



RESORT VILLAGE OF THODE

...your community

SUMMER IS BACK **AUGUST 2011**

CONSIDERING OUR COMMUNITY, CONSIDERING BRIGHT TOMORROWS *...A REPORT, SOME HISTORY AND OBSERVATIONS FROM THE MAYOR*

FROM OUR PLACE OF GOOD FORTUNE WE ALL STILL THINK OF OTHERS IN HARDSHIP

I hope this report finds all of you and your families well and that you are looking forward to time together with those close to you this summer. Many of us know well the hardship that others are going through in areas of this Province and the country and we all wish that good fortune will shine on the many victims of fires, storms and floods very soon. While certainly there are many things that we would like improved around us, I can't help but feel that we have been very fortunate in our own community. For the past two years communities throughout the Province have been ravaged by the forces of nature. This year many have lost their homes, their businesses and many farms will not bring an income to support families this year. As we all hear appeals to help those in need this year, I hope that we can think of ways to help those communities and families that have lost so much right here in Saskatchewan. A fund has been established by the Red Cross for those that are wondering how they can help.

THE PAST COMES TO CALL IN MANY COMMUNITIES

For many years and in many communities it seems that the policy on services, facilities, infrastructure and asset management was more or less a pay as you go policy, much of the general maintenance was handled essentially by volunteers and for the most part, there weren't many demands and our costs were few and manageable. In our young community of only 40 years this is quite understandable as to a large extent the expectations of most were low. The buildings were mostly cabins, we drew our water from the lake, and we flushed grey water there too. Many homes used only wood burning fire places or electric heat as most initially didn't have natural gas. Many hauled their own potable water for use in their own cisterns. Effluent and solid waste discharged into holding tanks that many of us continue to use. It was common to hear the sentiment that it was good enough, after all, most of the residents did not live here full time and seasonal dwellers did not want or need many services. The real estate wasn't worth much either so there wasn't a good economic case to be made for spending too much money or time on development and services.

COMMUNITIES NEED TO GROW, IF THEY DON'T GROW, THEY WILL DIE

Maybe that's just a cliché, maybe history tells us otherwise, even if only from recent decades in our province. There are some facts that we understand now as we look in the rear view mirror. It is clear we are still changing, and it seems that we are a community in two worlds. In four decades we have changed much, but we are no longer a low maintenance community. We have more services than many similar yet more populous communities. Except for inflation and reassessment, our tax base growth has not kept pace with the increased amount of services and the cost of operating these services. People move here from the city and other centers wanting all the same amenities, but don't think the costs should be as high, Still others yearn for the simpler way, less services and very little need for administration or costs to provide services they can provide themselves.

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Considering Our Investments and the Future

(continued from page 1)

Two thirds of the capital cost of the major utilities we have purchased, the water system and access to city water and the sewer system and lagoon was subsidized by the Governments of Saskatchewan and Canada. This means that our residents received over \$1.5 million in grant funding, however operating costs are not subsidized whatsoever, unlike those capital costs and also depreciation of the assets is at the full value not the discounted price we paid. Our local improvement projects in the most recent decade, particularly water and sewer add new operating and capital cost considerations. Case in point, the full accumulated value of the utility assets is actually over \$2.2 million dollars and we must consider our obligations now, for maintenance and operations and future considerations in terms of depreciation and replacement. These aren't our only assets to consider either and our dilemma is further compounded by the small rate paying base and number of assessed properties.

IF WE KNOW SOME HISTORY CAN WE UNDERSTAND WHY AND WHERE WE ARE TODAY?

