



## Mayor's Monthly Message

### December 2021

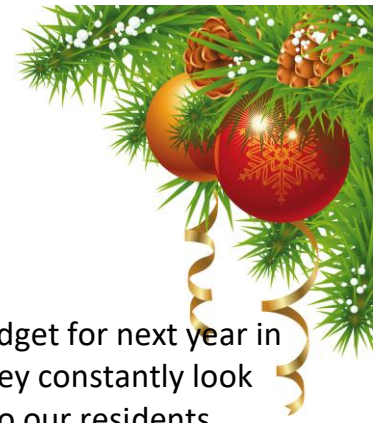
This month kicked off in style with the “Light Up Stirling” event on Saturday, December 4<sup>th</sup>. It was great to connect with hundreds of friends and neighbours around the fire pits, hear talented singers and musicians from our community as well as watch the faces of our youngest residents as they got the chance to visit with Santa. The hard work of the community events committee and extra efforts from the many volunteers from the Stirling Fire Department was appreciated in ensuring a successful and safe event.



Buddy the **#StirlingScout** was also introduced during Light Up Stirling. Buddy is a member of Santa's advance team and has been popping up in different places each day throughout our Village as he gathers stories of community spirit and good deeds to report back to the big man at the North Pole. Keep an eye out for Buddy as he continues to make his rounds and be sure to tag him on social media. (There may just be some prizes for the best pictures and most prolific picture poster!)



Con't.../2



Page 2

This month's Council meetings were heavily focussed on reviewing the budget for next year in detail. Council appreciates the hard work of our administrative team as they constantly look for ways to reduce expenses and find innovative ways to deliver services to our residents. Council approved both an interim operating budget and interim capital budget.

The operating budget will be finalized in the spring once provincial transfers/grants are known and the impact of any changes made by the provincial government to the education portion of your property taxes is set. Council voted for the draft budget to hold the line on property taxes with **no** increase to the mill rate and **no** increase to any fees, charges or levies. Many of the communities around us are increasing utility franchise fees, municipal service charges and in some cases even property taxes. Council is very aware that with the cost of everyday living rising combined with other financial pressures from the pandemic that most residents simply cannot deal with further cost increases. (Important to remember that despite no increase to the mill rate that changes in the assessed value of your property as well as changes to the education portion set by the provincial government could still impact whether your total property tax bill goes up or down when tax notices are issued in May.)

The good news? Stirling is lower for property tax and municipal utility costs than the average across 44 communities surveyed in our region. In fact, Stirling ranks 28<sup>th</sup> on the list from most to least expensive. (Milo, Warner and Arrowwood are the most expensive along with 25 other communities on the list that cost more in which to live than when compared to Stirling.) Thanks to our friends at the Town of Raymond who compile the data each year. You can find the ranking report on the Village website or click this link: <http://stirling.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/2021-Regional-Utility-and-Tax-Comparison.pdf>

The capital plan for next year is focussed on just 2 major priorities – the first being the reopening of the pool for the summer and the second being the start of a multi-year process to upgrade the sewer force main from the lift station to the lagoons. Both of these projects will consume the vast majority of the focus of our public works team in 2022 and 2023.

A reminder that the Village office, ATB Agency and Waste transfer station hours of operation will be adjusted during the festive season. Be sure to check the Village website or Facebook page for revised hours and temporary service changes.

Wishing everyone a very Merry Christmas! All the best for a happy, healthy and prosperous New Year.

 Trevor Lewington