

CHRISTMAS LIGHT-UP

Peachland puts cheers on ice

Councillors OK with free food, pass on beer tent

By DOROTHY BROTHERTON
Westside Weekly

It's never too soon to look ahead to Christmas, and that's exactly what Peachland council is doing by approving a rule that no alcohol is to be sold at the Christmas Light-Up in 2014.

For the first time, the 2013 Light-Up was hosted by the town's chamber of commerce with supervision by Cheryl Wiebe, director of community services, rather than wholly by town staff.

It was a one-time trial and is being evaluated now. Discussion among councillors focused on if it's appropriate to introduce beer gardens for this event, and council nixed the idea.

"We decided no alcohol. Cheryl will come back to us with a full report," said Coun. Vern Moberg.

Coun. Cindy Fortin added, "I'm glad to see this. I don't think beer gardens should be allowed at this kind of event."

Council also discussed the need for emphasis on families and children, and

the idea of continuing free food. Council endorsed the free food tradition, while discussing the cost and people required to provide it.

It was noted fire pits are always supervised by municipal staff.

Asking the chamber to host the 2014 Light-Up was endorsed by council, but not without some caution.

The arrangement is subject to full consultation with mayor and council, and a plan is to be presented by the chamber by the end of September.

Fortin had earlier raised worries about the municipality giving up control of the Light-Up.

Fortin said, "I'm concerned that we would even consider not doing the free food. One of my fears was that the Light-Up would become commercialized. This is a local event, and we ought to keep it a community event."

She said if food is sold, some vendors may not even be from Peachland.

Final decisions will be made in September.

WATER

Politicians take on mussels

Lakes pay hefty price to clean up mussels

By DOROTHY BROTHERTON
Westside Weekly

Tiny marine mussels don't pay much attention to laws, so you can't exactly outlaw them, but you can put rules in place for people aimed at keeping invasive marine life from ruining our lakes.

Both West Kelowna and Peachland have lined up with the majority of Okanagan communities calling on senior governments to do something about those nasty little mussels that threaten to wreck havoc on our lakes.

Originally from Europe, invasive zebra and quagga mussels have made a mess of areas in the Great Lakes and are spreading westward, hitching rides on recreational boats.

"The mussels are an increasing concern if they are transferred into the Okanagan on somebody's boat. They multiply at an amazing rate and clog up infrastructure," Peachland Mayor Keith Fielding said.

Money to clean up the mess and repair clogged water intakes, pumps and motors is estimated at \$43 million annually.

The Okanagan Basin Water Board is leading the charge, calling on provincial and federal governments to



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Zebra and quagga mussels are fingernail-sized mollusks that can attach easily to objects and clog pipes of water treatment and power plants and disrupt ecosystems.

legislate some kind of inspection of boats at border crossings. The federal government controls waterways, but border crossings are under jurisdiction of both federal and provincial governments.

Coun. Terry Condon of Peachland said inspections are certainly not without precedent.

"You can't go far in Washington or Idaho pulling a boat behind your vehicle without somebody pulling you over and going over your boat. This is not unreasonable," said Condon.

Besides ruining infrastructure, the mussels can deplete food sources for fish and produce toxins that kill fish and birds and contaminate drinking water sources, according to the OBWB. As the razor-sharp shells

spread across beaches, tourists stop coming.

West Kelowna Mayor Doug Findlater, who chairs the water basin board, said prevention will be much less expensive than clean-up.

He said the invasive species will impact fisheries, tourism, agriculture, private water intakes, maintenance on the Bennett Bridge, docks and boat lifts, and a need to refit drinking water intakes and wastewater and storm water outfalls with chlorine ejectors to keep the mussels out.

"This could be the biggest (and most avoidable) hit on taxpayers and the environment that we've seen in our valley," said Findlater.

Anna Warwick Sears, executive director of OBWB said, "It only takes one boat infested with the mussels, launching in our waters, to cause serious harm to our lakes. We don't want them here in the Okanagan. They grow like crazy."

B.C. now has fines and actual jail time for importing the mussels, but no inspection stations. The federal government has legislation pending that would allow Canada Border Service Agency staff to stop boats from entering Canada from the U.S. unless they've been inspected.

"OBWB has decided to try to persuade them (the senior governments) to take this seriously," said Fielding

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