

Greetings! Sharing my “not-so-brief” (grab a coffee first) News Update with info from the last few months:

**Some Winter 2019 highlights:** On the cold night of January 20, many of us viewed the beautiful Blood Wolf Moon, witnessing this full lunar eclipse. It was a marvel even though we now understand what ancient peoples attributed to mystery and myth. If you are a scientist at heart or enjoy observing and learning about the wonders of the universe, check out the events going on at our local world class facility off Highway 22. Visit the Rothney Astrophysical Observatory on one of their viewing nights or organized events. Their next event about Radio Astronomy will be held on March 8. For more info about events and requirements, check out: <https://www.ucalgary.ca/rao/>

Another highlight of the deep freeze conditions in recent days, is that Mother Nature may be taking care of a threat to the health of our forests. The Mountain Pine Beetle will hopefully be slowed up from its destructive efforts due to the consecutive days of cold. So, you see, that good things can come from the cold of winter in addition to providing recreation opportunities for those of you who are stalwart fans of the great outdoors.

**Fish/Priddis Creeks Stewardship Group:** We are meeting on Tuesday, February 19, 2019, from 12:30 to 4:00 pm at the Priddis Hall to discuss our next topics of interest, including: a review of water flows over the last years, current water license policy and monitoring, and information on the health of fish in the watershed. You are welcome to join our science-based community group to learn more about our watershed. Local area landowner, David Swann, has invited us to participate for the purpose of learning and better protecting the Creek, a vital resource. The hope is to tie this group with existing watershed stewardship groups, such as Friends of Fish Creek (within Calgary) and the Bow River Basin Council, since no other stewardship group is currently active on this reach of Fish Creek. Please attend the meeting without notice or contact me or David Swann at [davidswann571@gmail.com](mailto:davidswann571@gmail.com)

**High Country Rural Crime Watch AGM:** On Monday, March 4, starting at 7:00 p.m. at the Priddis Community Hall, HCRCWA will host a short AGM, then hear from our guests and offer a chance for you to ask questions. Turner Valley RCMP will give us an update on rural crime and other subjects. Foothills Fire Department will present info and discuss FireSmart planning. Please join us!

**Priddis Outdoor Rink Upgrades - Event:** Join in the fun to support this project and get tickets for the St. Patrick's Day Concert Fundraiser and Silent Auction on Saturday, March 16, 2019, from 6:00 p.m. to 1:00 a.m. Link for tickets: on [Priddis Panthers Hockey Facebook - Eventbrite](#)

**Wildlife Conflict Solutions Workshop 2019:** Residents are invited to attend this event on Saturday, May 11, 2019. This notice is a bit early, but just wanted to get this on your calendar. Will take place at the Old Rothney Farm on the Ann & Sandy Cross Conservation Area. In an effort towards coexistence with wildlife, multiple agencies will be putting on presentations and demonstrations about fencing, bear spray training, reducing conflicts, what to do if you have an encounter, coexistence and mitigation strategies, learning about deterrents, etc. Will share more info soon. You can also follow this [Blog-spot Link](#) for more details.

**Secondary Suites update:** On January 30, 2019, after much consultation, a public hearing and council deliberations, 1<sup>st</sup> Reading was given to the Land Use Bylaw amendments for Secondary Suites on parcels 2 acres or larger. Some changes may yet occur prior to 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Readings. This Bylaw brings two types into effect: secondary suites in the primary dwelling and secondary suites in an accessory building. Secondary Suites will be a discretionary use on Country Residential parcels over 2 acres. On Agriculture parcels, suites will be a permitted use. Size requirements for secondary suites are a minimum of 37 sq. m. (400 sq. ft.) and maximum of 83.6 sq. m. (900 sq. ft.). View the Bylaw on my website home page: [Link to 1.6 MB PDF](#)

**Fish Creek Ranch water system and Foothills County water studies update:** In a couple months, we hope to call a meeting with residents about our investigation of piped potable water to the NW of Foothills. High-level engineering studies have come in and we are now investigating grant opportunities and water licenses. We have recently made the purchase of the FCR facilities and reservoir. No decisions have been made re piped water. Discussions next.

