

County of Barrhead No. 11 Annual Ratepayers Meeting held at the Glenreagh Community Hall on April 5, 2016 was called to order by County Manager Mark Oberg at 7:04 p.m.

PRESENT:

Lindsay Gordon
Dennis Kasowsky
Curtis Miedema
Dwayne Miedema
Kerry McElroy
Ken Anderson
Lawrence Miller
Emil Smecko
Norah Smecko
Donna Woods
Lambert Veenstra
Harold Begert
RCMP Cst Sarah Harding
Wally Wright
Helmut Ehrenholz
Brian Miller
Rick DeVries, Barrhead Leader

Council, Auditor, Staff

Reeve Bill Lee
Councillor Doug Drozd
Councillor Marvin Schatz
Councillor Bill Lane
Councillor Ron Kleinfeldt
Councillor Darrell Troock
Councillor Dennis Nanninga
Mark Oberg, County Manager
Diane Begert, Director of Finance and Administration
Linda West, Admin Asst. to the County Manager
Blaine Clarahan, Auditor
Marilyn Flock, Agricultural Fieldman
Cal Fischer, Public Works Superintendent
Ken Hove, Assistant Public Works Superintendent
Rick Neumann, Development Officer

MOMENT OF SILENCE

County Manager Mark Oberg reported that Mr. Dean Tomm, an employee of the County of Barrhead into his 25th year of service with the County, passed away suddenly on April 4th, 2016. Mr. Oberg asked those present to observe a moment of silence in memory of Dean Tomm.

MEETING CHAIRMAN

County Manager Mark Oberg called for nominations for meeting Chairman. Kerry McElroy was nominated by Ken Anderson and Kerry McElroy accepted the nomination. Mark Oberg called three further times for nominations for meeting chairman. No more nominations came forth and Mark Oberg declared Kerry McElroy Meeting Chairman.

Mr. Kerry McElroy took over the Chair.

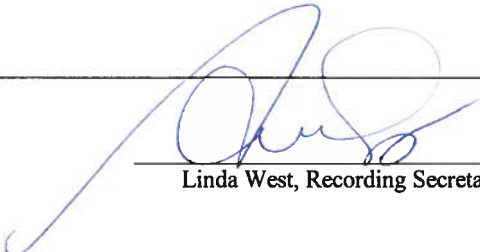
MEETING SECRETARY

Chairman McElroy suggested that Linda West be appointed as the recording secretary for the meeting and there were no objections. Chairman McElroy appointed Linda West as meeting secretary.

INTRODUCTIONS

Chairman McElroy called upon Reeve Lee to introduce the Council and Staff present. Reeve Lee introduced County Manager Mark Oberg and requested Mr. Oberg to introduce staff members that are present. Mr. Oberg introduced the following County staff members:

Linda West, Administrative Assistant to the County Manager
Diane Begert, Director of Finance and Administration
Rick Neumann, Development Officer
Marilyn Flock, Agricultural Fieldman
Cal Fischer, Public Works Superintendent
Ken Hove, Assistant Public Works Superintendent



Linda West, Recording Secretary

The individual members of Council present introduced themselves, reporting on the Electoral Division they represent and also reporting on the various Committees, Boards, and Commissions they sit on.

MINUTES OF ANNUAL RATEPAYERS MEETING HELD MARCH 18, 2015

The minutes of the March 18, 2015 annual ratepayers meeting were distributed to those in attendance and Chairman McElroy provided time for those present to peruse the minutes.

Helmut Ehrenholz moved that the minutes of the Annual Ratepayers Meeting held March 18, 2015 be accepted. The motion was voted on and carried.

REEVE'S REPORT

A copy of the Annual Report brochure was available to all those present. Reeve Lee reviewed his written report for fiscal 2015 as contained in the Annual Report document which included:

- a) The signing of the Capital Funding Agreement with the Town of Barrhead stating that the County would contribute up to \$5 million dollars for the Town of Barrhead's new aquatic centre;
- b) The Council's declaration of an Agricultural Drought Disaster in the summer of 2015;
- c) The paving of Township Road 604 connecting Highway 769 from Mellowdale to Highway 33;
- d) The Visioning Exercise for the Kiel Development Project located 1.5 miles east of Barrhead and the proposed completion of a full feasibility study for the project in 2016;
- e) The opening of a new school in the Hamlet of Neerlandia;
- f) The Neerlandia Co-op new commercial developments;
- g) The upcoming celebrations in 2016 for the 25th Anniversary of the Twinning of Barrhead and Tokoro, Japan; and
- h) The presentation of the Council's first *Conservation and Stewardship Award* to *The Lac La Nonne Enhancement and Protection Association*.

