

April Boot Tales Director's Update

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Contact

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As we sit between Seedy Saturday and Earth Day on our Roberts Creek Calendar, in this season of growth and renewal, I am struck by the importance of these types of events in our community. My current reading material includes a book called Remembering What it Means to be Human, by Coast author Irene McDermott. You can probably guess some of the themes, given our in our current cultural context, but one of them is the importance of physically coming together for gatherings such as these.

Special thanks to the One Straw Society for their work in organizing another fantastic Seedy Saturday at the Hall. The turnout this year was excellent, an indication of the growing awareness of the benefits of local food production. After much discussion at the Board, there will be no major changes in the Drought Management Plan (Stages 1-4) this summer, nor will a cistern rebate program be implemented at this point. Should summer limited rainfall patterns continue it will be up to homeowners to find supplements or alternatives to “first use” regional treated water to grow those Seedy plants in the late summer.

Sunday April 24th Earth Day Celebrations take place at the Pier from noon until 5. This year, the event will fall under the umbrella of the Roberts Creek Community Association, as organizer Graham Starsage has taken on some of the sustainability-oriented components of the Community Association's new Strategic Plan. There are more details elsewhere in Boot Tales, but I would encourage you to contact Graham at robertscreekearthday@gmail.com and ask him how you can help out. It's a great way to serve our biosphere, support local ecological organizations, learn, and build community.

SCRD Newsletter Topics

With a slightly smaller word count in this new Boot Tales format (...doesn't it look great?!) I thought it would present an opportunity to highlight some of the topics in March's "Coast Current" SCRD newsletter, rather than repeat the information here. **Disaster Preparedness for Seniors, Beach Access signs, Grants in Aid, Budget meetings, and New Transit fares** are some of the updates included. By the time you read this, April's edition will likely be out. You can access the newsletters here www.scrd.ca/Newsletter or subscribe at www.scrd.ca/Newsletter-Signup. Options include signing up for the SCRD Sustainability or Recreation newsletters at the same time.

Budget Taxation Impact

As I mentioned last month, a combination of higher property assessments in other areas, a strategic focus on fiscal restraint, and some difficult decisions has resulted in an average property tax reduction in Roberts Creek of 0.5%. This has been achieved despite some significant capital and training expenditures at our Fire Hall, and the funding of the economic development entity discussed below. Rural Health District taxes will also be down, an average of 3.5%. For those interested in more detail, check my News Blog in early April.

Presently nearly 4 million dollars in Provincial and Federal grant funding is being applied to current projects to mitigate property taxation and user fees, and staff are paying close attention to opportunities presented in the recently announced Federal Budget.

Economic Development

After more than 3 years of meetings, workshops, and negotiation, the 4 coastal local governments (SCRD, Sechelt, Gibsons, and shishálh) have come together to create and fund a coastwide Economic Development Entity. The format will involve an arms-length (from local government) Board of Directors. Members were selected from a list of applicants by a steering committee of elected officials, and approved by all local governments.

While the members of the arms-length Board has yet to be made public, Roberts Creek will be well-represented in various ways. Not only do a number of the board members live in the Creek, but the interests of home-based business, self-employment, technology, tourism, agriculture and education fields are well-represented. The mandate of the entity is very much a local “new economy” model, as our ability to diversify our coastal “commutershed” is fundamental to our ability to diversify our coastal demographic.

Special Events Bylaw

Sometime over the next several months, SCRD Planning Staff will begin to look at a bylaw to regulate some special events. The bylaw would apply to Rural Areas, rather than Gibsons or Sechelt. There is already a bylaw in existence, but it is significantly outdated. For our community that values celebrations, arts, music, community gatherings of many sorts, this will provide a good opportunity for discussion around how we balance those pieces with the peace and quiet of our rural neighbourhoods, health and safety, and ecological impact, among other factors.

Issues such as what number of attendees triggers the bylaw, number of events per year, and what kinds of institutions or organizations would be exempt will form part of the discussion. Festivals are an important and growing part of our culture on the coast, and the opportunity for public input will be well publicised as the Bylaw moves through process.