

Councillors in attendance:

Deputy Mayor Tkachuk-Ward 7 (Host)

Councillor Cote- Ward 7 (Host)

Councillor Moore-Ward 5 (Host)

Mayor Moghrabi

Councillor George L'Heureux- Ward 2

Councillor Jason Stedman- Ward 4

Councillor Borgun – Ward 3

Administration in attendance:

Shadia Amblie, Chief Administrative Officer

Dan Small, Assistant Chief Administrative Officer and Senior Manager, Finance and Grants

Melanie McConnell, Senior Manager, Legislative and Information Services

Brian Shapka, Senior Manager, Public Works

Clayton Kittlitz, Senior Manager, Planning & Development

Molly Fyten, Manager, Environmental Services

Danielle Cardinal, Legislative Services Coordinator

Heather Reid, Legislative Services Coordinator

There was a combined total of 38 people in attendance, including Councillors and Administration.

DISCUSSION SUMMARY

Deputy Mayor Tkachuk provided opening remarks and an introduction of the Councillors and Administration in attendance. Deputy Mayor Tkachuk underscored that the Ward Open House is an opportunity for conversation and to encourage citizens to provide feedback to Council.

Deputy Mayor Tkachuk outlined the format of the Open House would start with feedback solicited from each table and then with a Question & Answer format, with Deputy Mayor Tkachuk highlighting that the information would be compiled and brought to Council for their awareness. Deputy Mayor Tkachuk also provided a brief overview of the 2019 Municipal Census and invited attendees to complete the survey.

Councillor Cote supplemented Deputy Mayor Tkachuk's introduction by referring to the Strategic Goals of the County which were on display for residents to view. The 5 Strategic Goals include:

1. Economic Development
2. Recreation and Culture
3. Social Wellness
4. Tourism
5. Environment

The host Ward Open House Councillors explained the Start, Stop and Continue Exercise, and invited residents to provide input as part of this exercise. The host Councillors also thanked residents for attending the Ward Open House to discuss ideas on matters important to them.

The host Councillors proceeded to visit each table to engage in discussion.

Here is a summary of the topics raised by attendees:

Draft Environmental Reserve (ER) Bylaw:

- A resident was concerned about the draft Environmental Reserve Bylaw questioning what the County's objective is with this bylaw, indicating there are thousands of residents who have lakefront properties and they should be able to enjoy the lake. The resident questioned if the bylaw will restrict residents, and if so, the resident remarked that there will be legal challenges, that will not only impact the municipality but the provincial government.
- Mayor Moghrabi shared that a meeting with Alberta Environment and Parks (AEP) is necessary given that the County has no control over the provincial restrictions with the hope that the AEP Minister is accepting of the predicament the County is in given the legislative adherence for environmental reserve preservation.
- Another resident asked if the draft Environmental Reserve bylaw is a provincial requirement. The resident was informed that the province chose 2-3 lakes (Lac La Biche Lake, Gregoire, and Wood Buffalo) to implement riparian measures. Administration informed the group that the County is gathering feedback on the draft Environmental Reserve Bylaw and that the bylaw will go back to Council for a decision, and that it's important for Council to hear all positions on the Bylaw. The group was informed that since 1995, the provincial government, through legislation referenced the riparian state. The group was also informed that the Environmental Reserve Encroachment Policy has been in effect since 2010, therefore, the ability to deal with encroachments on environmental reserves is not a new measure.
- A resident referenced a FireSmart exercise, whereby some of the environmental reserve was cut down towards the lake, which is a protection mechanism in the event of a forest fire, in this instance, the cutting of grass would be considered a breach of the draft Environmental Reserve Bylaw.
- Concerns were raised about the devaluation of lakefront property; result of increased riparian zones, inability to use lake freely and no fishing on Lac La Biche lake.
- The Deputy Mayor underscored that Council has not made any decisions, and that public input is being requested on the draft Environmental Reserve Bylaw. The attendees were also informed that the current state of the preservation of the Environmental Reserve is provincially regulated.
- One resident remarked that it appears that Council has already made a decision, questioning which avenues are available for residents to voice their concerns to Council.
- Residents explained they want more of an avenue for providing feedback on the draft Environmental Reserve bylaw citing that it would have been ideal to get public input before the draft bylaw was presented to Council. Additionally, residents suggested a meeting with landowners would gauge more input instead of an open house.
- Administration informed the attendees about the public engagement process underway, and it was underscored that the draft Environmental Reserve bylaw being discussed is in draft format and that it is unclear what the outcome may be on the bylaw because public input will be taken into consideration. Residents were asked what other avenues may be appropriate in receiving feedback, while noting that it is currently on the County website.
- One resident mentioned he resides in Sunset Bay and that he lobbied about proper sewer and water hookups; which is an optional service, so he questions the logic of the draft Environmental Reserve bylaw.

