



# WHEATLAND COUNTY

## Reeve Monthly Report

---

Reeve: Amber Link

Division: 2

Reporting Period: October 2020

Report Date: October 30, 2020

### **October 1 Community Futures Virtual Symposium and AGM**

Governing Your Greatest Asset (effective loan portfolio governance including developmental lending differences, duties and roles, loan review and approval, fit of financing project with board strategic direction). AGM, recognition of newly appointed Board, review of CFLIP portfolio performance, CFLIP Audited Operating Financial Statements, and CFNA Audited Financial Statements.

### **October 1 Emergency Management Committee Meeting**

Review action items from 2019 meeting, Covid-19 update, Emergency Management documents, resources, and plans, upcoming training and exercise planning, Field Officer Report, and Emergency Social Services Report.

### **October 1 Community Futures Wild Rose Directors Meeting**

Financials, thank you to exiting Director, GIC decision, corporate services transfer, new Auditor procedure, CED Committee Terms of Reference, monthly loan report, Small Business Week plan, and I shared training on effective loan governance received at CFNA Symposium.

### **October 2 Teleconference with MP Martin Shields**

Updates on federal response and local issues and strategies.

### **October 2 Central RMA – District 2 General Fall Meeting**

We presented our Alberta Farmland Trust Resolution, and it was approved unanimously by the district. Lacombe County presented a resolution on Provincial Policing Costs Levy – Designate as a Requisition that was also passed unanimously. The Honourable Tracy Allard, Minister of Municipal Affairs, joined us virtually and discussed the Assessment Model Review. RMA update. Education session: Effective Lobbying. Financial report.

### **October 3 Gleichen Family Block Party**

Strathmore and Siksika Family Resource Network Hub Teams hosted a fun filled family block party with music, outdoor yoga, hip hop dancing, art activities, and music by special guest Tribe. 1491.

### **October 5 Growth Management Board Rural Caucus in Red Deer**

Updates from Edmonton and Calgary Regions. Government of Alberta response to Resolution ER1-19F: Dissolution of Mandatory Growth Boards and discussion of next steps. Interesting discussion around voting structure and the fact that while population is accounted for, the voice of the land (and resources) is lost as rural municipal leaders perspectives are outweighed by urban and the fundamental lack of understanding of rural issues.

**October 6 Council Meeting**

Full agenda packages (with back up documentation) are available on our website:

<https://wheatlandcounty.ca/agendasandminutes/>

You can also watch the recording on our YouTube channel:

[https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCRJrvIs0eygNM7zERLnviOg?view\\_as=subscriber](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCRJrvIs0eygNM7zERLnviOg?view_as=subscriber)

Public Hearing and subsequent readings for land redesignations, Council, CAO and department reports. Awarded contract for Project Manager for broadband strategy. Approved letter to Minister of Municipal Affairs.

**October 7 Agricultural Service Board Meeting**

Reviewed Agriculture and Environment Department Strategic Plan 2021-2023, an extremely thorough, action-oriented plan that I am excited about. Discussing options for Wetland Replacement Program potential participation, ASB bursary selections, meeting dates, Chair and Manager reports.

**October 8 WC Infinite Possibilities Regional Business Collaboration**

Ryan Corry, Founder of Local Shops, presented on his e-commerce platform for businesses to sell products online. Continued collaboration on strategies for regional businesses.

**October 8 Wheatland Housing Management Board Meeting and Online Engagement Session**

The first of 5 online engagement sessions for the potential Wheatland Lodge and Hospice Care project. Goals of the engagement sessions are to understand the social and cultural context of Strathmore and Wheatland County and to empower the community to shape the project vision. Session 1: "During the first community engagement session, we will provide a bit of the project background and the new lodge highlights, we will talk about the important design principles to consider through all of the community engagement sessions, and then we will dive into the main discussion; how does the built environment promote healthy living and sustainable communities as it relates to the site context."

Reports on COVID financial impacts to date (being reimbursed by Province), financials, maintenance, Social Housing, Lodge, CAO, and Chair reports. Policy updates. Expression of Interest was submitted for provincial Request for Expression of Interest for Designated Supportive Living 4/4D, Long Term Care, and Community Hospice. Hospice Society donated \$50, 000 towards architect expense for design.

**October 13 Municipal Planning Commission**

Four Development Permits were approved with conditions.

**October 13 Planning and Priorities**

Administration shared information regarding Siksika Nation Memorandum of Understanding, investment, Fire Board, fees, Gleichen reservoir, FOIP considerations, and strategic planning.

**October 15 Western Irrigation District Stakeholder Perception Discussion**

Discussed mandate and value of WID in terms of water security, irrigation for our ag producers, and safe, reliable water supply.

**October 15 FCM Virtual Annual General Meeting**

President report, CEO report, bylaw amendment, operating committee reports -Finance and Audit (including Financial Statements and Auditor appointment), Human Resources, Member Relations, and Conference Planning. Resolutions report. Board of Directors elections report. President inaugural address.

