



Happy Easter!

Welcome to the latest edition of Crystal Clear. I know we are all looking forward to a little more 'normal' and we certainly hope we can put COVID behind us and return to celebrations with family and friends. This edition contains valuable information for residents so please take a few minutes and read what's happening in our village and around the lake.



MUNICIPAL TAX REVENUE FROZEN FOR THE FIFTH CONSECUTIVE YEAR

Municipal tax revenue will remain at approximately \$292,000 again in 2022, resulting in a tax **mill rate** of 3.15, the third lowest among the seven Summer Villages. The “hold the line” budget is a reflection of Councils concern regarding the fiscal pressures from the Covid epidemic, combined with recent inflation levels not seen since the 1990’s

A “Mill” Rate, taken from the Latin word *millesimum* meaning thousand, is the method by which property taxes are determined. Each Mill represents one dollar of tax for every thousand dollars of assessed home value.

However, there are other factors at play that will affect homeowner taxes. The 2022 School Requisition (under Provincial control) has increased to \$209,262 from 189,073 last year, home assessment values have increased by 15.9% for 2022 and the wastewater utility fee will be increased by \$20 to \$300. As a result, most homes will see marginal increases. (The increase in assessed value of course means homeowners assets have grown exponentially.)

In summary, although some uncontrollable costs will be up, the municipal revenue portion of your taxes will now have remained constant for 5 years in spite of our epidemic challenges, inflation and the cost of completing major projects like roads and parks.

ARE MY TAXES HIGH?

Some residents think so, but you be the judge.

As noted in the previous article, the 2022 Mill rate for Crystal Springs is 3.15, representing a mid-range for villages around the lake. Of the 9 villages, three are lower and five are higher, with Grandview being the lowest at an estimated 2.40 and Norris Beach the highest at 4.7. In comparison, our neighboring communities were significantly higher. In 2021 Edmonton was at 7.01, Leduc at 7.59 and Wetaskiwin at 9.3. While Crystal Springs wastewater fees will increase to \$300 a year from \$240, the average in neighboring cities that charge a percentage of the water consumption rate is closer to \$500. In addition, unlike most Villages, the neighboring cities charge Utility companies an access fee, that is then charged back to residents by the Utility.

Most summer village Councilors are very sensitive to tax levels, share an award winning coordinated low cost administrative structure and cooperate on many fronts, even though policies and services are varied. The Crystal Council has tried to ensure a balance modern well served and highly desirable community with manageable taxes. It has done so in part through efficiencies, grantsmanship, donations and volunteerism.

If you have recommendations for efficiencies or for any services that you think should be eliminated, contact any one of your Council members.

“ODDS & ENDS”

SOLID WASTE AND RE-CYCLING IMPROVEMENTS ARE COMING!

Coming to you late Spring/early Summer, GFL Environmental, our “solid waste” management company will be providing new totes and an added 'blue/bag' recycling program at no additional cost. All old MCL totes will be removed and only new gray serial numbered totes will be picked up. The recycling of paper and cardboard will require residents to purchase blue bags. Residents will be provided with full details including dates and timing in the near future. Tote returns by Public Works will also continue for aesthetic and security reasons. Stay tuned!

NOISE CAN HURT!

Spring is here and people will be keen about getting outside and socializing. Fires, cold beer and wine with music are bound to be popular. But not everyone appreciates revelry – and certainly not late into the night.

Crystal Springs Bylaw 181 has noise restrictions on any day of the week. There are some variations in the timing, for example construction that can start at 7a.m. but as a general rule, the restrictions are between midnight and 8 a.m. The By-law restricts “any noise which disturbs or tends to disturb the quiet, peace, rest, enjoyment, comfort or convenience of any person.”

So, if the neighbors party is out of hand, talk to them first, but If all else fails, you can reference section 3.1(l) of the Bylaw that allows the intervention of By-law or Police Officers and fines range between \$300 and \$1000.

