

Resort Village of Sunset Cove



RM of McKillop #220 Update

2018 was a historical year for the RM of McKillop, in which the Resort Village of Sunset Cove is situated. There was tremendous conflict between RM councillors, their Administrator and the Reeve which ultimately affected the way they governed the RM. Members were taking legal action against other members. Secret meetings were reportedly being held. Lawyers were hired to sit in on all RM council meetings and to legally defend the RM Administrator over reported improprieties. Staff quit or got fired? Petitions were submitted from the ratepayers demanding both financial and management audits be conducted. The RM refused to comply with the petitions. The Administrator is suddenly no longer employed by the RM and rumors swirl. She is then rehired and paid \$83,000.00 for six months of

work. She is later terminated. A Queens Bench judicial review was conducted over the transfer of property owned by the RM of McKillop concerning Fox's Point. The RM acknowledged a \$488,000 budget deficit and \$245,000 in unpaid invoices. **Municipal governments are not legally permitted to run budget deficits.** Cottage owners received their 2018 tax notices with increases up to 200%, while many rural land owners only saw increases of 5%. One cottage owner had their 2018 taxes go from \$2193.86 to \$6229.65, a 184% increase. Ratepayers formed an association and forced the RM into court over changing electoral boundaries, which would result in fairer representation on RM council for them. In August the Minister of Government Relations ordered an inspection into the affairs of

the RM of McKillop, a move rarely ever done by a provincial government. In September they then appointed a special investigator to oversee the RM business practices for a period of one year. The ratepayers won their court battle and new RM divisional boundaries are now legally in effect. The existing RM council will soon be dissolved. Elections are currently underway for each of the six new divisions with voting occurring at the end of February 2019. So how does all this affect Sunset Cove? Thankfully it doesn't! Back in the early 1980's, our council of the day (Gerry Argue, Bob Babchuk and Bill Ciz) had the foresight to apply for Resort Village status which we later achieved. We are now totally independent of the RM and fully regulate and govern ourselves.

A snapshot of our tax rate and financial position

The Resort Village of Sunset Cove is sitting in a comfortable financial position. We work hard to ensure your taxes (made up by our mill rate times our assessed value plus our base tax) are the lowest or among the lowest of any community along Last Mountain Lake. As many are aware, we

appealed SAMA's assessed property values last year, the first time ever done so by a municipality in Saskatchewan. We won this appeal and reduced our total taxable assessment by 5.3 million dollars, (from 16.1 million to 10.8 million) saving our residents significant tax increases over the next four years.

Our yearly operating budget for our resort village is approximately \$60,000.00. This pays for our roads, garbage, landfill and lagoon fees, wages, insurance, policing and fire costs, website, snow removal, village maintenance, library fees, dust treatment and pest control as well as our SAMA fees and our mandated yearly audit, etc.

Our 2018 mill rate was 1.0 . The average mill rate for our twelve neighbouring resort communities is 3.63.

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Did you know?

- We spent \$5000.00 last year on dust treatment
- We trapped and released 35 skunks last year from our resort
- It is illegal to trench across Mountain Drive or to cut any tree on village property without written approval from council
- We expanded our village boundaries in 2013 to extend from the bank to the middle of the lake, to enable us to have governance over our beach, boat launch and shoreline

Boat Houses/Boat lifts



Since the floods of 2011 and 2013 a lot has changed on our Municipal Reserve shoreline.

Most existing boathouses were damaged beyond repair and a decision was made to remove them all, build a new berm above the flood elevation and rebuild. We received government funding in excess of \$100,000.00 and rebuilt our shoreline, beach and boat launch above all historic flood levels. Residents who had

existing boat houses were given the first opportunity to rebuild. Only one of approximately 15 boat house owners did so during the past five years. The rest of our residents have chosen to use boatlifts instead.

Situating boathouses upon this berm now is very problematic for a number of reasons. Therefore, council has mandated that no further boathouses will be permitted here. The berm will be only used for boatlifts going forward. Most of these boatlift locations have already been allocated to back row residents, however a few locations still exist. Contact Councillor Chris Coffey if

you require additional information regarding this.

All residents must pay a small annual lease fee to located a boatlift here. We charge less than \$100.00 per year. By comparison, Saskatchewan Beach residents pay \$350.00 per year to do the same.

This lease money is put aside to pay for upkeep and repairs of this berm area and does not go into our general coffers.

Boat Launch Etiquette:
Please do not leave your vehicle or trailer on or next to the boat launch if you are not present. Day parking is up top, next to the roadway.

We are still using the RM lagoon (without having a contract with them to do so). However, this will someday end and we will then have our liquid wastes hauled to the Strasbourg lagoon. Our haulers are aware of this and the only difference you should see may be a slight increase of around \$10.00 in your pump out fees, when this does occur.

Sewage Lagoon

The provincial government banned the practice of land spreading liquid waste (septic waste) a few years back, forcing all communities to enter into an agreement with a lagoon owner for their liquid waste disposal. We entered into an agreement with the RM of McKillop to do so, forming a Public Utility Board with them and three other resort villages to manage it. Our costs were to be 3% of the construction costs, which

amounted to \$32,000.00 for us. However, when it came to signing the agreement, we learned the RM refused to honour their commitments and secretly took over sole ownership of this facility. Our costs soared to exceeding \$65,000.00 for a ten year contract plus a million dollar decommission fund. We were looking at over \$100,000.00. Thankfully we were able to negotiate a much better deal with the Town of Strasbourg.

