Grey Highlands to write off Talisman arrears

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The Municipality of Grey Highlands has begun the complicated process to write-off the outstanding taxes owed by Talisman Mountain Resorts.

Grey Highlands recently took ownership of the Resort after multiple tax sales failed to attract a buyer. Despite the municipality now owning the property, more than $2.5 million still remains on the books as taxes owed to the municipality.

Talisman has not paid its property tax bill since 2006.

With the municipality now in full ownership of the Talisman property it needs to remove the Talisman tax amount it is owed from the books for auditing purposes and needs to recover the money from the school boards and county.

Grey Highlands council at its regular meeting on Monday, Dec. 16 gave Treasurer, Karmen Krueger permission to begin the process to write that amount off and recover some of the funds.

Of $2.5 in back taxes, $873,226.83 is the amount Grey Highlands paid to Grey County and the school boards on behalf of Talisman.

If Grey Highlands sells the Talisman property within seven years it would pay back the amount recovered from the county and school boards.

The report about the Talisman item led Deputy Mayor Paul McQueen to ask Krueger if the municipality should be remitting county and school board taxes when properties are in arrears.

Krueger said in theory that would be possible, but she said it would not be an even remotely practical system to implement.

She said the municipality mainly deals with arrears that are very small. She said attempting to withhold county and school board taxes on all the properties in arrears would be impossible.

"It would be an administrative nightmare. At any one time we have hundreds and hundreds of accounts that are unpaid," she said.

Once the arrears are written off taxes will no longer be an issue for the Talisman property.

When the municipality assumed ownership of the property it became a tax-exempt property.