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2019 Budget focuses on future sustainability

The 2019 budget makes sustainability a priority while balancing high quality services with critical infrastructure investments and a focus on minimal impacts to citizens and businesses. The \$139.7 million budget includes estimated expenditures of \$82.3 million for general operations and \$57.4 million for capital, 59 per cent of which is being allocated to capital road projects. This equates to less than one per cent increase in operations and 27 per cent decrease in capital expenditures.

“Council asked Administration to cut their budgets and they did as it is essential to ensure our municipality is sustainable in the long-term,” said Reeve Leanne Beaupre. “When County Council works through budget deliberations, our focus is on maintaining services, programs and partnerships with affordable tax levels while continually investing in priority road and infrastructure projects. These are projects that serve not only our residents, but everyone who works in or visits the County.”

The overall 2018 taxable assessment increased by \$394 million (4.7 per cent increase over 2017).

The municipal tax revenue increase is two per cent, which equates to a \$34 increase to the average residential property owner with a home assessed at \$435,000. These rates vary based on individual property assessments and changes to the market value.

Provincial Education and Senior’s Foundation Tax Explained

All Alberta municipalities are required to collect education taxes on behalf of the Government of Alberta. The County also collects on behalf of the Senior Foundation. Approximately 37.1 per cent of residential taxes are transferred to the province for education purposes and Senior Foundation purposes.

County of Grande Prairie residents can find out more about the 2019 operating and capital budget in the attached Budget Highlights.

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Additional information: Budget Highlights attached

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Budget Highlights

Capital Budget

Approximately \$33.6 million is being invested in capital road and bridge projects.

The proposed new construction includes 22.9 km of road surfacing including the paving of gravel roads, surfaced road overlays, and re-construction, with divisional road projects to be determined.

Grant funding for road projects is estimated at \$5.1 million, including a \$2.1 million Federal Gas Tax Grant and \$6.92 million in funding from Provincial Municipal Sustainability Initiative (MSI) Grant.

The following is a list of scheduled road projects:

- Northgate and Crossroads North Industrial Park 98 Ave. – overlay 11 km
- Spruce Wood Estates subdivision – base and pave 2.10 km
- Dunkley Meadows subdivision– base and pave 1.30 km
- JD Willis subdivision– overlay 1.10 km
- Country view North 105 Ave., 106 Ave., 107 Ave., and 97A St. – grade, base and pave 0.75 km
- Althen Corner 156 Ave., 101 St., and 102 St. – overlay 0.40 km
- RR 93 Regional Waste Facility Road - overlay 0.40 km
- Whispering Ridge School Site – sidewalks
- Spruce Villa Estates – base and pave 1.8 km
- RR125 - grading 2.2 km
- Red Tail Intersection upgrades
- RR73 upgrades
- \$14.2 million for Divisional Road projects
- \$2.67 million for bridge rehabilitation and replacement projects
- \$2.1 million for spot construction, road widening projects and road condition assessments

In addition to road construction, the capital budget includes:

- \$7.1 million for replacement of vehicles and equipment
- \$400,000 for a Water Tender for Town of Sexsmith Fire Department
- \$120,000 Snow Blower
- \$240,000 to support upgrades of the Grande Prairie Regional Pound
- \$300,000 for playground upgrades, campground improvements including a power site expansion to Pipestone Creek Campground
- \$173,500 for upgrades to the Community Services Snow Storage Site to meet Alberta Environment and Parks (AEP) regulations
- \$112,500 in County Sportsplex improvements including the installation of a second fishing dock for the pond, playing field upgrades, directional signage and purchase of maintenance equipment



Operating Budget

The operating budget proposed for 2019 includes:

- \$4.3 million in recreation, community and culture grants to various organizations
- \$1.6 million towards Weed Control services and programs
- An estimated \$1.2 million to the City of Grande Prairie for the tax sharing agreement (share of municipal tax revenue- 20 per cent from the co-generational facility and 10 per cent on any new commercial/industrial development in areas serviced by Aquatera)
- \$1 million over ten years (beginning in 2020) to Grande Prairie Regional Hospital Foundation for a patient bedside engagement system
- \$781,000 for maintenance of greenspace, cemeteries and trails
- \$500,000 for ditch maintenance and to improve drainage throughout the County
- \$200,000 for Aquatera subsidy to minimize the wastewater rate increase for residents who receive these services.
- New playschool program at Harry Balfour School and an increase in programming at Whispering Ridge School from two to three classes

Schedule of Fees and Rates Change

- Utility fees for water and sewage/wastewater will increase by three per cent for the average residential and commercial utility customer in the hamlets of Bezanson, La Glace, Teepee Creek and Valhalla.
- Campgrounds will increase the Group Area fees as well as increase day use fees and implement half day use rates.
- Payment of tax accounts online with a credit card will now be charged a 2.2 percent convenience fee.

For more information on the 2019 final budget, please contact Bill Rogan, CAO at 780-532-9722.