



NEWS RELEASE – Lamont County Council Approves its 2023 Budget

December 16, 2022 – LAMONT, AB: Lamont County Council reviewed its budget committee’s proposed 2023 budget at the December 13 Regular Council Meeting. Council has approved the proposed budget with the following considerations as proposed by the Lamont County Council Budget Committee; tough decisions were made considering the following priorities (including the current economic climate):

1. Inflation costs have increased over the past few years, leading to higher cost for materials, updated interest rates and cutbacks in funding from other sources—including provincial grants and post-pandemic realities;
2. Lamont County is focused on maintaining infrastructure to ensure the best delivery of its service levels; and
3. Lamont County is committed to development in Alberta’s Industrial Heartland (AIH) to increase more business and services that benefit Lamont County (including impact on jobs, developments, revenue and service opportunities).

In budget discussions, Lamont County Council focused on a priority-based and collaborative approach, with a target of long-term sustainability.

Council based their decisions on input and feedback from its annual service level survey to the public, from the service level open house, and from public feedback provided to Councillors. Council worked to provide a transparent and open process to setting its budget.

"Administration and staff did a great job to present a draft budget that follows Lamont County's strategic direction and business plan," said Lamont County Reeve David Diduck. "Lamont County faces many challenges moving forward such as inflation, reduced government funding, and supply chain issues."

At the budget meetings and in the Regular Council Meeting (Dec. 13) where the budget was presented, Council reviewed Capital Projects (ongoing and those targeted for 2023, including staffing, equipment maintenance and purchases), proposed tax rates (to be approved in Q2, 2023), as well as the operations budgets for each department (Public Works, Agricultural Services, Administration and Corporate Services, Community Services, Planning and Economic Development, Emergency Services, and the Library Board) and set the 2023 budget of \$36,502,283. To fund this budget, Council allocated the amount tax dollars received, grant funding and other initiatives, with the remaining budget shortfall directed to be funded by General Operating, Virtual and Fire Operating reserves.

"Council's goal was to keep service levels and business needs at current levels while attempting to minimize tax increases and drawing from reserves to fund operating expenses," said Diduck. "While there will be a tax increase and a draw from reserves, Council and Administration is to be commended for working hard to achieve a budget that is fair, prudent and achievable in 2023."



Council approved the following service enhancements and targeted reductions (highlights):

- Safety Boots Program increasing to cover more of the required safety equipment cost.
- Hiring a Municipal Intern, a GIS specialization position, two seasonal labourers and a Public Works Operations Foreman, and amending the Public Works Administrative Support to one FTE from existing positions.
- Move to 6-year gravel rotation from five (except for urgent fixes and needs).
- Extended the timeline for replacement of certain capital assets and purchased extended warranty purchases to offset possible equipment repairs.
- Utility Rate increases of five per cent for water rates.
- A Development Engineering Officer position to address engineering needs and consultations and to assist with Integrated Heartland Infrastructure Planning.
- Rural Addressing Contingency Program for replacement of weathered/damaged signs and emergency services needs.
- Reductions for Babas and Borshch Festival in 2023, Young Farmers Council, Library funding, additional green initiatives, modified IT support, and future consideration for other vehicle, equipment, infrastructure and building enhancements and accessibility.

Further reporting on budget and service levels is published in the **Service Level and Operational Highlights 2023 Budget** report (planned for release in early 2023).

Lamont County Council approved an eight per cent increase to the Farm and Residential tax rates for 2023 (this is a slight increase to the 16.0622 and 3.9905 rates from 2022). However, the final Tax Rate is set when the *Tax Bylaw* is passed (in the second quarter of 2023).

The public and media are invited to attend council and committee meetings (including Agricultural Service Board) in Council Chambers or virtually through Microsoft Teams (link available on the Lamont County website). Be advised that all meetings are recorded. Lamont County continues to follow public health recommendations and provincial mandates related to the COVID-19 pandemic—masks are an individual discretion. *Next Council Meeting: January 10, 2023.*

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