**October 15 WC Infinite Possibilities Regional Business Collaboration**

Our Economic Development Officer provided an overview of Small Business Week plans.

**October 15 Wheatland Surface Rights Group Meeting**

Landowners with concerns regarding leases with energy companies met to discuss relaunching a group.

**October 15 Wheatland Housing Board Online Engagement**

Session 2: “During this session we will do a quick re-cap of what we heard at the last meeting, and then we talk about the common areas in the lodge. The goal for this session is to gather the community’s input on what are all of the important design features and amenities the lodge should have to offer.”

**October 16 Calgary Metropolitan Region Board Meeting**

Growth and Servicing Plan update, public engagement update (four weeks of online engagement (November 2 -27), virtual open house planned for November 17, aiming for high volume of visitors with representative geographic distribution, value quality of input over quantity of responses), in person meeting proposal (will review in December, administration is recommending committee meetings stay virtual), update on Chair and Chief Officer meeting with Minister of Municipal Affairs, and roundtable. Also received a letter approving an extension to March 1, 2021 for plan completion. Work plans will need to be amended as they had been arranged assuming the requested four-month extension would be approved.

**October 16 Calgary Metropolitan Region Board Workshop 4**

Detailed review of HDR Calthorpe’s recommended final scenario, which will be the basis of the regional growth structure and policies and ultimately the Growth Plan policy. Several concerns were identified, including the lack of rural perspective, the complete lack of recognition of agriculture as a major industry in the region. I emphasized that rural municipalities should maintain jurisdiction regarding conservation of agricultural lands. Urban leaders do not have the necessary context to control these decisions. Another major concern was feasibility, particularly with respect to current economic realities (for example if plan is transit oriented and funding for major transit projects may not be forthcoming in near future). Changing consideration due to lifestyle changes with pandemic have not been reflected. Many issues around joint planning areas and land consumption caps. Noted that for growth by municipality under the proposed scenario Wheatland County does not even register on the graph nor are we included in any of the proposed joint planning areas or major transportation infrastructure plans. Next workshop is anticipated to be scheduled in December.

**October 19 Cluny Playground Opening**

It was a pleasure to represent Council with Division 1 Councillor Wilson for the opening of the new playground in Cluny.

## **October 20 Council Organizational Meeting**

Election for Reeve and Deputy Reeve, annual appointments to committees and boards, review of Code of Conduct and Legislative Policies, meeting dates and signing authorities.

## **October 20 Council Meeting**

Full agenda packages (with back up documentation) are available on our website:

<https://wheatlandcounty.ca/agendasandminutes/>

You can also watch the recording on our YouTube channel:

[https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCRJrvIs0eygNM7zERLnviOg?view\\_as=subscriber](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCRJrvIs0eygNM7zERLnviOg?view_as=subscriber)

Council resolution tracker, Economic Development Board Annual Overview by Board Chair and Terms of Reference, proclamation of Alberta Development Officers Week, Gleichen school site update, request for water service funding to Speargrass, tender awarded for Carseland Fire Station, and lease agreement for Speargrass RV Storage.

Gleichen school site info: The title transfer from Golden Hill School Division to the County for the old Gleichen School site was completed in September 2020. A site inspection was conducted on September 23 and staff noted that some of the perimeter fences are in poor condition and should be removed (most notably, the four-foot fence on the east side of the site). Specifically removing this fence allows for easier snow removal in the alley on the east side of the site. Further, with the removal of the school building, there are post and chain fences which no longer serve any purpose and are recommend being removed. In anticipation of the land transfer, the playground equipment on site was inspected by a third-party playground inspector. The results of the inspection recommended removal of all the playground equipment as it does not meet CSA safety standards (CSA Standard Z614 which is the National Standard of Canada for Children's play spaces and equipment).

## **October 20 MDP Webinar Planning**

Reviewed the process for the upcoming webinar.

## **October 21 Managing Growth, Infrastructure, and Servicing, Municipal Development Plan Review Webinar**

With Councillor Ikert and several key members of our administrative team we reviewed the purpose of the MDP review, managing growth, commercial and industrial development, institutional, parks and recreation, servicing, water, wastewater, waste management, mobility, transportation, sustainable energy, health and safety.

The current [Wheatland County Municipal Development Plan \(MDP\)](#) was approved by Council in 2013 to provide the County with a vision for 30 years. Today, six years later, the County wants to ensure the vision, policies, and objectives within the MDP are being met and remain relevant, through a comprehensive review and update.

The County will be focusing the MDP update around the following key areas:

- Servicing
- Residential growth
- Sustainability
- Agriculture & environmentally sensitive areas
- A portion of Wheatland County falls within the CMRB, this area will be addressed

The webinar can be viewed here:

<https://youtu.be/9R5kvBvR-Q0>

For more information on the MDP and to provide feedback by completing a survey please visit our information page here:

<https://wheatlandcounty.ca/mdp/>

#### **October 22 CMRB Governance Committee**

Reviewed Q2 and Q3 actuals, preliminary review of 2021 budget. The committee discussed current office lease and plan for beyond reserves. Administration will bring multi-year forecast to understand longer term impacts to the reserve funds and the anticipated reduction in provincial funding, guidance on principles for using reserve fund, and the Board will engage in strategic discussion to establish 2021 priorities.