The Bylaw Officer can be reached at 780-719-6447 and the RCMP non-emergency complaint line is 780-312-7267

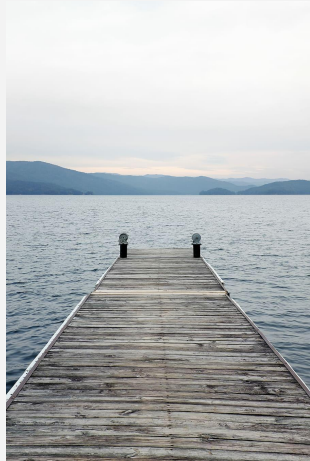
Village West Development

A BIG thank you to all residents who provided input on the proposed Village West development slated for behind our village. It was obvious from the feedback that Council and the developers received, that this development is simply not favorable and is significantly flawed.

Our voices will need to continue to be loud to be sure whatever development the county wishes better meets the needs of its neighboring communities.

While we have no official word, we understand some changes are being made and an open house will be held in the near future. It will be very important should this occur to get as many residents in attendance and details will be forthcoming once received.

NEW BOAT MOORING AND DISTURBANCE STANDARDS



As of 2021, the Alberta Government has new requirements for placing docks and mooring structures in Alberta Lakes. A brochure detailing the policies and requirements can be found under “mooring” below the environmental tab on our website at crystal springs.ca. Residents will also receive a “hard copy” brochure with their tax notice in May. We recommend it be saved for future reference.

IN SUMMARY WHAT YOU NEED TO DO...

- 1) Examine the “Moorage allowance infographic” located on the brochure.
- 2) Assess if your moorage plan is entirely consistent with the dimensions in that “infographic”.
- 3) If your property is on the water and your dock, lift and other structures meet all of the standards in that graphic, no further action is required.
- 4) If your dock or other structures deviate from the “infographic” you require to apply for Municipal approval and a provincial government “Temporary Field Authorization” (TFA).
- 5) If you are placing any structure on municipal land (parks and reserves) you must submit an application to obtain approval.

The brochure contains complete detail and help is available from our administration at 780-586-2494. As noted, the brochure is posted on the web site under the environmental tab. If required, the moorage application form can be found in the policies section of the site.

4000 + CATTLE ON THE NORTH SHORE?

Ponoka rancher Greg Thalen has applied to the Natural Resources Conservation Board (NRCB) to add 4000 head of cattle to an existing herd in a "Controlled Feeding Operation" (CFO) on the west side hills within the Pigeon Lake watershed.

The Crystal Springs Council along with other municipalities, the Pigeon Lake Watershed Association and the Pigeon Lake Renewal League have all submitted spirited "statements of concern" in the hopes of influencing the NRCB to deny the plan. Crystal Springs has claimed that the cattle operation would cause odor, noise and property depreciation for most of the 6000 area residents around the lake. In addition, and most importantly, it will reverse decades of environmental effort to create a healthy lake, thereby negatively impacting area residents and an estimated 100,000 annual visitors – for generations.

Specifically, Council has noted that Pigeon Lake is a large Alberta lake at 96.7 km², with a relatively small 187 km² watershed that feeds fluctuating water levels from a creek and dozens of small streams and artesian wells. As such the Lake is highly susceptible to land pollutants. This "CFO" will adversely affect Pigeon Lake water quality contributing to blue-green algae blooms that will cause public health and safety concerns, damage sensitive conservation sites including fish spawning and wildlife habitats and negatively affect important recreational resources inhibiting quiet pleasurable enjoyment and good health.

The ranching proposal includes pens and manure spreading over 16 quarter sections. We are advised that 4000 cows can produce over 6500 metric tonnes of manure every 45 days - 6500 metric tonnes over the Sunset Harbour and Tide Creek Basins.

If the application is approved by the Natural Resources Conservation Board (NRCB), residents will need to oppose it politically or suffer odour, noise, property depreciation and lake pollution not seen for some time.

