

Well drilling fees will bring in well over \$1 million in 2012

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MVG Staff

Fees paid by oil and gas companies to Mountain View County for well drilling activities have already exceeded \$1 million this year, councillors heard during last week's Policies and Priorities meeting. Greg Wiens, director of corporate services, presented a financial update for the county as

of the end of September.

"It is a significant amount of revenue," said Wiens. "We have received a lot of revenue in October and November, so we have well over a million dollars in revenue from our well drilling tax in 2012."

As of Sept. 30, the county had received \$1,030,953 from well drilling taxes.

"That revenue was slated to go to reserves and as we

go through the year-end process there will probably be some discussion as to where some of those extra funds could go," he said.

"We have been getting a lot of revenue, but we've also seen the impacts of a lot of oil and gas activities as well."

Coun. Paddy Munro said, "I see that impact in Division 6. I see what happens with all that oil and gas activity,

the way the roads are basically destroyed."

CAO Tony Martens said, "Our concern is what is the future impact on those roads and when is that going to show up."

In 2011 well drilling fees brought in about \$435,000.

Road inspection fees have also exceeded the budgeted amounts and are four times the revenue at this time last year, said Wiens.

"That indicates that our people are out there more and are collecting revenue related to the actual road inspections," he said.

As well as the well drilling fees, the update also includes the following:

- Traffic fine revenue is expected to be close to budget expectations. The penalty amounts in September were higher than anticipated in the budget.

- Redesignation fees are projected to be \$10,000 short of the \$90,000 budget but still well above the 2011 levels.

- Solid waste collection fees are tracking to be \$45,000 ahead of budget.

- Equipment net revenue is showing a net cost of \$572,000 so far.

- Gravel road blading expenses are at 35 per cent of budget and slightly above last year's levels.

- Hard surface road expenses are 41 per cent of budget and \$100,000 above last year.

- Snow removal costs are \$760,000 so far this year. This leaves 63 per cent of the budget for the remainder of the year.

"This is below last year's amount of \$1.8 million," he said.

BUNKER

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Warkentin's bunker, along with another he owned in part with businessman

Victor Pobihushchy, were two Springbrook-area facilities decommissioned by the federal government after they had outgrown their usefulness. Military men tell of years of diligent top-secret duties performed within the confines of these bunkers, and quite a few practical jokes along the way.

Warkentin says he had originally snapped up the historical treasures to preserve what was once thought of as part of Canada's best hope in the event of a Soviet attack, from falling into the wrong hands.

Rumours of Hell's Angels interest in purchasing the main facility near the airport were more a function of the shrewd business tactics of his partner Pobihushchy than reality, he said.

"He wanted a good price for it," Warkentin said. "He wouldn't tell me the half of what was going on."

Following the sales from the Crown to Pobihushchy and Warkentin, Nelson said there were allegations that criminal elements approached the owners with an interest to purchase the bunkers.

"On June 15, 1997, the purchasers of the Penhold bunkers wrote a letter to the Solicitor General of Canada and stated that they were approached by parties who may have wanted to purchase the bunkers from them for illegal purposes. Media reported in August of 1997 the Hell's Angels outlaw motorcycle gang had reportedly offered US \$1.3 million to purchase the HQ bunker," she said.

Public Works and Government Services Canada paid \$750,000 to buy back the headquarters bunker and \$500,000 to buy back the communications bunker, "in the interest of security and public safety," she said.

- With files from Lea Smaldon

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