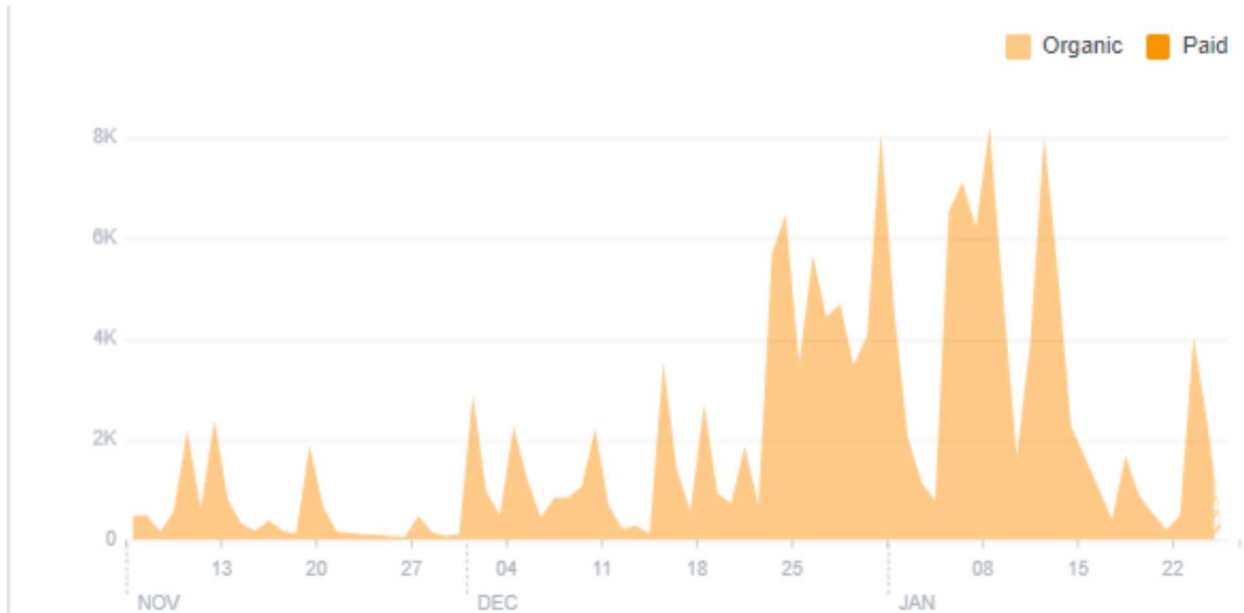


Communications & IT Report – November 2020

Communications:

Facebook Activity – November 5, 2020 to January 22, 2021



Top Posts:

<p>Nov 12, 2020 – 2,711 Views – 236 Engagements</p> <p>North Peace Housing Foundation Published by John Smith • November 12, 2020 •</p> <p>Bargains in Bluesky. 304 - 10 St. Bluesky, AB - \$120,000.00. A little paint and attention and this one is ready to move in! - Visit https://www.nphf.ca/11003.html for more details and a 360 Tour... See More</p> <p>Homes for Sale Bargains in Bluesky!</p> <p>3 bedroom - \$120,000</p> <p>6 Bedroom - \$75,000</p> <p>2,711 People Reached 236 Engagements Boost Post</p> <p>2 7 Shares</p>	<p>Nov 19, 2020 – 1,953 Views - 194 Engagements</p> <p>North Peace Housing Foundation Published by John Smith • November 19, 2020 •</p> <p>Are you looking for relaxed living in a great community? Take a look at this happy home in Hines Creek that is waiting for you to move in. Visit https://www.nphf.ca/11001.html for more details and a 360 Tour.</p> <p>Homes for Sale Happy Home in Hines Creek</p> <p>628 - 10 Street, Hines Creek, AB</p> <p>Two bedroom, one bathroom home with a full basement.</p> <p>Only \$98,000.00</p> <p>1,953 People Reached 194 Engagements Boost Post</p> <p>10 Shares</p>	<p>Dec 4, 2020 – 2,060 Views - 518 Engagements</p> <p>North Peace Housing Foundation Published by John Smith • December 4, 2020 •</p> <p>Book a viewing on this great value, corner lot home in Grimshaw. Visit https://www.nphf.ca/13703.html for more details and a 360 Tour.</p> <p>Homes for Sale Great Value in Grimshaw!</p> <p>4716 - 44 Ave., Grimshaw, AB</p> <p>Two Bedroom, one bathroom home with a basement.</p> <p>Only \$156,000.00</p> <p>2,060 People Reached 518 Engagements Boost Post</p> <p>1 2 Comments 7 Shares</p>
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All municipalities contacted for newsletters etc. All were very helpful and supportive.

