

Minutes of a Regular Council Meeting of Clearwater County, Province of Alberta, held April 26, 2016, in the Clearwater County Council Chambers in Rocky Mountain House.

CALL TO ORDER: The Meeting was called to order at 9:00 A.M. by Reeve Alexander with the following being present:

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| Reeve: | Pat Alexander |
| Councillors: | Earl Graham |
| | John Vandermeer |
| | Jim Duncan |
| | Kyle Greenwood |
| | Theresa Laing |
| | Curt Maki |
| Chief Administrative Officer: | Ron Leaf |
| Recording Secretary: | Tracy Haight |
| Director, Public Works: | Marshall Morton |
| Director, Corporate Services: | Rudy Huisman |
| Director, Community & Protective Svs: | Ted Hickey |
| Director, Ag Services & Landcare: | Matt Martinson |
| Manager, Infrastructure: | Erik Hansen |
| Manager, Operations: | Kurt Magnus |
| Communication Coordinator: | Christine Heggart |
| Manager, TIMS: | Brad Welygan |
| Manager, Corporate Services: | Rhonda Serhan |
| Project Technologist: | Kate Reglin |
| Media: | Leah Utas |
| | Sylvana Crosby |
| Public: | Dennis Ross |
| | Bob Johnston |

**AGENDA
APPROVAL:**

Ron Leaf added Clearwater County Taxpayers Association Invitation as Item G3.

COUNCILLOR MAKI: That the April 26, 2016 Regular Meeting Agenda be accepted as amended.

136/16

CARRIED 7/0

**CONFIRMATION
OF MINUTES:**

1. April 12, 2016 Regular Meeting Minutes

COUNCILLOR DUNCAN: That the Minutes of the April 12, 2016 Regular Meeting are accepted as circulated.

137/16

CARRIED 7/0

**CORPORATE
SERVICES:**

1. Tax Rate Considerations

Rudy Huisman stated that the approved 2016 Operating Budget, based on December 31, 2015 assessment values and 2015 tax rates, estimated net

municipal taxes at \$43,384,735. After the closure of the tax roll, actual net municipal taxes are \$44,720,343. The increase is a result of a revised assessment base due to increased value of leased land for oil/gas wells and additional industrial properties to the tax roll.

Mr. Huisman identified several factors for Council's consideration regarding the Clearwater County's 2016 tax rates:

- Alberta Court of Queen's Bench is reviewing a case that challenges the interpretation of legislation on the assessment of certain lands. Dependent on the Court's ruling, this may set precedence for future assessment appeals which may impact Clearwater County with an estimated loss of \$750,000 in municipal tax revenue;
- A potential increase in non-residential assessment appeals due to current economic conditions;
- The 2016 Municipal Sustainability Initiative (MSI) funds were \$400,000 less than anticipated;
- Clearwater County's 2018 preliminary budget forecasts a \$2.6 million deficit; and,
- A 1.5% increase in the consumer price index for Alberta from March 2015 to March 2016.

Marianne Cole joined the meeting.

Mr. Huisman provided scenarios for tax revenue generated based on .5% percentage increases up to 2.5% and noted the calculations maintain a 3:1 ratio between residential and non-residential rates and includes provision for at risk revenue.

Mr. Huisman identified the impact of the Provincial education tax requisition and noted a 5% increase for non-residential assessments and a 1% decrease for residential and farmland assessment.

Discussion took place on the challenges facing Clearwater County to provide current service levels with decreased tax revenues resulting from potential changes in government legislation for assessment of oil/gas property. Other contributing factors include a reduction in MSI funding, decreased linear, machinery and equipment assessments, and the anticipated 2018 budget deficit.

Council reviewed the scenario of a 1% tax increase and discussion took place on a small increase to protect service levels, to avoid substantial increases in the future, to mitigate risks to revenue; and the reduction of operating costs where feasible.

Discussion continued on the current political environment and how the introduction of Provincial programs and policies, such as the carbon tax, will affect municipal operations.

Discussion took place on the need for education regarding the Provincial increase to education tax and the legislative responsibility municipalities have for the collection and/or payment of any uncollectible education taxes.

COUNCILLOR DUNCAN:

That Council approves a 1% increase to Clearwater County's 2016 Residential, Farmland, M&E, and Non-Residential tax rate.

