



County of Stettler No. 6

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For Immediate Release
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Council passes 2019-2021 Budget

County of Stettler Council passed the 2019-2021 Budget on Wednesday, January 9 at their regular council meeting. The 2019-2021 budget process was carried out in four stages.

- 1) In the spring and summer, County ratepayers were surveyed and feedback was collected on current services offered. We asked citizens to prioritize their needs. We visited four regions in the County plus provided an online opportunity for those willing to engage and provide us with feedback.
- 2) Departments reviewed survey results in September and October and provided draft budget numbers.
- 3) In November, Council received a preliminary draft budget and began discussion, prioritizing and debating priorities for the 2019-2021 budget.
- 4) On December 9, the proposed budget was released to the public for review and feedback, and on December 18 Council held a public budget presentation to hear feedback and collect input.

Going forward this budget provides that the County can continue to maintain our existing level of service and continue to capitalize on grant monies as they become available.

- This budget anticipates a need for a 3% increase in the Residential Municipal Property Tax Rate and a 5% increase in Farmland. In recognition of the continuing struggling oil and gas industry, this budget does not plan for an increase to Non-Residential, Linear or Machinery & Equipment taxes. Currently, approximately 68% of the County's tax revenue comes from Linear and Machinery & Equipment and Non-Residential taxation; 19% of tax revenue comes from Residential taxation; and 13% of tax revenue comes from Farm taxation, versus ten years ago when percentages were 78%; 14%; and 9% respectively.
 - A 5% increase in Farmland could translate up to a \$30 increase on a ¼ section of land
 - A 3% increase in Residential could translate up to a \$56 increase on a \$500,000 home

Council will not confirm the tax rate until May, upon receipt of 2018 assessment numbers.

- Council identified a long term gravel supply (25+ years) as a priority, and we have secured a new gravel pit and supply on our northern border that will provide a stable supply of gravel for years to come. Council is paying for the pit through borrowing.

In 2018 Council identified a need to strategically address rural crime in our region. A committee was formed, and under Council's direction a third full time Bylaw Officer was hired.

- We now have three full time Protective Service Officers on staff who maintain services 24/7 throughout the County of Stettler. These officers also head the Stettler Regional Emergency Management Agency, coordinating a regional program of preparedness for response to, and recovery from, emergencies and disasters for the County, the Town of Stettler, the Villages of Big Valley, Donalda and Gadsby and the Summer Villages of White Sands and Rochon Sands.
- Changes to federal tax laws on Jan. 1, 2019 removed long-standing tax exemptions for elected officials for one-third of their salaries. Council adjusted their fees in order to maintain existing net take-home salaries.
 - Meeting Per Diem of 4 hours or longer: Adjusted from \$225 to \$275
 - Meetings of less than 4 hours duration: Adjusted from \$175 to \$200
 - Preparation Days Per Councillor: Adjusted from \$750 to \$800 per month
 - Allowance for Reeve: Adjusted from \$600 to \$650 per month
 - Allowance for Deputy Reeve: Adjusted from \$200 to \$250 per month
- This budget accounts for a newly implemented administration fee for laneway snowplowing. A \$100 administration fee will help cover the administration of this program including flags and annual inspections for the laneway snow plowing service for residents in the County able to utilize this service. The administration fee was implemented as a result of the public budget survey, indicating this was not a service available equally to all residents of the County of Stettler. The administration fee will help offset the cost of this program.

The annual compilation of our budget is an exercise in surveying our community's needs, looking at the Strategic Plan areas identified by Council, and making a report card of the progress made the year prior and the direction given going forward. The budget process helps us to identify and consider what citizens value most in our County, and examine how we can continue maintaining those services and service areas.

For more information or to view the current County of Stettler Budget please visit our website at www.stettlercounty.ca, or contact the County of Stettler.

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