Reeve Lee reported that the Council attended the official sod turning for the Town's construction of the new aquatic centre earlier today, April 5, 2016, and also reported that the Council attended the opening of the Neerlandia Co-op Grocery, Liquor outlet and Restaurant on March 18, 2016.

Reeve Lee moved acceptance of the Reeve's report. Chairman McElroy called for questions coming out of the Reeve's report and hearing none, a vote was called on the motion and the motion was carried.

COUNTY MANAGER'S REPORT

County Manager Mark Oberg reviewed his written report for fiscal 2015 as contained in the Annual Report document which included:

- a) The ongoing development of a Fire Services Strategic Plan;
- b) An update on the business of the Barrhead Regional Water Commission including upgrades to the water treatment plant in 2015 with a few minor matters at the plant to be completed in 2016;
- c) The funding provided by an Alberta Community Partnership (ACP) grant utilized to engage a facilitator to work with the Councils of the Town of Barrhead and County of Barrhead in considering various types of regional cooperation, which includes amalgamation, and in addition, ACP grant funds were utilized to pay for the creation of an amalgamation study and a survey of the community, and further, that as the two Councils are still in discussion on these matters, the meetings, results of the results of the study and survey are still confidential;



Linda West, Recording Secretary

- d) The variety of public services, including FCSS, Public Library, Regional Landfill and Airport services, provided in partnership between the County of Barrhead and the Town of Barrhead;
- e) The Council, or its representatives, meeting with new Ministers within the Alberta Government including the Minister of Municipal Affairs and the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry, and meeting with the new MLA Mr. Glenn van Dijken;

Mr. Oberg reported that the Council met earlier today, April 4, 2016, with the new Member of Parliament Mr. Arnold Viersen.

Mark Oberg moved acceptance of the County Manager's report. Chairman McElroy asked if there are any questions from the County Manager's report.

Dennis Kasowsky asked a question on the matter of the amalgamation talks and the County Manager and members of Council reported that a study has been prepared and submitted to the Minister of Municipal Affairs for her consideration and the County has not received any response from the Minister to date. The County Manager also reiterated that as the two Councils are still in discussion on these matters, the meetings, results of the results of the study and survey are still confidential.

Dennis Kasowsky asked if the provincial grants are going to continue with the new provincial government and Mr. Oberg reported that the County officials believe the grants will continue but confirmation of amounts has not been confirmed to date. The County Manager also reported that it is anticipated the Province will release its budget in mid-April for the next fiscal year.

Lambert Veenstra asked if the residents are going to have a say at any time on the matter of amalgamation. Reeve Lee reported that a study has been prepared and submitted to the Minister of Municipal Affairs as required in the Act, and the County has not received any response from the Minister's Office to date. Chairman McElroy asked if the Council has a timeline for a response from the Minister and the County Manager reported that it is unknown. Lawrence Miller stated that it would be unfair to ratepayers if they had no participation or opportunity for choice on the matter.

Chairman McElroy asked for a vote on the motion to accept the County Manager's report and the motion was carried.

AGRICULTURAL SERVICE BOARD (ASB) – REPORT

Councillor Marvin Schatz, Chairman of the ASB, reviewed the written report of ASB Chairman for fiscal 2015 as included in the Annual Report Brochure, which included:

- a) The ASB's continued partnership with the *Farm Safety Centre* for them to deliver farm safety programs to the schools within the municipality
- b) The ASB again delivered the *City Slickers Program* for urban children and their parents with funding assistance from the *Barrhead Agricultural Society* and the partnership with *Ag for Life*.
- c) The ASB continued to revamp its *Business Management Plan*, and amended several policies;
- d) The ASB continues to work on drainage issues within the municipality;
- e) Discovery of Jimsonweed (Devil's Trumpet) in the County of Barrhead;
- f) Representatives of the ASB met with the Provincial Minister of Agriculture and Forestry and had discussions on certain topics including Country of Origin Labelling;



