



MountainViews

Issue 1 – January 2010

It's about Mountain View County

Over the past three years, Mountain View County Council has identified communication with our ratepayers as a top priority. Since the addition of a full-time Communications Coordinator in 2007, the amount of information reaching our ratepayers has increased on a yearly basis.

Your response to our communications in print, on air and online has been great—but you've also told us you'd like to receive more.

For example, over half of the County residents who responded to an August, 2009 communications survey indicated they would be interested in receiving additional information from Mountain View County in newspaper or magazine-style format.

A majority of respondents also indicated they'd like to hear more about what's happening with Council. They also would like more information on what our planning and development department has been up to, and what road construction and maintenance is taking place in our County.

We've heard you loud and clear, and we intend to deliver—right to your mailbox.

This is your first edition of Mountain Views—a mix of regular features, information, and stories on the people and places that make Mountain View County the best place to live, work and play.

Mountain Views will be published six times per year and delivered to rural mailboxes in Mountain View County. We're proud to announce we're partnering with Overwater Media and Communications, a Mountain View County-based company owned and operated by County residents, who will be working with County staff to put together each issue of Mountain Views.

In addition to regular features—such as Agriculture in Action—each issue will include our Viewpoint poll, where we ask you for your point of view on burning issues facing the people of Mountain View County. The results will be posted online, as well as in the next edition of Mountain Views. This is another way we're trying to grow a dialogue with you—the ratepayers we are all proud to serve.

Mountain Views - It's about Mountain View County.

Reeve Al Kemmere



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Snow removal a team effort

County has updated its snow removal strategy, and not a moment too soon.

During the month of December, successive snowfall events over many days dropped nearly four feet of snow on Mountain View County—the largest one-month accumulation of snow in the County for 15 years. Combined with high winds gusting from the north at over 50 km/hr, December’s snowfall events proved to be a major test for County road crews says Steve McInnis, Director of Operational Services. “The snowfall ranged from moderate to heavy and lasted for days at a time, which along with heavy drifting made keeping roads open along the County road network a major challenge.”

Prior to 2009, the County was divided into ten districts, with each area assigned one truck and one grader. Under this system, graders seldom moved outside their assigned division to assist during heavy snowfall events. This led to some staff and equipment being under-utilized, while others struggled to keep up. McInnis said the County needed to find a way to better utilize its resources to keep collector roads open, while ensuring local roads were also opened in a reasonable time frame. Starting last year, the County began dispatching all available plows and graders regardless of their location to wherever they were needed along the County Collector Network. “Once the collector network is clear and safe for traffic, the fleet then works on the local roads until they are clear. If significant precipitation begins again, all County units will head back to the collector network roads to ensure safe travel,” McInnis added.

During the December storms, nine graders and ten plow trucks were used to clear the snow from County roads, with the focus being on keeping collector roads open for the early morning and after work commutes. With snowfall amounts of over a foot during some events, operators and equipment maintenance staff worked extended days (12 to 14 hours, 7 days per week) in very extreme conditions. Two graders, two loaders, and one snow-blower were also hired to haul or blow away to help open the very worst locations.

The nature of the storms meant there were often significant delays in removing accumulated snow from local roads, with roads requiring two to three passes to ensure they are passable for motorists. With the County setting its staff budget based on average snowfalls, normal service levels along secondary County roads will drop during extreme events says McInnis. He thanks County residents for their patience during these events, and asks for help in keeping excess snow off County roadsides. “Piling snow from driveways in County ditches can cause dangerous drifting conditions and create snow storage issues for County plow trucks,” McInnis says. If possible, he suggests residents plow snow somewhere on their property where drifting and runoff won’t be an issue.

According to Pete Waycott, Manager of Infrastructure Maintenance, teamwork is a big part of handling such a major event. “Operators kept the County fleet on the move, and mechanics ensured that equipment performed extremely well during this series of storm events. We also coordinated our efforts with local emergency services and the Chinook’s Edge School Division to make sure emergency vehicles and school buses were able to get where they needed to go.” Waycott adds that Mountain View County is reviewing its storm response to identify what could be improved in the future. “By noting the locations of chronic drifting and of County-based businesses with multiple employees, we hope to provide the best response possible for County residents in extreme conditions.”



