Winter 2010

Alberta Urban Municipalities Association

Small Communities' Newsletter

Contact

Please feel free to contact any of the following people with questions or comments about the newsletter or the Small Communities Committee.

SCC Members

Bob Clark (Chair) bbdclrk4@mcsnet.ca
Reg Pointe clrowe@telusplanet.net
Doug McDermind dogrod@hotmail.com
Barb Sjoquist mayor@edgerton-oasis.ca
Bob Manning bhmanelk@xplornet.com

AUMA Staff Zohreh Saher zsaher@auma.ca

Small Communities Standing Committee

The Small Communities Committee is a unified voice, advocate and resource, focusing on urban municipal governments with populations of 2,500 or less. The Committee is comprised of seven members from communities of 2500 or less, including two AUMA Board members.

The Committee is accountable to the Board for: sharing services - regional and AMSC aggregated; reviewing and recommending suggestions for under 2500 Mayor's Caucuses; reviewing the status of MSP (Municipal Sustainability Project) that is impacting Small Communities; and defining the process, developing a Work Plan and updating the Terms of Reference for the Committee.

New Action Centre to promote municipalities' energy efficiencies and emission reductions

A very special announcement was made during the recent Mayors' Caucuses. In a news conference February 11, Alberta Environment announced its partnership with AUMA and AAMDC to develop a Municipal Climate Change Action Centre (MCCAC) with a goal to boost the capacity of members to implement energy and emission reduction activities. AUMA has received a three year grant for the centre from Alberta Environment. In addition, AMSC has provided funding for set up of the centre and is covering the cost of the office space.

Many of the activities that will have the greatest impact on reducing emissions, such as more compact land uses and increasing the energy efficiency of buildings and the transportation sector will also save municipalities (of all sizes) money in the long term. Investments in energy efficiency and renewable energy now can help boost the economy and make communities more resilient to fluctuations in energy prices.

Action on climate change and energy efficiency can and should be incorporated into Municipal Sustainability Planning. Your municipality can use the MSP process to identify priorities for action on climate change and vice versa.

Action on climate change is not necessarily about doing extra initiatives but ensuring initiatives are done with energy efficiency and other such considerations in mind. For example, if there are municipal buildings that need significant work, there is prime opportunity to implement energy efficiency retrofits. In fact, there is funding available through the federal government eco-energy building fund to support retrofits. One of the goals of the Action Centre is to help municipalities (including smaller ones) capitalize on these opportunities.

Click here to view the Alberta Environment announcement

To view the MCCAC Backgrounder and Q&A click here

To view the plan click here

For more information on the Action Centre, Contact Rachel Bocock, Senior Policy Analyst, 780-409-4313 or rbocock@auma.ca.

Debrief: Mayors' Caucuses and the MLA Breakfast

Mayors' Caucuses: Coming just a day before the February Mayors' Caucuses, the Provincial Budget announcement was a favoured topic of conversation among about 170 Mayors and CAOs attending the sessions. The Under 2,500 Caucus met in St. Albert Feb. 10 and both the 2,500-10,000 and the Over 10,000 Caucuses gathered in Edmonton Feb. 11.

Fresh from his attendance at the Legislature for the Budget Speech, President Darren Aldous was able to update members on the AUMA's analysis of the Budget, in preparation for meeting Government members at the MLA Breakfast on Feb. 11.

- Click to view the Mayors' Caucus presentations
- Click to see AUMA's Budget Analysis
- If you attended the Mayors' Caucuses, click here to participate in a quick survey

MLA Breakfast: Feb. 11, AUMA hosted its first MLA Breakfast, attracting more than 40 MLAs, including the new Minister of Municipal Affairs Hector Goudreau and the new Minister of Finance Ted Morton. In addition to a guest appearance by Ruth Kelly on behalf of the City of Edmonton's 2017 World Expo bid committee, the AUMA Executive Committee used the event to make short presentations, familiarizing the Government members with AUMA's role as an advocate for local govern-ment interests and 2010 initiatives.

Of particular interest to MLAs was the re-launch of AUMA's MLA Newsletter, the Provincial-Municipal LINK, which will be published weekly during the Legislature sittings to keep the Government connected to the municipal perspective. Click here to view the LINK.

Deputy Premier Doug Horner moderated a lively Q&A session and spoke about the Provincial Budget implications for municipalities. Hector Goudreau rounded out the Breakfast agenda with some thoughts about the Budget and his new portfolio.

Message from the Chair

Winter is almost over and we are all anticipating spring! However, we are happy to present to you our Winter 2010 edition of the Small Communities Newsletter. I know that you are busy in your municipality "making things happen" but please take some time to peruse the newsletter and read some articles that may inspire a light bulb moment or two.

