



athabasca county connection

A newsletter for residents and businesses of Athabasca County

June 2014

Tax Bylaw adopted

Decreases on the way for properties with same assessment values

Property owners in Athabasca County will soon be receiving their tax notices in the mail.

This year the majority of residential property owners will see their tax bill go down slightly (1.8%) while all other property types will see a slight increase, partially due to increased property values in the County.

Each year the County waits to receive requisitions from the Greater North Foundation and the Alberta School Foundation before calculating property taxes.

These amounts, combined with assessment values on property and the mill rate set by the County, determine the overall tax rate.

A drop in both school and Greater North Foundation requisitions this year, and \$500,000 in assessment growth, helped offset a two per cent increase in the municipal tax rate set by the County required to deliver programs and services.

"The County has a lot of work to do and having the ability to move forward without a tax increase is a good feeling," says Reeve Doris Splane.

"While some types of assessment will pay slightly more due to increased property values, we are happy about an overall decrease of 1.8 per cent."

Athabasca County Council adopted the tax rate and held all three readings of Bylaw 8-2014 (Tax Rate) at its April 24 meeting.



DIVISION & COUNCILOR RESIGNS TO SEEK FEDERAL SEAT - Councilor David Yurdiga (right) addresses Athabasca County Council following the submission of his resignation. The long-time representative for the Grassland area has been selected as the candidate to run in the upcoming federal by-election.

By-election to take place in Grassland

A by-election will be held on July 7, 2014 to fill a vacancy on Athabasca County Council.

The by-election became necessary after David Yurdiga, Deputy Reeve and Councilor for Division 7 (Grassland), tendered his resignation effective Friday, May 9.

Yurdiga was chosen as a candidate in the upcoming federal by-election for the Athabasca-Fort McMurray riding and resigned to allow greater focus on his campaign.

County Council officially accepted Yurdiga's resignation at a Regular Council Meeting held on Tuesday, May 12. Yurdiga attended the meeting to bid farewell to the County.

"One of the most difficult things I've had to do was press send on my resignation email," said Yurdiga about his decision to leave municipal politics.

Yurdiga was first elected to Athabasca County Council in 2007. He was first nominated as Deputy Reeve in 2008, then as Reeve from 2009 to 2013. In October 2013 Yurdiga was once again nominated as Deputy Reeve of Athabasca County.

After a nomination process and secret ballot vote, Christi Bilsky was chosen by fellow Councilors as Deputy Reeve. An Oath of Office ceremony then took place making Councilor Bilsky Athabasca County's new Deputy Reeve.

A reorganizational meeting then took place to appoint councilors to regional boards, committees and commissions previously attended by Yurdiga. Once a new Division 7 Councilor is elected another reorganizational meeting will take place.

Nomination Packages Available

Councilors hear directly from the people living in their division and bring their ideas forward to Council of how to improve the County.

"Being involved in municipal politics is seen as one of the closest ways for elected officials to work with members of their communities and see the results of their work a relatively short time later," says Brian Pysyk, Returning Officer.

"We are looking for residents interested in guiding the County and Grassland area."

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You can call
County offices
Toll-Free

Administration Office
for general inquiries
1-844-662-2273

Public Works
for roadway/ maintenance issues
1-844-675-2404

County Briefs

Campgrounds open for the season

As of May 15th the eight campgrounds operated by Athabasca County are opened for the 2014 camping season.

Forfar Recreation Park and Hope Lake Campground take advanced bookings while group site bookings can be made for Jackfish Lake. Self-registration is in place for the remainder of the campgrounds.

More information about campgrounds is available by visiting our website and looking for Parks, Community and Recreation under the Services tab.

Audited financial statements available

Each year the County engages the services of an independent auditor to review the financial position of the municipality.

Two reports, an Auditors' Report and a Statement of Financial Position are created and made available to the public for review.

They can be obtained from the County Administration Office or downloaded from our website by looking under 'Services' and 'Corporate Services' tabs.

Check out our local trails

There are a variety of trails in the County that are excellent for a fresh air outing or relaxing stroll all the way up to a two-day excursion on an ATV or trail ride on your horse.

By looking under the 'Visitors' tab on the homepage links to following trails can be found:

- the Riverfront Boardwalk,
- Muskeg Creek Trail,
- Athabasca Landing Trail,
- Peace River Trail,
- Poacher's Landing; and,
- the River Runners Snowmobile Trail.

There are some great things to see on the trails from wildlife and natural areas to the history of the region.

Easily identified symbols for hiking, biking, Off Highway Vehicles, snowmobiles, and equestrian uses are beside the names of the trails.

The trails listed are maintained by a combination of non-profit organizations in conjunction with the County, Town of Athabasca and other provincial and national organizations.

WCB report card ranks County first



Each new County employee, including 2014 seasonal staff, receives safety training on their first day of work to introduce them to safe work practices and policies. The emphasis of Norm De Wet (photo right) is to see each of them return home each day without injury.