Year after year, we welcome new residents to this beautiful community and in the past five years we see many more moving to live here full time, raising young families and making this community stronger and our future brighter. We are evolving and we are trying to provide the new services families need although we are still challenged by the small assessment base. Below is a rough timeline that outlines some of the changes and challenges:

- **PRE 2002 TO 2006** – During this time we all were using lake water filtered and pumped from a pump house that was situated near our current garage at the entrance to Pelican Pass. Senior governments were beginning to realize issues for public health emanating from water supply and the need for better quality facilities and potable water. With the support of SaskWater and the Government of Saskatchewan, the treatment and distribution capacity in the City of Saskatoon was increased and upgraded with the intent to make high quality potable water available to surrounding communities. In this period, healthy food issues started dominating the agri-food processing debate and the Canadian and provincial governments began the process of improving availability of quality water for the food producing sector in Canada through Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Agreements (PFRA).

This was to become an unexpected but welcome opportunity for our Village. We were asked to participate to help build a larger user base to make the rural water utility from Saskatoon to Clavet and southwards more viable. At this time, as one of your Councilors, I was honored to also serve first with Kirk Dyck as a Director and then as the charter Treasurer of the new Dundurn Rural Water Utility. All credit must go to the entire Council of the day, especially our two term Mayor, Ernie Doell, Kirk Dyck, Kelly Neufeldt and Donna Doell for their foresight and commitment to improving this **essential community service**.

Through the PFRA program many communities accessed the 2/3 funding support from Ottawa and the Province. After the subsidy, a nearly \$750,000 cost for the Village to access 'City water' was reduced to less than \$250,000 or roughly \$2,700 per residential property. We have a relatively new 60,000 gallon reservoir and pump house now located on top of the hill. However, this feeds water through a distribution system that for most of the Village (except for Pelican Pass) is more than 35 years old and in need of constant repairs and before too much time passes, full replacement. (...continued on page 3)

Our Utility Upgrades in Five Years, more than \$2.4 million in Thode

- **2004 TO 2006** – The Ministry of the Environment (then known as Sask Environment and Resource Management) notified the Resort Villages and users at Blackstrap that the sewage lagoon between the villages was to be decommissioned. Obviously, the two villages immediately sought an interim solution and were fortunate to make arrangements with the Town of Hanley for access at a cost of \$20,000 for use of their lagoon. The Thode split was 40%, \$8,000 or about \$75 per house per year.
- **2006 TO 2009** – City of Saskatoon water was now being delivered to the residents of Thode and the Village welcomed a new Council in July of 2006 as governments in Ottawa and Regina were changing too. There remained the need to find a more permanent solution to waste disposal than the hauling of our sewage to Hanley. In 2007, the council of the day decided to purchase a sewage hauling truck and began operating the Village Septic Service. This included maintaining and insuring the vehicle, as well as contracting the operator and scheduling service for the residents for the first time. Obviously, owning and maintaining the truck brought new costs, and securing and managing drivers also brought more work for our administration. As this was occurring the Village and neighboring communities entered consultations that would begin the process of investing in new sewage services including a new lagoon to be located southwest of Dundurn, as well as a proposal for a fully operational sewage line that could eventually replace all holding tanks. The new utility could also serve to mitigate the numerous issues for the Village as the owner and manager of sewage hauling equipment and the related service.
- **AUGUST 2009 TO 2011** – Your current Council was elected in July of 2009 and while water and sewer issues continued to dominate, the Council was also pressed to handle other concerns and priorities.
 - 1) Stairway access and parking were added to the Village Centre and Angel Park.
 - 2) A tree nursery has been established for future development of our green spaces and many of the maturing saplings have been planted throughout the Village thanks to the Greenscape committee
 - 3) A Community Building Fund has been established to support long term enhancements to Angel Park, upgrades to the Centre and Children's play area and the building of four season Sport Courts
 - 4) Nearly \$45,000 has been invested in shoreline stabilization for the first time in over 25 years
 - 5) Roadway upgrading has been progressing slowly as a result of above average rainfall and delays in completion of the new sewage system. However much work has proceeded on shoulder and base repair, culvert repair as well as drainage and grading to make ready for the new dust free surface.
 - 6) Fencing upgrades to the pump house area have started and a storage facility has been established for seasonal vehicles
 - 7) The roof on the Village garage at the beginning of Pelican Pass was replaced this spring
- **SEPTIC SERVICE ACCOUNT MANAGEMENT ENDS DECEMBER 2011** – In the spring of 2010, Council sold the Village septic truck to the operator, Mr. Trevor Heagy, owner of Big Ts Septic Service. The truck was sold for \$50,000 plus interest and effective December 31, 2011 the Village will no longer have any financial interest in the vehicle that you see in the community pumping and hauling sewage. At this point only 27 people have committed to connecting to the new sewer line that was installed last year, yet we still feel certain that in time, that number will increase substantially.

