



Mayor's Monthly Message

February 2020

This month Council met as the Municipal Planning Commission to review our inter-municipal development plan also known as an IDP. Communities are required to work with their neighbours to develop detailed policies to coordinate development in areas that they share along their respective borders. The new IDP outlines areas for future residential growth as well as areas that can be designated for commercial development. Working towards the creation of new areas to attract businesses and broaden our tax base is crucial for the long term financial sustainability of the Village. This is the first update to our IDP with the County of Warner is just over 10 years. Look for the IDP to return to the Council agenda for further discussion in the coming weeks.



Construction of the new library space on the lower level of the Lion's Hall and Community Centre continued this month. Several representatives of Council along with two representatives from the Library Board held a meeting on Saturday, February 8th to answer questions and allow concerned residents to preview the new space.

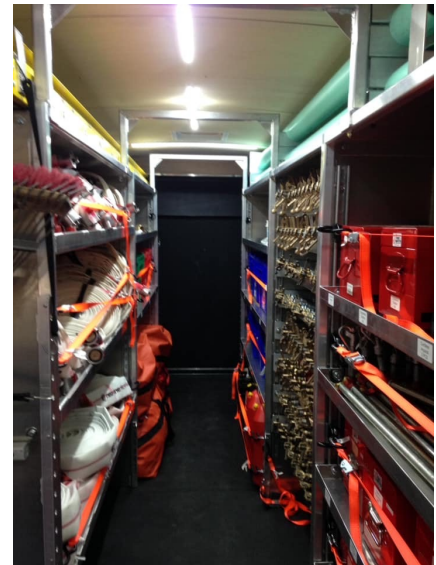
The meeting was attended by 4 residents. There is a detailed "frequently asked questions" document with more information about the project that can be obtained from the Village Office or the Library. Council also reviewed changes to a Library Board Bylaw that would update governance procedures for the library and reflect updates required under changes to provincial law.





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Council has approved the purchase of a new brush truck for the fire department that will enhance our ability to better respond to grass fires in the region. The new truck will also enable us to make better use of the structure protection unit or “SPU” on assignment to Stirling from Edmonton based Flash Fire and Safety. The unit is made available to the Stirling fire department at no cost. The SPU allows our department to consider additional revenue generating deployments in cooperation with Alberta Agriculture and Forestry providing new training opportunities for our department volunteers.



Council has decided to finance the new purchase rather than spend capital up front to better match the payments with potential revenues. A debenture bylaw was passed for this purpose. Council also reviewed an update to the Fire Bylaw to amend the appointment process for the Fire Chief to be compliant with requirements outlined in provincial law.

Did you know the volunteers from our Fire Department completed 1,480 hours of training last year? We also have 14 members of the department trained to the National Fire Protection Association (or NFPA) 1001 Standard which is the core training level for professional firefighters.

Council continues to evaluate the creation of a municipal corporation to take advantage of an energy marketing business opportunity. We have been consulting with other small Alberta municipalities who are currently using this program to generate new sources of revenue for the community. The Town of Raymond recently formed a municipal corporation to manage its land development activities. Council continues to explore new and innovative ways to explore shared services with other communities in our region. Creating efficiency without sacrificing the services or amenities we enjoy in Stirling is a key priority as we respond to budget reductions in transfers from the province.



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Council directed me this month to write to the RCMP to express our concerns regarding the Government of Alberta's implementation of changes to the police



costing model. Council wanted to ensure the RCMP know that we appreciate their work in our community and that our concerns with new incremental costs to the Village for policing combined with a low probability of new constables or staff being deployed to our area was a concern with the provincial government's model not with the RCMP itself. My December Mayor's message noted how new policing costs would rise to the equivalent of \$52 per resident by 2024. The placement of new officers is linked to the crime severity index of an area. The good news is that the Raymond detachment area has a relatively low crime rate compared to other areas of the province. The bad news is that as a result, our detachment is unlikely to see any "new boots on the ground."

One last area of concern is provincial education taxes. The Village is required to collect the education portion of property taxes but the rates and levies are assessed by the provincial government. The initial forecast is that the education amount of your property taxes will rise by approximately 4% per year for each of the next 3 years. We will be watching the Provincial Budget planned to be released on February 27 very closely for other implications to our own budget for the Village. Look for updates in my March newsletter.

Trevor Lewington

Have a comment? Question? Idea? Suggestion?

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