2. 2016 Tax Rate Bylaw

Rudy Huisman requested that Council table Item D2 for later in the meeting so as to allow for preparation of the 2016 Tax Rate Bylaw as per Council's previous discussion.

COUNCILLOR MAKI:

That Council tables Item D2-2016 Tax Rate Bylaw.

139/16

CARRIED 7/0

Rudy Huisman and Rhonda Serhan left the meeting.

PUBLIC WORK:

1. Gravel Road Rehabilitation Review

Erik Hansen provided an overview of Clearwater County's current gravel road rehabilitation program for rebuilding approximately 20 miles of substandard and/or at risk roads per year at estimated costs of \$220,000 - \$250,000 per mile. The program also includes a shoulder pull at an additional cost of \$25,000 per mile.

Mr. Hansen explained the program is proactive and uses road assessments and evaluations conducted in the spring to determine priority, with priority given to "through roads" over "no-exit roads" although exit roads may be included in the rehabilitation work dependent on a various factors, such as history, "vulnerability", and number of residents that may be affected if the no exit road "fails". Currently, there is a large inventory of substandard and/or at risk no-exit roads that require rebuilding.

Marshall Morton noted that some landowners have concerns with rebuilding no-exit roads relating to the removal of trees and increased road width and would prefer roads left as is unless extensive damage is evident. However, without a proactive approach, no-exit road access and egress are at risk and emergent repairs are more costly. He inquired if Council wishes to continue with the current program approach of Public Works assessing no exit roads and making an administrative decision to repair or leave.

Discussion followed on cost implications for alternatives to the existing program. Mr. Hansen responded to questions from Council and explained a substandard no-exit road rebuild is often included with a through road rebuild. He noted that if a no-exit road is not included with a through road rebuild, costs are deferred. Mr. Morton responded to questions from Council and explained that in the long run costs are higher for temporary patch repairs.

Discussion followed on reducing the number of non-exit road rebuilds without impacting the original intent of the program and/or service levels. As the program does not include policy, the impacts are unclear.

Mr. Morton responded to questions on the condition of Beaver Flats Road and he noted that Administration will review and report back to Council.

COUNCILLOR DUNCAN:

That Council directs Administration to draft a policy framework for rebuilding no-exit roads.

140/16

CARRIED 7/0

2. Fire Ban Signs

Kurt Magnus stated when a fire ban is declared in Clearwater County, public notification is achieved with Public Works placing fifty-four signs at various locations in and around Clearwater County. Clearwater County also posts fire ban information online as follows: provincial fire ban website, Clearwater County website, and social media sites such as Twitter and Facebook. With the use of these additional communication methods, Administration recommends reducing the number of signs posted to only point of entry on surfaced roads to decrease costs, such as personnel time and travel, associated with sign placement.

Discussion took place on Clearwater County's process for the declaration of fire bans. Mr. Leaf explained that as most of the County area is in the Provincial Forest, and in order to reduce compliance versus non-compliance issues, the County follows suit when the Province declares a fire ban.

Mr. Morton responded to questions, explained staff procedures for installing signs, and confirmed this is not a legislated requirement.

Christine Heggart responded to questions and confirmed online posting includes Instagram and Alberta Alert applications.

COUNCILLOR DUNCAN:

That Council directs Public Works to consult with Clearwater Regional Fire Rescue Services to determine the reduction of up to 19 fire ban signs based on an assessment of locations and staff efficiencies.

141/16

CARRIED 7/0

3. Grader Maintenance Tender Award – Grader Beat #506 and #509

Kurt Magnus stated Administration tendered the maintenance of Grader Beat #506 (approximately 173 km of gravel road) and #509 (approximately 160 km of gravel road) for a five-year contract beginning May 1, 2016.

Mr. Magnus noted ten bids were received for each of the grader beats, with East of 22 Ltd. as the low valid bidder at \$79.00 per hour for Beat #506 and \$82.00 per hour for Beat #509. East of 22 Ltd. chose Beat #506 over Beat #509. Consequently, Double M Grader Service is the next low valid bid for Beat #509 at \$86.00.

Marshall Morton explained that final approval for amendments to the grader maintenance contracts policy is pending, therefore East of 22 Ltd., which is owned by Jomad Industries, is eligible.

COUNCILLOR GRAHAM:

That Council awards Grader Beat #506 maintenance contract to East of 22 Ltd.