Area resident Jeanette Hall has written a comprehensive, well researched, science based analysis of the matter that should be read by everyone around Pigeon Lake and beyond. While a bit long, it is absolutely worth the time. With her permission, we are making it accessible from the following link. We also encourage you to share it with family and friends.

Link to letter

<https://www.dropbox.com/s/z9l7ga1fwz0s8wt/Spark%20that%20lit%20the%20flame.pdf?dl=0>

Is Your Drinking Water Safe?

While our community has a communal wastewater system, residents rely on personal wells for clean potable water. Water wells should be inspected annually for obvious signs of damage or contamination. Be sure the area around the well is clear of debris or items that might pollute the water supply. An annual water test for contamination is strongly recommended along with a professional inspection by a water well contractor every ten years.

Annual water tests are easily done by obtaining the necessary sterile collection equipment from your local public health office and following simple directions. The analysis is free. Wells must be shock chlorinated when a well water sample result shows that there is bacteria in the water. Any time a well is opened for repair it should be disinfected and newly-built wells should be shock chlorinated following construction.

Well water analysis kits are available at many Alberta Health Services Public Health locations including Wetaskiwn at 5610 40th Ave. You may wish to phone 780-361-4333 to check pick-up and deposit times as every location has specific times when samples can be returned in order to ensure the accuracy of testing. Alternatively, a complete list of locations and times can be found by searching Alberta Health Environmental Public Health.

LAND USE BYLAW

Council continues to work with municipal planners on our revisions of the land use bylaws. This is a comprehensive document (over 70 pages) that attempts to find a balance between protection of our environment and lake , while allowing residents to still have the flexibility to develop their properties as they see fit.

The feedback received from the community has asked us to focus our energies around tree removal, Recreation Vehicles, clarity of current bylaws, accessory buildings and shoreline modification. The new plan will take into account the Pigeon lake Water management Plan to ensure we are doing everything we can to help our lake.

Our plan is to complete the draft shortly and to have a virtual meeting this summer and then final implementation in the fall. This bylaw is a huge undertaking and while it is taking longer than we expected , we want to be sure we get it right and receive your feedback before it becomes law. Stay tuned for the date and the draft bylaw which will be mailed out.

SHORELINE CLEANING PLANS

Crystal Springs has a tentative plan to clean shorelines, however the plan may need to be adjusted as the ice leaves the lake and shoreline conditions are known. The current plan is for Council to obtain permits, engage contractors for municipal parks and reserves, provide residents with contractor options (at homeowner cost) and then remove and dispose of algae mattes. In recent years the earliest the ice has fully left the lake was April 16 in 2016 and the latest was May 28 in 2013. Residents will receive more detailed information following “break-up.”



Beyond the improvement in aesthetics, odor, recreational access, property values and comfort, spring cleaning of the shores is good for the lake. Algae mattes when tested are high in both nitrogen and phosphorous, important compounds in the reproduction of algae if they are returned to the water. (They are however good for land fertilization)

Some years up to six semi-truck loads were removed from our shores. Watch for future emails and posters detailing the 2022 plans.

GETTING SERIOUS ABOUT ENFORCEMENT

A working committee of Councilors from seven Villages are taking a serious look at speeding vehicles and truck overweight limits that are dangerous to residents and damaging to our roadways. The group is studying current and potential policies, practices and resources in order to better address the two problems that exist right around the lake.

The work includes examining a range of possible enforcement resources from RCMP service enhancements to By-law Officer partnerships with neighboring Counties to collaboration with the Alberta Justice Peace Officer/Sheriff’s training program. According to committee Chair Ron LaJeunesse the multi-village partnership is enabling new knowledge, skill, creativity and the potential for pooling financial resources. The group is hoping for an early summer report with recommendations that will then need to be considered by the seven Village Councils.