**Trailer Billboards:** Residents have made it clear to us that they do not want our scenic visits to become a series of trailer advertisements. Since most residents who have signage for their businesses have gone through the proper processes to obtain permissions and have paid their share to do so, they also feel it is unfair for this type of unpermitted and unsightly signage to not be addressed. While some strategy for signage near towns may be in future discussions, most municipalities do not want this type of image. So, in February 2019, our council accepted a recommended action plan on removing the signs. The landowner (where the trailer is parked) will be notified, advised of next steps and there will be a follow through with enforcement of increased fines. Additionally, Alberta Transportation requires a roadside development permit for signs and trailers within proximity of a highway. They do not issue permits for these trailer signs due to safety concerns and therefore the trailer billboards are not in compliance with either AT or the municipal land-use bylaw.

**Council Matters:** If you would like a detailed record of the topics and public hearings we are addressing at our Wednesday Council Meetings, you can read our Council Minutes published in the Western Wheel. These are a few items we have had on our Agendas and Add-on Agendas over the last few weeks: securing gravel and gravel crushing for 2019, water licenses, planning our industrial corridor, considering budget 2019 items, council planning sessions for long range planning, emerging trends in municipal law, reviewing shared services agreements and fire services agreements, ongoing planning matters, capital purchases in our budget, community requests, personnel matters, department organization, special events permits, bills and accounts, boards and committees appointments and requests, etc.

**Municipalities Reviewed and Rated:** The Canadian Federation of Independent Business recently released their research in a report called: "Alberta Municipal Spending Watch Report", where Alberta municipalities with populations of 1,000 or greater were ranked according to spending sustainability patterns from 2006 to 2016. Each muni was given an overall provincial ranking, where #1 is the best performing and #182 is the worst. The rankings are based on growth in real operating spending per capita from 2006-2016, and 2016 real operating spending per capita, with equal weight placed on both metrics. We are pleased to share that Foothills has rated 6<sup>th</sup> out of 182, with spending per capita noted at \$1,349.26. The #1 muni was at \$755.67 and the #182 ranked muni was at \$6,804 per capita. I have placed the report on my website if you wish to further review the findings and recommendations: [Link to 2 MB PDF](#)

**Enhanced RCMP Policing Pilot Project - extended:** As mentioned previously, we have had an enhanced-policing project under way from October to December 2018. We have purchased additional RCMP overtime hours, which includes the officers and their vehicles in our 3 detachment areas, to respond to high priority locations and situations and do increased visibility enforcement. We are pleased with the results and will be continuing this strategy, which started again on February 1, 2019. I hope to share a review for you in my next article. The good news is that we believe this program has contributed to a greater RCMP presence and has helped with faster RCMP responses.

**Calgary Metropolitan Region Board (CMRB) update:** Our staff and councillors are putting a fair bit of time in on this. Recent meetings have included working with all 10 members on visioning sessions towards the draft of the "Growth Management Plan". While the "interim" plan and regional evaluation framework are now in place, the next order of business is to work on the main plan and all the supporting studies. So, we are moving forward in 2019 with monthly meetings of the Land-Use and Regional Servicing Committees and the Board in order to meet the tight timeline in place. I have been appointed to sit at the table for Foothills on the **Servicing Committee** (water, wastewater, transit, transportation, policing, recreation, etc.) and as alternate on the **Land-Use Committee** (Growth Management Plan and Regional Evaluation framework). I look forward to working hard, on your behalf, on these projects which will inform the growth plan. <https://www.calgarymetroregion.ca/>

**Working Water Well and Septic Sense Workshops:** were held in Foothills in January and February 2019. We had great attendance even with the cold temps. We'll likely hold them again. [Link to Working Well resources](#)

**Foothills County:** Effective January 1, 2019, our municipality's name is now officially changed to "Foothills County". The Order in Council can be found here: [Link to 0.5 MB PDF](#)

**Hot Topics Q & A with Provincial Officials:** In November 2018, I was able to raise some questions on your behalf when we attended our Fall Convention for Rural Municipalities of Alberta. Here are a few...

**Q** = to Justice Minister & Sol Gen Kathleen Ganley: Thx for the work you're doing to fund support to RCMP in the Rural Areas. Stats are showing an increase in reporting of suspicious activity – more people engaged is a good thing. However, earlier this year, some residents called in while they were watching their property being robbed and were put on hold. There is still a need to address RCMP call-taking. Please comment.

**A** = Yes, there's two things. We're working on the non-emergency calls and then also the emergency calls handled by RCMP dispatch. We recognize this is an issue and are working on it.