Board Minutes uploaded and all Board Policies are now uploaded and available on the website.

Articles in Mile Zero News – January 20th and 27th – Below 3 pages attached.

IT & Technical

Transition to Cloud proceeding; all the Shared Folders data and structure from our server has been uploaded to Teams and is being backed up by Backupify (Datto)

Investigated Rendevar, a Virtual Reality platform for seniors.

The new phone system was installed at Heritage Towers.

Two surveys moved to cloud - Meals & Recreation Survey

A new notebook has been configured for the Housing Manager.

Respectfully submitted,

Don

Don Good

Director - IT, Communications and Stakeholder Relations

Pandemic causes decrease in NPHF occupancy rates

Kristin Dyck

North Peace Housing Foundation has reported a 10 per cent decrease in their January occupancy rate for both the lodge and family housing units.

At the end of January, 2020 the overall lodge occupancy rate was 84 per cent, compared to just 74 per cent this January, explained Tammy Menssa, NPHF executive director. Of the four lodges operated by NPHF, Peace River's Heritage Tower Lodge is suffering the greatest number of vacancies, with 20 of 80 available units

currently vacant.

"There have been applicants who were scheduled to move in before the pandemic hit who backed out due to COVID restrictions. We have also had residents move out of our facilities because of the restrictions. Additionally, we have seen the number of applications that we receive decrease dramatically. Typically, we see the interest in our lodge facilities increase when we enter Fall, and the weather starts to turn cold. September and October are usually busy months for

applications and move ins, however, that was not the case in 2020," Menssa said.

While she could not pinpoint a reason for the decrease in occupancy of their family housing units, Menssa did say that she is aware of two misconceptions circling the communities they serve. She said she has heard reports that people believe the Foundation is closed for business due to the pandemic or that they are operating with an extensive waitlist.

"Neither is true. We encourage people to apply,

as we may be able to help them find an affordable home that is suitable to both their household income and composition," she clarified.

The largest concern for NPHF when occupancy rates decline is how these numbers will ultimately affect their budget. Without tenants in the family housing units, the foundation is forced to cut the only area of their budget that has any wiggle room, maintenance.

With their budgets approved by the provincial government, NPHF operates a deficit operating budget annually for their social

housing portfolio, which includes both the family housing and senior self-contained apartments.

While the Foundation's senior self-contained apartments occupancy rates have remained stable at 92 per cent, the family housing units are not doing quite as well.

"If our revenues are down due to vacancies, it limits our ability to do some of the renovations and upgrades that are required," Menssa said. "It becomes somewhat of a snowball effect. We do not have the rental revenue from tenants and as a result we do not have the money to fix up the units to attract new tenants. Our Affordable Housing Program operates on revenues generated by tenant rent; therefore, the more vacancies we have, the more difficult it

becomes to operate effectively."

When speaking about the lodges, Menssa explained that funding comes from fees paid by residents, the Province, and municipal requisitions based on equalized assessments.

The provincial grants are based on occupancy, very similar to the way that provincial school funding for each school board is based on enrolment. This means a lower number of residents results in less revenue from not one but two of the Foundation's revenue streams.

Regarding requisitions, these rates are primarily based on the lodge budgets.

For 2021, the Foundation's Board made the decision to increase the requisition by two per cent.

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Decrease in NPHF occupancy rates

While they had discussed increasing requisitions by as much as five per cent, the decision to approve the two per cent increase was necessary to ensure adequate capacity and staffing for the duration of the pandemic.

