

Hello, all TOWN OF STE ANNE residents,

Oct 14, 2022

From: Yvan St Vincent- Deputy Mayor and incoming Mayor

I wanted to take a moment to introduce myself to everyone who doesn't know me. With no election for Mayor in the Town, I was unsure exactly what to say or do during this campaigning time, but, after hearing from folks and reading comments, I feel I should share some information with TOWN residents. I would have normally shared this in a forum or by going door to door. First off, I am truly excited to work in my new role as mayor after the October 26, 2022 election. I've enjoyed being involved the last 8 years on Town Council and I look forward to 4 more years with a new team of Councillors. I'd love to believe that no one else went for Mayor or that we only have 5 folks running for Council because everyone is thrilled with how things are going, but I know that would be naïve of me to think. I must admit that the "apathy" around the election is concerning but it's consistent with what we've seen with the Police Board, CDC (Chamber of Commerce), Library Board, Museum Board, volunteer firefighters, etc., where it's been a challenge to get residents involved. I just ask that everyone remember that those running for Council are residents just like you and I, they have families and other jobs. Attempting to join Town Council is done because folks want to get involved in their community and try to make a difference. Please remember that when meeting with them or speaking of them on various platforms. I encourage you to be questioning but fair, remember out of 3000 residents only 5 chose to run so please respect their courage for putting their names out there for that, it's not that easy to do. We/they don't have magic solutions for complex problems but every Councillor and Mayor I've ever worked with wants the best for their residents, even if you don't always agree with their decisions.

At this time of year, words like "transparency, development, dedication, etc" are often thrown around and I do believe folks running are being truthful, however, those words mean different things to everyone so it's important to drill down to get a better understanding when we use those types of words. I want to be clear that I am not in support of any one potential Councillor over the other, so anything I share below is to help share information on common points of discussion, so you have accurate information about the Town of Ste. Anne. I've been on Council for 8 years so anything I share reflects my time on Council.

1. Over the last 8 years, we've added a skatepark, resurfaced and upgraded the tennis courts, added a new splash pad, a new outdoor rink (hope to concrete soon to be used more in summer), Phoenix Cheer Athletics (support to have them come to Ste Anne), renovated stage and paved road area, and ensured parks are part of new developments. So, when folks say "more activities for all age groups or for teens" - what is it exactly they want to see? The statement of "we need more recreation" doesn't help serve as a direction, so what exactly are folks looking for in Ste Anne? Who is ready to help make it happen? This takes Provincial grants that require a volunteer base that also raises funds along with Town matched funding contributions. As you may know, Minor Hockey Association, Soccer Association, Baseball Association, Lions Club, Comité Culturel, etc. only exist because volunteers care enough to invest their time. Nothing can run by Council/Town alone. Please let us know which community has mastered offering more for teenagers (or any ages) and we'd gladly study what they offer, and, if we can make any of it happen, we will. I work in Lorette where they have a very active "family fun group" and they plan holiday activities, community/family events, movie nights,

their version of Dawson Trail Days, etc. The difference is they have over 50 volunteers on this committee, and this is something we honestly lack as a resource to offer more in Town. The same would go for Richer Rodeo, which has an amazing group of volunteers, and we see how successful that event is each year. We have a strong Recreation Services Manager who just needs volunteers to run with. If you want to see something grow in Ste. Anne, we need you to join and help plan and run these events. We are always actively recruiting in all areas, so if this is something of interest to you, please email me at yvanstvincent@outlook.com and I'll gladly put you in contact with someone who can use your help or leadership. Recreation is a money "loser" but worth every penny as it's invaluable to our community, but we need to know what folks want and who can volunteer to help and/or lead.