**Q** = to Service Alberta Assistant Deputy Minister Steven Bull: 1. When Bell took over the Supernet and purchased Axia, there were side-effects. A community awaiting the last part of their project install came to a full stop. Please comment. 2. Also, please explain the role of Bell regarding the Alberta Supernet 2.0.

**A** = 1. This community will get service if not from Bell, then from a third party. 2. Bell is doing infrastructure upgrades, including installing more dark fiber in order to reach the goal of the CRTC for 50-down/10-up. Various funding ideas are being considered for reaching communities. Expectations can also start at more realistic levels, such as 25/5. Some Fed \$ from the Investment in Infrastructure Program plus \$750M from CRTC will be available for remote rural areas.

**Q** = to Alberta Transportation officials: Can you please provide an update on the status of the Hwy 22 Priddis-Fish Creek Bridge project? (Discussed stats, recent activity, etc.)

**A** = A consultant has been hired to bring the file up to date to be ready to go. They'll look at the design and it will be tender-ready by the summer of 2019. Has been on the unfunded projects list for awhile. No promises of a project start-date, but will be ready to go when money becomes available.

**Q** = to Alberta Transportation officials: Regarding the two passing lanes on Hwy 22 near 272 St. W, we respectfully request that passing be removed, double-solid lines painted and cautionary signage installed. (Our Council requested a meeting with Alberta Transportation (AT) on this topic. We have to follow protocols when we request a change to highways. On your behalf, I requested that AT evaluate removing passing in the areas near the Priddis Emergency Services Building and 272 ST W, lines be painted double solid yellow and signage be posted for no passing and/or caution. Note - there are 2 sections of passing: one is just SE of the fire hall and the second further up the hill to the west nearer to 272 ST W, where the fatal collision occurred on October 22, 2018. While I have requested this, I also realize that the passing issue really relates to the whole of Hwy 22 from Priddis to Bragg Creek. It's a behaviour issue, noted by people who have communicated with me on this and by the RCMP. People will pass due to impatience and put other people's lives at risk to do so.)

**A** = Evaluations are currently under way, as discussed and requested by Foothills County representatives and community residents. AT will respond to Foothills on this. (NOTE: As of the writing of this 2019 newsletter, there is still no official answer. I will inquire again and let you know...)

**Q** = to Alberta Environment & Parks (AEP) Minister Shannon Phillips & Ag & Forestry Minister Oneil Carlier: A wildfire burned from May 27 into June 2018 in the Champion Lakes MacLean Creek area. It burned to within 5 kms of some residents in West Foothills. There's a chance that the fire was human caused by a random camper's fire. Currently the province has rules & regulations in place in the Public Land Use Zone there. Residents have asked me if I could request that these be effectively communicated, enforced, and more signs be placed to ask people to fully extinguish their fires. Can you please comment on these requests? And, thanks for the wildfire team's work to extinguish this fire!!!

**A1** = AEP Minister Phillips: McLean Creek PLUZ is next to be planned under the South Saskatchewan Regional Plan and will have fire pits, toilets, etc. People want to enjoy the outdoors, so the Government of Alberta wants to make it safe and considerate of neighbours.

**A2** = A&F Minister Carlier: 70% of wildfires are human-caused. We have to get the word out to prevent this.

**2019 AEP Action** (my note from follow-up discussions): AEP will be working on pre-planning for the Footprint Management Plan and Recreation Plan for the Maclean Creek and other neighbouring areas, including data collection

and modelling. Affected communities, municipalities and other organizations will be invited to the consultation process when ready. An example of the process and plans can be seen with the recently approved Livingstone-Porcupine Hills Land Footprint Management Plan and Recreation Management Plan: [Link to AEP website – landscape management plans](#)

**Convention Guest Speaker:** Amanda Lindhout shared her inspiring story of courage, resilience and grace as she survived being held hostage in Somalia in 2008/9. It is truly a story to help us gain perspective about life:

<http://amandalindhout.com/>

**Event Recap:** On November 8, we held a community event to discuss **Rural Crime & Wildfire**. Guests & Topics included: Turner Valley RCMP, 2 Foothills Councillors, our High Country Rural Crime Watch, review of calling 911, Block Talk, Foothills Fire Department, Foothills Emergency Management, AB Forestry and 2 Provincial candidates – from Highwood and Banff-Kananaskis. In summary, rural property crime stats are looking better in the last couple of months. Our Foothills pilot project with enhanced policing is creating a noticeable increase of police presence. As noted, Foothills Council will continue this in 2019 because of good results and recovery of costs. We heard an excellent recap from the officers that were on the May/June 2018 wildfire and learned how our agencies responded. As a next step, we will be inviting our Foothills Fire Department to work with our community associations and residents to incorporate FIRESMART planning and protection measures.

