

BOB MILLER
City editor

Local news

Tumbler election lively

by MALCOLM CURTIS
Staff reporter

Old rivals are squaring off again in this month's battle for the mayor's chair in Tumbler Ridge.

Joy Davies, a 39-year-old businesswoman and former alderman, is running against Mayor Mike Caisley, 45, who defeated Davies in the last mayoral election two years ago by 70 votes.

While their campaigns are under way, an aura of uncertainty still hangs over Tumbler Ridge, the northeastern B.C. community, as the haggling continues between Quintette Coal, the town's biggest employer, its banks and its Japanese customers on coal prices.

With the delay in a deal between the parties, originally expected last spring, now forestalled until Nov. 15 (the latest deadline) Tumbler's economic growth has stagnated.

Davies charges Caisley with not doing enough to promote the town, for attract businesses, build community facilities and lower the cost of living there.

For his part, Caisley defends his record of sound government during difficult times, expresses confidence that Quintette will reach an agreement on coal prices, and sees a prosperous future for the town.

The mayor, a mine personnel supervisor, is running on his record and he lists a number of accomplishments.

In the past two years a teen centre has been set up, the town's Northern Lites community college campus has been expanded and \$1 million has been secured from the province for a paved airport (construction is expected next year), he said.

Court services have been introduced (starting next month) saving residents the time-consuming drive to Chetwynd or Dawson Creek and the town's finances have been brought under control.

Davies challenges Caisley's record, saying not enough has been done to attract new shops to Tumbler, while town residents continue to pay the highest natural gas prices in the province.

More than \$8 million in consumer dollars seeps out of the community to other communities, she said.

The National Energy Board recently turned down a bid by West-coast Transmission to buy Northland Utilities, the Edmonton-owned company that provides natural gas to the town.

Northland says its high utility rates result from Tumbler's population not being as large as originally forecast.

If the sale had gone ahead, West-coast was expected to reduce gas bills by absorbing production costs through its province-wide network.

"Our municipal government has failed us and must accept some of the blame," Davies said, arguing that Caisley did not appear at NEB hearings to represent the town.

The mayor responded that he has lobbied the provincial government and Prince George-Peace River MP Frank Oberle extensively on the issue and that the NEB ruling was a surprise to all concerned.

Davies has made building a swimming pool in the town one of her central planks. "Living in the north and in a town with so many children, the swimming pool should have been one of the first recreational structures in place."

Tumbler Ridge residents will have a chance to judge the respective merits of the candidates at public forums on Wednesday and Thursday.



Park project

The finishing touches on a new foot bridge at Wilkins Regional Park at Miworth are being completed by an Intersect crew. Here, project supervisor Jim Callahan peels away a last strip of bark. Intersect

is a federally and provincially-financed society through which young offenders are encouraged to compensate their victims.

Citizen photo by Lisa Murdoch

LITTERED SIDEWALKS, SHABBY BUILDINGS

Aid asked for dirty downtown

by BERNICE TRICK
Staff reporter

Dirty, littered sidewalks are killing business in the downtown area of Prince George, says the Town-center Business Association.

To prove its point, at Monday's city council meeting TBA representatives showed city council members a video of downtown streets laden with rubbish, litter, paper, cigarette butts, and puddles of anything one cares to imagine.

"When you look at this, it brings up the question: 'Where are we going?'" said TBA spokesman Ray Kandola.

"If this continues we're only going one way — downhill," he said. "When one looks up it's not much more exciting than looking down."

The condition of the buildings is getting worse and the stores are becoming "more empty every day", he said.

He pointed out such conditions do not attract new business, tourists or fill up the parking lots.

"It's easy to expect merchants to look after it, but it's (the problem)

City council

so far gone, it's hard to correct," Kandola said. "The whole town should be concerned."

He requested help from council, suggesting the city obtain a machine to clean the litter and snow from sidewalks and provide better lighting in some areas where he believes families fear to tread after dark.

Mayor John Backhouse told the representatives council shares the concern and is aware of the downtown area problem.

"We must find a solution," he said, adding the city engineer has been asked to look into some form of cleaning the sidewalks. As part of the solution he said property owners should ensure their portion of sidewalk is cleaned every morning and that buildings are maintained.

Although Kandola blamed part of the litter on cigarette smokers, Ald. Monica Becott told council outdoor ashtrays should be provided.

She said she believes the city needs to spend some money on a machine to clean the streets and sidewalks.

Ald. Colin Kinsley said the problem stems mainly from the night-life downtown. "What can we do? Our policing has been stepped up to the point where police costs are taking up to 31 per cent of our budget."

Ald. Steve Sintich, believing the main reason for the problem is absentee landlords, suggested TCBA contact owners across the country to participate in an improvement program.

"I know from those rental dollars that go to absentee landlords in other areas, no money comes back...not even for paint," he thundered.

"Has a letter gone out to say their property stinks?" he asked.

In the end, council agreed to refer the matter to the downtown planning strategy committee, a sub-committee of the Prince George Region Development Corporation, requesting it look at the problems of cleanliness, lighting and snow clearing and then bring recommendations and priorities to council.

The TBA group asked council to include new Christmas decorations

in its 1988 budget to replace those "tattered and worn" in use now.

It was noted that merchants on Third Avenue have donated \$1,000 to purchase colored lights this year to brighten up canopies along their street.

Truck collides with 2 horses

A 23-year-old Summit Lake man escaped injury after his truck struck two horses on Highway 97 this morning about five miles north of Summit Lake.

One horse was killed instantly and the other had to be destroyed. The truck rolled over and caught fire, police said.

The name of the driver involved in the accident was not available.

FIFTH AND CARNEY

Rezoning rejected

Holding a second public hearing to rezone property at Fifth Avenue and Carney Street to highway commercial from residential zoning didn't work out well for the owners.

A rezoning application by Glen and Lillian Mooney was defeated at third reading Monday by city council after considering three recommendations by city committees to defeat the zoning bylaw.

The technical planning committee, advisory planning committee and development services were against commercial zoning in view of the number of gas stations and convenience stores now frequenting the area.

Although the owners had no special plans for the five-lot residential site at this time, council felt rezoning would leave the door open for an additional gas station or convenience store.

During the public hearing, Al James, owner of One Stop Foods, opposed the rezoning, fearing the site could be purchased by a large franchise such as AM-PM Foods or 7-Eleven Stores.

Walter Bitz, operator of the Fifth and Carney Gulf service station, also opposed rezoning, saying four different gas services on the corner is enough.

The couple's original application requesting highway commercial zoning on June 17, 1985 was approved to third reading, but was subject to a restrictive covenant prohibiting the development of a gas bar and convenience store.

The application never did receive final reading because the couple never agreed to the restrictive covenant, but instead requested a new hearing in light of new development on the corner.

Mooney asked for equal consideration granted others like One Stop Foods so council granted a second hearing on the matter.

The Mooneys, who now live in Kelowna, told council they were having problems utilizing the property as residential land and hoped rezoning would make it easier to sell.



Teen line

Citizen photo by Brock Gable

Crisis Line co-ordinator Tina Wingfield assists Mayor John Backhouse during the official opening Monday of the teen crisis line at the Community Services Building. Crisis lines are being manned by 25 volunteers from 4 to 11 p.m. Wednesday to Sunday at 564-TEEN (8336). The line was established here as a result of high numbers of teenagers needing help with problems and the high number of teen suicides during 1985. Financing for the project has been provided by the provincial government, Shriners-CKPG Telethon and the local Telephone Employees Community Fund.

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