

Councillor Liz Breakey: Decorum & Councillor Lowther

THE IMPORTANCE OF CIVIL DISCOURSE IN POLITICS

I have always believed that civility of discussion and respect for process in politics is paramount to achieving progress in working with others, whether in agreement on issues or not. There is always some common ground to be found though it will never be discovered through animosity and anger.

It was with some trepidation that I waited the merging of our new Councillor, Eric Lowther, after he successfully contested the by-election and joined a relatively polarized Council – just as I did a few years back. This was a high-powered federal political alumnus entering the world of municipal politics part way through a term. And it is indeed a challenge to step into already established ways of doing business as I had found. However, I found to my relief that Councillor Lowther felt the same way that I did about the overt rudeness and belligerence that was sometimes in play at Council meetings and certainly, in letters sent in to the various media meant to undercut or circumvent open discussion at Council meetings.

Eric Lowther has always behaved with decorum and decency during both public Council meetings as well as during the committee work sessions. He has also consistently supported the goals of the communities within Division One. This is in direct contrast to the individuals who claim to “speak for the residents” who don’t always take the time to find out what the residents actually think on all sides but instead present their version as “the truth”. This includes stating that the desperately needed flood protection is “a complete waste of money” though not having taken the time to find out that even should upstream protection proceed, by some miracle, the local mitigation is still needed to protect the vastly changed landscape. This group has also dealt with public personal attacks against various councillors, including myself in their online newsletter, County News.

The goal of a Councillor should be to work to solve the issues that beset their residents on a day-to-day basis, both big and small. And in addition, look to the health and well being of the County residents, both financial and in terms of enhancements of safety and efficiency. This, Eric has done, through working for his community but also through civility of working with others on Council when they are open to it. For this, I do respect him.

Councillor Liz Breakey is not running for re-election.

“We have never had a Councillor that has connected with the community as much as Councillor Lowther does. His regular Community Update forums, his e-newsletter, his website and his regular articles in the community paper all combine to keep us well informed.”

Barry Mjølness, long-time Bears paw resident



Re-elect
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Letter to Rocky View

COME OCTOBER 17TH, WE WILL KNOW WHO OUR FRIENDS ARE...

Who doesn’t love firefighters? We are all – rightly – predisposed to think well of members of this profession.

But I have concerns about the union for Rocky View firefighters offering to act as scrutineers for the upcoming Oct 16 election.

On the face of it, this looks like a laudable public service from an admirable group. But sadly, there is mounting evidence of a political agenda at the root of their desire to be at the polls. And once again, the negative, obstructive ideology-based Rocky View Forward group seems to be in the middle of it.

An email to union members from Jeff Salkeld, president of the Rocky View County Firefighters Association, starts with: “This political action campaign is heating up with attention being gained daily.”

Being a scrutineer is predicated on being in the polls promoting fairness. So why is this the opening gambit designed to recruit volunteers for this job?

Even more alarming, in a later email, Salkeld directs union members to “please consider the overall situation and the established premises presented by Jerry Arshinoff and Rocky View Forward in contrast to the majority Council opinion/direction.” He then goes on to say “On October 17, we will know who our friends are.” (Oct 17 is the day after the election)

Most disturbing of all is this quote: “...we will begin to impact our municipal government for our customers’ and members’ safety and wellness in a much more aggressive manner.”

Clearly there is an ulterior motive here.

It’s becoming very clear that a strident vocal minority made up of well-known anti-everything activist types oppose just about everything in the County. Some in fact have proudly stated they are in favour of Rocky View stagnating as a “land bank” for Calgary.

And while there is nothing wrong with a local firefighters’ union urging its members to support an activist group, it is a flagrant abuse to attempt to use scrutineering as a means of doing so

The public is rightfully skeptical when Unions get involved in election campaigns to further their own interests.

I suspect most firefighters have no interest in Mr. Salkeld’s “aggressive” agenda, but it’s clear from his words that he indeed does have such an agenda, and is backing candidates that he believes will further it.

Scrutineering, or electioneering? There’s a difference.

Rob Matthews, Rocky View County

Positive Springbank

I love Springbank and I don’t want to change its character.

But is it so wrong to want some upgrades to the Park For All Seasons?

Or to see the trail systems expanded so it’s safer for cyclists and motorists?

Bingham Crossing has been approved, and I understand the shovels will be in the ground next year. Don’t we need a councillor who takes into account the perspective of all residents, and works with the Bingham developers to make sure what goes in there fits with what “all” residents want?

I have nothing personally against Division 2 councillor Jerry Arshinoff – his Liberal Pierre Trudeau political past aside – but his Dr No routine is getting old. While writing this, I had a look online at the most recent council vote on a gravel operation in the County. The vote was 8-1 in support, with Mr. Arshinoff the only councillor opposed. Reviewing RV Council meetings, this is a common occurrence.

Most of the people I speak with are of the same opinion as me. We live here for a reason – we love it here and are proud of our community.

But can’t we talk about how to move forward and what we might do to enhance this community for our families? Why is this public representative so fixated on the negative?

I don’t think a coffee shop, grocery store, restaurant or heaven forbid, seniors’ housing options would be too terribly tough to add without changing the character of Springbank.

We need fresh ideas that the division two councillor doesn’t have.

On Oct 16, vote for change and a Positive Springbank.

Jason Bamlett, Rocky View County