"While some of these increased costs are presently being supported by grants from the province, which are greatly appreciated, others are not and, especially as seniors are among those most negatively affected by

COVID, the Foundation needs to ensure that we have the resources to protect our seniors from the disease itself, and also to effectively and compassionately respond to the pressures, both physical and emotional,

being placed on the seniors in our lodges and the staff who diligently work on their behalf," reads the NPHF board meeting synopsis dated December 2, 2020.

Executive Director of NPHF discusses housing concerns for seniors in Manning

Dan Archer

At the Town of Manning Council meeting, January 13, 2021, Councillor Keith Hutchison moved: "To direct administration to draft a letter to North Peace Housing, Alberta Seniors Housing and any other parties involved in the decision making of the development of the Lodge, requesting input design on the new Lodge building."

Tammy Menssa, Executive Director for the North Peace Housing Foundation, conversed over what the new Del-Air Lodge in Manning might appear like upon completion, although specific plans for the updated building don't exist at this time.

The current lodge on 202 First Avenue South West is a retirement residence offering private living spaces and social activities for seniors.

"The approved project is for the redevelopment of the existing 52-unit Lodge to include 37 Lodge units and 16 DSL (Designated Supportive Living) units," Menssa said. "However, at this point, there are no formal plans in place. The successful proponent of the RFP process is currently working through the pre-award phase of the project and once this is completed additional information will be available."

"The North Peace Housing Foundation is the primary provider of seniors housing in Manning," Menssa added. "In addition to the Lodge, the Foundation manages the Manning Seniors Apartment building, which is a 16-unit, two storey independent living

complex offering one-bedroom apartments. We currently have five units that are available and ready for move-in. Once again, we are still accepting applications and moving people in, so we encourage seniors to apply."

During retirement, many Canadian seniors have decided to move the United States, Mexico or Belize upon retirement for the balmy weather. Or, seniors in rural areas such as Manning might depart to urban centres, where doctor's appointments, medications and other conveniences and services are more accessible.

Menssa agreed that some of Manning's seniors have chosen to leave for other areas after retiring, yet many have either chosen to stay in the area rather than move away, or they've come back to the community after a brief sojourn.

"In their early retirement years, some seniors are travelling to warmer climates, but then many return home to the comfort and security of the community in which they raised their families. These familiar surroundings have the added benefit of companionship with lifelong friends and acquaintances."

Although cities can boast a host of services, Menssa said the seniors in Manning have advantages they wouldn't enjoy in Edmonton or Calgary.

"They have numerous opportunities to overcome senior loneliness and isolation, with many social events," Menssa informed then listed a sampling of the attractions Manning has for seniors, including the Senior Citizen Star Centre, the river beach, walking trails, summer swimming pool

activities, senior golfing, stick curling, designated gym exercise programs and the public library.

"The community has an excellent FCSS seniors outreach program and boasts

events such as an activity packed seniors' week, numerous seniors' teas, suppers and learning opportunities throughout the year," Menssa said.

"We welcome and invite

our community population to join in activities and events hosted at the Del-Air

Lodge to keep our seniors involved, engaged and celebrated," she added.



The current lodge on 202 First Avenue South West is a retirement residence offering private living spaces and social activities for seniors. Photo courtesy of Don Good.

NPHF involved with Manning housing issues since 1960

Dan Archer

North Peace Housing Foundation (NPHF) existed since 1960 originally as the North Peace Foundation. In 1965, the Foundation became the North Peace Housing Foundation, when seven independent agencies united.

Tammy Menssa, Executive Director for NPHF, discussed how this organization worked in Manning to retain affordable housing for a variety of people in different stages of their lives.

"The North Peace Housing Foundation is a management body established under the Alberta Housing Act to provide adequate and suitable housing in a variety of housing types that are accessible to low-income households in need. We currently have 630 units throughout the North Peace region including seniors' lodges, senior self-contained apartments, family housing, and affordable units," Menssa said.

One of the NPHF's key achievements is the establishment of the Del-Air Lodge in the 1970s and creating apartments in Manning for seniors.

"Over the last 60 years, the Foundation has taken on many challenges, including entering new service areas, with the construction of the Del-Air Lodge in Manning in 1976, overseeing the construction and management of new apartment buildings for seniors, as well as taking

on the management of homes for low to moderate income families and additional seniors' apartment units," Menssa recounted.