Who Says What the County Can or Cannot Do?

Municipalities have no powers under the Constitution

Did you know that according to the Canadian Constitution, Mountain View County doesn’t exist? While this may seem hard to believe, according to Canada’s Constitution Act – the document which outlines the roles and responsibilities of provincial and federal governments—there is no mention of term “municipality.” It is only under Section 92 of the Constitution that each province is given the right to create “Municipal Institutions” and deal with “raising of a Revenue for ... Municipal Purposes.” As a result, municipalities in Canada were created by the provinces, and have no powers under the federal Constitution Act.

So who says what municipalities can or cannot do? In Alberta these powers are outlined within the provincial Municipal Government Act (The Act) and its regulations. The Act sets out requirements for municipalities—including all cities, towns, villages and municipal districts (counties) in the province—and outlines very specifically what they legally can or cannot do. (See sidebar)

Although the Act was amended in 1995 to provide an increased level of flexibility for municipalities, the Act and other acts of the province continue to be very specific about how municipalities will govern themselves. The Act is not like a set of rules posted in a park to improve the enjoyment of all using the park—it is more like the Highway Traffic Act where

Councillors and staff are provided with specific rules to follow. Ignoring those rules can result in the dismissal of Councillors, fines, and civil liability for both Councillors and staff.

That being said, when the revised Act was passed by the Alberta government in 1995, it had a significant influence across Canada in increasing the flexibility granted to municipalities. The Act is again being reviewed by the province, and associations representing both rural and urban municipalities are requesting amendments to allow municipalities to act with even greater flexibility.

Additionally requests are being made by municipalities to have access to funding to undertake the full range of responsibilities given by the provinces, without having to increase taxes. Currently in Canada, municipalities receive only 8% of all taxes collected, while the federal government receives 50% and the provinces 42%. This means municipalities do not collect enough revenue to maintain their roads and infrastructure, and are reliant on federal and provincial grants which may start, stop or change at any time. To help ease the funding crunch, municipalities are asking for a pre-defined share of provincial and federal taxes to help support the infrastructure and services they are required to provide.

ACT ACCORDINGLY

According to the Municipal Government Act, Mountain View County is required to:

- act only by authority of a bylaw or resolution
- hold an organizational meeting
- employ a chief administrative office
- post notices on meetings
- pass annual budgets
- set annual taxes
- send assessment and tax notices
- collect school taxes
- provide land for new schools
- have a Municipal Development Plan
- have a Land Use Bylaw
- hold public hearings
- process redesignation and subdivision applications
- have elections
- have our meetings in English
- advertise and process appeals and hearings in specific ways
- maintain roads and bridges
- provide an annual financial statement

Municipalities cannot:

- regulate wellheads, pipelines, highways, or any other matter where the province has legislation
- as a County own roads or bridges (Cities, towns and villages may)

Budget 2010 Synopsis

While some sectors of the economy speak of recovery in 2010, Mountain View County is preparing for one of the most difficult years in recent memory. Fortunately a difficult year for most municipalities in Alberta is much brighter than most places in North America or around the globe, and Mountain View County is prepared for whatever happens.

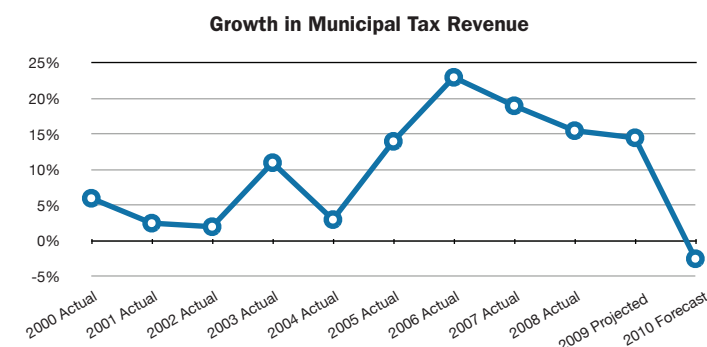
Balanced budget

Municipal economic fortunes generally lag behind the fortunes of the general economy. Although municipal taxes and general revenue are expected to drop in 2010, Council's "frugal and prudent" approach to the 2010 operating expenditures, along with strategic use of County reserves, has allowed the County to maintain current service levels while achieving a balanced budget.

