

Ward 6

UPDATE

February 2005

from your councillor



Councillor Alan Dunn

I am Alan Dunn, Strathcona County Councillor for Ward 6. This newsletter is one way by which I hope to keep in touch with you, the residents of Ward 6. This is an exciting time for the County and I am glad to have the opportunity to serve on Council.

In this newsletter I shall write about some of my favourite topics: pressure on the environment, impact of population growth, and money. I look forward to your feedback on these or anything of interest to Ward 6 or the County as a whole.

I hope also to make this newsletter an ongoing progress report of activities within the Ward.

Community involvement

Here is what will no doubt be my regular pitch to get folks to participate more in their neighbourhood.

Community leagues, once the social backbone of the community, are falling on hard times due to competition from entertainment in Edmonton together with busy lifestyles. It is time to reverse this trend. Not only do the leagues provide a source of inexpensive fun with your neighbours, they are also a source of political power.

There is a lot happening in Strathcona County these days, as you will see from this newsletter and others. Decisions are being taken that will impact your lifestyle and bank balance.

Strong, grassroots organisations are one of the most effective methods of insuring that your wishes and opinions as a community are kept in the public eye.

We on Council depend upon your support and encouragement to meet the goals you have set for us. A powerful way of doing this is through local organisations such as community leagues. So, please, VOLUNTEER! A few meetings per month or helping out with an event are really not that onerous.

If you do not have a community league in your neighbourhood (or even if you do), resources are available through the County to start or revive one. Call me to find out how at 464-8206.

PEARL

Speaking of community involvement... Preserving Environment and Rural Lifestyle (PEARL): the title pretty well says it all.

This is a volunteer organisation with its roots in Ward 6. Set up to deal with a specific area concern, this group has expanded its informal mandate to include the County as a whole.

PEARL acts as both a resource and an advocacy group to deal with a variety of lifestyle and environmental issues.

For more information or if you have an interest in helping, call Barb at 467-5080.

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Strathcona County

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Ward 6

UPDATE

Budget 2005

Well, the 2005 Budget has been passed by Council, for better or for worse. As a new councillor, I found the process fascinating but somewhat frustrating.

Strathcona County is a large and complex organisation; control of the money reflects that complexity. The budget process begins normally in May and represents contributions from Council, executive, managers and other staff.

The budget is shaped by long-term planning as represented by the Strategic

Plan for the County and the Business Plan, which deals with the next three years. All the pieces of this jigsaw must fit together coherently if there is to be any hope of meeting financial goals.

Those of us new to Council found ourselves with little time to read and understand the budget documents and even less to make what many of us considered necessary changes, changes we were assured would be impossible without compromising the integrity of the entire budget.

Here, then, was our dilemma: we, as a new Council, had to approve a budget without having had the opportunity to influence it.

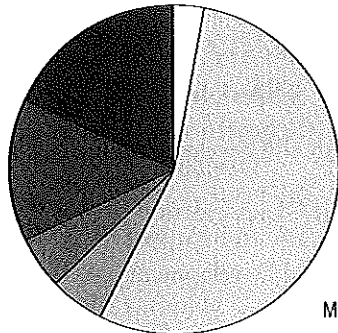
In end, we were able to engineer at least one important change: in 2005 there will be no increase in tax-supported debt.

New capital projects must be funded through reserves or surplus or be deferred. This eliminated the need to borrow \$4.8 million. This change was little enough. I would have preferred to see even more radical reductions in spending; however, I believe that we have at least announced that this Council is keenly interested in taking a hard look at costs and taxes, a token, perhaps, but an indicator of a new direction. It is rather like passing up a second piece of pie the day before starting a serious diet.

Here are the numbers: the budget includes a general tax dollar increase of 3.13 per cent. The impact of this increase on the average single family residential property is estimated to be \$42 per year or \$3.50 per month.