Linda West, Recording Secretary

Trans-Pacific Trade Agreements; Government Funded Research; Value Added Agricultural Products, and the Farm Safety Legislation (Bill 6);

- g) Local ASB Tour;
- h) Board members' attendance at conferences, workshops and information sessions;
- i) The ASB Rural Beautification Award winners, the recipients of the ATB Farm Family Award, the GROWTH Alberta Business of Excellence award winner, and the ASB Recognition Award winner.

Councillor Marvin Schatz thanked George Andrews for his years of service on the Agricultural Service Board and reported that Dale Greig was appointed by Council to serve as a public member at large on the ASB commencing January 1, 2016.

Motion by Marvin Schatz that the Agricultural Service Board Chairman's Report be accepted. Chairman McElroy asked if there are any questions from the ASB Chairman's report.

Dennis Kasowsky asked for further information on the Jimsonweed. Agricultural Fieldman Marilyn Flock responded that the Jimsonweed has been found in a few fields and have also been found in flowerbeds. Marilyn cautioned that if anyone finds the jimsonweed on their property that they do not touch the plant with bare hands and do not burn the plant as it is very toxic. Marilyn reported that the weed has been found mostly in canola crops and it has not been proven which 'lot' of canola seed contains the Jimsonweed seed.

Reeve Lee announced that Marilyn Flock will be retiring in 2016.

Ken Anderson stated his support that the ASB delivers the *City Slickers* program and hopes that the program will continue in the Barrhead community. Ken also stated his support that the Council continues to appoint public members at large on the ASB.

The motion to accept the Agricultural Service Board Chairman's Report was voted on and carried.

AUDITOR'S REPORT

Blaine Clarahan, Auditor for the County, reviewed the 2015 Auditor's Report and the Financial Report for the year ended December 31, 2015, as contained in the Annual Report document which included:

- a) The Consolidated Statement of:
 - Financial Position;
 - Operations; and
 - Change in Net Financial Assets;
- b) The Schedule of Property and Other Taxes Levied
- c) Notes to the Financial Statements
- d) Salary and Benefits Disclosure.

Motion by Blaine Clarahan that the Auditor's report be accepted.

Chairman McElroy asked if there are any questions from the Auditor's report.

Lawrence Miller asked if any money has been paid as yet to the Town of Barrhead for the new pool. County Manager Mark Oberg reported that no money has been borrowed as yet by the County of Barrhead, and that the borrowing is proposed to be done in June, 2016. Mr. Oberg reported that the County anticipates there will be one bi-annual debenture payment made in 2016, estimated to be \$142,000.00.



Linda West, Recording Secretary

County Manager Mark Oberg and Director of Finance and Administration Diane Begert reported on the reduced assessment for taxation for 2016, advising that some loss in oil, and gas and linear assessment is made up with increased residential assessment for 2016. Diane Begert reported on the matter where there are tax accounts outstanding to the County relating to pipe and power assessments and machinery and equipment assessments where the tax payers have gone into receivership or declared bankruptcy, and the manner in which the County has to proceed to try to collect on outstanding taxes. Reeve Lee reported on the requirement for the County of Barrhead to send to the Province, the amount of property taxes levied for education purposes even in the case where those amounts have not yet been paid to the County by the taxpayer.

Walter Wright asked if the County could borrow money for the pool in more than one block and Diane Begert responded that a higher rate of interest would have to be paid if the money is borrowed in more than one block.

Lambert Veenstra commended Council for standing their ground to limit the County contribution to \$5 million dollars for the Town's pool.

The motion to accept the Auditor's report was voted on and carried.

Chairman McElroy asked if there are any questions regarding the other reports contained in the 2015 Annual Report document. No questions were put forth.

QUESTIONS AND OPEN DISCUSSION

Brian Miller asked how much of the costs for County Councillors to attend meetings on the amalgamation matter will have to be paid by the County if amalgamation does not proceed. The County Manager reported that the County of Barrhead has been carrying these costs to date and that the matter could be discussed if amalgamation does not proceed.