The expansion of the Del-Air Lodge began in 1999. Thereafter, with the construction of the Harvest Lodge in Fairview in 2001, the Foundation augmented their supportive living units for seniors in the Peace Region by close to 80 units.

According to Menssa, the NPHF provides supportive housing options for 225-plus seniors in the region. Developments in affordable housing for seniors continued through the 2000s. In the hamlet of Cadotte Lake, the Foundation developed a subdivision in 2007, distributing eight manufactured homes for families in this community. "The Foundation opened the doors to Garden Court, a new seniors affordable housing project on the west hill in Peace River."

The NPHF is a significant employer in Manning.

"Del Air Lodge currently employs 25 people, 23 part-time and casual staff, a manager, and a maintenance worker," Menssa said. "Overall, the Foundation employs 118 with 29 full-time, 46 part-time, and 43 casual employees."

Affordable housing hasn't always carried the best reputation. The NPHF have tried to correct the general misunderstandings of affordable housing in the Peace Region.

"In the past, through discussion with applicants, it was determined that there was a misconception that community housing units were only available to those individuals in receipt of income support benefits. In addition, there was a negative stigma attached to vacant units; they were presumed to be run down, both inside and out," Menssa reported.

The NPHF decided to reach out to the people in Manning in an effort to show their commitment to the region. Also, the NPHF wanted to give the community a better perception about the range of housing offered by the Foundation.

"Management in the Manning area then focused efforts on marketing the units and establishing strong relationships in the community — providing updated and accurate information has had a positive impact. The result has been an increase in applications and the beginnings of a mixed income community."

The NPHF offers housing to a variety of people in different situations. Menssa expressed how the Foundation has aided renters in Manning who are within the lower or mid-income brackets.

"Many of our renters were and continue to be close to or at maximum rent. Typically, these successful tenancies are shorter term, with subsidized or near-market housing being a beneficial in-between step while

tenants are in life-transition. We are happy to be able to assist people at such a critical time in their lives and to have a positive impact in our community."

Alberta's recent economic stresses affected by the downturn in the oil industry and the COVID-19 pandemic have created an upheaval in the province's housing market. Of course, housing problems exist across Canada. According to the Tamsin McMahon in the Globe and Mail, one in five Canadians are undergoing issues in locating affordable housing.

Menssa addressed some of the creative ways the NPHF has taken to adjust the housing options available in Manning.

"Alberta's economic realities have had an impact both with moving new tenants in, and at the same time, losing tenants due to lack of job security. Manning, like many other smaller northern communities, does not currently have a growing population, so the decision to renovate four family housing units into senior's affordable units, and moving the laundry access to the main floor, has been

timely and successful. We currently have three-bedroom seniors' affordable units available, with main floor laundry and maintenance included."

"Even with the current COVID restrictions in place, we are accepting applications and moving people in. We encourage interested families to visit our website, www.nphf.ca, for more information and to download an application," Menssa added.

If applicants are unable to locate housing through the NPHF, Menssa said the Foundation will provide unsuccessful candidates different routes towards other possibilities.

"We do our best to help meet and provide all families with housing needs. For those in our community that don't meet our eligibility requirements, we provide assistance with alternate search information and options."

The NPHF also provides housing for people with special needs in Manning.

"These individuals face the same issues as other modest income people do. However, their situation can often be compounded

by a personal circumstance, with many variables, that makes finding appropriate housing even more difficult," Menssa said.

Menssa further related how the NPHF serves people with special needs.

"They have been served primarily through the Private Landlord Rent Supplement (PLRS) Program or the Direct to Tenant Rent Supplement Program, typically in one-bedroom apartments. The Foundation believes the Direct to Tenant Rent Supplement is an excellent housing program. Through proper controls, this program provides an extremely responsive tool to deal with changes within the economy that impact the availability of affordable housing."

But according to Menssa, the Rent Supplement Program designed to assist those with special needs might be threatened.

"Unfortunately, the Rent Supplement Program is currently under provincial review and therefore the Foundation is unable to accept applications until further notice," Menssa disclosed.