

23 March 2022

Tanya Thorn et Town Council Okotoks
PO Box 20 Stn. Main
5 Elizabeth Street
Okotoks, AB T1S 1K1

Ref: House Fire - [REDACTED]
Lot/Unit-Block-Plan [REDACTED]
Roll No. [REDACTED]

My name is Graham Coulter, my wife Wendy, and I owned the home located at [REDACTED] Sheep River Cove that was consumed by fire on March 15th, 2022.

The purpose of this letter is two-fold. First and foremost, as per your Governance Process, Policy No. GP-F-2.2, paragraph 2. "Property Tax Levy Cancellation policy". I am requesting from town council, consideration for tax relief for our above mentioned property until the house is rebuilt and we can reinhabit the home; as I understand it, this could easily be up to December of this year.

Secondly, I wanted to express our disappointment regarding the response from the town. We are both retirees and this has been an extremely traumatic event. We have lost almost everything, and although the response from our family, immediate neighbourhood and friends as well as the entire Okotoks community at large has been completely overwhelming, and supportive, we feel the town could have been more helpful.

On Friday March 18, 2022, I went to city hall, front counter to inquire about what could be expected, and next steps regarding any relief from taxes and utilities. The woman at the front counter was helpful, and contacted someone in your tax office and attempted to reach someone in the utilities department to assist me in my inquiry. No one from either department would see me or talk to me, but instead I was handed 2 business cards, for me to call, one for [REDACTED] and one for [REDACTED]. I called both but was only able to reach [REDACTED] who said she wasn't completely certain what the policy was, but told me that I would have to petition town council for any tax relief. I could not reach anyone by phone from the utilities group. A subsequent email sent to the email address on the utilities business card was responded to asking if I had called the town to turn off the water? I attempted to call them, and again no one answers the phone. In fairness, the following Monday, I did receive an email confirming the water was off and that utilities and invoices would be stopped until services were re-started. Lastly, I received an email from [REDACTED] on Mar 22 with a link to the taxation policy, GP-F-2.2, paragraph 2. "Property Tax Levy Cancellation", which I referred to above.

Although some may believe this to be a reasonable response from town personnel, the expectation that we were expected to chase down utilities information far more readily available to town personnel than ourselves, and that we must beg town council for tax relief on what is now an uninhabitable lot while dealing with the complete loss of our home and belongings is poor to say the least.

Both our neighbour and us experienced the same response from town staff. It is our hope when traumatic events such as this occur, that public facing employees be aware that under these stressful times their actions or lack thereof have an impact, leaving us feeling re-victimized. A simple “let me check and get back to you” with a call-back confirming things are looked after, or what to do next, would have been a significantly better response.

I look forward to a favourable response concerning tax relief.

Thank-you

Graham Coulter

Wendy Coulter