



Mayor's Monthly Message

February 2021

The Village office recently began accepting e-transfers as a method of payment in addition to cash, cheque, credit and debit cards. Simply use the email address of payments@stirling.ca in your online banking app and be sure to include a memo entry to explain what the payment is for. (IE: Library memberships, business license, dog tag, swim lessons etc.) Feel free to call the office with any questions about how to use this new convenient payment option.



Council approved an amendment to this year's capital plan to further enhance safety and security at the Community Centre/Lion's Hall. There are a few incidents each year of attempted vandalism or unauthorized entry after hours. The approved project will see the installation of additional LED lighting as well as internal and external security cameras. We appreciate vigilant residents who report suspicious behavior and help watch over our community.

Council continues to be pleased with the uptake across the region on electricity, natural gas and other services offered through Ridge Utilities – Stirling's municipally controlled corporation. The Town of Raymond has joined the Ridge Utilities family this month as a marketing associate. This partnership will see Raymond market retail utility services offered by Ridge to its residents and earn a commission to do so. As regulated rates in Alberta continue to rise due to market conditions, we have seen many people take advantage of the fixed rates available through Ridge. You can always stop by the Village office for more information or see the rate plans available at www.ridgeutilities.net.



Speaking of rates, one area that we do not have any control is the distribution charges that come from the wire services provider. Fortis recently obtained approval from the Alberta Utilities Commission to increase distribution fees on your monthly electrical bill by 1.1 to 1.7% depending on the type of service you have to your home or business. (Although agricultural irrigation users faced a much larger 9% increase.)



Public health restrictions imposed by the province continue to require the Village to limit operations of certain programs and facilities. Council has directed administration to operate as many services and facilities as possible within the current guidelines. Council also discussed potential implications of continuing public health requirements on

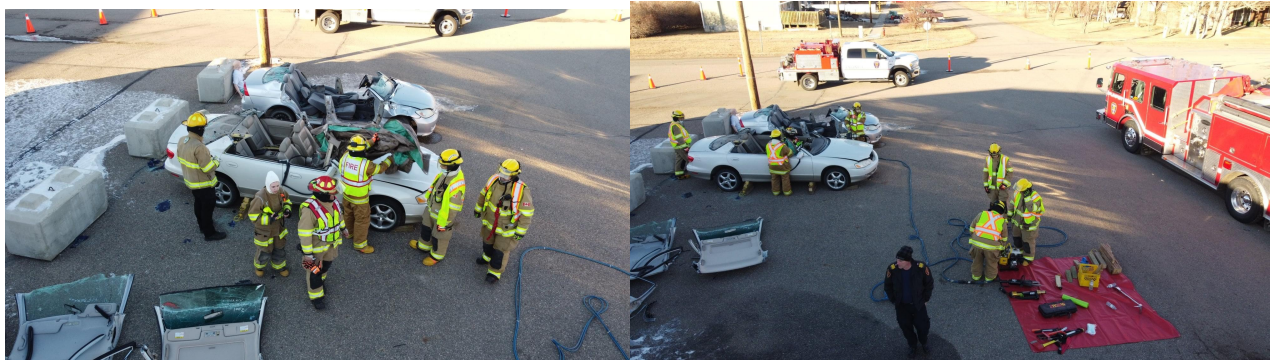
the efficient and effective operation of the pool this summer. No decisions have been made as yet as we wait for further information from Alberta Health Services.

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Council has discussed the possibility of opening concession services at the pool during the summer months which could be run by the pool staff to make use of the existing kitchen located within the building. Council decided at this time to offer the possibility to run the concession to private business and/or citizens who might be interested in making use of this space on either a seasonal (summer months) or year round opportunity. Interested parties can reach out to CAO Scott at the Village office to submit a proposal and/or to obtain additional information.

Your volunteer fire department continues to complete training on a regular basis and is well regarded across the region as one of the most qualified volunteer departments. In fact, Stirling's fire department offers training programs that are often attended by volunteers from other departments. Pictured are some recent sessions practicing extrication techniques removing someone trapped in a vehicle after a collision.



The Government of Alberta will unveil its annual budget on Thursday, February 25th. Council will be watching to understand the implications on both our operational and capital budgets. You may recall that Council approved interim capital and operating budgets in December. These interim budgets are usually updated in March once funding transfers from the province as well as any new costs for programs like policing are confirmed. Council looks forward to these discussions next month to move forward with our strategic priorities but also work to minimize the potential impacts on your property taxes.

The Village is also completing our annual third party financial audit. You can always review audited financial statements from previous years as these are posted on the Village website. Our auditors report their findings to Council and make recommendations on any changes that can be made to improve our financial controls. We anticipate that auditors will present their report for 2020 to Council in March or April.

I am hoping that spring is just around the corner! Fingers crossed.


Trevor Lewington