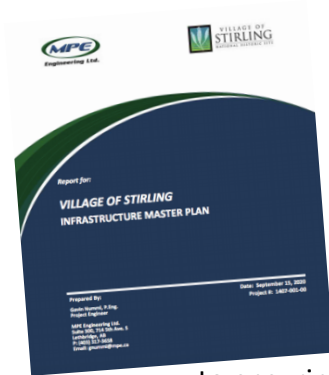




Mayor's Monthly Message

November 2020

Council passed a number of amending bylaws this month to make minor administrative adjustments to the wording of seven existing bylaws to ensure compliance with the requirements of Alberta's Municipal Government Act. Changes were the result of recommendations arising from a municipal accountability program or MAP review completed in June of 2019. Alberta Municipal Affairs completes a MAP review of all municipalities under 5,000 people once every four years.



This month has also included discussions by Council about key priorities for 2021. Completion of 3rd Street in front of the school will be the primary capital expense next year and will include paving and landscaping. We continue to explore cost effective ways to bring raw water to public green spaces like our parks for irrigation. Another key project will be to begin the engineering for and prepare grant applications to support the twinning of the pressurized sanitary sewer line from the lift station to the lagoons. We hope to obtain grant approval in 2021 and complete work in 2022. A focus on upgrading core infrastructure may not sound very exciting but is crucial to ensuring the long-term sustainability of our community.

Council has also begun discussions on the operating and capital budgets for 2021. The Village administrative team has undertaken a detailed line by line review of all expenses and taken a deep look into opportunities to find further efficiencies. The Government of Alberta has indicated that grants and transfers to municipalities will see significant reductions next year. Council expects to have to make tough decisions to avoid increases to user fees and property taxes. Keeping costs for residents as low as possible is our goal given the state of the economy and the challenges we have all faced this year.



There have been a number of comments recently on social media related to snow removal and clearing of roads. The first consideration of our public works team is always public safety. Operating heavy equipment in poor visibility conditions from high winds and blowing snow is high risk for both road users and our staff. It's also not terribly productive to clear roads while a storm is underway and significant snowfall is still expected. That said, we don't want to see people get stuck or have areas where emergency services apparatus cannot get through. When it is safe to do so, our team prioritizes clearing of high use roads and key locations like the school and Fire Hall. Public works then works to move outwards and get to all streets in our community. It takes time.



VILLAGE OF
STIRLING
NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE

Recent snowfalls were significant and occurred in a short period time creating challenges for many other communities and even provincial highway snowplows. Changing weather can also cause new drifting and accumulation on roads that were previously cleared. Generally, our public works team begins at 4:00 am on major snowfall days and works as many hours as are required to keep roads accessible. Yes, they get paid for that time as is pointed out on social media only too often but I think it is important to remember that our small staff team also works long hours and often in poor conditions. Council appreciates their efforts.

We have seen a positive initial response to the launch of Ridge Utilities. The municipally owned company will market electricity, natural gas, internet services and green generated power to residents, farmers and businesses across southern Alberta. (Although Stirling residents are far better off with Axia fibre which is not available through Ridge's internet provider QWAVE.)



As part of the Utility Network & Partners Inc. family of energy marketers, Ridge Utilities will invest profits from its operations back into projects in communities where its customers live through a community investment fund. As the sole shareholder, the Village of Stirling will benefit from a new revenue source to help support future financial sustainability. To explore available rates and to sign-up visit www.ridgeutilities.net for more information. You can also reach the customer care team at (403) 308-8850 from 9am to 5pm from Monday through Friday or just stop by the Village office and talk to the team.

" Wash your hands like you've been chopping jalapenos and need to change your contacts"

- Dr. Bonnie Henry

Coronavirus cases across Alberta continue to increase. Some regions now fall under "enhanced measures" which involve further public health restrictions. The County of Warner is fortunate to have avoided major outbreaks so far. The Village staff regularly attend informational conference calls from Alberta Health and the Alberta Emergency Management Agency to stay up to date on the current situation. We

continue to take reasonable precautions to protect our staff, facilities, residents and ensure continuity of operations. You can find the latest provincial updates here: www.alberta.ca/covid19.

Trevor Lewington