

Roberts Creek SCRD Director's Newsletter, April 2018

Mark Lebell

Email: robertscreekmark@gmail.com **Website:** robertscreekmark.com

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

(If you have trouble with any of the links below, copy and paste them into your browser)

A sure sign of Spring in the Creek are the Earth Day celebrations down at the Pier. This year they are taking place between 12-5 on Sunday, April 22nd. Do find me down there all day in my green baseball cap if there is something that you would like to chat about. SCRD Staff from various departments, including Water and Solid Waste will be on hand to provide information and answer questions. Hope you can make it!

At its meeting of March 22nd, the SCRD Board approved the 2018 Budget.

The SCRD Finance Department has won numerous awards for the quality of its public reporting. For those wanting more information than provided below, start here: www.scrd.ca/Budget. Look at previous years' annual reports in our Local Reading room or online, or book an appointment with me one Saturday morning at the Gumboot.

A **quick overview** is that the 2018 Budget includes about \$55 Million of expenditures, \$38 Million of that being Operational items and \$17 Million in Capital costs. The SCRD provides over 45 different distinct services to the community and funds cannot be shifted from one "Function" to another. Staff present budget proposals based on criteria provided by the Board, ranging from Mandatory (Safety, Regulatory Compliance, Business Continuity) to items identified as Low Cost/High Value. User fees, parcel taxes, Federal and Provincial government grants and transfers, and other sources of revenue supplement property tax requisitions in meeting the requirement of a balanced budget.

What are some of the "big ticket items" that impacted this year's Financial Plan?

This is the first full financial year of the **Transit Service Expansion**, which includes more frequent bus service at peak times. Although schedule adjustments always have their impacts, I have received much positive feedback about the improved service levels, and investments in this service pay off with social, economic and environmental benefits for the Coast.

Recent engineering reports have indicated that if we maintain the status quo, the **Sechelt Landfill** is only 8-10 years away from reaching capacity. Provincial regulations dictate that site closure and environmental monitoring costs will be substantial, as will implementing any viable alternatives (expanding capacity, opening a new landfill site, shipping waste elsewhere...). For this reasons, the Board voted to **increase the financial Reserves** in this service to fund the developments that will need to happen moving forwards. Upcoming changes in how we manage organic matter, recycling and

garbage on the coast are reflective of a number of concerns, not the least of which is the Landfill timeline.

This year also brings the first full financial impact of the **Sunshine Coast Regional Economic Development Organization**. This initiative is jointly funded by all 4 Local Governments and is overseen at arms-length from politicians by a working volunteer Board. Their mission is to “enhance the economic capacity of the Sunshine Coast community through collaborative, sustainable initiatives”. Identified Strategic Goals include increasing the number of expanding businesses on the coast, increasing quality career opportunities, and reducing economic disparity. More information can be found at investsunshinecoast.ca

Finally, **Information Technology** has made a positive impact on both internal operational efficiencies and the level of customer service the Regional District is able to provide. Try using the new Property Mapping resources, or myscrd.ca to pay bills online. We are all aware that software and hardware require regular upgrades, and funding for those was increased as part of the organization’s **asset management plan**.

Here are some other budget items that had smaller, or net zero impacts but may be of interest:

Roberts Creek **increased support for the Libraries** in Gibsons, Sechelt and our own Reading Room. There is growing recognition of the key role that these facilities provide goes beyond their traditional roles, and into public access to online information, educational workshops and community building.

Parks maintenance base budget funding received some attention in the Financial Plan as well. As an example, users of Cliff Gilker Park will notice recent bridge improvements, and more danger tree mitigation. Increased extreme weather events are thought to be having an impact on this budget area.

Funds for the toilet rebate program have been shifted into a water **cistern subsidy program**. Cisterns are much larger than rain barrels, and provide a means of onsite water storage that may be appropriate for those who grow food at home. Keep an eye on SCRD websites, newsletters, or Facebook for the specifics around the rollout of this program.

While progress moves slowly on an agreement between the Ministry of Transportation and local Regional Districts that will allow continued SCRD pathway building on Ministry land, Roberts Creek’s portion of annual **Federal Gas Tax funding continues to accumulate in an account**. I would hope that a future SCRD Director would continue to link these funds to Active Transportation through investment in **shoulder widening and pathways**. Another possibility is using some of the funds to support development of **Phase 2 of the Suncoaster Trail**. This multi-user trail is

intended to connect the Langdale ferry terminal to Sechelt , and is currently undergoing route planning in the general region of the power lines that cross the mountain in upper Roberts Creek.

Community **Grant-in-Aid** applications have been solicited and submitted, and the Board will make decisions in May for disbursement in August. These grants support many of the community initiatives that make Roberts Creek and the Sunshine Coast such a great place to live.

What, no \$ for Water?!?

Because of its nature, the **Regional Water “function” has relatively large operating and capital Reserves** set aside. The 4 supply-related water projects, described at length in previous newsletters or at robertscreekmark.com are presently at stages that can be funded through those Reserves or via existing loan approvals. The only exception is funding the installation of water meters in the District of Sechelt, where recent news of an unsuccessful federal grant application will likely result in long term borrowing in order to maintain Reserves levels for future projects.

What is it all going to cost me?

Of course, individual property owners tax bill will depend on the services that they receive, along with the **assessed value of their home relative to those of their neighbours and the broader Sunshine Coast**. Average assessed values were up about 16% on the Coast as a whole. Roberts Creekers’ average home value increased slightly more than the mean for the Coast, which means we will be “apportioned” slightly more (about .5%) of the tax bill than our average coastal friends.

Having said all of that, **the SCRD portion of your provincial tax notice will likely increase by somewhere in the neighbourhood of 5%.**

The SCRD Board also functions as a Regional Health District Board, funding portions of capital projects at Sechelt Hospital. Due to some loans being paid off, **the RHD portion of your bill should decrease by about 20%.**

SCRD April Newsletters Topics

This month’s edition of the **SCRD’s “Coast Current” Newsletter** can be found at the link below, but you can also subscribe to receive it directly. Information on **Emergency Cellphone Alerts, Water Projects, Recycling** and more can be found here: <https://secure.campaigner.com/CSB/public/archive.aspx?args=MjU1MDgyNTU%3d>

Note that a hard copy of this Newsletter is posted in the glass case beside the General Store, and hard copies are available in the Roberts Creek Library Reading Room.