

Roberts Creek SCRD Director's Newsletter, January 2017

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In person: Gumboot Café, Saturday Mornings, 10-12

Best of the New Year to all. I hope that you and your family and friends had a safe and happy holiday season. A reminder to dress for high visibility if you're out walking or biking in the evening as we wait for the longer daylight hours to come.

I would like to extend a **particular invitation to newer members of the community** to drop by the Gumboot Café and introduce yourself, ask questions, or let me know what's important to you. I'm there nearly every Saturday morning between 10-12. My website news blog has a list of resources (a link to our Official Community Plan, for example) to help you get to know your new home.

Newsletter format update

This will be the last hard-copy mailbox delivery of the SCRD Director's Newsletter. Rising costs, changing communication modes and lack of access to the 400 Roberts Creek households that understandably don't accept unsolicited mail have brought this change about.

The great news is that the **Roberts Creek Community Association will be publishing an electronic community "Boot Tales" email newsletter once a month.** This will include local events, opportunities and listings from a range of Roberts Creek organizations, delivered right to your email in-box. It's a great way to stay in touch with what is happening in your community, and to find opportunities to contribute to this great place. You can subscribe (or unsubscribe) to the newsletter via **links on the RCCA website** www.robertscreekcommunity.ca or my website. Please help spread the word about this valuable piece of local connective tissue.

The email list could also conceivably be used in the event of an emergency (say, a wildfire) to direct Roberts Creekers to accurate sources of information. The SCRD website is the place to look for information from the Sunshine Coast Emergency Program.

"Boot Emails" will **include a link to this SCRD Directors Report**, and I will continue to publish and archive it on my website. In addition, I always post a hard copy each month in the glass RCCA bulletin board on the side of the General Store, and will put some photocopies in the Library, and perhaps other downtown locations.

Contact the Community Association at boottales@robertscreekcommunity.ca if you have information that you want to circulate in the community via this medium.

Water Meters

Meter installations will take place for Roberts Creek Regional Water System users throughout the winter and spring. If you live below the highway you can expect a letter in your mailbox soon, followed by a blue 4-page information booklet shortly afterwards. If you have further questions about the installation program you have a number of options. **There will be an Open House at the Roberts Creek Hall on Tuesday, January 17th from 4:00-6:00.** SCRD staff and the contracted installation company, Neptune Technologies, will be present to provide information and answer questions.

If you are unable to attend the Open House there are **two websites** available to you. The www.scrd.ca/water-metering has background information and FAQ's about the Metering Program. The installation information in the mailed booklet can also be found at www.sunshinecoastwatermeters.ca. Of course, you can always phone the SCRD Infrastructure Department at 604-885-6800.

The full Universal Water Metering Program **implementation schedule** at this point involves waiting until all Rural Area and Sechelt residents have their meters installed before setting the rates. This will give Roberts Creek property owners two years or more to learn from the information provided by their meters, identify leaks, and implement data-based water conservation strategies prior to the public rate-setting process.

Budget Deliberations Begin

The Board begins Round 1 of 2017 Budget deliberations with meetings at the Field Rd. SCRD offices during the week of January 23 through 27 (schedule online, agendas published a week in advance). The Board will be hard pressed to repeat last year's negative (-0.5 in Roberts Creek) increase in the SCRD property tax portion of your rural property tax bill.

The Consumer Price Index in Vancouver is sometimes used as a signpost and this year it has seen an increase of 2%. Vancouver seems headed towards a 4% increase in property tax, and the Cowichan Valley Regional District is looking at an average of about 5%. Comparisons by to other areas are imperfect for any number of reasons, and clearly my role is to ensure that Roberts Creekers are getting value for their money while the Board's strategic plan is implemented. Previously negotiated union and management wage increases, Transit improvements and Green Waste disposal costs are items that are anticipated have an impact on the budget at this point.

Board of Variance

The Board of Variance functions independently of the SCRD Board and has the jurisdiction to issue orders with regards to some "minor" land use issues within the SCRD. If you are interested in serving on this 3 person Board you can find more details here www.scrd.ca/Board-of-Variance, in the attached January "Coast Current" SCRD newsletter (link below) or by contacting angie.legault@scrd.ca.

Regional Economic Development Organization Strategic Plan

After a number of years in development, the jointly-funded (SCRD, Sechelt, Gibsons, shishalh Nation) Sunshine Coast Regional Economic Development Organization is getting off the ground. Governed by a Board that includes a number of hard working Roberts Creek volunteers, the intent is that the entity remain at "arms-length" from political interference, while operating within governance structures that allow for oversight of the public funds being spent. The SCREDO Board recently published their Strategic Plan, a document that outlines their principles, goals, action plan and operating considerations and can be accessed on page 53 of this agenda: www.scrd.ca/files/File/Administration/Agendas/2016/2016-NOV-24%20CAS%20Agenda%20Package.pdf. It identifies the organization's **three goals** as increasing the number of growing businesses, increasing the number of quality career opportunities, and reducing economic disparity. More public outreach from SCREDO will likely be coming soon.

Long-Term Health Care

The issue of long-term residential care has emerged as a pressing one this fall with the announcement of Vancouver Coastal Health's contract with Trellis for a new facility in Sechelt. Regardless of one's views about the privatization of health care, the facility's proposed location, or the process by which it has come about, **VCH staff has acknowledged that the net 20-bed gain is insufficient in the long term.** As a Regional Health District, we borrowed 14.7 million dollars in 2007 to co-fund 40% the ongoing expansion of the Hospital, and have significant outstanding debt to service as a result. Those new acute care beds were not intended to be filled with long-term care patients, as happens when there are insufficient residential care beds. As an advocacy voice for the community, SCRD Board members have been urging VCH to engage in broader consultation around this issue of importance to all of us. We will see what comes forward in the New Year.

Bus Schedule Updates

Dangerous road conditions necessitated several short-term bus schedule and route changes over the holidays. If you want to keep abreast of any last minute changes you can check BC Transit's Sunshine Coast Alert website <https://bctransit.com/sunshine-coast/schedules-and-maps/alerts> before your trip, or you can subscribe to the automatic email alert service provided on that page.

Recreation opportunities

I hope that you have had the chance for some Dakota Ridge winter fun already this year. The Dakota Ridge Facebook page has up to date road and trail conditions. The Winter and Spring Recreation Guide can be found here www.scrd.ca/Recreation-Guide. It contains lots of programs for Adults, Teens and Children (some of them no or low cost), parks maps, facility hours, special events and details on the MYPASS drop-in membership.

SCRD December and January Newsletters Topics

The **December and January editions of the SCRD's "Coast Current" Newsletters** include information on the following topics: the 2017 Budget Process, new Asbestos testing requirements, the Advisory Committee review process, dog licenses, Dakota Ridge, Drought Management Plan and water conservation updates, Board of Variance opportunities, the SCRD's 50th Anniversary, along with Committee and Board schedules, and more. They can be found here: www.scrd.ca/newsletter