No residential tax increase

At the beginning of the budget process Council gave a target of a 0% residential tax increase. This target has been incorporated in the budget which means the average residential rate payer is expected to pay the same amount as taxes in 2010 as they paid in 2009.

	2009 BUDGET	2010 BUDGET	VARIANCE	%
Revenue generated from:				
Municipal Taxes	21,896,077	22,600,000	703,923	3
School and Other Taxes	11,040,233	10,142,500	-897,733	-9
Total Taxes	32,936,309	32,742,500	-193,809	-1
Sales of Goods & Services	3,184,907	2,907,625	-277,282	-10
Grant Revenue	4,600,283	11,319,875	6,719,592	59
Total Revenue	40,721,500	46,970,000	6,248,500	13



Opportunity to invest

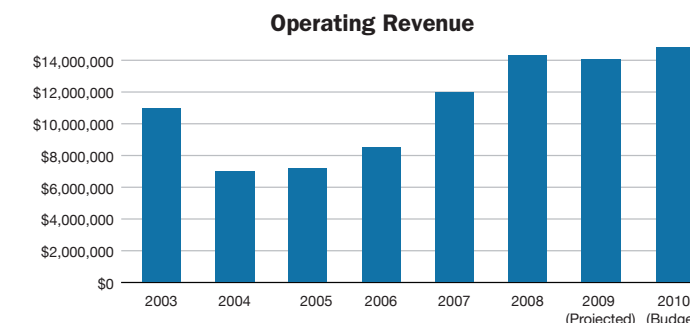
County Council sees an opportunity in the current economic down turn. Construction prices are lower than they have been for a number of years and Council is using this opportunity to invest in the County's infrastructure. In 2010 there is \$18.6 million in capital expenditures planned, nearly double the yearly average. The majority of the capital spending is targeted to the County's road infrastructure, including:

- \$5.7 million paving project on the Red Lodge (road upgrade completion)
- Extensive investment in County chip sealed roads
- \$1.5 million dollars per year to address surface and sub surface issues related to the chip sealed roads from 2009-2011.
- \$3.16 million expenditure on equipment primarily supporting road maintenance activities.

	2009 BUDGET	2010 BUDGET	VARIANCE	%
Capital Expenditures:				
County Collector Network/ Red Lodge Road Paving	325,000	5,760,000	5,435,000	94
Other Road Upgrades	7,515,600	7,591,115	75,515	1
Heavy Equipment and Vehicles	1,993,000	3,162,500	1,169,500	37
Airports	676,820	1,260,880	584,060	46
Other Capital	308,500	861,356	552,856	64
Total Capital Expenditures	37,053,500	37,970,000	916,500	2

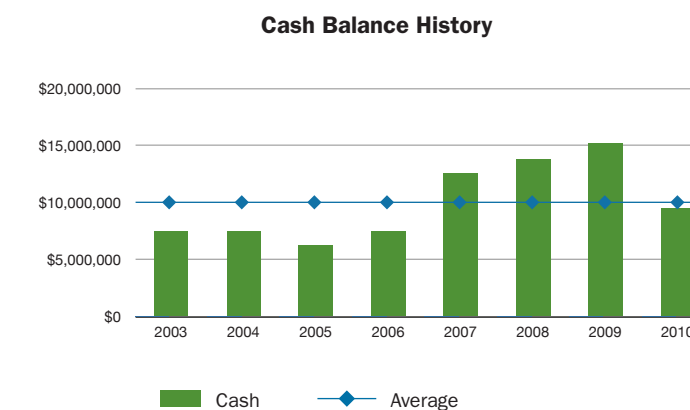
Fluctuating reserves

Recent years have seen significant additions which have grown operating reserves from \$7 million in 2005 to over \$14 million expected at the end of 2009. However, with the large capital expenditure in 2010, Capital Reserves are expected to drop from \$3.6 million to \$2 million. Overall, Operating Reserves are still expected to have a modest increase of 4%, rising to \$14.8 million in 2010.