142/16

CARRIED 7/0

COUNCILLOR LAING:

That Council awards Grader Beat #509 maintenance contract to Double M Grader Service.

143/16

CARRIED 7/0

Marshall Morton, Kurt Magnus, Kate Reglin, and Erik Hansen left the meeting.

**COMMUNITY &
PROTECTIVE
SERVICES:**

1. Grant Funding for Community Halls.

Jerry Pratt stated that applications for funding from Condor Community Centre, Taimi Hall, and the Royal Canadian Legion Caroline Branch (Caroline Legion) are pending Council's decision and that Arbutus Hall recently submitted an application. Mr. Pratt inquired if Council wishes to review the Grant Funding for Community Halls, Associations, and Non-Profit Groups policy before deciding on the funding requests.

Jerry Pratt identified factors for Council's consideration regarding funding for community halls and associations as follows:

- There are 20 community halls listed on Clearwater County's insurance policy.
- Many of the halls are over 40 years old.
- Provincial, community and corporate funding support for halls have significantly decreased.
- Lack of information on structural functionality and condition of these halls.
- Some of the boards associated with the halls have dissolved or are in the process.

Discussion took place on the need for viability and sustainability assessments for community halls in Clearwater County so as to rationalize funding.

Discussion followed on reviewing Taimi Hall and Caroline Legion's requests separately as they are not applicable under the existing policy.

Mr. Pratt responded to questions and stated Administration will make arrangements to submit Arbutus Hall's application for funding at the next regular council meeting and that Administration is waiting for final assessment reports on Condor Hall's building site and structure.

COUNCILLOR VANDERMEER: That Council reviews and considers Condor Hall and Arbutus Hall funding applications prior to the Grant Funding for Community Halls, Associations, and Non-Profit Groups policy review.

144/16

CARRIED 7/0

COUNCILLOR MAKI: That Council reviews the Grant Funding for Community Halls, Associations, and Non-Profit Groups policy.

145/16

CARRIED 7/0

2. Automated Sani-Dump System Loan – Rocky Mountain House Visitor Information Centre

Jerry Pratt presented a request from the Rocky Mountain House Visitor Information Centre (VIC) for a maximum loan amount of \$11,215 to purchase a Sani-Star Automated Pay System.

The VIC currently uses a cash drop box for collection of fees for sani-dump services. As the drop box has been subject to theft and vandalism over the years, VIC would like to replace the drop box with a secure automated pay system. Total capital cost for equipment, installation, signage, lighting, and surveillance equipment is \$22,430.

VIC Operation Board proposes that VIC borrow 50% of costs from each of the Town of Rocky Mountain House and Clearwater County Councils with a maximum repayment schedule of two years.

Discussion followed and Administration confirmed costs include installation and that VIC will cover yearly service fee costs.

COUNCILLOR VANDERMEER: That Council approves a maximum loan amount of \$11,215 for the Rocky Mountain House VIC with a maximum repayment schedule of two years.

146/16

CARRIED 6/1

RECESS:

Reeve Alexander recessed the meeting for lunch at 12:00 P.M.

Reeve Alexander reconvened the meeting at 12:35 P.M. with the following people present: Councillors Maki, Duncan, Vandermeer, Greenwood, Graham, and Laing; Ron Leaf, Rudy Huisman, Christine Heggart, Leah Utas, and Tracy Haight.

COUNCILLOR GREENWOOD: That Council lifts Item D2 2016 Tax Rate Bylaw from the table.

147/16

CARRIED 7/0

CORPORATE SERVICES:

2. 2016 Tax Rate Bylaw

Rudy Huisman presented the 2016 Tax Rate and Minimum Tax Bylaw 1015/16. The Bylaw sets the 2016 tax rates as follows:

- Residential municipal tax rate at .0025868
- Farmland municipal tax rate at .0041368 and
- Non-residential, machinery and equipment, and linear rates at .0075417

Mr. Huisman noted the Provincial Education tax rates:

- Residential and Farmland – .0024216
- Non-residential and Linear – .0036640
- Uncollectible School Tax Rate – (.0000132)
- Westview Lodge Tax Rate - .0000678

COUNCILLOR GREENWOOD: That Council grants first reading to Bylaw 1015/16 2016 Tax Rate Bylaw.

148/16

CARRIED 7/0

COUNCILLOR VANDERMEER: That Council grants second reading to Bylaw 1015/16 2016 Tax Rate Bylaw.

