

County Council, at their August 21, 2019 meeting, unanimously endorsed embarking down the path of Priority Based Budgeting (PBB). Beaver County is one of only a handful of municipalities in Canada to use PBB. It is an innovative approach to allocate budgeted resources towards achieving results in identified goals as opposed to applying traditional incremental budgeting. Incremental budgeting takes last year's budget and the services embedded within and adds/subtracts for items like inflation, growth, grants and new legislation.

PBB for Beaver County will mean a step-by-step process toward clearly sharing with the public all the programs the municipality provides, gauging how well those programs resonate with citizens and ranking those program impacts on priorities in a strategic plan. All the traditional budget factors are still included but programs are also gauged for their ongoing relevance to citizens and priorities. This allows for more movement among program areas and reallocating resources to where they achieve the greatest results.

Reeve Jim Kallal stated that he “sees tremendous value in making sure the public knows exactly what they are receiving for programs as well as how much those programs cost and how they are impacting community priorities.”

One of the intangible benefits of PBB is moving away from a budget being about departments that are difficult to explain to the public to a budget being about programs that a citizen/business can identify with. Programs invite a healthier dialogue among all stakeholders and add a level of accountability not often seen in government.

The first step on this journey will come in the form of meetings with Council and administration to look at the current strategic plan and refresh it with a PBB lens attached. What this means is applying rigor in identifying clear goals for the community. These goals then need results attached to them. This is where accountability and transparency lie.

The results, clearly articulated direction and expectations from Council, will be handed off to administration to then build a business plan built on achieving the most results possible within the framework of the budget. Council will then hold its administration accountable for the results promised in that business plan.

Reeve Kallal suggested he has “never seen a clearer way to demonstrate understanding between direction from Council and a straight-forward answer from County staff. This really sets the standard for staying focused on those things that are most important to citizens, businesses, community groups, and Council. Council is looking forward to sharing the results of this with our community. There are only so many dollars in our budget. It is important we demonstrate good value to everyone.”

Strategic planning efforts with Council start in mid-September.