Cash balances

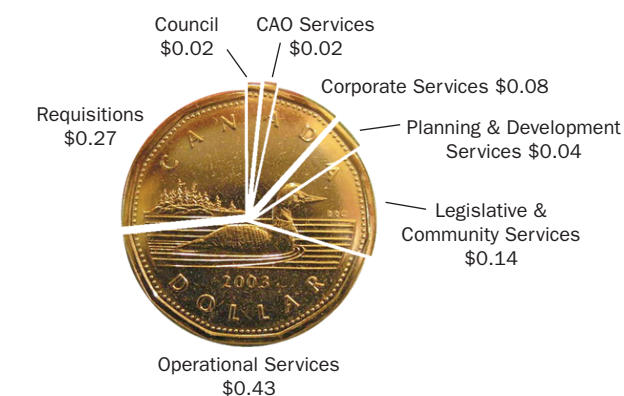
2010 will likely see the County draw on its rainy day funds, with cash expected to decrease from \$15.6 to \$9.3 million. Balances will still remain above levels experienced prior to 2007, which was the beginning of the last economic growth cycle.



Keeping costs down

Operational expenditures are budgeted to increase \$916,500 or 2.5% in 2010. Over half of this increase is \$543,000 funded from reserves to support the purchase of fire trucks for local fire authorities; \$186,000 is to maintain salaries and wages of employees; and \$128,000 will fund local recreation and library facilities.

	2009 BUDGET	2010 BUDGET	VARIANCE	%
Operating Expenditures:				
Council	512,170	595,480	83,310	14
CAO Services	519,000	627,580	108,580	17
Corporate Services	3,147,663	3,223,008	75,345	2
Planning & Development Services	2,036,950	1,582,120	(454,830)	-29
Legislative & Community Services	3,531,276	5,253,427	1,722,151	33
Operational Services Maintenance (Primarily Roads)	14,241,600	14,577,750	336,150	2
Other Operational Services	2,024,610	1,968,135	(56,475)	-3
School & Other Requisitions	11,040,231	10,142,500	(897,731)	-9
Total Operating Expenditures	37,053,500	37,970,000	916,500	2



At the end of 2010 the County is expected to remain in a strong financial position, prepared for whatever challenges may appear in 2011.



Cattle traceability changes will affect producers

Tag-in, move-in reporting requirements to change March 1, 2010

New changes to livestock traceability regulations will affect Mountain View County producers. On March 1, the following change relating to tagging requirements for cattle identification comes into effect: "All producers now have until cattle are 10 months of age, rather than 8, to apply industry approved Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) tags and register the cattle's birth date. Producers using actual birth dates also have the option of using a cattle identifier (tattoo or production dangle tag) by three months of age and until applying an RFID tag at 10 months of age or the animal leaves the farm, whichever comes first. Previously, RFID tags were required at three months of age."

A second change involving cattle move-in reporting for feedlots also comes into effect: "Feedlots feeding 1000 or more head a year are now required to report move-in information to the Canadian Cattle Identification Agency (CCIA). Previously, only feedlots feeding 5,000 or more head were required to do so. This regulation applies only to feedlots, not cow-calf operations."

Mountain View County has a Gallagher Smart Reader HR3 (tag reader) available for county residents to use. It can be used by any county resident wanting to age verify their cattle. The tag reader comes with a weigh scale, power cable, a 12 volt battery cable, a Bluetooth adaptor with short extension cable, a 15 V DC battery charger, MyScale Pro CD and an instruction manual.