Dennis Kasowsky asked if the Ag Fieldman's position will be filled soon after Marilyn Flock retires. The County Manager reported that the upcoming vacancy has been advertised provincially and the County has received approximately 15 applications to date.

Ken Anderson asked what work is proposed for Range Road 60 south of Highway 18 and County Manager Mark Oberg reported that some of the oiled surface on the road is still in good shape so those areas with a solid oiled surface will be left and the other areas of the roadway will be treated with the dust suppressant product MG30 as a pilot project.

Ken Anderson stated that Township Road 604 is a very nice road now that it is paved. County Manager Mark Oberg reported that the County will be paving two sections of Range Road 40 in 2016, the first section from Highway 33 north to Township Road 604 and the second section Highway 18 south approximately 2.5 kilometers.

A question was asked as to what is happening with Highway 661. Councillor Nanninga reported that the County Council continues to put pressure on the province to pave Highway 661. Councillor Nanninga reported that the Province calls the project 'shelf ready' and that the Council considers Highway 661 an unfinished road. Councillor Nanninga further reported that both the Councils of Westlock County and County of Barrhead have Highway 661 at the top of their respective priority lists with the Province and that representatives from industries and the two municipalities will be meeting on the matter on April 11th.

Dennis Kasowsky asked why the Council has Highway 661 as its priority rather than Highway 777. Council Nanninga stated that at some point you have to make a choice and because the Province considers Highway 661 to be an unfinished road and shelf ready, that is why Council has placed Highway 661 as its first priority with the Province.

Reeve Lee stated that people from Dapp, Jarvie and Fawcett areas do trade in the Neerlandia area and there is lots of traffic generated from the agricultural industry with grain being transported for storage in the Neerlandia/Vega area.

Dennis Kasowsky asked what the chances are for funding from the Province for Highway 661 at the present time. Members of Council reported that Highway 661 is a provincial road and that the Council continues to hear that there will be funds for infrastructure so the Council will continue to pressure the provincial government.

Lawrence Miller stated that he is glad to hear Highway 661 is Westlock County's priority.

County Manager Mark Oberg stated that the County of Barrhead will finalize the budget for fiscal 2016 following the release of the provincial budget scheduled for April 15th, 2016.

Helmut Ehrenholz asked if the low level crossing by the golf course will remain in place with the anticipated paving of Range Road 40 south of Highway 18 and the County Manager reported that no changes will be made to the existing low level crossing and that the crossing will remain in place.

Councillor Lane reported that the Province is proposing that work will be done in 2016 on Highway 18 from the Town of Barrhead west to Thunder Lake.

Dennis Kasowsky asked what the charges are for a fire equipment response to property and the County Manager reported that the Council has set a maximum fee of \$3,000.00 for fire equipment to respond to a single event.

Mr. Miedema asked if the County has considered any incentive for landowners to leave existing tree shelterbelts in place. Councillor Drozd reported that the Council does not have an incentive program for existing shelterbelts, but the Council does have a Riparian Improvement Program for the establishment of new, or to renew, riparian areas or buffer areas.

Brian Miller asked if the Council has considered paying for fire responses through taxation and Councillor Troock reported that the Council is currently reviewing the fire services agreement between the Town of Barrhead and the County.

CLOSING COMMENTS


Reeve Lee reported that Constable Sarah Harding from the Barrhead RCMP Detachment is present and that the Sargent from the Detachment has quarterly meetings with Council.

Reeve Lee reported that representatives from the Council are scheduled to meet with the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry on April 28th, 2016.

Reeve Lee also reported that the County of Barrhead continues to lobby the Province to address the topic of the large disparity in the frequency of opportunities and the amount of money able to be raised by community groups that conduct and manage casino events as fundraisers, depending on whether the group is from a city or from a municipality in rural Alberta. Reeve Lee reported that the County understands there is an average of a \$60,000 funding difference for an organization from an urban center managing a casino event versus an organization from rural Alberta managing a casino event, which is not fair.

ADJOURNMENT

Ken Anderson moved that the meeting adjourn at this time being 8:48 p.m. The motion was voted on and carried.



Linda West, Recording Secretary