**Block Talk App:** In November, a new mobile phone application, Block Talk, went live in Foothills County. This public app is like an online neighbourhood for a modern neighbourhood watch, which allows residents to communicate with one another when something's happening in the community, whether it's an alert or a community event. The App divides Calgary into geographical areas based on the established neighbourhoods. Foothills is now included, in its entirety, but soon may be divided into a few more areas, TBD. Users can download this app for free and sign up to receive notifications when posts are made in any of the areas they select. Michael Murray, Founder of Block Talk, has set it up so you can "follow" where you live, where you work, where you play, where your kids go to school, etc. As a public application, it can be used to help disseminate news quickly to the community to keep us informed. This will complement the work of our rural crime watches and emergency management, to add another option for communication. Check it out: <https://www.blocktalk.ca/>

**New Cannabis Bylaw:** After holding a public meeting on October 3, Foothills Council gave 2<sup>nd</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> readings to pass Bylaw 43/2018 on October 17, 2018. The intent of the Bylaw is to impose additional restrictions on the smoking, vaping and other forms of consumption of cannabis in public places to prevent behaviours and conduct that may have a negative impact on the enjoyment of public places within Foothills County. Section 4. of the Bylaw states that 'A person must not smoke, vape or consume cannabis in any Public Place'. The specified penalty for violation of this Bylaw is issuance of a violation ticket and a \$250.00 fine.

**New RCMP Crime Map on Foothills website:** Just wanted to let you know about this Alberta RCMP Crime Map, if you have not yet seen it. This map can be accessed on the Foothills County website with the link in this message. When you visit this page, you can zoom in on the map on the right side of the page and see stats on the left side of the page. Stats are on this website for around 14 days, marked with an icon which identifies the type of incident placed at the approximate location on the landscape. Where you zoom in on the map on your screen, the number and type of incidents will be shown for that portion, with a sub-menu of the date and file number. You could keep this map as a "favourite" on your internet browser to check what's going on around us locally. Click on "RCMP CRIME MAP" when you visit: [RCMP crime map - Link](#)

**Dark Sky Country – Postcard & Pin Project:** To help spread awareness, keep the conversation lively, and get everyone involved, residents surrounding the Ann & Sandy Cross Conservation Area and the Rothney Astrophysical Observatory were sent an informative postcard about the benefits of preserving dark skies. Residents are invited to send in a photo of something they have done to mitigate light pollution. Our awesome Dark Sky Country pins will be mailed out to participants, while supplies last. Thanks to the Calgary Foundation, ASCCA, RAO, RASC and Foothills for supporting this initiative! For more details, please visit: [DarkSkyCountry.ca](http://DarkSkyCountry.ca)

**Investigating an Idle-free Policy for our municipal fleet:** On Sept. 8, I requested that we authorize staff to investigate an idle-free policy, as time permits. As there is much good work that has been done by the [Calgary Region Airshed Zone \(CRAZ\)](#) and other municipalities on this, we are going to gather information and look at what we may bring about for an internal policy regarding best practices on operating our municipal vehicles. The goal would be to help us be mindful of using only what we need and, as a benefit, to save on consumption and cost of fuel = to save some tax dollars and reduce pollution. This past summer, we provided Alberta Environment & Parks with a list of things we are already doing in rural municipal practices to reduce pollution and improve air quality, to add to their yearly report for the Air Quality Management Framework under the South Saskatchewan Regional Plan. This idea came about as one area that we could take a look at in more depth. Foothills is also a member of CRAZ, for which I am the council representative. It is important for us to be at this table because air quality knows no boundaries.

**For Other News & Updates:**

Please visit my website: <http://suzanneoel.com/> Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/CouncillorSuzanneOel/>  
I also share these news updates through monthly articles in the High Country News, which is print or online.

With Best Regards, Suzanne

**P.S.** (from S.O.) I am emailing you this information because I thought you may be interested in this update about the Foothills County and our area (and we have been in touch previously). If you do not want to receive a newsletter from me occasionally, please let me know and I will not send any more information, or change your contact info if needed. Please share this information with your neighbours if you wish.