To book the Mountain View County tag reader contact Amber Hines at 403-335-3311 ext 163. The Mountain View County area Canadian Cattle Identification Agency (CCIA) representative is Shayna Dodds; she can be reached at 403-988-1719.

More information on the new traceability regulations can be found on our website, mountainviewcounty.com/livestock

Under the Growing Forward Program there are three Traceability programs:

RFID TECHNOLOGY ASSISTANCE

Feedlots/backgrounders feeding more than 1,000 head of cattle annually are eligible for this program, with other supply chain participants to become eligible over the Growing Forward implementation period. Applicants may receive a maximum of \$3000 if purchasing a hand-held reader(s) and software, and a maximum of \$2,000 if purchasing the panel reader(s) and software

TRACEABILITY PILOT PROJECT

Key participants in the livestock supply chain are eligible for this project. Project selection and applicant eligibility will be based on the recommendations of the targeted industry working groups. There is a maximum payment of \$1,000 per pilot project for program funding.

TRACEABILITY TRAINING PROGRAM

Industry boards, commissions and agencies, educational institutions and non-profit organizations that represent the agri-food industry are eligible for this funding. The funding available for this program is 100% of eligible transaction costs, to a maximum payment of \$25,000 per application.

Think Locally. Grow Globally.

Growing Forward funding now available to County producers

Growing Forward is an initiative from Canada's Federal, Provincial and Territorial Ministers of Agriculture to cultivate a profitable, competitive, market-oriented agriculture and agri-foods industry. *Growing Forward* consists of 12 different programs for agriculture and the agri-food industry, with a number of these now available to eligible Mountain View County producers:

WATER MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

Producers who have plans for updating their water management on their land can apply for up to \$5000 in funding from *Growing Forward's* Water Management Program. To be eligible for the Water Management program producers need to have a minimum of \$10,000 farm commodity production per year, and need to develop a Long Term Water Management Plan for their farm to be provided to Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development. Special incentives at 50/50 cost sharing for certain items in support of improved water management or protection are also available.

MANURE MANAGEMENT

(Available in January 2010)

The maximum amount of funding is \$50,000; to be funded on a 50/50 cost share basis between the applicant and *Growing Forward*.

INTEGRATED CROP MANAGEMENT

(Available in January 2010)

The maximum amount of funding is \$20,000; to be funded on a 50/50 cost share basis between the applicant and *Growing Forward*.

GRAZING & WINTER FEEDING MANAGEMENT

(Available in January 2010)

The maximum amount of funding is \$15,000; to be funded on a 50/50 cost share basis between the applicant and *Growing Forward*.

RFID TECHNOLOGY ASSISTANCE, TRACEABILITY PILOT PROJECT AND TRACEABILITY TRAINING PROGRAM

(See sidebar on page 6 for details.)

TO BE ELIGIBLE FOR FUNDING APPLICANTS MUST:

1. Be liable to pay Alberta income tax or corporate tax (or claim losses) on income from the production of farm commodities under the Income Tax Act or the Alberta Corporate Tax Act
2. Be an active producer of agriculture crops and/or livestock
3. Have completed an Environmental Farm Plan and
4. Have registered with *Growing Forward* and obtained a *Growing Forward* registration number.*

*Be sure to apply right away for a *Growing Forward* registration number, as there is up to a 2 month wait from the time the registration form is sent in to receiving the number.

TO APPLY a Work Plan and Program Application need to be submitted to the program area of choice. Each program has a separate application and approval process. Funds are not guaranteed through the entire process. Even if a work plan has been approved and a project can be started there are no guaranteed funds for that project. On the Work Plans, projects can be split up into payment phases; once each phase is complete the receipts can be sent into the appropriate program coordinator.