We are uncertain as to what role the Village will need to assume with respect to Waste Water Utility billing and payments if any. However, our administrative office will no longer handle invoicing and collections on behalf of the waste hauler(s). **EFFECTIVE JANUARY OF 2012, RESIDENTS WILL BE RESPONSIBLE FOR CALLING THE HAULER OF THEIR CHOICE DIRECTLY TO ARRANGE FOR HOLDING TANK PUMP-OUTS.**

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Our Small Community - Big City Services and Big City Cost?

NEW UTILITY SERVICES, INVESTMENTS FOR A BETTER COMMUNITY? - Sure you will hear from many in our Village, other cities and other Provinces that we bought the capital projects at a price that we couldn't refuse. With funds from both senior governments we effectively got a 66% discount. "Don't find sewer systems on sale for that price very often, do we?" So now, after much anxiety and discussion and even a community splitting election, our administrator opens the mail to find a bill from the new Waste Water Utility for the one third (33.33%) share that we have to pay. I guess I forgot to mention, for the sewer that's roughly ½ a million dollars, yes, \$541,111 to be shared equally by about 113 assessed properties, about \$4,800 each. Consider if there were 150 properties, that amount would have been about \$3,600 per house.

Many in the community prepaid but some are still paying for the water system upgrade, a very necessary service that already dates back roughly six years, which at that time even after government funding cost the Village about \$250,000. Both of these costs are capital investments and for that reason they are not covered by your property taxes rather they are funded by special assessment or a direct charge to each rate payer. With so few properties to share the cost, it is difficult to make it any more affordable for each resident. The sad part is that this is now a hardship for many of our long time friends and residents, many that are retiring, many on fixed income and many raising young children. We need to seek new solutions to the future infrastructure issues. There are options that would offer more certainty as to how to pay and less burden on ratepayers.

BUT ARE THERE MORE COSTS AHEAD? – These capital costs that we have incurred have added to the assets in our community. In the past roughly two plus years, municipalities are now required to not only account for the assets in the audited financial statements, all communities must now also account for the depreciation of those assets. In the new era of accountability of governments the objective here is to give the taxpayer a better sense of the fiscal condition of their communities. However, that is only half of the process required to properly manage the assets in municipalities. An example that illustrates better asset management practices is that which is followed by condominium associations pursuant to the Condominium Property Act in establishing, collecting and investing replacement reserves for capital cost purposes. Often referred to as Condo Fees, these accumulated replacement reserves prevent the need for a cash call from owners in the event that there is a breakdown of any major infrastructure.

In our own community, consider the following facilities and assets and the reserve balances on hand;

- The **water distribution system** in the old village is approximately 35 years old and failing regularly. Replacement will cost approximately \$200,000 to 250,000 excluding new curb stops and other costs. **There is no replacement reserve and while we actually had a small reserve, it was used to finance the DRWU waterline project & will not be replenished for a few more years**
- The **water distribution system** in the new area, Pelican Pass is approximately 15 years old. This asset likely has a useful life of at least another 20 years. Replacement will cost approximately \$100,000 to 150,000 (at 2011 prices) excluding new curb stops and other costs. **There is no replacement reserve**
- One of the amenities that we take for granted is the **lake and the shoreline**. There has not been regular budgeting for shoreline preservation dating back 25 years. In two years we have spent over \$40,000 for shore line stabilization and quotes to repair other threatened sections have come in at \$50,000. **THERE IS NO REPAIR OR REPLACEMENT RESERVE**

- Obviously **our roadways** are a constant concern, Our road has not had a full resurfacing since 2003 and for the most part we have only applied road patch to keep the road repaired over the last eight or so years.

