

Okanagan Valley's big city mayors meet

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Transit, water and environmental permitting topped the agenda at the latest quarterly meeting of the mayors of the Okanagan's four largest municipalities.

The mayors of the the four municipalities, all members of the Inter-Municipal Services Advisory Board, meet quarterly to work on common municipal issues.

Kelowna Mayor Walter Gray, Vernon's Robert Sawatzky, West Kelowna's Doug Findlater and Penticton's Dan Ashton met April 20 and discussed the directions to take for 2012.

"By continuing to work together, the four municipalities are able to address areas of mutual concern, which will be a benefit to all the citizens of the Okanagan Valley," said Ashton.

During the meeting, the group discussed partnership opportunities with B.C. Transit, which is considering implementing a three-person panel to work with municipalities on planning. The mayors agreed the larger centres would like to work in tandem with their provincial transit partner, making the panel available to assist smaller centres with planning.

The mayors also noted they are looking forward to the Okanagan Basin Water Board's strategic planning session scheduled for early June, and would call on municipal peers at the coming Southern Interior Local Government Association convention in Revelstoke to offer the OBWB suggestions and recommendations for consideration during its planning process.

At the meeting, Ashton also raised the issue of environmental permitting issues relating to the reconstruction of streamside infrastructure, such as dike systems.

It was agreed that Penticton will take the lead on the matter, writing a letter to senior government to review the lengthy and often costly process required before municipalities are able to conduct needed repairs.

Gray, Sawatzky, Findlater and Ashton also signed two joint letters at the meeting—one to B.C. Premier Christy Clark seeking funding support for private landowners for forest fire mitigation and one to all member municipalities of the Union of BC Municipalities seeking support for a change in UBCM's allocation of the regional significant project funding under the Gas Tax Agreement, calling for a move from tier two to tier one status. That would allow municipalities more opportunity to pursue projects that meet individual municipal needs, say the Okanagan mayors.

In addition, Ongoing concerns that impact the four municipalities were also

discussed, including enforcement of lakeshore zoning regulations and the new RCMP policing agreement for B.C.

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