IN LAKE BUOY

Once again Crystal Springs and Alberta Environment will be monitoring water quality during the open water season. This information is vital for us to understand the lake and provide data that can impact development decisions in the future. The link to the public will be sent out as soon as the buoy is deployed.

The buoy will report every 15 seconds on everything from PH content to air temperature.

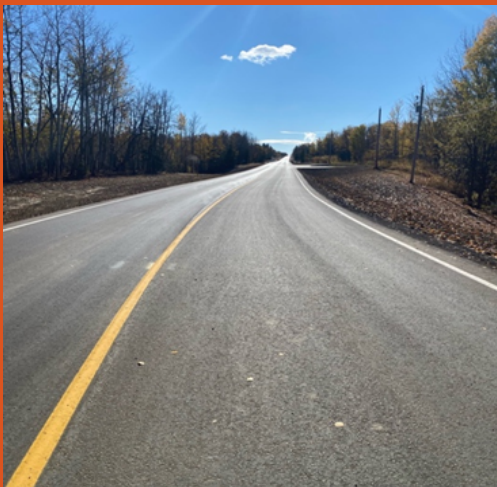
ROAD NEWS

- Last year our road was chip sealed and several loads of gravel were deposited over the very icy winter months. Due to this our road will be swept when clear of all snow and ice. Potholes that have appeared as a result of our springs will also be repaired. It is expected this will resolve our dust issue.
- Due to our ongoing issues with speed, council is investigating legal and insurance requirements to install a total of 8 speed humps at strategic locations down Lake Shore Drive. Humps are different from bumps and will be about 4 feet in width and over 20 feet wide therefore not as harsh on vehicles. Our desire is to reduce speed and the number of vehicles using our road as a shortcut to the village. We will monitor the results and feedback from residents and while we recognize not everyone likes them, they are needed for resident safety.
- RR12- A committee is currently looking at plans to improve RR 12 in conjunction with the County. We hope to have an improved maintenance plan in the coming months.

Annual Information Meeting(AIM)

If health conditions allow the AIM we will be held this summer in person at the park. This is an opportunity to meet with council and administration, discuss any issues related to the Village and meet fellow residents . An email will be forthcoming with event details once we can confirm the meeting.

Remember This? 2021 and 2022



PICK UP PLEASE

Pet excrement is unfortunately a problem in our community and a new “PUP” initiative, “Pick Up Please” will be introduced this Spring.



The effort is considered important because a single gram of dog coliform when analyzed, contains up to 23 million bacteria which are known to cause dysentery, typhoid fever and hepatitis. Dog waste is also toxic to lawns causing burns and creating nutrients for weeds. When left behind, these fecal contaminants also flow into Pigeon Lake contributing to algae growth.

With funding help from your bottle contributions to the Pigeon Lake Renewal League, (PLRL) “doggy deposit stations” with Educational Brochures will be placed in visible locations in our community

Research of programs in other communities identified four strategies; public education, social pressure, deposit stations, and enforcement as essential components for a successful program. All four approaches will be utilized in the Crystal program, which means we will all have a role encouraging everyone to “pick up please!” Watch for it!

THS CHANGES

The Municipal wastewater system completed in 2019, followed several years of controversy and conflict. However it has operated virtually flawlessly since then with much of the credit going to our municipal staff and the construction/maintenance professionals, THS Septic from Rocky Mountain House.

Unfortunately THS has recently advised the Villages that the company will be moving away from septic servicing. As a consequence a new service provider has to be found. This has resulted in a few delays in new construction and servicing.

Our administration is actively pursuing an option that we hope will allow the Villages to partner together, do the work in-house and save money. The details as to personnel, processes, emergency numbers etc will be provided directly to all residents in the near future.

RECREATION MEMBERS SOUGHT

COVID has certainly put a damper on recreation events that we can coordinate as a village. We do, however, have a LOT of new folks who want to get involved and meet new people. There is no better way than being on the Recreation Committee!