In response to this comment, Deputy Mayor Tkachuk indicated that a mandatory hook up bylaw is being considered by the County.

- One resident reminded attendees that we reside in Lakeland County, and are currently receiving setbacks attributed to existing fishing regulations and lakefront properties are being devalued, the resident asked Council to keep this in mind when meeting with provincial ministers.
- Another resident spoke that the intent of the legislation is to protect natural waterways, and the degree to enforce the bylaw needs to be evaluated. The resident noted that it is silly that we cannot trim grass due to potential contamination and that the science of protecting the draft Environmental Reserve Bylaw should be done pragmatically. If our lake is in trouble, there should be emphasis on the historic research of the lake, and exploring upstream pollutants should also be examined. It was further noted that lakes such as ours are facing challenges with agriculture applications in our lakes and watersheds. The community, as a collective should be involved in research efforts in the foreseeable future, citing that many residents who love the lake would support objective science to protect the water quality.
- Councillor Cote informed the attendees about the watershed study underway and that lake testing is ongoing. Councillor Cote noted there will be challenges when trying to change 50 years of behavior, and again underscored that the draft Environmental Reserve bylaw is in draft format and that the County is seeking public feedback.
- A resident inquired if a watershed management study is being done on our lake. Administration informed the group that water testing has been underway since 2001, and that this data is available and is referenced in the watershed management plan. Residents were informed that the collection of water sampling was attributed to concerned residents, and residents were encouraged to reach out to Council and Administration for this information, while underscoring the importance of balancing lake quality.
- The Deputy Mayor remarked that its not only residents who are getting pressured to be ecologically friendly, the County too has received pressure from all levels of government.
- A resident encouraged attendees to look at the larger picture and consider the larger polluters as well, while questioning if there is a strategy to address this; the group was informed that Administration was tasked with bringing forth this data. Residents were also encouraged the get involved in watershed protection/action committees.
- The question was asked about enforcement staffing, inquiring of there will be an increase in staff if the draft Environmental Reserve bylaw is adopted, along with how the enforcement of the bylaw will be done.
- Council needs to be serious about enforcing bylaw/new rules; currently there are no consequences for breaking the rules – no enforcement.
- A resident shared that he's worried that if he corrects some of the encroachments on his property as outlined in the draft Environmental Reserve Bylaw, and then the bylaw changes, then his expenses would essentially be wasted. The resident was informed that with existing legislation, encroachments are not permitted, therefore, any encroachments should be addressed and that environmental and municipal reserve land should be left in their natural state.
- One resident questioned if the draft Environmental Reserve bylaw will deter visitors.

- Councillor Cote shared that the people have been asking to make the lake health a priority, and it's important that this be taken seriously.
- The residents were informed that Council wants to work with residents in terms of storage mechanisms, for example, exploring the implementation of dock or pier permits.