149/16

CARRIED 7/0

COUNCILLOR DUNCAN: That Council considers granting third reading to Bylaw 1015/16 2016 Tax Rate Bylaw.

150/16

DEFEATED 4/3

MUNICIPAL:

1. Federal and Provincial Budget Summary

Ron Leaf reviewed highlights from the 2016 Federal budget and noted federal spending plans for infrastructure (including green and climate resilient infrastructure) and broadband services.

Mr. Leaf reviewed highlights from the 2016 Provincial budget and noted the following:

- There is no indication of support for a new hospital in Rocky Mountain House.
- The Strategic Transportation Infrastructure Program for municipal bridge and resource roads is zero funded for 2016.
- Council's strategic planning for regional partnerships, economic development, inter-municipal land use, environmental stewardship, and geothermal research project are in line with the Province's budget initiatives.
- The implementation of the carbon tax will increase operating costs for municipalities in 2017. County staff will assess financial impact, which will be presented during the 2017-2019 budget process.
- There is a \$50 million reduction in Municipal Sustainability Initiative capital funding from the previous budget, however, budget documents indicate MSI will be extended for an additional year.
- An increase in funding for municipal water infrastructure programs. Administration intends to submit the Condor Sewer Lagoon upgrade project for grant consideration.
- A decrease in funding for Alberta Agriculture and Forestry Department, associated support programs, and for wildfire management.
- Potential savings thru the amalgamation or dissolution of various Provincial boards and/or agencies.

Discussion followed on the potential impact of the federal and provincial budgets on Clearwater County.

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| COUNCILLOR MAKI: | That Council receives the information as presented. |
| | CARRIED 7/0 |

151/16

2. Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties (AAMDC) Survey – Local Authorities Election Act

Christine Heggart stated that the AAMDC is conducting a survey on the Local Authorities Election Act (LAEA) to prepare for the provincial government's review prior to the 2017 municipal elections.

Discussion took place on differences between elections in Clearwater County and elections in large urban centres. Clearwater County candidates fund their own campaigns so fundraising and donator disclosure issues are not a factor. Clearwater County is challenged with the appointment of returning officers due to the number of recruits needed for a large number of polling stations that are established by Council. Residents are also confused with boundary divisions which may be remedied with further clarification at voting stations.

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| COUNCILLOR MAKI: | That Council directs Administration to complete the AAMDC Local Authorities Election Act Survey 2016 on behalf of Council. |
| | CARRIED 7/0 |

152/16

3. Clearwater County Taxpayers Association (CCTA) Invitation

Christine Heggart stated CCTA invited Council to attend a CCTA hosted open public meeting on May 5, 2016, 7:00 p.m., at the Leslieville Elks' Hall. The meeting's purpose is to provide an opportunity for Council to address questions regarding the concept plan for the County's north development and building construction.

Ms. Heggart confirmed, as per Council's direction on April 12, Council's public open house is booked for May 30, 2016, 7:00 p.m., at the Dovercourt Community Hall. This open house, which is related to the County's north development and new building construction, is set to follow Council's anticipated review of schematic designs on May 10.

Discussion took place on the lack of available information to properly address inquiries at the May 5 public meeting until after May 10; and, without sufficient information, it is not practical for Council to attend the May 5 meeting.

Ms. Heggart responded to questions and confirmed Administration scheduled consultants and staff to attend the May 30 open house, provide information, and address questions. Ms. Heggart also confirmed advertising for this meeting will be published in local papers, website, newsletter, and social media sites.

COUNCILLOR GREENWOOD: That Council invites CCTA to the May 30 Public Open House.

153/16

CARRIED 7/0

INFORMATION:

Ron Leaf reviewed upcoming events and meetings scheduled for May and June.

Discussion took place on the outcome of the provincial review of agencies, boards, and commissions and the impact on rural Alberta. Administration will continue monitoring.

Discussion took place on Council's lobby efforts regarding the introduction of Bill 7: Electoral Boundaries Commission.

COUNCILLOR DUNCAN: That Council receives the CAO Report, Public Works Director's Report, Councillor's Verbal Report, and the Accounts Payable listing as information.

154/16

CARRIED 7/0

**ADJOURNMENT:
1:27 P.M.**

COUNCILLOR MAKI: That the Meeting adjourns.

155/16

CARRIED 7/0


REEVE


CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER