed the final property assessments rolls due to a delay by their assessment contractor (SAMA), so the assessment roll will not open for review for up to two months from the originally planned date. The RM has stated that this would not affect any ratepayer because they would extend the deadlines for appeals and pre-paying taxes accordingly to coincide for the delays in creating the assessment rolls. Also, the 2017 RM budgets have not been finalized and therefore, municipal mill rate values have not been determined. The Province has set the education mill rates. The audience was made aware of the province wide increased percentage of assessments on both agricultural and residential properties, and how councils are having to adjust mill rates accordingly. Please stay tuned. (???)

8. Other business arising.

- **#220 and #322 Highways:** #220 highway is expected to remain in the current condition with only periodic maintenance being done. The extent of construction work on #322 is unknown at this time because negotiations for cost sharing between the RM and Department of Highways are required to determine if an alternative heavy truck route will be built. This will determine the weight standard to which the section of highway #322 will be built from "5 corners" to 2 kms east of Glen Harbor. The Department of Highways still has funds budgeted to cover construction of the remaining portions of Highway #322, when details of the work are determined. Highway #322 construction is on the list to be tendered this year, but the weight standard must be determined before it is tendered. Maintenance to both highways is on-going.

Throughout the meeting ratepayers asked questions and commented on information presented. **In closing, it was suggested that RM council needs to host regular ratepayer meetings** to present information and hear concerns of the ratepayers. This would fit with the RM council's platform of communication and transparency.