

The Water Cooler



Vulcan County - Staff Newsletter - November 2011

CAO News

Time flies when you are having fun and it seems as though I just did an article for the previous newsletter and Liza was after me again for an article for this edition.

Please join me in congratulating Nels Petersen as our new Director of Operations. Nels officially assumes the helm of our Operations Department upon Nick's retirement but he is already very involved and the transition is well under way. Please also join me in welcoming to the staff at the office Juli Moon, here to ensure that our Development and Protective Services Department receives the administrative support it needs to run smoothly.

We recently wrapped up our 2010 audit just in time to start in on the 2011 audit. Budget 2012 preparations are well under way and our first meeting with Council is scheduled for November 28th. Our target is to have budget discussions wrapped up by mid-December and the 2012 Budget approved by Council at the December 21st Council meeting.

You will notice when you fill in your timesheet that there are some bits of information when you open the software program as well as more when you sign in. This was done to ensure that all staff have an opportunity to receive communication in a timely manner and in a medium that everyone signs in to on a weekly basis. Thanks to Operations staff for their suggestion on this as the credit for this new communication tool is theirs, not mine. All I did was implement a very good idea that was brought to my attention.

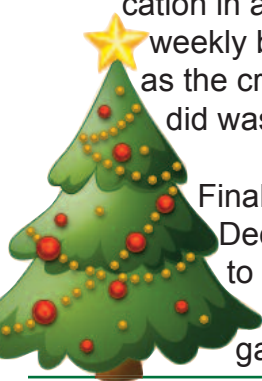
Finally, another reminder that the Staff Appreciation Night will be on December 9th at the Champion Hall. I would encourage you all to attend and enjoy the evening with your co-workers and Council as this is a night where the most important aspect of our organization, you, are recognized. As always, be and work safe.

Shop Talk

All of the crews are just about finished for the year, and the winter equipment checks are getting started, so it will be very busy down at the shop. Gravel sales are now done for the year, and the inventory count will be starting the last week of December. All of the graders are 'winged out' and ready for the snow!

We would like to thank all of the seasonal staff for their hard work, and look forward to seeing them back again in the spring.

There have been some staffing changes, JW, Will and Lee have all been hired on full time for the Maintenance Crew, it is expected they will go back to their regular duties in the spring. Gary Greig has been transferred to Public Works Foreman, and Ken Neufeld is Shop Foreman, Bill Schmeelke is now Shop Lead Hand.



Director of Operations

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Nels Petersen will be taking over the reins as Director of Operations upon Nick Zubach's retirement later this year. Although Nels has worked for the County for a short time he brings with him a wealth of experience from life before Vulcan County. Having been the owner and operator of a contracting business has given Nels the opportunity to interact with people, whether customers or staff.

Married to Joan for 13 years, they have 2 children Tristan (3) and Addison (2), the family live in Carmangay and have lived in the area for most of their lives.

Not that he has a great deal of spare time, but when he does, Nels loves to renovate vintage trucks and cars, the current project being a 1953 Fargo 1/2 ton step-side truck.

In his own words.... *My objective as Director of Operations is to maintain, expand, and improve our municipal infrastructure through clear and concise communication with staff, Council, and ratepayers of Vulcan County.*

I am looking forward to developing productive relationships with staff and cCouncil that provide the level of service that our ratepayers expect while remaining fiscally responsible.

I would like to thank the staff, Council and ratepayers that have offered their congratulations and encouragement since my appointment to Director of Operations. I would also like to thank Nick Zubach for the guidance he has given me over the past couple of weeks as we begin the transition to Nick's retirement.

I am sure we all send our best wishes to Nels and look forward to what the coming years will bring.



Party!!

Well it is winding down to the final days of Nick's retirement from Vulcan County, so I guess as a nice gesture (haha) we should throw him a send off party before he departs for good. We will be meeting in the Council Chambers on December 16, 2011 from 3:00-4:30. It is a come and go as you like to say a farewell to our Director of Operations. If anyone would like to bring small sandwiches or a dessert please contact Shellah @ ext. 124.