Athabasca County has been ranked first for safety out of 72 municipal government employers in 2014 by the Workers Compensation Board of Alberta.

The WCB Employer Report Card looked at incident statistics for municipal workers over the last five years and showed that the results of the County's Health and Safety Management Program and the Disability Management Program are having positive results.

Lost time incidents are defined as injuries that are significant enough to send a worker home.

Today these numbers have fallen significantly compared to five years ago. Modified work programs, in place under the Disability Management Program, help re-introduce

employees to the workplace sooner should they experience an injury.

It wasn't always this way though. It takes the ongoing commitment of employees to make any program successful.

"It's everyday choices that County employees make in doing their daily work and a willingness to promote safety on the part of the County that has gotten us to this place today," says Norm De Wet, Health, Safety and Facilities Coordinator for the County.

In order to provide programs and services the County employs an average of 70 full-time workers through the year, and an additional 30 seasonal workers during the non-winter season.

Road construction season is upon us

Each year the Public Works Department moves forward on maintaining 2,425 kms of road by conducting construction projects and gravelling programs.

ROAD CONSTRUCTION

This year road construction will take place between May 20 and August 25 in the following places:

- Div 1 - in NW 24-62-23
- Div 2 - Rge Rd 225.5 SE of 31-64-18
- Div 3 - Twp Rd 650 N of NE 32-64-18
- Div 5 - Twp Rd 670 N of (31&32)-66-21
- Div 7 - Rge Rd 181 W of NW 12-67-18
- Div 8 - Baptiste Lake Ring Road (SV of South & West Baptiste)

Shoulder pull reconstruction will take place between June 2 and Aug 16 in the following locations:

- Div 2 - Old Colinton Hwy North
- Div 4 - Rge Rd 242 W of (22&15)-65-24
- Div 7 - Hamlet of Grassland (1st Ave. N) West of Rge Rd 183
- Div 9 - Rge Rd 220 - 4-68-22 W4; Rge Rd 223.5 - W of 6-69-20; Rge Rd 21/Twp Rd 690 (N of (35&36)-68-21.

MAINTENANCE GRAVELLING

The County's gravelling program helps maintain the safety of the travelling public by providing enough gravel material for roads.

Depending on weather conditions, this year the work will begin on June 9 in Division

6 and continue through all Divisions of the County with a projected completion date of August 15.

The gravel will be hauled from three gravel pits by a combination of private and county-owned trucks.

In addition to these areas, gravel will be hauled to roads that require patch gravelling and sections of road where road construction has taken place.

The Maintenance Graveling Program is developed each year by the Maintenance Foreman, County Councilors and each area Grader Operator.

Questions can be directed to the Public Works Department by calling 780-675-2404.

Save the date: 4th Annual Fly-In Barbecue July 19

Join us from 11 am to 3 pm at the Athabasca Municipal Airport for a free lunch & refreshments

Athabasca County has planning well underway for the 2014 Fly-In Barbecue.

It's the fourth year for the event and is an opportunity for everyone to find out more about our airport and the aviation community who depends on small airports for leisure and business.

We already have a number of special guests attending the event. They include the Civilian Air Search and Rescue Association (CASARA), STARS, E-Z Air, Angel Flight Alberta and local groups.

Athabasca County will also have some information and displays about recent improvements made to the airport, and general information about the County.

Of course there will be plenty of aircraft to look at, activities for the kids and fun for everyone.



Aircraft owners are invited to fly-in and join in the fun. Do you have a special interest aircraft? Register it with us today. There's Avgas available and no landing fees for the day. Welcome bags will be presented to all pilots who bring an aircraft to the event.

So consider flying or driving over...we would love to have you as part of our event!

New PAPI lights a first

It's not often that a small, rural airport can tout being the first at anything but the Athabasca Municipal Airport is different in this regard.

It will soon be the first airport in Canada to have LED Precision Approach Path Indicator (PAPI) lights installed.

PAPI lights are a visual aid that help pilots acquire and maintain the correct approach to an airport. The lights are automated and are activated when a pilot keys the airplane's radio that is tuned to the airport's radio frequency.

The lights help tell pilots if they are too low, or too high, on their approach and greatly help increase safety at airports.

It was in 2008 that new PAPI systems were manufactured using LED lamps instead of incandescent bulbs. They offer longer life (50,000 hours in some cases) and produce sufficient brightness to meet all aviation guidelines.

Much like at home, power savings will be realized by use of LEDs and is another main advantage for the LED technology.

A contractor will begin the installation of the new lights this month with completion of the project expected sometime in July.



New Avgas fueling system popular

The addition of a self-serve Avgas fuel system has become popular with pilots in the region since its installation.

Allowing fuel to be accessed on a 24/7 basis, it is a secure way for pilots to purchase fuel and for the County to make it available.

It uses chip and pin technology which is becoming the recommended way for those who accept payment by credit card and debit to ensure their systems are safe for both vendor and customer.