I am particularly excited to hear what you have to say about our guest editorial from the Mayor of Bawlf, Jerry Iwanus, on social media. Jerry's presentation at the Mayors' Caucus last month was a standout for me. Jerry is so passionate about the medium, but he also understands it from the perspective of a small town Mayor.

I am so happy to be back as Chair of the Small Communities Committee and look forward to work with the new small communities' team to represent your interests.

Kindest regards,
Bob Clark, Committee Chair
Mayor, Village of Boyle

My Experience with Social Media

An editorial by the Mayor of Bawlf
Jerry Iwanus

I resisted for the longest time. "It's a time-suck," I said, but I kept an eye on how the social networking phenomenon, Twitter, was evolving. I then read a piece in *Alberta Views*, featuring my MLA, Doug Griffiths. Doug also did an interview on CBC, which spoke well of this phenomenon, so I eventually took the plunge.

Now, I don't do Facebook or blog at this point, but I'm not ignorant of social media. However, Twitter was different and I soon discovered why: it's the gateway to an endless stream of articles & blogs, and it is *the* place where politics is discussed these days (including, of course, municipal issues). I started making connections, 140 characters at a time. Ultimately, I now have this community (including numerous other elected municipal officials) with whom I can share ideas on a wide range of issues. I don't agree with everyone, but I'm having a series of interesting conversations about the future of this province that I wouldn't otherwise be having and that in itself makes the effort worthwhile.

My Twitter agenda: to raise & enhance the level of political conversation in Alberta; to bring the small-town & rural perspective to the broader political conversation; to make people aware of Bawlf and other communities like it; to bring honour and credibility to the office of elected official in a small town; to provide a moderate political perspective & a moderate respectful tone to the discussion; to consider all issues in an open-minded, non-partisan way; and to bring a bit of humour to the conversation. Despite the fact that I don't officially speak for the Village of Bawlf on Twitter, my followers are well aware of my position and I'm always conscious that both the Village and I will be judged on the basis of what I say and how I say it.

Should you be on Twitter? Yes, but only if you're willing to engage, converse, and have your views challenged! Twitter will not make or break my re-election chances in Bawlf (at least not yet), but it puts me in touch with a broader perspective and keeps me abreast of the issues. It's a way of bringing people of common interest together and the fact is that, if these conversations are occurring, the small-town & rural perspective needs to be properly represented. In many ways, Twitter serves as the great equalizer: everyone's opinion carries the same weight. This is where communication is headed in the 2nd decade of the 21st century. We all need to be part of it.

Jerry Iwanus is the Mayor of Bawlf. Jerry Iwanus has been proud to call Bawlf home since 1995. He moved to Bawlf from Edmonton in 1995 simply because of a keen appreciation for the small-town lifestyle. Follow him on Twitter or email him.

Need help using Twitter or other social media? Please contact Zohreh Saher, Research Analyst at the AUMA by e-mail. And, remember to follow The AUMA on Twitter.

Alberta Small Communities Conference "Cultivating for our Future" May 28-30, 2010 Village of Mannville

The Small Communities Conference was first started in Edgerton, Alberta in 2000. Since then, it has been hosted in Legal, Turner Valley/Black Diamond, Swan Hills and Forestburg. Alberta Small Communities Conference is a forum to support community leaders by addressing common issues and sharing positive knowledge and experience. The focus is small communities with a population of 2500 or less who are encouraged to maintain their unique individualism while working together to share and seek solutions for success and sustainability. 2010 and future years brings great change and small communities must adapt in order to maintain our independence and thrive in our niche.

The theme Cultivating for our Future, was chosen as it relates to diverse aspects small communities are faced with. To better prepare for our future, we can create awareness and educate ourselves on future changes. We can adapt for a brighter tomorrow for our future and generations to come.

The Village of Mannville is honored to be hosting the 2010 Alberta Small Communities Conference. The conference is preceded by their Annual Village Invitational Golf Get-Together held Friday afternoon at Mannville Riverview Golf Course.

Mannville is proud to hold this event each year in appreciation of municipal partners, dedicated local business owners, reliable contractors and community volunteers.

Keynote Speaker Mr. David Beurle, an Australia community speaker, founded his own company 'Innovative Leadership Australia (ILA)'. He brings a wealth of knowledge on challenges and hardships that many small communities are faced with in today's economic and changing times.

Various breakout session topics include:

- Municipal Emergency Management Program Guide
- Challenges with providing quality education in small rural communities
- Building a successful emergency services department
- Alberta Community Co-operative Development
- Water conservation
- Asbestos Awareness
- SECOR (Small Employer Certificate of Recognition)
- Building Tourism

For more information click here, contact the Village Office at (780) 763-3500 or e-mail conference@mannville.com.