Q: What nationality is Santa Claus?

A: North Polish

Q: What do you call people who are afraid of Santa Claus?

A: Claustrophobic

Competition Winner!!

So here's the answer to last editions 'what is it' competition - A razor (did you have a close shave?). Thanks to all who came up with guesses, some weird, some wonderful. The fastest on the buzzer was Nadine, who wins a Home Hardware gift card.



What is it?

To make things a little fairer for those who get the newsletter later than others, it has been decided all correct entries (one per person) will be placed in a draw. The winner's name will be drawn prior to the January edition of the Water Cooler.

So, no excuses now - can you guess this one???

The Drum Major's Hat?



**Guesses to Liza 403-485-3130
or grants@vulcancounty.ab.ca**

Christmas

Vulcan County Council invites you and your guest to the Vulcan County Staff Appreciation Night.

Friday, December 9, 2011
Champion Hall, Champion
6pm Cocktails
7pm Supper

Dance and social evening to follow.

Please rsvp to Nadine at 403-485-3102
or ea@vulcancounty.ab.ca

Ag Dept News

Agriculture Services have been working on finishing up the grazing lease contracts for the first round of tax recovery land. Most of the tax recovery lands were repossessed by the Alberta Government during the depression in the 1930's and are now being handed back to the County from the Alberta Government. We are getting a second round of lands in the New Year.

Also, Agriculture Services will be gone to the 2011 Association of Alberta Agriculture Fieldmen in service training in Edmonton December 5-9.

If you have any questions or concerns about Agriculture Services please feel free to call Kelly Malmberg at 403 485-3103.



Health Spending Account Claims 3

Haven't spent your \$1,000 health spending account money yet? Don't know what to spend it on? Don't lose it!

Reminder: 2011 Health Spending Account credit dollars do not carry forward to 2012.

Please submit all 2011 claims with original receipts to AVP Bizflex before **January 31, 2012**.

Claim forms can be completed on-line and printed off and mailed to AVP with original receipts.

Link to claim forms: www.avpbizflex.com/forms/claim-form.html

Note: Dental and Health Care Premiums that employees paid in 2011 **are** allowable expenses.

Please complete a claim form and **submit to payroll**, do not send claim directly to BizFlex.

Bizflex has requested one report be sent from Vulcan County for all employees who will be claiming reimbursement for premiums. December Dental and EHC premiums were deducted from November pay. The YTD amount on your November 18th pay advice is the 2011 premiums paid.

Deadline for submitting claims to payroll for premium reimbursement is **December 13th, 2011**.

Important note: Please be aware that if you are claiming reimbursement of premiums through BizFlex you will not be able to deduct these premiums on your personal income tax return.

For a complete CRA list of allowable medical expenses click on the link below:

<http://www.cra-arc.gc.ca/tx/ndvdl/tpcs/ncm-tx/rtrn/cmpltng-/ddctns/Ins300-350/330/llwxpns-eng.html#premiums>

If you need assistance **please see Maxine**.

Carbon Monoxide

Now that cooler weather is upon us, the process of closing up homes and turning on heaters is underway. These actions reduce the exchange with outside air and provide numerous sources of combustion.

It should come as no surprise that carbon monoxide incidents occur at this time of year.

Most carbon monoxide comes from incomplete combustion of fossil fuels. This gas has no smell, taste or color. Symptoms of exposure include headache, nausea, breathlessness, dizziness and confusion. Unconsciousness and even death can occur from very high exposures.

Here are some suggestions to keep in mind to minimize carbon monoxide exposures:

- Make use of carbon monoxide monitors
- Follow warnings on fuel burning devices
- Make sure flues and chimneys are intact and unblocked
- Don't use gasoline powered engines in enclosed spaces
- Don't ignore symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning

Be Safe!

