

Minutes of the Red Deer River Municipal Water User Group, March 18, 2010 at 2:00 p.m., Civic Centre, Drumheller, Alberta

1.0 Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 2:00 PM by Co-Chair Jim Lougheed, Red Deer County and John Kaster, Town of Hanna. Introductions were given.

Present: Jim Lougheed – Red Deer County, John Kaster – Town of Hanna, Rick Poole – Town of Blackfalds, Murray Marshall – County of Starland, Warren Smith – Town of Olds, Vanessa Vander Meer – Village of Linden; Everett Page – Mountain View County; Chris Reeds – Town of Trochu; Earl Graham – Clearwater County; Rob Naylor – Town of Three Hills; Lynda Fiedler – Town of Sylvan Lake; Redford Peeples / Rob Stoutenberg – Town of Stettler; Larry Pimm – City of Red Deer; Scott Dudley – Village of Munson; Ray Reckseidler – Village of Delburne, Dennis Kuiken – Village of Acme, Sheila Church – Town of Bowden; Bob McIntyle – Town of Sundre; Derek Baird – Town of Innisfail; Bert McFadyen – M.D. of Acadia #34; Cathy Perry – Village of Alix; Allen Eastman – County of Newell; Dug Major – Special Areas; Wayne Richardson – Town of Paintearth; Bill Shaw – Red Deer (Advisory); Ray Romanetz – Town of Drumheller; Keith Ryder – RDRMUG; Linda Handy – Town of Drumheller, Recording Secretary.

2.0 Adoption of Agenda

Fiedler that the agenda for the March 18, 2010 Red Deer River Municipal User Group Meeting be adopted as presented. Carried unanimously.

3.0 Adoption of Minutes

3.1 Confirmation of Minutes of the Regular Meeting of January 21, 2010

Smith that the Red Deer River Municipal User Group Regular Meeting minutes of January 21, 2010 be adopted as presented. Carried unanimously.

4.0 Guest Speaker

4.1 Todd Aasen, Districts Approval Manager, Alberta Environment

T. Aasen provided an overview of Alberta Environment's approval process, monitoring procedures and protocol regarding the effects of gravel extraction on ground and surface water within the Red Deer River Basin.

He highlighted the review considerations as follows:

EPEA

- *Primary considerations are – can the pit be reclaimed to a stable suitable land use (equivalent to predevelopment or land use approved by local authority) and is the topsoil being conserved?*
- *The current pit size and maximum pit size;*
- *Maximum un-reclaimed area, security sufficient?*
- *Development permit from local authority?*

- *Attainable reclamation plan?*
- *Operation plan includes soil conservation and erosion control measures;*
- *Water Table intersected? Located in or near a surface water body?*

Water Act – *Is authorization under the Water Act required?*

- *Primary considerations are – is there a potential for existing water users being significantly impacted? If there a potential for significant impact to the aquatic environment? Is there a potential for significant water management impacts? Is the activity exempted by the Water Ministerial Regulation?*

Effects of Gravel Mining on Water Management

Generally Alberta Environment considers gravel mining a low risk activity;

In specific cases there is a potential for Water Management concerns;

From a cumulative perspective, land use concerns usually restrict development before water management concerns.

He also provided a perspective of the current quality and quantity concerns of the Red Deer River Basin.

Quantity – *Mountain runoff forecast if below average to average. Currently 315,000 cubic decameters have been allocated, and 141,000 cubic decameters are pending (total 456,000).*

Quality – *water quality in the Red Deer River is generally good we have noted a slight decline over the past 5-7 years.*

Pending Licenses: *MVRWSC – 14,000; SAWSP – 61,500; MD of Acadia – 56,700; Red Deer County – 6,200; Highway 12/21 – 1,800 – Total 141,000.*

Questions and Comments from members:

W. Smith stated that there are huge concerns with water diversions – potential for contamination – scars on the land. T. Aasen stated that he does review applications for impact on water diversions and consideration is given to location of pits in the flood plain, whether there are substantial water users in the region, quantified ability for existing users to get water, and the short and long term impacts on the Medicine River. He further advised that his department assesses what will happen in a flood event, contamination of aquifer, whether fueling stations are on secondary surfaces and whether the local authority determines whether or not the pit is approved.

J. Loughheed stated that Red Deer County changed their bylaw to allow for gravel extractions on agricultural land and they never thought that the Red Deer River would be under such attack by gravel companies – these pits could expand to 300-400 acre pits. He further stated that their Council was under the impression that Alberta Environment would manage gravel pits in the best interest of the public's future. He stated that their Council made a huge error in allowing gravel pits in their land use bylaw as they are receiving a lot of applications for this type of operation. T. Aasen stated that Alberta Environment does consider whether

the land use fits within the area, accumulative impact of several operations, distance from the river, water tables levels and whether the applicant is following all the rules. He further advised that the approval authorities do have interveners and there is a mediation process.

Members agreed that municipalities need to be active in voicing their concerns on the issue to ensure our declining water stock is protected. B. Shaw stated that the Red Deer River Alliance recognizes the importance of this issue and the Advisory Council will have an opportunity to address the issue strategically. He further stated that when there are groups fighting for the same resource, balance needs to be struck.

