



NEWS RELEASE – Lamont County Council Approves its 2024 Budget

December 19, 2023 – LAMONT, AB: On November 27, 28 and 30, Lamont County Budget Committee reviewed and discussed a proposed budget for 2024. Tough decisions were made to ensure long-term sustainability of Lamont County and to have resources to execute the budget. Lamont County was fortunate to adjust some costs and projects throughout 2023 and is expecting a surplus at the end of the year. This will reduce the impact of the 2024 budget on families, taxpayers and our reserves. Council continues to advocate with the province for further economic development opportunities, improved traffic safety and reducing any red tape to be successful in our region.

Lamont County Council focused on a priority-based and collaborative approach, with a target of long-term sustainability. It also based decision making on the results from the annual Service Level and Budget Survey and resident feedback from throughout the year.

The 2024 budget was presented at the December 12 Regular Council Meeting for Council approval. Council has approved the proposed budget with the following service enhancements for the 2024 year:

1. Enhanced public engagement with Council, including the introduction of a public newsletter in 2024 and coffee talks with a Councillor to also commence in 2024;
2. Expanded fire coverage for our busy spring season (additional Duty Crew coverage into March for further fire safety and prevention);
3. Optimizing our gravel program (adjusting the gravel spread rates to increase the kilometres spread with a slightly reduced product application);
4. Expanding our Community Adult Learning staffing and related programs on a one-year term basis to support administration of the program;
5. Initial Investigation into Participation in a Municipally Controlled Corporation (MCC) with Alberta Industrial Heartland Association to best position Lamont County for future growth;
6. Adjustment to the Farm and Residential Tax Rate by four per cent (this is a proposed increase for budgeting purposes; discussion and final approval of the *Tax Bylaw* occurs in early 2024);
7. Engineering of approvals for select gravel mining operations; and
8. A Water Utility Rate increase of 10 per cent (to better reflect the cost of service delivery).

Lamont County Council spent more than 17 hours reviewing the 2024 operating and capital budget, and then formally approved this on December 12. The 2024 Budget focuses on delivering on our strategic plan, while maintaining current service levels.

"Many municipalities have experienced significant challenges this year and as the economy recovers," said Lamont County Reeve David Diduck. "We have seen increases in many of the day-to-day needs for everyone. Inflation has impacted the cost of food, gas and services. Costs are rising and Council has worked to balance service needs with limiting the impact to residents to keep things affordable."



There are a few factors beyond Council’s control that have contributed to residential and farm property owners seeing an increase in their tax bill again this year. This has been set to not exceed a four per cent increase when the *Tax Bylaw* is finalized in the new year. It is relevant to note this increase is lower when compared to other municipalities across our region. Council is committed to limiting the impact and cost of living factors where it can, but without a minor increase, the services provided to residents would not be sustainable.

Council works hard to provide a transparent and open process to setting its budget, meetings were open to the public and minutes and video are accessible on the Lamont County website. We continuously encourage feedback and engagement from the public through events, surveys, video and attending of Council Meetings. This is also achieved through participating in public hearings, providing feedback on minutes and video of Lamont County Council meetings, and utilizing our citizen service request system. It is through our residents that make Lamont County a great place to live, work and play.

The 2024 Budget and Multi-year Operating and Capital Plan, as presented, has 2024 Operating expenditures of \$30,558,431 and Capital expenditures of \$4,965,679. Capital expenditures will be funded from trade-in of assets, Provincial grants, and reserves. Operating expenditures are funded through the tax levy, user fees, and \$565,000 coming from reserves.

“Council is committed 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 works hard to identify efficiencies and surplus areas to limit the impact to our ratepayers.”

Further reporting on budget and service levels is published in the **Service Level and Operational Highlights 2024 Budget** report (planned for release in 2024) and the Budget Summary Report (planned for release in early 2024).

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 9, 2024.*

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