Economic Development and Tourism

- Residents remarked about the future of the community from an economic development standpoint, questioning where the community is going and the need for a strong economic development plan that will encompass technology initiatives, while recognizing the economics of northern Alberta. There is a need to think strategically and recognize evolving research while incorporating regional and corporate interests.
- Residents would like to know what the next steps are related to tourism.
- Residents were informed that the County recruited a position dedicated to Tourism and Economic Development, and that Council approved the Economic Development Strategy update. Also, there's a Retail Gap Analysis underway and that this information will be brought to Council at a future Council meeting. Residents were also informed that an Economic Development Advisory Committee Bylaw will also be brought to Council for approval.
- Deputy Mayor Tkachuk commented about the need for new infrastructure, and that Council is prepared to assist where possible, and that the County remains open for business. Administration will be working to support the required improvements to increase business coming to the community. The Mayor commented that we require sustainable industries beyond oil and gas; engaging with the local college, Environment and Parks, medical services to plan for future generations.

Bridge at Cosway

- One resident asked about the construction of a bridge that was to be located at the Cosway, the resident indicated this was an initiative of a past Council, over a decade ago and was curious to know why it never reached fruition.

Communication:

- Improved communication was suggested in terms of informing residents of outcomes. Residents shared attending two open houses in 2018 in regards to the Mission Beach Local Improvement and the Master Plan and Tourism Strategy, and they are unaware of any outcomes relating to those open houses. Some suggestions in terms of communication efforts included the County newsletter, and a mailing list.

Staffing:

- A resident requested a staff directory be made publicly available to easily identify who to contact should residents have any questions or concerns.
- A resident commented that it appears young employees are not being promoted which results in those employees moving on and leaving the County.

Water and Sewer Hook ups:

- A resident shared they encountered challenges in getting qualified contractors to perform residential water and sewer work, and asked if the County can assist residents with securing contractors to perform this type of work. The group was informed there is reluctance to get involved in procurement of a contractor due to perceived unfairness and/or favouritism.

Golf Course:

- Over the last 25 years, the Golf Course has not been improved. It's a long way from the beauty it was when it was first built.
- Fairways are narrowing.

Future Meetings:

- A resident suggested that meetings be dedicated for each strategic goal given that most of the discussion during the Ward Open House pertained to Strategic Goals 1 and 5: Tourism and Environment.

START, STOP and CONTINUE Exercise

In response to the Start, Stop and Continue exercise, the following information was provided:

START

- Repairing the boulevards by Fountain Tire
- Additional County Access Bus hours of operation
- Repairing the 103 Asphalt
- Enforcement of rules regarding new development
- Permits with 99 year lease to be transferred/erased with property for docks, lifts, boats and fire pits.
- Allow moveable structures through a permitting process
- Allowing fishing
- Exploring the possibility of building a walkway or tunnel for the rail lines that interest through the hamlet

CONTINUE

- To study lake health
- A grandfather provision
- Walking Trails
- FCSS Teen Chill Zone
- FSCC Parent Courses
- Parent Link Programs
- Sidewalk Program
- Tree clearing and boulevard cutting
- Lobbying for downtown to be a County road

STOP

- Driving on grass during snow removal
- Measurements of the roads

WRITTEN COMMENTARY

Due to insufficient time to address all questions and comments, residents provided their handwritten comments, the following is a summary of those topics and comments (if provided):

Bylaw Enforcement staff:

- There appears to be too many bylaw enforcement staff, and yet residents still feel unsafe.

Road Maintenance & Resurfacing:

- There's a concern about the resurfacing of West Road citing that the mix used was too soft which has resulted in huge ruts in the road, making it challenging for residents to drive, walk, or bike on the road.
- Another concern was raised about the paving of the Beaver Lake Hamlet-West Road.
- A comment was made about the possibility of extending Range Road 145 to Township 655 A

Pool:

- Maintenance
- Usage
- New Pool

Garbage Pick up:

- Can garbage pick up be improved for seniors who live on acreages who have very long driveways.

Signage:

- The question was asked why there are there no yield signs in the hamlets, and only stop signs?
- The question was asked on whether a three way stop sign system can be installed at the bypass intersection and Highway 55?

Addressing:

- A comment was noted about the challenges of sharing addresses when they're incorrect.

Water/Sewer-Mission

- A concern was noted regarding the tender of this project

Sidewalks/Drainage

- A resident asked if there are statistics kept in regards to Walking Trail usage during the winter season.