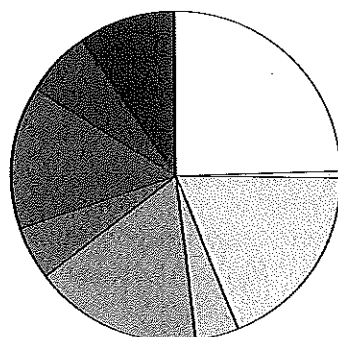
An overview: Strathcona County 2005 Operating Budget

Where the money comes from 2005 Operating Budget (\$'000)



Municipal & Utility approved Operating Budget Revenues = \$145,112

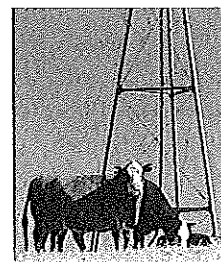
The cost of County services 2005 Operating Budget (\$'000)



Municipal & Utility approved Operating Budget Expenditures = \$145,112

Business Support Services allocated

Energy Exploration



This continues to be a contentious issue in Ward 6.

Council decided in favour of establishing a policy rather than a bylaw to deal with

exploration activities. This approach is supported by legal opinion. Time will tell whether cooperation with the EUB (Alberta Energy and Utilities Board, the provincial body that oversees gas and oil development) and exploration companies will be sufficient.

Growth and development

Alberta is in a boom economy once more. While a boom brings opportunity, it also brings serious challenges to our lifestyle and to our environment.

Concern about development was the single most frequent concern that I heard during the municipal election campaign. There is a feeling, at least in Ward 6, that residential growth is uncontrolled and that planning is either poor or non-existent. Residents often feel that changes to their neighbourhoods are out of their control.

Growth can offer benefits. There is usually an influx of new ideas, new skills, new prosperity and best of all some great new neighbours. Nevertheless, residential development imposes enormous pressures on a rural community. There are environmental costs:

- sewage disposal
- destruction of habitat or farmland
- noise
- light
- vehicle pollution

There are social costs:

- population density
- crime
- alienation
- traffic
- loss of rural tranquility

Above all, new subdivisions are expensive. They require increased services and infrastructure:

- roads
- schools
- transportation
- recreation facilities
- policing
- utilities

While operating costs may eventually be recovered, at least to some extent, from new property taxes, capital costs never are and must be largely funded by the existing rate base. In short, we all

subsidise new residential development.

The decision to permit new development is not random. Council retains control of the process and is empowered to halt it at any stage should the development not be in the best interests of the community.

Strathcona is fortunate to have the support of a sophisticated and professional planning staff to look after our interests. These folks ensure that each development application is thoroughly and impartially reviewed for its potential impact.

The Municipal Government Act requires that each municipality have a Municipal Development Plan to establish policies related to land use throughout the entire municipality.

An Area Concept Plan is required for a specific development. This document is an overview of future roads, lots, utilities and other infrastructure proposed for the area.

An Area Structure Plan serves a similar purpose for areas less than a quarter section.

Finally, the Land Use Bylaw defines specifically how each parcel of land may be used.

Each of these must be ratified by bylaw so that ultimately it is Council and not the planners who decides whether a development will proceed, though they often take the heat for unpopular planning decisions.

If you have concerns about the rate or type of development planned for your neighbourhood, contact me. My job is to represent your interests and I may be counted on to advocate your views and those of your neighbours.

Proposed developments for Ward 6

A number of residential developments are proposed for Ward 6.

These projects are in various stages of the planning process. If you would like more information about any of them, call Planning and Development Services at 464-8080 or me at 464-8206.

Balmoral

Landrex Developments has applied for subdivision of a parcel immediately North of Fountain Creek Subdivision on RR 233. There would be 42 Estate Residential lots.

Crimson Leaf

11107844 Alberta Ltd has applied for approval of an Area Structure Plan and subdivision of a quarter section on RR 225 South of Twp Road 522. There would be 22 Country Residential lots.

Meadow Hawk

Resland may submit an application for an Area Structure Plan for a cluster development of 59 lots, South of Wye Road on RR 231.

Uplands

Dracon have been considering a cluster development in the vicinity of Big Island Lake on RR 225.

