

New app for cellphones and tablets will put Grey Highlands in the palm of your hand

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After looking around for an app developer, Grey Highlands staff members decided to take on the project of creating a municipal app themselves.

It's now available from Apple and Google, and offers information from the Grey Highlands website in a mobile friendly form.

IT manager Jerri-Lynn Levitt took on the project with clerk Raylene Martell and Amanda Fines-VanAlstine, customer service co-ordinator.

The main reason to design their own app was because of the challenge of constant updates. Now, when the website is updated, the app follows.

One feature allows you to get a map from your location to any Grey Highlands site.

"Trying to think of all the aspects that different people would want" was a challenge, Ms Fines-VanAlstine said.

"And getting it approved by Google and Apple is a

process," she said. It took about a week and a half.

Some things can be worked out over time. The app allows "push" notifications, but whether that should be reserved just for emergencies or used more often is still up for discussion, Ms Fines-VanAlstine said.

Right now, work is being done to make it possible to fill and submit forms through the app.

Grey Highlands launched the app on Feb. 5. The municipality is making more efforts to broaden its ways of communicating with the public, especially online. The hope is for a two-way flow of information, the municipality said in its press release.

The app is available for android and iOS devices as a free download - search "Grey Highlands."

It "features easy-to-access information for municipal services, public

skating, recreational program times, events, municipal meetings, news, emergency alerts and much more!" the press release said.

The municipality said residents can keep up with road conditions and instructions; submit events for the calendar and book facilities.

The garbage and recycling schedule is on the "My Pickup" tool, along with landfill hours.

Online tax payments and water bill payments are also included.

The website already allows many of these functions, but it's possible that by having the phone app people may be more likely to have their say, ask their question, or even make their complaint.

And if residents like the app they can press Share Now and share it with friends and family.

Plans are to update the app

with more features such as dog tags and burn permits.

Curtis Smith, Communications Manager, commented that half the traffic to the website is already from mobile phones.

"So it makes sense to provide an easy-to-use, mobile portal for communicating to residents," he's quoted as saying.

"The app will provide

all the information a person needs on a day-to-day basis and gives us another important venue to send out emergency information."

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GREY HIGHLANDS LAUNCHES ITS APP – Shown in the promotional photo for the app release are: Grey Highlands app development team (front row) Amanda Fines VanAlstine, Jerri-Lynn Levitt and Raylene Martell, with council members proudly flourishing the home screen with the loaded app: Coun. Cathy Little, Deputy-Mayor Aakash Desai, Coun. Tom Allwood, Coun. Danielle Valiquette; Coun. Dane Nielsen; Mayor Paul McQueen and Coun. Paul Allen. (submitted photo)

Thanks
Fred & Gail.