We have already reviewed costs for a new surface and while those costs in 2003 were \$25,000, this year our cost will be nearly \$50,000. Between last year and this year our Council has invested about \$15,000 in culvert repair, stabilization of the road bed and the shoulders and also on grading. The primary reason for this and for delays in the last two years is due to the installation of the sewer system and the current effort to allow residents to connect to the line before finishing the road surface.

THERE IS NO REPAIR OR REPLACEMENT RESERVE

- The Village pump house
- The Garage and Storage Sheds
- The Sewer System (the lift station is owned by the Waste Water Utility)
- The Village Centre and Playground
- Machinery, snow removal and yard maintenance equipment

THERE ARE NO REPAIR OR REPLACEMENT RESERVES

SO WE HAVE NEW UTILITIES, BUT CAN WE AFFORD TO MAINTAIN THEM?

... the other half of management and administration of your Village, the Cost of Operations

WE HAVE IT GOOD HERE BUT... AT THIS RATE, ARE WE COVERING THE COSTS?

In 2009 we revised the base tax program to more closely cover core services. While the actual cost of core services is nearly \$800 per residential property, our base for 2011 is only \$750 plus 2.5 mills to cover services in our community. Remember we only have assessed 113 properties and according to the 2006 census only 156 people living here full time. Below are some rates, fees and levies in surrounding communities.

➤ Clavet 2010 base tax	\$700 + 16.2 mills	125	properties plus commercial
➤ Dundurn 2010 base tax	\$700 + 11.5 mills	300	properties plus commercial, \$8000 utility levy
➤ Hanley 2010 base tax	\$560 + 15.75 mills	250 ¹	properties plus commercial, \$4600 water levy
➤ Martensville 2010 base tax	\$670 + 6.27 mills	2500 ²	properties plus commercial
➤ Thode 2011 base tax	\$750 + 2.5 mills	113³	properties no commercial \$4800 sewer levy
➤ Shields 2011 base tax	\$550 + 2 mills	197	properties plus commercial \$8600 water levy

Resort Village of Thode Core Services: RCMP, Blackstrap Emergency Services (fire), Administration, including wages, audit, SAMA, insurance, general office costs, Council expenses and repairs and maintenance and Waste Management which includes recycling & landfill costs are the key core services we provide for everyone. Our research indicates that considering that garbage collection as a core service the taxes in Thode are at the same level for average properties as we experienced in 2008. This is despite that the CPI has seen an increase of about 5.5% in that period.

Consider these challenges in a community that has no growth in the tax base and only slightly over one hundred properties to carry the burden while we pursue the same services that larger communities have. These are real challenges and there are solutions, if we work together in the best interests of the community

With kind regards, Alan Thomarar

¹ estimate

² Population 6,500

³ Population 156 in 2006

DOCKS, SHORELINE AND USER FEES

Despite that you might hear conflicting stories, a \$100 per season fee was approved by Council during the budget meeting and is now required prior to the dock installation. This fee will help cover the cost of maintaining the boat launch, assist with shoreline repair and help with general village maintenance such as parks, the swim area and the staff and administrative support.

The intent is also that when our launch is repaired we will change the gate and key system and issue new secure keys free of charge to permitted dock owners. Residents requiring a key for the launch that don't have a dock will pay \$100.00 for their key each year. Boathouse owners will not be charged.

The hope was that this fair system would give relief to several residents that didn't have docks or use the launch at all. Please support your local community, and submit payment for your dock fees. Payment secures your slip and reserves right of first refusal for future use.