Garbage bins

The cost of using the local RM landfill was increasing significantly each year. There were a number of other concerns surrounding our involvement with them, such as no annual financial statements being filed as is legally required and several notices of violation by the Ministry of Environment. Our 2018 costs were to be \$11,300. We nego-

tiated a long term deal of approximately 1/2 that amount with Loraas Disposal, who now takes our garbage to the Regina Landfill, on the same pick up schedule as before.

However, our biggest concern is the **misuse** of these Loraas bins. We constantly find furniture and other prohibited items thrown into them, instead of hauling these items to

the local landfill. We will be implementing a new bylaw regarding this, with fines for violators starting at \$500.00. This amount will be added to your taxes if required.

Each spring and fall we will now bring in a large walk-in garbage bins for your large items, tree branches, etc. Please use these instead of our smaller bins. Thank you!

Please remember that it is your responsibility to have fire fighting insurance added to your household insurance plans. A minimum of \$10,000.00 is recommended. You are legally responsible to pay for any firefighting needs you create or require. Please check with your insurance agent to ensure you have this coverage.



Skunks love to live under sheds. Please ensure all your outbuildings are blocked so skunks can not den there. In any year where rabies become prevalent, having a large skunk population is very worrisome. **Do not** leave pet food out at night!

Village Hill

We are aware that the hill leading into our village is in need of repair. It is very rough (washboard) and needs to be graded. We tried valiantly to try to get a grader operator into our village to smooth this hill out prior to winter freeze up. We had two different grader operators promise to attend, however neither did. We will get it smoothed out as soon as possible in the spring.

During the winter months, we have allocated additional money towards the cost of maintaining this hill. Last week we had a local sanding company attend and heavily sand this hill. We will contin-

ue to do this whenever the hill is exceedingly slippery or after we get it plowed. The sand barrels are currently very low, (to be used for spot sanding) and attempts are being made to get these filled. A special winter sand is used in these barrels to prevent the sand from freezing into a solid clump.

We had several yards delivered last year, expecting it to last 2-3 years, but it has been already used. We will get some more. Please remember that this sand is only for spot sanding the hill.

Only the bottom portion of this hill is actually located within our resort village. The

majority of the hill is the responsibility of the RM of McKillop to maintain. We will wait until after the upcoming RM elections and then engage the new council members with a cost sharing proposal.



Resort Village Bylaws

This year council undertook the task of examining and updating all the Bylaws of the Resort Village of Sunset Cove. Many had been in existence for decades and are no longer applicable or enforceable. These will be repealed.

Several other bylaws will need to be added or amended to keep place with the current

needs of our resort.

Councillor Derrick Duczek is leading this initiative and please reach out to him if you have any concerns or suggestions.

Some bylaw changes will require a public meeting to enable us to change them. We will keep everyone posted and look forward to your input on

The Resort Village of Sunset Cove may soon be able to accept electronic financial transfers for fees and taxes, etc. We will have more information regarding this soon. Stay tuned!

The Resort Village of Sunset Cove is redoing it's website. Please be patient as we struggle to get this completed. Uploading past minutes, agendas, financial statements etc takes a lot of time and effort. We hope to soon present a more informative and accurate website.

Development Permits/Aquatic Habitat Permits

Most, if not all work undertaken from the top of the bank, down to the water's edge, will require both a development permit from the resort village as well as an ***Aquatic Habitat Protection Permit*** issued through the Water Security Agency. These permits sometime takes 2-3 months to receive, so plan accordingly. They can be located on line. The Resort Village applies for this permit each year prior to



conducting repairs on our boat launch. The fines are large for those who don't comply.

Any landscaping work you may be considering on your property involving installing rockwork, building retaining walls, altering drainage patterns, excavating, etc will likely require a development permit from the resort village prior to beginning your project. You may require an engineering certificate for large projects. A stop work order may be issued if you start without a permit.

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Odds and Ends:

- Our village has signed a contract with the Strasbourg Fire Department to provide fire protection services for our community. They are an extremely proficient and efficient fire service who will always respond with all three trucks and 10-15 firefighters. They are heavy rescue trained and have hydraulic jacks and jaws of life equipment with them at all times. They may be able to do extractions under collapsed building, etc. They are Star Ambulance trained and equipped to enter into burning structures. Their response time is expected to be as good if not faster than what Silton could offer and they provide a significant higher level of fire fighting capabilities. Each false alarm or call out results in a minimum \$3000.00 call our fee. (See insurance note on page #2)
- The RM of McKillop has instituted a very restrictive bylaw to govern the use of ATV's and snowmobiles on all land within their RM. Violators face a significant fine. They seem to have removed their snowmobile bylaw from their website but the ATV one is still present. <https://rmofmckillop220.com/mrws/filedriver/bylaws/ATV-BYLAW-293-2015.pdf>
- We are still working on installing the yard light down at the beach/boat launch to light this area during evening hours.
- We spent \$2500.00 in 2018 conducting tree trimming along Mountain Drive. This is likely a service we need preformed every 3-4 years.
- We would like to give special thanks once again to Mr Barry West who does such a great job of keeping our resort looking so beautiful each summer.

Our backyard friends