Anyone who wants to be part of this valuable committee should contact Mayor Rawlinson

In the past the Recreation Committee has organized golf tournaments, meet and greets, BBQs, boat rallies...and of course we welcome any new activities and ideas!

GET INVOLVED!



2022 STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS APPROVED

Council's Strategic Plan of priorities was approved on March 10th following consultation with residents. Councillor's said they were very pleased with the positive comments received regarding accomplishments during their first term of office, along with the advice regarding traffic control measures and influencing the Village West proposal.

The 14 page report outlines a full strategic plan including, but not limited to, the following priorities:

- Keeping taxes down while maintaining service levels
- Improving Land Development, Public Works and By-law enforcement resources
- Completing work on a new Land Use Bylaw
- Reducing speeding and truck over-weight road damage
- Shoreline cleaning
- Water level and quality studies and initiatives
- Completing Pavilion equipment and promoting use
- Re-introducing a summer Recreation and Christmas social program
- Implementing new boat mooring regulations
- Expanding recycling efforts
- Reducing pet excrement
- Monitoring and influencing watershed land development proposals

The full report can be found at crystalsprings.ca

DO YOU HAVE “BACK-FLOW” PREVENTION?

The Village's new wastewater system is operating remarkably well with virtually no problems. Unfortunately, it is not infallible. A 2020 Spring failure in the main line operated by the Wastewater Commission caused a back-flow of sewage that could have caused flooding in a few Crystal Springs cottages. Wastewater damage was or could have been prevented by a simple in-line device installed near the building that stops sewage from flowing backwards. Do you have yours? If not, you may wish to speak to a plumbing contractor.

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PREDICTING 2022 WATER LEVELS...



As most residents know, Pigeon lake covers a large area of 97.2 km and sits in the headwaters of the Battle River basin. In spite of its size the lake has no major river inflow and is fed by several streams, one creek and many ditches from a relatively small drainage area of 186 km². The maximum lake depth is about 7 meters. Annual water levels are largely determined by snowpack runoff and spring rain. Offsetting these inflows is evaporation that is high in hot weather like this past summer.

Recorded mean daily water levels since 1955 show a fluctuation of up to 1.2 meters with the average annual water level at the end of July at 849.960 meters above sea level. The 2021 end of July water elevation was 850.160 meters above sea level (MASL) only marginally higher than the average since 1955. In contrast the 2020 end of July water elevation was some 8 inches higher than the average level and 17 inches over the 2019 low levels.

Although each year presents a different set of climatic conditions, there is a typical seasonal trend. Prior to the ice coming off the lake, the snow melting in the watershed generates a large surface inflow called a “freshet.” The snowfall this past winter is considered to be average with significant freezing and thawing, but more will be known about volume as we witness the length of the runoff that traditionally lasts from a few days to several weeks with a gradual increase in levels from breakup until July and then a steady decline until fall. Evaporation, the major source of out flow, runs from May to August with a maximum average net evaporation of 150 mm in July.

While high water levels are generally valued by residents, if too high they pose significant risk to shoreline erosion, flooding and ice thrusts in the winter. For example, a 1990 storm caused Pigeon Lake to rise 12.2 inches between July 1st to 4th. Strong winds and waves exacerbated shoreline erosion and property damage. High levels are now drained off by a Weir at Pigeon Lake Creek on the south end of the lake near Ma-Me-O Beach.

Water level controls began as early as 1914, when the Weir was constructed (re-built in 1986) to prevent flooding of the downstream hay lands. The Weir was designed to keep water levels at an elevation of 849.9 m above sea level (ASL) although Mayor Rawlinson has been advocating for the Weir levels to be raised.

So while predicting water levels is risky, winter levels have been monitored for the first time and they have not been a cause for concern. Secondly the snowpack is average and if we are fortunate enough to have an average Spring rainfall, boaters should be able to expect an average water level similar to 2020. Wouldn't “normal” anything be nice for a change?

