



NOTE - If you don't have time to read this entire newsletter, be sure to read:

**The first example . . .**

**The second example . . .**

## PARCS UPDATE #78.2: Sept. 15, 2017

### WHAT HAPPENS WHEN RATEPAYERS LOSE CONFIDENCE IN THEIR ELECTED COUNCIL?

Councils of both rural municipalities and resort villages are governed by *The Municipalities Act*.<sup>1</sup> While this act confers responsibility on these councils "to encourage public participation in the governance process",<sup>2</sup> the PARCS Board of Directors has observed that, more and more, cottage owners are feeling that the needs of cottage communities are falling on the deaf ears of those councillors responsible for serving cottage communities.

**Recently PARCS has learned of two situations where frustrated citizens have initiated actions to hold their council accountable:**

**The first example involves a rural municipality** which contains a significant number of cottage communities.<sup>3</sup> While the cottage owners have 2 elected ratepayers on the 7-member council, cottage owners remain severely under-represented in terms of the ratio of cottage-owner ratepayers versus non-cottage-owner ratepayers.<sup>4</sup> This council is alleged to have held meetings without notifying the cottage-owner councillors.

The cottage-owner ratepayers have formed a **ratepayers association** which has circulated a **petition**,<sup>5</sup> calling on council to conduct both a management audit and a forensic audit.<sup>6</sup> The petition was signed by **more than 400 ratepayers** and recently delivered to the administrator. If the petition is sufficient, council must engage the services of an independent auditor: the municipality is responsible for all costs of the audit which must be completed within 180 days of the petition being found sufficient.

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<sup>1</sup> Cities function under the *Cities Act*.

<sup>2</sup> [Citizen's Guide to Shaping Council Decisions](http://www.saskatchewan.ca/search?q=A%20Citizen's%20Guide%20to%20Shaping%20Council%20Decisions&sort=relevancy) at <http://www.saskatchewan.ca/search?q=A%20Citizen's%20Guide%20to%20Shaping%20Council%20Decisions&sort=relevancy>

<sup>3</sup> 9 organized hamlet cottage communities, several other unorganized hamlets and subdivision cottage communities

<sup>4</sup> The issue of the inequity of division boundaries in rural municipalities with cottage communities will be re-introduced at the fall convention.

<sup>5</sup> A petition can: (1) call on council to hold a **public meeting** (requiring at least 5% of voters in an RM or 8% of voters in a RV), or (2) call on council to hold a **binding referendum** (requiring at least 15% of voters in both an RM or a RV) or (3) call on council to hold either a **management** or **forensic audit**.

There are very specific requirements under sections 132, 133 of the *Municipalities Act* for setting up a petition to a municipality. The petition must be presented within 90 days of the date of the first signature. The petitioners need to consult with the municipal administration regarding the number of voters, should the municipality not maintain a tax role.

<sup>6</sup> A management audit examines the entire way in which a council and its administration have operated; a forensic audit scrutinizes the financial records.

**The second example involves a resort village.** Some of the cottage-owner ratepayers feel that council has implemented management procedures which are detrimental to the health of the natural environment (trees, grass, beaches, etc.) in their resort village. Attempts to raise the issue via a delegation to council have gone unheeded.

These cottage owners have also formed a **ratepayers association**. Their first action has been to set up a **public blog site** in which they describe the management practices that are causing environmental issues and outline the expectations for responsible management of the environment. They have not dismissed the possibility of a future petition, should the public blog go unheeded by council.

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**Other options for ratepayers seeking to challenge council decisions or actions will be described at our convention and include:**

**Reports to the office of the provincial ombudsman** – In November of 2016, it was announced that it had been one year since the Ombudsman began taking complaints about Saskatchewan municipalities; in that time, 489 complaints were received. Ombudsman McFadden will describe the types of complaints that her office receives and how her office deals with these complaints.

**Appeals to the Saskatchewan Municipal Board** – The SMB listens to concerns from both ratepayers and municipalities by hearing appeals about local governments, assessments, planning, municipal boundaries, fire prevention and road maintenance agreements. The Chair of the Municipal Board will explain the role of the SMB and the activities they do to resolve municipal issues.

**Most importantly, the upcoming PARCS will offer opportunities for delegates to learn ways to prevent complaints from ratepayers by:**

**Communicating more effectively** - Our keynote presenter, Lynn Gidluck, will teach us a model for communicating with ratepayers. She will provide hands-on issues for us to use in developing plans for effective communication strategies. She will encourage us to share our own experiences. “An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure” when it comes preventing hard feelings and misunderstanding. This morning workshop promises to be worth the two hours to prevent hours of headaches from petitions, audits, and referendums.

**Sending out effective newsletters** - Is your newsletter a crowded list of council decisions? Or does it promote involvement of the community and build community spirit? We'll take a look at two effective newsletters in cottage communities.

**Sharing our stories** – The convention will provide the opportunity to talk to each other about current issues, about mergers and annexations, along with interesting and unusual stories from mayors and councillors as part of our banquet.