So You're Wondering about CMARD?

Smaller municipalities are known for their tight knit connections, hospitality and strong sense of community. Residents often feel that they can easily be involved in the social fabric of their town or village. Unfortunately, these positive attributes can also be seen as barriers to individuals looking to relocate to a new place. Similarly, individuals who are members of the community who are confronting issues of discrimination may feel isolated and not know where to go to get support. The Canadian Coalition of Municipalities Against Racism and Discrimination (CMARD) provides an opportunity for small communities to make a difference in these areas.

CMARD is part of a larger international network of municipalities working together to combat discrimination in their communities. Forms of discrimination addressed by the Coalition may include, but are not limited to, race, gender, age, ability, sexual orientation, religion and language. In Canada, the Coalition is supported by the Canadian Commission for UNESCO. To date, nine Alberta municipalities have passed resolutions to join the Coalition. CMARD is endorsed by the Canadian Association of Statutory Human Rights Agencies (CASHRA), the Canadian Race Relations Foundation, and the AUMA.

Joining the Coalition is an easy process that involves Council passing a resolution to become part of the network. Passing the resolution shows that Council believes issues of racism and other forms of discrimination are important, and makes a public commitment to encouraging a welcoming environment where all members can feel included. Joining the Coalition also sends a positive message to individuals and families who are considering moving to a smaller community.

By becoming a member of the Coalition, Council agrees to develop an action plan to address issues of discrimination. This action plan will reflect your community's unique realities and utilize its many assets and resources. The AUMA can provide support to you in the development of your plan. There is no cost to joining CMARD and the actions outlined in your plan can reflect your municipality's financial situation. In fact, many communities have been able to design and implement their plans without any significant dedication of funds. Having a plan in place can also provide Council with a ready-made response in the event of an incident of discrimination.

For more information on joining the Coalition and to learn how membership can benefit your community, please contact Marc Colbourne (Senior Project Coordinator – Welcoming and Inclusive Communities) at 780.989.7419 or mcolbourne@auma.ca.

Are You Tuned In?

Events Calendar
The AUMA and other organizations host a number of conferences and events throughout the year that are of interest to small communities. To find out about events that are key to your community, click here to visit the AUMA web site calendar.

Weekly Digest
Each week the AUMA and AMSC release a Digest that covers information on advocacy efforts, AMSC services and other topics of interest to municipal politicians and administrators. Make sure that you are in the know by subscribing via the AUMA web site. Click here to subscribe.

Future of Local Governance Initiative: An Update

On October 15, 2009, AUMA received a letter from the Assistant Deputy Minister of Municipal Affairs, inviting 3 administrative representatives from AUMA "to the first Municipal Sustainability Strategy Working (MSSWG) Group meeting" to be held at the Ministry offices.

The intention of the Working Group was to consider:

1. What constitutes a viable and sustainable municipality and how can these be measured?
2. What basic services should a municipality provide?
3. What capacity building tools are required?
4. What restructuring processes should be used?

After much discussion, the AUMA Board agreed to participate, with regular and detailed updates being provided by the AUMA administrative representatives.

AUMA has filed Policy Papers and positions on Municipal Sustainability with the MSSWG, and has referred back to those documents during the meetings. AUMA has requested that three elements be added to the preamble or introduction to the report of the MSSWG:

- The role of the Province, and its obligations
- Clear statement about the importance and value of local autonomy and municipal governments.
- The fact that there are various manners in which municipal governments are accountable: e.g. through independent financial audits, through elections and by being close to the citizens and for that reason being very transparent.

There was some discussion as to whether the Municipal Sustainability Strategy would be a priority of the new Minister. Alberta Municipal Affairs stated that the items that the MSSWG was working on were part of the Department Work Plan, and would very likely continue under the new Minister. This was confirmed with the new Minister's mandate letter and with the 2010 Municipal Affairs Business Plan. One new aspect of the 2010 Municipal Affairs Business Plan is that Municipal Affairs has a mandate to perform Municipal Corporate Reviews (MCRs).

As the mandate of the MSSWG ends this spring, the report and list of tools created by MSSWG may be a first step towards creating an AUMA toolkit on the Future of Local Governance (FOLG), and also on taking a close look at restructuring as the Government of Alberta sets out its framework for reviewing the MGA. Additionally, AUMA will have the benefit of hearing the discussions regarding restructuring and dissolution, and will be prepared to react to the Government of Alberta's response to the MSSWG Report.

Stay tuned to the weekly digest for more updates on MSSWG.