Dundurn Rural Water Utility

With the excess amount of rain last year, Thode, like other communities such as Saskatoon and the DRWU operated our water utility at a loss. We have a responsibility to ensure that the Thode water utility is a self sufficient operation. While the amount of water pumped has an impact on the water bill from DRWU, the DRWU base fee and the cost to operate the system remain a constant. To this end, we have applied for a \$5/1000 water rate increase which you will see on your next bill. *The June 30/11 resolution speaks to Oct billing.*

A REALLY BIG THANK YOU

To Cheryl Reid, Councilor for holding things together and Tim Reid and Tom Hedemann for looking after maintenance while Gregg is on leave. **THANK YOU VERY MUCH!!!!!!**

FROM OUR VILLAGE ADMINISTRATOR

Jessie Williams

We have some docks and lifts that have not been put into the water. These items are allowed to be stored on the Public Reserve Areas for winter, but must be removed in the spring to allow for maintenance of these areas. Please remove these items immediately and if you do not plan to put them in the water relocate them to your own property.

We have many items that have been located on the area behind the village. This area is owned by Ministry of Environment, but is within the village boundary. Section 406 of the Municipalities Act allows the municipality to deal with these items as unclaimed property. Personal property that comes into the possession or control of a municipality and that is not claimed by the owner becomes the personal property of the municipality, and the municipality may dispose of the personal property in any manner that the council directs.

If these items are yours, please remove them as we are planning to clean this area and all items will be removed.

THANK YOU to Jennifer Adolphe and her crew for organizing a great Canada Day celebration. The community needs more of these events and Council sincerely appreciates all the effort from the volunteers in the community.

Currently about 70% of the village is registered to receive Council minutes, updates and info by email. If you would like to receive this information and your newsletter electronically, please forward your email address to Jessie at

THODE@XPLORNET.CA

**OFFICE HOURS – PART TIME
MONDAY TO FRIDAY ONLY**

Please call Jessie to make an appointment.

BUILDING A BETTER COMMUNITY TOGETHER

– SPORT COURT AND ANGEL PARK FUNDRAISING CAMPAIGN CONTINUES

Updating our last report residents continue to donate generously with time and money to improve our community and enhance the services for our residents to enjoy. We have nearly \$35,000 and also are striving to raise another \$20,000 to the Community Building Fund. With some more help there is an opportunity to have a multi-use outdoor tennis court, basketball court and skating and hockey rink, facility upgrades and enhancements to Angel Park. **There is no money from taxes in the Community Building Fund. It is 100% funded from donations.**

The goal is to raise \$50,000 and apply for matching funds have a total of \$100,000 to bring more improvements to our public spaces and improved facilities for the enjoyment of our youth and families. If there are residents interested in helping this community initiative with labour or financially please call our Village office at 492-2259. Council is establishing a Facilities Planning Committee and is seeking your support to grow the Community Building Fund and build better facilities for families and our community.

**DONATIONS TO THE COMMUNITY BUILDING FUND ARE TAX DEDUCTIBLE
RECEIPTS PROVIDED**

New Speed Limit!

20 KPH

DRIVE CAREFULLY

WASTE WATER PROJECT UPDATE

- The new lagoon is now accessible and our agreement with the Town of Hanley is no longer required.
- Sewer collection line is ready for connections (not ready for use) Development permits will be required –
- All phases of the project are now in progress and when reviewing costs to date final costs are projected in the range of \$4,800.00 per residence.
- Our lift station is now installed, but further pressure tests and system approvals will be required before it can be cleared for use.
- Invoices for the Local Improvement have been sent – prepayment deadline is August 31, 2011.
- As we understand many residents are planning connections to the system and should be reminded that they are responsible for damages to municipal roads and road allowances
- To date 27 applications have been received for connection. Our administrator has assisted some residents with questions regarding individual connections even though the Village is not receiving any fees or compensation despite suggestions to the contrary.

GREY WATER LINES TO BE REMOVED

If you currently have grey water lines please disconnect them. Our water distribution system had recorded consumption of nearly a million gallons of water that is unaccounted for. Saskatoon District Health is very interested in knowing about holding tanks which are not “holding”. You could be required to correct any issues to comply with legislation.