These subdivisions are proposed for your neighbourhood.

Planning Handbook

Are you interested in municipal planning? Do you wonder about the planning processes the County follows?

The Planning Handbook was developed by Strathcona County staff to help explain planning to non-planners. The handbook provides an overview of planning processes, along with useful charts and definitions.

You can find the handbook at www.strathcona.ab.ca, or call 464-8080 with any questions.

Summer Weed Control

Looking out of the window at the blowing snow, it is hard to believe that in a few months, County weed spraying will be underway.

It is never too early to start thinking about this programme and our reaction to it.

Look for more on this issue in future newsletters.

Municipal Development Plan Review will involve community



Municipal Development Plan

On December 4, the County held an initial kick-off workshop to hear comments from the general public on the proposed Municipal Development Plan

(MDP) rewrite.

Two excellent speakers – Dr. Avi Friedman and Dr. Brad Stelfox – commented on the impact of population growth upon the community. While the styles of these experts were quite different, the messages were the same: we ignore growth at our peril.

I look forward to working with the community on this issue. The decisions on development made today will impact our lives for decades into the future.

Here, as a refresher, is the County's description of the MDP and the proposed rewrite process. →

The Municipal Development Plan (MDP) is a statutory plan that guides future development in the municipality. Provincial legislation requires all municipalities with a population of 3,500 or more to adopt a Municipal Development Plan.

The plan provides a broad framework for the growth and development of the County for 20+ years. The MDP also provides policies that form the basis for the preparation of Area Concept Plans, Area Structure Plans, Area Redevelopment Plans and the Land Use Bylaw.

The Municipal Development Plan is in essence the document that represents the overall vision of the community. It provides direction in terms of how and where the community will develop in the future.

It contains policies that address a number of development-related issues concerning the environment:

- agricultural, residential, commercial and industrial development
- parks and open space
- public institutions
- the subdivision of land
- heritage resources
- transportation
- servicing (utilities)
- economic development
- the coordination of land use, future growth patterns and infrastructure

Why is the plan being reviewed?

Strathcona County's current Municipal Development Plan was adopted in 1998, and since then the County has experienced unprecedented growth. We need to review the policies contained in the current MDP to ensure they are still relevant.

One major change has been the increase in the overall population of the County, which has grown by more than 14 per cent since 1998 (comparing 1998 census data to 2003 data). By the end of 2004 it is projected that the population will have increased by an additional 4.4 per cent. This increase in population has led to increased demand on services, housing, etc.

Major steps in the review/rewrite process

Numerous steps will be involved in the Municipal Development Plan review process. These steps are fairly broad in scope, and the details have yet to be determined. The steps include but are not limited to:

- Public participation and input (gathering information and ideas, visioning, workshops, focus groups and open houses)
- Review of the current Municipal Development Plan policies
- Preparation of preliminary draft of the new Municipal Development Plan
- Public review of the draft document

Revised final draft

Adoption of the document by County Council

Public participation

A major component of any Municipal Development Plan review process is public input. The MDP is, in large part, a reflection of the community's wants and needs, values and vision. It is, therefore, very important that the public participate in the development of this document!

The County will host a number of workshops and open houses throughout the community and at different times during the process. This information will be used to provide direction for administration during the formulation of the document.

For more information: Phone: 464-8222 E-mail: mdp@strathcona.ab.ca

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Events

Colchester Community League

- General Meetings: 1st Wednesday of even-numbered months. All are welcome.
- February 25, Family Dance, Colchester Hall. 7 p.m. Details TBA. Contact Ellen: 449-5156

Whitcroft Community League

- For info, contact Bob at 467-2437

Wye Community League

- Meets once a month. Call 449-6848 or 464-8206 for times and venues.
- February 19, Music & Poetry Night 6:30 p.m. Wye Hall.
Info: Marilyn 464-0575
- March 19, Cards & Games
Info: Liz 449-6848
- April 13, Meet Your Ward 6
Councillor: Wye Hall Info: 449-6286
- May 7, Garage Sale
Info: Liz 449-6848