Policy regarding participation of external stakeholders in CMRB initiatives and substantive discussion regarding how to best address appeal/reconsideration mechanism. CMRB administration will bring back information on pool of knowledgeable experts to hear CMRB appeals and the option of a mediated solution (to come back to Governance Committee in December).

#### **October 22 WC Infinite Possibilities Regional Business Collaboration**

Listened in to hear the Director of Indigenous Tourism Alberta share what his organization is doing to promote and develop indigenous tourism in Alberta.

#### **October 23 Women in Politics**

It was inspiring to hear from the Honourable Leela Aheer, Minister of Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women, the Honourable Patti LaBoucane-Benson, Senator, the Honourable Rebecca Schulz, Minister of Children's Services, and Drumheller Mayor Heather Colberg, as well as roundtable discussion amongst many local leaders in Alberta.

#### **October 26 Photos with Mayor Fule**

Photos for article celebrating our 65<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

#### **October 28 Meeting with Rosebud School of the Arts representatives**

Councillor Koester, our General Manager of Development and Community Services, and I met the Vice Chair and the Education Director of the Rosebud School of the Arts.

#### **October 28 Wheatland Family and Community Support Services Board**

Organizational Meeting, Joe Pederson elected as Chair, Les Schultz as Vice Chair, committee assignments, auditor still has one year in contract, signing authority, and meeting dates confirmed. Policy Handbook update approved, review financials (underbudget due to COVID impacts on service and program delivery, provincial funding has been spent, however additional municipal contribution will likely be surplus), CAO report on programs and initiatives.  
(attended as alternate at request of Board member who was unable to attend meeting)

#### **October 29 CMRB Joint Committee**

Listened to meeting for context for Board meeting as some substantive issues were being addressed.

### **Assessment Model Review Announcement from Government of Alberta**

On October 20, 2020 the Honourable Tracy Allard, Minister of Municipal Affairs announced a decision regarding the Assessment Model Review. We appreciate that the Ministry of Municipal Affairs considered the feedback from municipalities across the Province and took our rural perspective into consideration in their decision-making process. The interim changes take into consideration several issues that were raised by municipal leaders.

We recognize the significant challenges the intersection of the pandemic, the economic downturn, and the market impacts of negative demand and supply shock during the price wars have had on the oil and gas industry. Wheatland wants to be part of the solution, we want our energy industry, and all industry, in Wheatland County to prosper. And we recognize the critical contributions industry makes to our communities. We continue to work with the Province and the Ministry during these difficult economic times, we need to work together to get through this.

We are pleased to hear that none of the initial four scenarios, which had assessment reductions for Wheatland County between 11-19% will be implemented. Our hope is this interim solution will increase competitiveness and contribute to investment attraction, which is one of our primary focuses in Wheatland County.

We are still analyzing impacts these changes will have on Wheatland County's assessment base and therefore budget, however we are optimistic heading into the next three years. Preliminary analysis is showing an estimated reduction of \$800,000 in revenue due to the changes, which is significantly less than what we were originally anticipating.

Most of our oil and gas producers are paying their annual property taxes. These taxes are used to maintain county owned infrastructure the producers use to extract natural resources. We are currently owed approximately 5 million dollars of outstanding current year property taxes and Wheatland administration is working with the producers to ensure full payments are made. We have expressed concerns regarding unpaid taxes in this sector to our provincial counterparts and are advocating for a legislative mechanism to enforce collectability.

The significant investments that rural municipalities make in critical infrastructure that supports industry needs to be considered. Specific sector viability can not be at the expense of municipal sustainability. We recognize the gravity of the fiscal reality and are committed to working together to recover and rebuild and are focused on fiscal responsibility in stewarding all tax revenue.

Further, there is misinformation being spread regarding rural municipal spending, it's important to understand looking at spending on a per capita basis is unreasonable without being cognizant of the significant land mass and transportation network that rural municipalities build and maintain in Alberta. Rural municipalities provide services to approximately 85% of Alberta's land mass, despite having only 16% of the population.

"As a note of interest, industry stakeholders commonly use net financial worth to measure municipal financial position, which includes the total tangible capital asset (TCA) value of municipal assets. This measure creates an illusion of municipal wealth, but in reality, is merely a reflection of the incredible infrastructure network municipalities manage. In other words, although infrastructure assets have value, they provide no direct revenue for municipalities, and maintaining the assets carries a major cost. Net financial position, which does not consider the value of TCA, is a far better indicator of financial health. Alberta's municipalities operate in a volatile world of rapid growth and contraction that requires large investments in infrastructure and services not typically asked of municipalities in other jurisdictions. Despite this, Alberta's municipalities have done an admirable job controlling costs." (from Rural Municipalities of Alberta Cross-Jurisdictional Financial Comparison briefing package)