There is a retroactive period for the Stewardship Programs. Projects that were done in September 2009 are eligible for funding, however all work plans, program applications and reimbursement claim forms need to be submitted by **March 1, 2010**. Projects eligible under the retroactive period need to be approved by the appropriate *Growing Forward* program coordinator before any funding is received.

General information and stewardship funding lists of what is eligible/ineligible can be found at the *Growing Forward* website, www.growingforward.alberta.ca or by phoning the Ag Info Center at 310-FARM(3276). For support on Work Plans please call Amber Hines with Mountain View County @ 403-335-3311 ext 163.

ENVIRONMENTAL FARM PLANS

An Environmental Farm Plan is a free, voluntary self-assessment process that producers use to evaluate the environmental strengths and opportunities of their farming operation. Having an Environmental Farm Plan can:

- Help increase awareness for the improvement of farm health and safety
- Build acceptance of the operation among neighbors and the public
- Increase personal satisfaction and knowledge
- Add value to the farm property
- Promote agricultural sustainability

Once an Environmental Farm Plan has been completed, producers are eligible for funding through *Growing Forward*.

New Environmental Farm Plans are now available at the Mountain View County Office. If you are interested in completing an Environmental Farm Plan, please contact Amber Hines with Mountain View County at 403-335-3311 ext 163, as farm plan workshops or one-on-one sessions can be held.

The Land-use Framework and You

The Land-use Framework is an initiative approved by the Government of Alberta in 2008, whose stated purpose is to better manage land use patterns within the province of Alberta. Once finalized, the Land-use Framework will represent a significant change in how Mountain View County meets its environmental, economic and social goals.

The first step in establishing the Land-use Framework occurred with the passing of the Alberta Land Stewardship Act in October of last year. The Act establishes the legislative foundation for the Land-use Framework and sets up a regional planning system establishing thresholds to manage the cumulative effects of development in each planning region. Currently there are seven planning regions within the Land-use Framework, each named after one of Alberta's major watersheds. Mountain View County is included within the Red Deer Regional Planning Area, and its plan is scheduled to get underway in 2011.

Government-appointed regional advisory councils are now developing Regional plans and strategies in coordination with the Land Use Secretariat. Draft plans for the Calgary Metropolitan region and the Capital (Edmonton) region have already been completed and are in a draft format, and the Lower Athabasca and South Saskatchewan regional plans are underway.

Approved regional plans which border the Red Deer region may influence how our plan is drafted.

How does this affect Mountain View County?

Significant restrictions have been placed on rural municipalities forming parts of the Calgary Metropolitan and

Capital Region Plan areas. The policies severely restrict rural development options and place some approval powers into urban hands. While the Alberta Land Stewardship Act permits municipalities to retain their authority over Municipal Development Plans, Area Structure Plans, land-use bylaws and decision-making on subdivisions and development standards, Mountain View County will need to ensure that all land-use planning and activities within its boundaries comply with the broader Red Deer regional plan.

The Municipal Area Partnership (MAP) which consists of Carstairs, Cremona, Didsbury, Mountain View County, Olds and Sundre, recognizes the restraints these regional plans will place on our future growth and development opportunities. MAP has nominated County Reeve Al Kemmere to represent the MAP region at the table once the Red Deer Regional Plan gets underway.

It is important for all residents to learn more about the Land-use Framework and to get involved, as the Red Deer Regional Plan will have a potentially greater impact than both the County's Municipal Development and Land Use Bylaw. Landowners will have the opportunity to participate in public consultations during the development of regional plans.

For more information on the Land-use Framework please go to www.landuse.alberta.ca.

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VIEWPOINT

Do you agree with the proposal to raise the number of domestic animals (cats, dogs, etc.) allowed on a County Residential property from one to three in the County's Draft Land Use Bylaw?

Yes No (If no, what answer do you feel would be appropriate?)

Fax your response to 403-335-9207; mail it to Mountain View County, Postal Bag 100, Didsbury, Alberta, T0M 0W0; or go on-line to www.mvcab.ca/views, and fill out our survey on-line. A summary of responses will be printed in the March edition of Mountain Views!