## REVISED PROGRAM FOR CONVENTION 2017

### **THEME – COMMUNICATIONS – SHARING OUR STORIES**

#### **FRIDAY, OCT. 20, 2017**

- 9:00 am *Registration, Coffee and Nutrition*
- 9:30 am **Welcome and announcements**
- 9:45 to 12:00 **Planning for Effective Communications -  
Plenary workshop** (Dr. Lynn Gidluck, Benchmark Public Relations)
- 12:00 to 1:00 pm *LUNCH*
- 1:00 to 2:00 pm **What if communications fail and citizens complain?  
The role of the provincial ombudsman** (Office of the Ombudsman)
- 2:00 to 2:45 pm **The Community Newsletter – A tool for effective communication**
- Manitou Matters – Resort Village of Manitou Beach
  - Collingwood Newsletter – OH of Collingwood Estates
- 2:45 to 3:00 pm *NUTRITION BREAK*
- 3:00 to 4:00 pm **Possible topics for PARCS future discussions with government**
1. Fair Representation of cottage owners on RM Councils
  2. Training for newly elected council members
  3. Fair elections for ratepayers in cottage communities
  4. Lessee voters in resort villages – Ron O’Byrne
  5. Better criteria for items in OH budgets that RMs must approve
- \*Announcement:** *Directly after supper there will be an opportunity to listen to and talk with ratepayers sharing their "stories".*
- 4:00 to 5:00 pm *Break before evening events*
- 5:00 to 6:00 pm *HAPPY HOUR before the PRESIDENT’S BANQUET*
- 6:00 pm *AN OLD FASHIONED FALL SUPPER including ratepayer stories, music, silent auction, and pies for desert*

#### **SATURDAY, OCT. 21, 2017**

- 9:00 to noon PARCS BUSINESS, ANNUAL MEETING, ELECTIONS
- 12:00 to 1:00 pm *LUNCH*
- 1:00 to 2:00 pm **Part 1 - Panel Presentation: Mergers and annexations**
- 2:00 to 2:30 pm **Part 2 - Ministry of Government Relations: The rules to follow**
- 2:30 to 3:15 pm **When we seek help resolving our disputes -  
Role of the Saskatchewan Municipal Board** (Sask Municipal Board)
- 3:15 to 3:30 pm *NUTRITION BREAK*
- 3:30 to 4:30 pm **How to be proactive about planning with our neighbours**  
(SARM, Community Planning)

# CONVENTION REGISTRATION FORM (NOTE **REDUCED RATES IN YELLOW**)

## CONTACT INFORMATION:

Cottage community (or association): \_\_\_\_\_

Contact person, name: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone number: \_\_\_\_\_

Email address: \_\_\_\_\_

**CONVENTION** (Includes Friday lunch, Friday banquet plus Saturday lunch, all nutrition breaks)

### Attending for **both days**

• # attending from **member communities** (voting delegates): \_\_\_\_\_ x **\$ 225** = \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Names: \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_

• # attending from **non-member communities**: \_\_\_\_\_ x **\$ 325** = \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Names: \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_

### Attending for **Friday Only (All day, including banquet)**

• # attending from **member communities**: \_\_\_\_\_ : \_\_\_\_\_ x **\$ 150** = \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Names: \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_

• # attending from **non-member communities**: \_\_\_\_\_ x **\$ 250** = \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Names: \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_

### Attending for **Friday Only (Day only, no banquet)**

• # attending from **member communities** : \_\_\_\_\_ x **\$ 125** = \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Names: \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_

• # attending from **non-member communities**: \_\_\_\_\_ x **\$ 225** = \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Names: \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_

### Attending for **Saturday only**

• # attending from **member communities** (voting delegates): \_\_\_\_\_ x **\$ 100** = \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Names: \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_

• # attending from **non-member communities**: \_\_\_\_\_ x **\$ 200** = \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Names: \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_

Extra banquet tickets (no spousal packages available): \_\_\_\_\_ x **\$ 30** = \$ \_\_\_\_\_

#### **REGISTER SOON by mail or email to:**

Lynne Saas, PARCS, Member Services

Box 52, Elbow, SK, S0H 1J0

Phone – 630-9698

Email – parcs@sasktel.net

#### **TOTAL FEES**

\_\_\_\_\_ Fees are enclosed

\_\_\_\_\_ Fees will follow by mail

\_\_\_\_\_ Fees will be paid at convention

**Note – Registrations cancelled after October 1<sup>st</sup> will be invoiced for full fees.**

#### **HOLIDAY INN DOWNTOWN 986-5000**

- One block from Conference Hotel
- 101 Pacific Avenue., Saskatoon
- 1 block from Midtown Plaza
- 20 (total) kings OR double queens (**\$159 each**) plus 13%
- For **Thursday, Oct. 19** or **Friday, Oct. 20**
- **Booking Code: PARCS**
- Discounted parking at \$7.50 per day in indoor heated parking garage
- Must cancel **48 hours** before day of arrival

Copy this form and mail/email it. Or simply send me an email with the name of your community, the number attending, etc. I will send an email acknowledging your registration.

**NOTE – MONDAY, SEPT.18, IS THE LAST DAY TO RESERVE A ROOM AT THE CONVENTION HOTEL. IF YOU ARE CONSIDERING ATTENDING, PHONE AND RESERVE A ROOM – YOU CAN ALWAYS CANCEL THE ROOM IF YOUR PLANS CHANGE.**