

## Lack of quorum sinks Springbank utilities proposal

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### **New utility strategy to start from square one**

A proposal to allocate a private company the exclusive rights to provide water and sewer to new developments in Springbank is now dead, after five councilors announced they could not vote on the item, which prevents council from making any present or future decision regarding the specific plan.

“We have lost our quorum,” said Reeve Al Schule after only four councilors remained in council chambers. The nine-member council needs at least five members to reach quorum.

“We can’t continue debating items D-7”

At the regular council meeting of December 7, the multi-million utilities proposal presented by Terasen Utility Services vanished from Rocky View’s radar screens, as Spring bank residents developers and local water providers attended the meeting to watch council’s debate on a staff recommendation for a two-month postponement of a decision on the controversial public-private partnership.

The project had been on the books since May, when Rock View utilities staff declared Terasen the preferred proponent.

“It is over,” said Chief Administrative Officer Ray Clark.

“Unfortunately, due to a lack of quorum the item has to be restarted.”

The glitch effectively kills all proceedings from the Rocky View issued its request last January calling for proposals from utilities companies to provide water and sewer to new developments in Springbank and area. In May, a team made up of Rocky View utilities service staff announced it had chosen Terasen as the preferred proponent, and submitted a recommendation to council to sign an agreement with the Vancouver based company.

Immediately after the recommendation for postponement was filed away, Clr. Brenda (Young) Goode moved to direct Rocky View’s Utility Services Manager Frank Misura to bring back a report on an interim Springbank utilities strategy to be discussed at the December 14 council meeting. Deputy Reeve Lois Habberfield introduced an amendment specifying that the report must contain more than one option for council’s consideration. The motion was passed unanimously.

**Approval of an interim utilities strategy could provide any opportunity for development projects that have been delayed some for up to four years. The reasons for delay was due to the crafting of the Central Springbank Area Structure Plan and the freeze was kept while a utilities servicing strategy was designed and approved.**

The unexpected outcome began early in the afternoon, as soon as Reeve Al Schule called in Misura to present a recommendation to postpone a decision on the Terasen proposal.

Area Clr. Gordon Branson said he had been advised no to vote, after publicly announcing his opposition to the proposal during his electoral campaign. He then chose to leave because of perceived conflict of interest.

Councilors Earl Solberg, Greg Boehlke and Gerry Neustaedter announced that having been elected in October, they were choosing to abstain, as they did not feel they had enough knowledge on the proposal, not having attended a public hearing on the proposal, which was in September.

“I was not part of the hearing,” said Neustaedter before leaving the room.

“I do not feel (able) to vote either ways,” said Boehlke.

Clr. Paul McLean, who is a second-term councilor and attended the public hearing in September, announced he could not vote because of pecuniary interest, as a relative of his owns Terasen shares.

Misura was to present council with a report recommending postponement of debate of a decision on the matter for 60 days. According to Misura’s report, substantial opposition remained to the Terasen proposal, which had been in front of council and recommended for approval in September.

“The overall feedback has been generally supportive of a regional solution but not necessarily of the concept presently proposed by staff,” wrote Misura in his report.

“There seems to be public resistance to private company ownership of the utilities.”

Misura further wrote that “an understandable business plan needs to be in place as well as a contract that give ample assurances to the Municipality, the public and the development and the industry.”

Misura also mentioned in his report that five meetings have been held with the public, two meetings were held with the Urban Development Institute and with local developers, and one meeting had taken place as well with the Civil Engineers of Alberta in Calgary.

“More preliminary steps are required in order to close the knowledge gap for all concerned,” he wrote in his report to council.

In his report, which was not read to council because of the lack of quorum, Misura proposed to provide information to the public, to developers, provide alternatives, apply for a water diversion license and a wastewater permit, and study different options to finance the infrastructure, in an eight-point “Work Program for Springbank regional Utility.”

The Springbank Community Planning Association complained about the lack of public participation on a proposal that they said could impact all Rocky View residents because of its size.

Representatives of Westridge Utilities Inc. and North Springbank Water Co-op Ltd. Said the capabilities of the local service providers and been disregarded, as the municipality never contacted them to negotiate an eventual participation of local water utilities in the process.

After the meeting, representatives of Terasen refrained from making comments on the turn of events.

“We do not have any comment until be understand the intentions of council,” said Doug Knight, general manager of “Terasen Utility Services”