T. Aasen explained that municipalities can be involved in the water management, allocation and impact of aquatic environment. There is a process that does involve public and private sectors as well (including the gravel operators). Alberta Environment does ask for municipalities involvement when setting rules on land use, ie. Regional Plans.

Smith, Baird moved that member municipalities of RDRMUG be encouraged to submit to the Ministers of Alberta Environment and Sustainable Resource Development, the Premier and local MLA's their concerns in regards to gravel mining in alluvial aquifers along the Red Deer River with specific reference to the Medicine River and Red Deer River alluvial aquifer.

Discussion on Motion:

Each member was asked to express this concern to their municipalities to heighten awareness of this political issue and that gravel mining operations should be a discretionary use in their land use bylaw. An information package will be prepared for Council in order for municipalities to prepare a letter of support to their MLA and the Ministers. W. Smith stated that this is not a Red Deer issue but rather an issue that impacts the storage on the Red Deer River.

Mr. Todd Aasen was thanked for his presentation.

5.0 Financial Reports

5.1 Balance Statement

5.2 Revenue and Expenses

5.3 Accounting Notes

K. Ryder, Executive Director provided an overview of the financial status to February 28, 2010 as follows:

Balance Sheet – Total Current Assets \$163,120.95.

Statement of Revenue and Expenses:

Revenue year to date \$10,133.62; Actual Expenses year to date \$3,258.95.

Surplus (Loss) to date is \$6,874.67.

Pimm moved the adoption of the financial report as presented. Carried unanimously.

6.0 New Business

6.1 Progress Report Water Assurance Committee

6.1.1 Progress report on Crown Reservation request

6.1.2 Discuss RDRMUG Strategy for future storage on/off the River

K. Ryder advised that the Water Assurance Committee working with Hart Management held a meeting with Alberta Environment at the Red Deer Office to present the Briefing Note in Support of a Request for a Crown Reservation under the Water Act. An excerpt taken from the March 2010 Report: *Surface water license allocations in the Red Deer River Basin as of June 2009 total = 306,498 dam³ (T. Assen's figure is more up to date at 315,000 dam³) of which 64,729 dam³ or 21% (now 22.5%) are for municipal purposes. RDRMUG recommends that the Crown Reservation for municipal use be for 130,000 dam³ inclusive of current allocations. This would provide for an increase in allocations of about 65,300 dam³, and leave about 228,200 dam³ available for future non-municipal purposes before total allocations reach the allocation closure ceiling of 600,000 dam³ (schematic).* K. Ryder stated that Alberta Environment is supportive of the MUG's endeavors however the Minister is not prepared to approve unlimited reservation. Each municipality with the RDRMUG is encouraged to have a conservation plan in place.

K. Ryder advised that the next steps based on the priorities (as set by the membership one year ago) is to research proposed water storage sites on and off stream. He asked the membership if this remains a priority. D. Major stated that timing is of the essence to move forward on this priority. Membership agreed. Alberta Environment has grant dollars to prepare the reports – agreement to proceed with the Terms of Reference. The Watershed Alliance is reviewing storage and it would seem fitting that the RDRMUG work together with the Alliance on this initiative. There is a one year window before the Regional Group provides their findings.

7.0 Executive Director's Report

K. Ryder provided an update on water conservation initiatives: RDRMUG Website has excellent links to references for conservation initiatives – *"Thinking Beyond Pipes and Pumps"*.

8.0 Correspondence

K. Ryder presented two documents for the members' consideration:

1. "Where Ideas Flow From" (Alberta Water Research Institute)
2. "Don't Drain Your Resources" (City of Calgary)

9.0 Review of Municipal Projects

New information from members on new water projects and the status of projects in the works in their respective communities:

Town of Olds – MVWSC Water Conservation Policy (common policy).

Town of Innisfail – Discussion held on conversion kits for single flush toilets to dual flush toilets available at Canadian Tire. Municipality will be giving this device to homeowners as part of their conservation initiatives.

Town of Bowden – replacing water / sewer lines (old clay lines) / water metre inspection program. Water audit report 20% leakage.

MD of Acadia – purchase of new for new subdivision which involves water / sewer distribution systems / sewage outfall.

Village of Munson – adopted new toilet program

Village of Alix – toilet program in place – repaving streets (water / sewer lines at the same time)

Town of Newell – Regional Water System Commission set up – water going to the villages (southern part) / tendering northern area soon.

Red Deer County – renew environmental master plan / fund wastewater line to south.

Special Areas – SSRB Water Study is available on website (Dug to provide CD).

Town of Stettler – Council approved rain barrel program; plant upgrade ongoing (mechanical portion to be completed).

Town of Delbourne – toilet program being researched.

Town of Hanna – toilet replacement program / rain barrels program.

10.0 Adjournment:

The next meeting is scheduled for **May 20th, 2010 at 2:00 PM at the Civic Centre, Drumheller, Alberta.**

The meeting adjourned at 4:15 PM