2. Arena upgrades/recreation: The arena is falling apart and has been for years; it's only due to the great work of Public Works/Operation that it's still even open as they keep putting lipstick on a pig. The Town loses on average \$100 K a year on the arena/recreation and that entire deficit falls on TOWN rate payers, even if 78% of the users are from the RMs of Ste. Anne and Taché. The RM of Ste. Anne contributes 40 K a year (which covers the operating of all Town recreation, not just the arena) and the RM of Taché contributes \$0, yet the operating cost of the arena/recreation is \$700K a year.... When folks demand upgrades on the arena, that would 100% come at the cost of higher taxes on Town residents, which has left Council with very difficult decisions on how to handle this declining "asset". On top of the 100K a year loss, it needs at least 160K in upgrades to bring the ice plant up to date for 2023. Where is that suppose to come from? We find it difficult to keep putting this entire burden on the Town of Ste. Anne residents, as we are still paying the last debenture for the arena upgraded dressing rooms until 2024. PS. This is why the canteen has not been upgraded, frankly we have far bigger issues than the canteen as I've stated above. I know some suggestions have been made to open the arena earlier to make more money, and that simply isn't possible with our ancient machinery, as it would actually cost us more to open earlier, when it's still warm outside. In the past, we have suggested increasing the cost (user fee) for non town residents but our recreation agreement with the RM of Ste. Anne has a non-resident clause that threatens the RM to pull their 40 K if a non-resident user fee is implemented. The honest truth is, at this rate, we will not be able to open our arena one day. We just aren't sure when that day will be, but it's coming soon unless a major influx of money is put into it, and our dilemma is "where does that money come from"? We have financial plans for all areas of our town as part of our asset management. We don't want to be caught off guard as to what upcoming costs are coming so we plan ahead for those as to not raise taxes each time purchases are needed. That isn't the case for the arena, as we haven't been able to make up a solid asset management plan because there are many things needed, and we aren't getting enough from our users from outside of Town. I would love to hear any feedback or ideas on this matter - yvanstvincent@outlook.com
3. New town office: our current monthly payment is the same as the rent we paid at the old, small, outdated office. Council worked hard on a plan to dispose of assets to raise half the funds of the new building to lessen the burden on our residents. Now we are paying that monthly payment into an asset double in size we will own. This move to the new Town office has not impacted residents and their taxes by collecting additional funds. Please email me at yvanstvincent@outlook.com if you want further information on this topic.

4. Community center for gatherings: we are in agreement with this being a large need for our Town, however, location, finding group/board to run it and funds to make this happen are an issue, as it's an expensive proposition to build a new building. Much like a new arena, it would be ideal to build a whole new complex to encompass all these things, however this is very costly and local industry sponsorship funds are needed, provincial funding, local town funding, to make these projects happen, which can be hard to come by without large industry, but this is something we need to continue to advocate for. It would be easy to levy an extra tax on our residents for the next 20 years to build these structures, but it also seems unfair to continue to put that burden strictly on TOWN residents when we know others are using it. If you want to discuss this further, please contact me at yvanstvincent@outlook.com.
5. Moving to new garbage system was done for 2 main reasons: #1 - to ensure health and safety of our public works employees, and #2 - equity, meaning we all pay the same rate for this service so we should all receive the same service. We have some houses who were consistently putting out 2 to 5 times more garbage than their neighbours which increased our tipping fees at the dump. However, those folks putting out more refuse each week are paying the same as those who put out 1 bag a week. In many cases, we are also aware of residents from outside our Town bringing their refuse into Town (to friends, family, etc.) which again increased our costs at the dump. For those reasons, this new system ensures that everyone gets to "put out" the same amount of trash each week which means each home is paying the same for the same service and one resident isn't subsidizing another. Of course, we still have a couple of bulk waste garbage days a year for spring/fall cleaning times, where residents are allowed to put out more than their bin for bulk pick up. Residents who consistently produce more trash than the provided bin have the opportunity to request more bins, and of course, that comes at a cost to them and not spread out to every other resident as it was in the past, we find this system to be more equitable and "fair". To discuss further please contact me at yvanstvincent@outlook.com.
6. Municipalities/Towns don't run or build grocery stores or day cares, but we do have a role in trying to entice businesses, etc., into our Town and we have been actively trying to do this in many areas. The truth is, we don't have an active Chamber of Commerce (C of C). In other communities where you see a lot of growth, it is always led by an active C of C, and we've been trying to get one going for the past 8 years with no results. Chamber of Commerce are also the ones who put on debates at election time, promote the Town and other things that they deem important to growing their town and providing resources to the residents. These things are not usually done by Town Council in isolation, which is why we need community members to join and be active in these boards, especially C of C in this area. I can assure you that if an entrepreneur has or does approach us, we are always ready to listen and provide incentives to encourage them to build in Town. If this topic interests you more, or you want to join our C of C, or have any ideas, please contact me at yvanstvincent@outlook.com.
7. Communication: we feel we try to use every avenue possible to communicate our events and information, yet we always hear "I didn't know until too late it was happening". What do you suggest we do to share information to as many people as possible? We had a push a few years ago to sign up for our Town newsletter (via email) so that information could be shared and we had less than 100 residents sign up. I really do want to hear your suggestions in this area so we can make sure everyone is informed, please contact me at yvanstvincent@outlook.com.