Animal Control bylaw has been amended to include the requirement to register your pet. Please contact Jessie or see the website for a registration form.

Please be sure to keep an eye on your pets as there are Bylaw Enforcement Officers visiting the Villages and issuing fines.

ANGEL PARK FUNDRAISING CONTINUES

The work to develop the entire recreational area in the vicinity of the Village Centre has moved from ideas to actual planning. The concept being presented will take in the range of three to seven years to complete all phases. Council has reviewed concept drawings and is awaiting final changes to the plan. **The plan will be posted in the Village Centre in a few weeks.**

Some of the improvements will include:

- all season Sport Courts north of the Village Centre for basketball, skating, hockey, badminton and tennis
- tiered decking north and lakeside up to the Village Centre with deck lighting and natural gas heat supply for outdoor events and private functions,
- New public washroom facilities and change rooms in the area of the Sport Courts equipped with heat, power and washing services.
- upgraded children’s Water Park to be relocated to the southwest of the Village Centre
- Improved, landscaped and expanded beach area complete with larger swim area and expanded seating
- Covered Band shell adjacent to the beach area and children’s Waterpark for seating and shading
- Improvements to landscaping, stairways and accessibility for strollers and wheelchair access.

We are hoping to make this a better community with more amenities for our families to enjoy and we have established a Community Building Fund. We hope to advance the implementation of the plan without relying on taxes from our community. To date we have raised nearly \$35,000 and are applying for matching grants.

Your donation to the Angel Park Project is tax deductible. Please call 492-2259, and help us build a better community for our families

Council Meetings

Please note that Council meetings are held in the

**Village Centre at 7:00 pm the
Second Thursday of each month unless
otherwise notified pursuant to bylaws**

NEXT MEETING IS TUESDAY, AUGUST 23, 2011

Council Members

Mayor:	Alan Thomarat	492-4637
Deputy:	Cheryl Reid	492-2235
Councillor:	Julie Pineault	492-4941
Councillor:	Lorne Cherry	492-4973
Councillor:	Rob Unruh	492-2494

Administration:

Jessie Williams 492-2259

Facilities & Operations:

Gregg Spearey on leave
Call Jessie at 492-2259

EMAIL: THODE@XPLORNET.CA

WEBSITE: WWW.RESORTVILLAGEOFTHODE.CA

VILLAGE CENTRE RENTAL INFORMATION:

Resident Rental Fee - \$100 plus \$250 damage deposit.

Damage deposit will be refunded if the Centre is cleaned after use.

For bookings contact 492-2259.

LOCAL IMPROVEMENT LEVY - SEWER SYSTEM

The Local Improvement fee is solely allocated to the costs incurred to install the collection line. As the village administrator and the current mayor are not coordinating the installation of the sewer lines into the homes, there is no administration fee being passed on to property owners via the Local Improvement Levy. If there are questions about fees or taxes that you need explained please call the office at 492-2259 and Jessie will answer your questions.

Council Assignments

Finance and Administration

Mayor Thomarat

- * Planning and development
- * Accounting/Treasurer
- * Communications (external)
- * Newsletter/Website support
- * Waste Water Management

Deputy Mayor Reid

- * Planning and development
- * Bylaw Review
- * Water and DRWU representative
- * Committee liaison and recruitment

Community Relations

Councillor Pineault

- * Public Relations (internal)
- * Social Committee
- * Fire Department
- * Dock Management/Fishing huts

Parks and Facilities

Councillor Unruh

- * Village Centre and Playground
- * Road Maintenance/Parking
- * Snow Fence/Ice Rink
- * Park and Village Maintenance (Greenscape Committee)

Utility Services and Environment

Councillor Cherry

- * Garbage and Recycling
- * Shore line preservation
- * Animal Control
- * Emergency Measures

For more regarding Council, Committees, Council meetings and minutes please visit our website at www.resortvillageofthode.ca