Since installing the system in July 2013 the County has sold over 12,500 litres of aviation fuel necessitating the installation of a second fuel tank.

Athabasca airport hangar provides interim storage

Purchase of hangar will provide savings and an immediate use for an existing building on County property

The acquisition of a hangar building at the Athabasca Regional Airport will provide the County with interim storage options until use of the building returns to aviation in the future.

The hangar, formerly owned by Alberta Central Airways, will be used by the County to store airport maintenance equipment right at the facility improving the efficiency of airport maintenance

operations. In addition to storing the airport maintenance equipment, the hangar will also be used to store large and small mowing equipment, as well as other County assets.

As a result of the purchase, the County is able to postpone the construction of a new storage building planned for the Public Works Department yard while providing a use for the hangar at the airport.

"Ownership of the hangar will provide office space and a central location for seasonal staff to operate out of during the summer months," says Brian Adamkewicz, Director of Infrastructure

Services. "It will also help protect the service life of the equipment because until now much of our equipment was stored outside in the winter."

As the region continues to grow it is anticipated the hangar will again be used by an aviation related business and the County will move forward with its plan to construct a storage facility of its own.

The purchase of the hangar was approved at the February 24, 2014 public works meeting. The County officially took ownership of it on March 10, 2014.

Visitor Information Centre to open in Old Train Station



Visitors to the Athabasca region will soon have a place to stop in to gather information and make inquiries about the things our region has to offer.

A rental agreement has been signed for the use of the newly renovated space in the Old Train Station located in Athabasca's downtown core. The agreement is between the Athabasca Heritage Society and Athabasca County on behalf of the Tourism and Economic Development Committee, which is comprised of Athabasca County and the Town of Athabasca representatives.

Next door to the Visitor Information Centre will be a historic display about the history of rail in Athabasca. It will include

artifacts from the period of the train station's heyday.

Those wishing to have information displayed at the Visitor Information Centre can deliver it to the Athabasca County Administration Office to the attention of Laura Barfoot, Tourism/Economic Development Officer.

A job posting to hire a full-time staff member to greet visitors at the Visitor Information Centre has been advertised. Interested individuals can visit the careers section of the Athabasca County website to find out more about the position.

The Visitor Information Centre is projected to open before the July long weekend.

Councilor by-election planned for Grassland area

Nomination Day set for Monday, June 9

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To be eligible to run as a candidate in the upcoming by-election you must:

- be over 18 years of age;
- be a resident of Division 7 in the Grassland area for the 6 consecutive months preceding the election;
- be a Canadian citizen; and,
- pay a \$100 deposit at the time of submitting your nomination papers.

A map outlining the boundaries of Division 7 in the Grassland area is available on the County website as a reference for prospective candidates and residents to determine their eligibility to vote.

The successful candidate will serve until the fall of 2017 when the next general election will take place.

VOTER INFORMATION

A person is eligible to vote in the Grassland Division 7 By-Election if they are: at least 18 years of age; a Canadian citizen; have resided in Alberta for the six (6) consecutive months immediately preceding election day; and, have a place of residence that is located in Division 7 of Athabasca County on election day.

Voters must also provide the required proof of eligibility as required by Section 53 of the Local Authorities Election Act or by local bylaw.

VOTING LOCATION/ POLLING STATION

Grassland Community Hall

ADVANCE VOTING

Saturday, July 5, 2014 - 12 (noon) to 8 pm

ELECTION DAY

Monday, July 7, 2014 - 10 am to 8 pm

Results of the Division 7 Grassland By-Election will be posted following the closing of the polls on July 7, 2014.

Partnership Profile

Athabasca Regional Waste Management Services Commission

Athabasca County holds membership in a variety of regional commissions which provide necessary services for residents.

The Athabasca Regional Waste Management Services Commission (ARWMSC) was established by a Provincial Government Order in Council in 1999.

It has four member municipalities: Athabasca County, MD of Lesser Slave River No. 124, Town of Athabasca, and the Village of Boyle.

The CAO of the Commission has the role of ensuring equal and fair treatment to each member municipality for services they receive or require.

The Commission has put in place successful residential waste collection programs, efficient transfer sites, landfills and waste bin services for the residents of the member municipalities.

Part of ARWMSC's work has been to manage the Athabasca Transfer Site, Recycle Facility and Blue Heron Bottle Depot.

"This is a facility and waste management program which many other municipalities look to as an example of what they want to work toward," says Doris Splane, Reeve of Athabasca County.

"We value our membership in ARWMSC and look forward to building on the successes we have already experienced."



Athabasca County
at the centre of it all

www.athabascacounty.com

The Athabasca County Connection newsletter is produced bi-monthly and is available to every resident by mail or electronically through email or on our website.

To receive or cancel your copy call the County Administration Office at 780-675-2273/ 1-844-662-2273 or via email: connection@athabascacounty.com

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