8. Dog park: We all want one and have explored many options, the issue is the Town owns very little land (plus we know very few folks want this right beside their home) and when we've tried to purchase land, it was cost prohibitive (would have to raise taxes). This is the same for our baseball diamonds, which are in disrepair. We are ready to upgrade them but are land locked and when we've tried to buy land, the cost was untouchable. I know these facilities need upgrades, but it has been hard to do those things as we've maintained the mill rate for the past 8 years as to keep our taxes down. It would be easy for us to raise taxes to upgrade the arena, baseball diamonds, build more sidewalks, build a dog park, etc., but with any choice we make, some residents are happy (well maybe not happy ha) to pay those increased taxes and some are furious. What we need, is resident involvement in these Town discussions to help steer Council in directions that most residents agree with and can support, both financially and with volunteerism. Please contact me at yvanstvincent@outlook.com to discuss further.
9. Amalgamation: No plans from the Towns perspective to pursue this. We are hoping we can work with the RM to strengthen our agreements for the services we provide through our town facilities. I'm not pro or against amalgamation. I believe it's our duty to listen to all options to improve our Town for residents, but just clarifying that amalgamation is something that is not currently being discussed at our table.
10. Policing: We have the best service in the Province of Manitoba. Several other RM's have requested proposals to provide service to them. This would allow our department to grow and at the same time decrease the cost to our town residents to keep our great policing. Nothing is firm at this time, but something we continue to explore. Email yvanstvincent@outlook.com if you want to discuss more or join the Police Board.
11. On that note, we are always looking for more folks to join our Library Board, CDC (Chamber of Commerce), Dawson Trail Days Committee and any new board you feel may benefit our residents. Please contact me at yvanstvincent@outlook.com. If any ideas or interest in joining!
12. I also intend to hold office hours at the Town office for residents to come visit with me who prefer to share their ideas or concerns in person instead of email or on the phone. I will share those office hours with everyone once I take office after the election. If it isn't clear, the point of this information sharing was to be as informative with everyone and to provide accurate details on topics that often come up. If there is a topic not mentioned here and you want more information, please let me know. The Town has worked on a plan the last 10 years to upgrade all roads, sidewalks, public works equipment, add 3 parks across town without increasing the mill rate, this is due in part to good planning and development investment. The truth is, a lot of the information I shared isn't easy to say or hear. We have some declining assets in many of our recreation areas and difficult decisions will need to be made sooner than later. We lack volunteerism. There is no lack of ideas, but there is lack of human resources (volunteers) to make those ideas come to life and this is where we need to hear from local residents (Town and RM) who want to get involved!

Excited and future Mayor of Ste Anne, can't wait to hear from many of you!!!