



**COUNCIL MEETING  
HIGHLIGHTS  
REGULAR MEETING  
MARCH 2, 2022**

**Honourable Minister Rick Wilson**

Honourable Minister Rick Wilson, Minister of Indigenous Relations, MLA for Maskwacîs-Wetaskiwin, attended the Council meeting. Minister Wilson discussed the following topics with Council:

- COVID 19 Challenges
- Provincial Budget
- Financial Stability for Oil and Gas
- Local Government Fiscal Framework
- STIP Funding
- Landfill Opportunities
- Seniors Housing – Beaver Foundation
- Mental Health Facilities
- Paving of Secondary Highways
- Rising Utility Costs
- Alternative Natural Energy Projects
- Coal Carbon Capture Technology
- Rural Broadband
- RCMP/Policing Funding

**2022 Shoulder Pulls**

Council had indicated it would like to resume the Shoulder Pull Program as part of the 5 Year Road Construction/Capital Plan. In the last approved 5 Year Capital Plan, rural roads were included for \$600,000 for a combination of shoulder pulls and spot repairs, potentially utilizing cement for wet problem areas in the same manner as Range Road 124.

In the 2022 budget, \$600,000 had been added for rural road maintenance which would include the shoulder pulls as well as repairs. By utilizing the cementing crew after the TerraCem jobs are complete, it is estimated that approximately six to ten miles of shoulder pulls could be completed before freeze-up.

Council passed a motion to approve the resumption of the Shoulder Pull Program at approximately 10 miles per year beginning in 2022.

**Landflood Control Contract**

Beaver activity has the ability to damage and at times destroy municipal infrastructure and associated drainage works. This activity also has the potential to impact private property and agricultural producers' livelihoods. In order to protect its infrastructure and in turn its residents, Beaver County has developed a policy and procedures for dealing with beaver activity within its boundaries.

Beaver County has used a contractor in the past to remove beavers in areas where their activity impacts infrastructure. The budget allocation for this program is currently \$40,000 however this program area is very weather dependent as more or less precipitation (snow or rain) can have a significant impact on beaver activity. In 2021, the cost for this program was ~~to~~ \$24,516.00. Administration has communicated with the current contractor and the company is willing to continue work within the County for 2022, at a minimal increased cost due to increases for fuel and other operational items.

Also, in 2021, the County continued with the Beaver Control Incentive. In this program, landowners that are removing beavers from their property can submit the beaver tails for compensation. The budget allocated for this program is \$10,000 and in 2021 there were 353 tails submitted for a total payment to landowners of \$7020.

Council also intends to review the information gathered in the Public Engagement Survey to determine if there are any further program or policy changes that could be implemented. Any items that require budget approval will need to be discussed during the budget preparation process for 2023.

Council passed a motion that the contract with the current Landflood Control contractor, 2086391 Alberta Ltd, be extended for the 2022 season without tendering due to time constraints, and that Council continue the Beaver Control Incentive Program for 2022.

#### **Request for Tax Payment Agreement**

Long Run Exploration Ltd. is a natural gas producer in Beaver County. The company is starting to recover from the financial challenges it faced when the natural gas market was struggling, and has contacted the County regarding a tax payment agreement to clear the outstanding taxes for 2019, 2020, and 2021.

Long Run's proposal is a two-year agreement with both past and future penalties waived during the period of repayment. The tax payment agreement is only for the tax levy owed (approximately \$860,000) and includes municipal, school, Beaver Foundation, and Designated Industrial Property taxes. They have indicated that in addition to monthly payments on the arrears, future taxes will be paid on time.

The County has entered into tax payment agreements with other companies that owed taxes in amounts as great as, or greater than, the amount owed by Long Run. These companies were proactive in requesting tax payment agreements before penalties were incurred and only received relief from future penalties.

Council passed a motion that Council require a lump sum payment of all property tax arrears from Taxpayer #20285 and 22405 and that Taxpayer # 20285 and 22405 be advised that following payment of all property tax arrears in a lump sum and confirmation that surface leases are up to date with landowners, Council is prepared to enter into negotiations regarding a tax payment agreement for 2022 property taxes.

#### **Strategic Priorities Report and Public Participation Summary Report**

On February 10-11, 2022, Council and senior management met to discuss strategic priorities for this Council's term. 60 issues and opportunities were suggested and then ranked. Common themes were established, resulting in 6 strategic topics.

Action plans were then developed for the 5 highest priorities, taking into consideration the capacity of County staff. The Strategic Priorities Chart will be updated and reviewed by the Governance and Priorities Committee (GPC) on a quarterly basis and any changes approved by Council.

The recent public participation survey played a key role in establishing the strategic priorities and the Summary Report identifies many items for Council's consideration. Administration recommended that the GPC review the Summary Report and provide recommendations for policy changes (if any). In addition, the County has a 2020 – 2030 Strategic Plan that should now be reviewed in light of the recent priorities established by Council.

Council passed a motion to accept the Strategic Priorities Report dated February 2022, to request that the Chief Administrative Officer update the Strategic Priorities Chart quarterly and schedule an annual review, to refer the Public Participation Survey Summary Report to the Governance and Priorities Committee for review and recommendations, and to refer the 2020 – 2030 Strategic Plan to the Governance and Priorities Committee for alignment with the Strategic Priorities Report.

### **Beaver County Chronicle Partnership**

Beaver County has a contract with Caribou Publishing for dedicated space in the weekly Beaver County Chronicle. The Chronicle is a 4-page insert in the Tofield Mercury and the Weekly Review newspapers and the County uses 1 ½ pages for its own advertising needs as well as providing opportunities for non-profit organizations to communicate their events, volunteer opportunities, etc.

Claystone Waste uses ½ page for its advertising needs and Caribou Publishing fills the balance of the Chronicle with articles of rural interest.

