

Background Notes from the Mayor's Desk - September 29, 2016

You may have read recently that a group of town and county residents came before Council with concerns about the rough road conditions on Centre Street North between 10th and 12th Avenue (the north end of town on the way to James River). Council welcomes any delegation or individual resident that wants to speak to Council at any regular Council meeting and we thank all those residents who brought forward their concerns.

Often, residents don't get the chance to hear what Council, Administration and staff are doing behind the scenes. We love it when people come to Council. Our job is to serve and we need to know what you want. Please feel free to call me, or any Councillor if you have questions, suggestions or concerns. If we know ahead of time what your concerns are, we can be prepared to give you, and the community, some answers about the issues you bring forward at Council meetings. That is our job.

Concerns about rough road conditions on Centre Street North are legitimate. Administration and staff have been given a little bit of money to patch some of the road but it is not the fault of staff that the road is rough. Council has only provided "band aid" money for temporary fixes. What is needed is a complete rebuild of the road from 6A Avenue through 12th Avenue. The cost is projected to be approximately \$2.2 million and the plan is to have it on the 2017 capital project list. Council has made decisions to do temporary repairs, using a little of your tax money, rather than spending more of your money on a road we will tear up in the very near future. Please don't blame staff for doing what Council tells them to do.

Behind the scenes, the Town Administration is working with our engineers on the road design, and all the needed upgrades to water and sewer pipes under the ground that need to be replaced as well. Fixing any road is not done as an isolated project, it needs to be fit in as part of planning for water and sewer services, other utilities, as well as other roads, for the next 30-50 years, as we grow into our future. It is a big complicated project - and our staff is "on it".

Council will approve the project - or not - depending on "the balance" of what we think you and your taxes can afford. We want to do projects, but they cost money – money that comes from various places, such as from your property taxes, reserves that have been put away, and grants that we can get from the Provincial and Federal governments. The ~\$2.2 million upgrade to Centre Street's road and underground pipes will be up against the need for us to expand our wastewater treatment facility (sewer plant) at a cost of up to \$14 million. Council does not want to raise taxes unnecessarily, yet we need to be sure that we do the projects that are important to the community. If we had to pick one project that was most important, would you rather be able to flush a toilet or drive on a smooth road? How much are you prepared to see your taxes increase to do as many projects as possible? Keep in mind that a 1% increase in your taxes amounts to about only \$32,000 in additional revenue.

We need your help. Please come out to talk with us about your thoughts on these decisions on the following budget meeting dates: November 7th from 5pm to 6pm; November 14th from 9am to 4pm; and a final public open house on November 16th from 6pm to 8pm.

Please call me at 403-638-3535 if you want to talk more about this, or any other issue of concern to you.

Terry Leslie, Mayor
Town of Sundre