

Policy and Priorities Committee Meeting

November 4, 2014

The Policy and Priorities Committee is a standing Committee of Council responsible for reviewing policies, bylaws, plans, studies and other County activities that are in a draft or planning stages in order to provide Administration with direction. Recommendations may be made during Policy and Priorities (POP) meetings, but final decisions regarding bylaws and policies must be referred to future Regular Council Meetings.

Councillor Reports

- Councillors engaged in their monthly round table of Councillor Reports, detailing their work with internal and external committees.

2015 County Budget Guiding Principles and Timelines

- In order to facilitate efficiency, accuracy and timeliness in preparing the 2015 budget, Administration brought forward guiding principles and timelines for the budget process, as directed by Council during a 2015 Budget Strategic Session held in September.
- Council discussed and provided direction regarding the guiding principles and timelines presented by Administration.
- Guiding Principles for 2015 Budget as directed by Council:
 - Commitment to developing a balanced budget with a special focus on core services.
 - Debenture funding for capital projects may be considered depending on size and scope.
 - Council plans to strike a balance between urban and rural projects by focusing on strategic plans.
 - All capital projects will be driven by long-term and short-term Council priorities.
 - Essential services are a top priority and will be maintained and improved.
 - New staff positions will require the presentation of a business case to senior management, and, upon their approval, the position and business case will be submitted to Council.
- With these guidelines, Administration will consult with each of the County's departments about their budget requirements for 2015, and prepare interim, preliminary and final capital and operating budgets for Council's consideration.
- As for timelines, Council is hoping to have a preliminary draft budget and interim operating budget by the end of December. This will include large capital projects so that projects can be tendered early in 2015.
- Council also requested that Administration review the operating/capital ratio spending by similar municipalities and bring this information forward for comparison during the budget deliberation process.

Draft Pool Policies, Pool Time Allocation and Pool Admission and Supervision

- County Administration brought forward draft policies for Council's review and recommendation to ensure consistency in administering and managing pool time allocations for multiple user groups, as well as to increase safety measures with respect to admission and supervision standards.
- Portage Pool is seeing increased numbers of bathers during public swims, sometimes as high as 155 people per open swim.
- Aquatic staff have found that there has also been an increase in the number of non-swimmers or inexperienced swimmers using the pool, an increase in children and youth left at the pool unaccompanied, and an increase in the number of users who are unfamiliar with the pool safety rules and environment.
- Administration contacted neighbouring aquatic facilities in Athabasca, Bonnyville, Cold Lake, Vermilion and Vegreville to ascertain their age and supervision standards. The youngest unaccompanied age was five years old and the oldest was nine.
- Currently the youngest age that can be unaccompanied at Portage Pool is six years old; however supervision from a guardian or a responsible person for non-swimmers and inexperienced swimmers is essential.
- Administration is recommending the implementation of a swim assessment test to gauge the skills of youth aged seven to 11 years prior their entering the pool. Swimmers who have successfully completed the swim assessment on three separate occasions will be allowed full access of the pool.
- Council approved the briefing and directed Administration to bring the new policies forward to a Regular Council Meeting for a final decision.

Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties (AAMDC) Lobbying Efforts

- Council discussed the next AAMDC convention and what they would discuss with provincial ministers during meetings.
- Council directed Administration to request meetings with the Minister of Transportation and the Minister of Seniors to discuss the following:
 - Ministry of Transportation
 - Highway 858 - Paving
 - Provincial Highway Maintenance (Highways 36, 63 and 881)
 - Owl River / 881 Intersection
 - Passing lanes and pullouts on Highway 881
 - Intersections on Highways within LLB County/request information on traffic counts
 - Ministry of Seniors
 - Seniors Housing