The Chronicle is provided free of charge to rural residents upon request. The rural customer base, combined with paid newspaper subscriptions throughout the region, results in the Chronicle reaching approximately 2400 households each week.

Claystone Waste is considering other options for communicating to residents and its other stakeholders. It has approached the municipalities within the Beaver Region to “reimagine” the Chronicle and how a partnership with the municipalities within the Beaver Region may best meet the needs of the entire area for:

- a) advertising (legislated and discretionary),
- b) communication to residents,
- c) promotion (municipal and non-profit organizations).

At a recent regional Chief Administrative Officer meeting, interest was expressed in continuing discussions regarding the partnership, subject to support from municipal Councils.

Council passed a motion authorizing administration to explore a partnership with Claystone Waste and the urban municipalities in the Beaver Region regarding expanded use of the Chronicle for regional communication.

### **Bylaw 22-1119 – Procedural Bylaw**

The Corporate Governance Review recommended that the Procedural Bylaw be amended to clarify the role of the Chief Administrative Officer with respect to the preparation of agendas.

At the October 2021 Organizational meeting, Council also directed administration to prepare amendments that would strengthen meeting protocol, allow for increased Council involvement in the development of meeting agendas, clarify the process for debate and discussion of motions and bylaws, and include business planning.

Since that time, an Agendas Committee consisting of the Reeve and Deputy Reeve has been formed. The Committee's mandate and guidelines include the review and approval of agenda items for Council and Governance and Priorities Committee meetings.

Bylaw 22-1119 includes additional amendments as follows:

1. Introduction of Consent Agendas for disposition of agenda items which do not require Council discussion or debate. Consent Agendas will enable the efficient handling of routine items and provide Council will additional time to discuss priority items.
2. A rescinding motion will require a Notice of Motion before being considered by Council.
3. Change to the Council meeting commencement time in accordance to 9:30 am.
4. Limit the distribution of Council agenda packages to electronic means. Paper copies will no longer be provided. The County provides Councillors with funds to purchase a printer, ink cartridges, and paper, and it is more efficient and economical for individual Councillors to print the portions of the agenda that they require rather than administration printing 5 copies of the entire agenda package.
5. Provide for the distribution of background information for Closed Session discussions in advance of the meeting when additional time is required for Council to review the information.
6. Provide for discussion and debate on a bylaw after first reading (instead of after second reading).

Council passed a motion to amend Section 46 of Bylaw 22-1119 to read as follows:

46. The CAO shall recommend the Agenda items to be included under the Closed Session heading of the Agenda in accordance with the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*, and shall be responsible for the security of any confidential documents. Background information related to Closed Session Agenda items will be distributed separately and in a secure manner with the Agenda.

Council then passed 1st reading of Bylaw 22-1119, as amended.

### **Economic Development Leaders Summit**

The Corporate Review accepted by the previous Council on October 6, 2021 referenced economic development as a significant gap relative to the future financial sustainability of the County. The Economic Development Leaders Summit focuses on orienting leadership in the field of economic development. Over the years, staff have attended this summit, and this year Council is being encouraged to consider attending to take advantage of updates, exclusive keynote speakers, and interactive networking opportunities. Learning how to drive successful local government economic initiatives through the sharing and learning opportunities would be highly beneficial for the County and the region.

Council passed a motion approving the attendance of Cr. Hrabec and Cr. Williams, as well as registration and costs, to attend the Economic Development Leaders' Summit, April 6th to 8th 2022, at Kananaskis.

### **RMA Spring Convention Resolutions**

Council reviewed the resolutions to be presented at the Rural Municipalities of Alberta Spring Convention to ensure an understanding of each topic. Councillors vote individually on each resolution so there is no need to achieve consensus on Council's position regarding each item.

Administration recommended that Council carefully consider Resolution 1-22S, to be introduced by the Municipal District of Smoky River regarding the Municipal Sustainability Initiative (MSI) funding formula.

The MD of Smoky River is requesting that the Provincial Government introduce the Local Government Fiscal Framework (LGFF) in 2023 (1 year ahead of schedule) and that the funding formula be based on equalized assessment per kilometer of open road maintained by a municipality.

Administration suggested that Council consider the implications of this resolution.

Municipalities have long advocated for long-term and stable grant funding levels. The Province has responded with a continuation of the MSI grant, followed by the LGFF in 2024. To advance the implementation of LGFF contradicts this position and could jeopardize long-range financial plans that municipalities have already approved.

MSI funding to each municipality is distributed from a pool of money in the Provincial budget. A change in the formula which increases funding to rural municipalities could reduce the funding available to urban municipalities. This may have the unintended consequence of creating financial instability for urban municipalities which could result in pressure on rural municipalities to increase intermunicipal grants or create situations where the urban municipality is seeking dissolution.

Without extensive research and consultation, it is difficult to determine whether the proposed equalized assessment formula is a fair method of distributing MSI grants. The Provincial Government should take the responsibility of developing a formula with consultation and input from all municipalities.

Council passed a motion directing the Reeve to send a letter to the Municipal District of Smoky River and the Rural Municipalities of Alberta in response to Resolution 1-22S – "A More Equitable Funding Model for Municipalities" to reflect Council's opposition to the resolution, for the reasons outlined by administration in the RFD, to ensure the County's small urban municipalities' viability.

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The next Regular Council Meeting has been scheduled for Wednesday,  
March 17, 2022, commencing at 9:30 am.

The next Regular Governance & Priorities Committee meeting has been scheduled for  
Wednesday March, 23, 2011, commencing at 1:00 pm.

For more information, contact Beaver County toll free at 1-866-663-1333 or 780-663-3730.  
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[www.beaver.ab.ca](http://www.beaver.ab.ca)

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