



MEDIA RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 3, 2020, Crossfield, Alta. – Like its residents, the Town of Crossfield has been financially impacted by the COVID-19 public health crisis. As a result, the Town’s operating budget, initially approved in December 2019, was revised to meet the new realities and challenges the Town of Crossfield now faces.

“We’ve had to make some difficult decisions, but we are now cautiously optimistic recovery from the impacts of COVID-19 is possible, perhaps not immediately but in due time,” said Ken Bosman, chief administrative officer.

The emergency operating budget was approved by council June 2.

“I and the rest of council committed to approving a budget which maintains the fiscal health of the town while providing as much support for the community as we can,” Mayor Jo Tennant said. “While this is an unexpected challenge, it is one we are sure council, staff and the community can weather together.”

Economic changes have resulted in an approximately \$1 million drop in revenue for the Town.

For instance, revenues from water and sewer utilities are projected to be \$280,000 less than in 2019, and closure of the Crossfield Community Centre and Pete Knight Memorial Arena in response to COVID-19 has resulted in a loss of revenue from renting of those facilities.

On May 27, Town administration announced three staff members had been laid off, one voluntarily.

“We are hopeful these layoffs will prove to be temporary. Laying people off is not something we take lightly,” Bosman said. “As a result of these layoffs, some of the important work of the Town will need to be delayed or picked up by the remaining staff.”

Staff were asked to consider taking a voluntary lay-off or early retirement as a way for the Town to make up some of the revenue shortfall. Overtime for staff has also been suspended except in emergency situations.

Based upon citizen feedback, council prioritized maintenance of the Town’s outside services and facilities, including Crossfield’s roads, parks, playgrounds and pathways, in the emergency operating budget. As a result, some staff have been redeployed from other departments – including community services and the fire department – to temporarily work in the public works and parks departments.

The Town has not yet received any funding from the federal or provincial governments to hire summer students; however, council approved hiring eight summer students as part of the emergency operating budget to ensure the town’s outdoor areas are maintained over the summer.



In addition, Town council has unanimously taken a five per cent cut in their honorariums for the rest of the year and has waived any special meeting fees.

The Town has also deferred payment of property taxes for both residential and commercial/industrial accounts to Aug. 31, 2020 and deferred the dates for payment of late fees.

Notice sent date:	Jun. 15, 2020
Notice of Assessment date:	Jun. 23, 2020
Assessment complaint date:	Aug. 22, 2020
Taxes due date:	Aug. 31, 2020
Penalty of 10 per cent applied to outstanding balance of the current taxes:	Oct. 1, 2020
Penalty of seven per cent applied to outstanding balance of the current taxes:	Dec. 1, 2020
Penalty of 18 per cent applied to entire outstanding balance of taxes:	Feb. 1, 2021

Tax deadlines will revert to the normal schedule in 2021. Residents can sign up for the Tax Installment Payment Plan now to spread out payments as the Town has waived the requirement of signing up for this program by March 15 for this year only.

Late fees on utility bills have also been waived. These moves are intended to help residents who may be experiencing financial issues of their own; however, there is a considerable impact to the Town's cash flow as a result.

Council approved a residential mill rate of 8.19261 for 2020 at its June 2 regular meeting. The non-residential mill rate was set at 7.14511.

"Most residents will see no change in their property taxes or a modest decrease," Bosman said. "Compared to other Alberta municipalities of a similar size, Crossfield's property taxes remain the lowest."

For instance, taxpayers in Pincher Creek and Three Hills – which have populations most similar to Crossfield – had mill rates of 12.31 and 13.89 respectively in 2019, including the education tax. By way of comparison, Crossfield's total mill rate for 2019, including the education tax, was 8.2041.

The federal government announced June 2 it would be providing municipalities the full yearly monies from the Gas Tax Fund rather than delivering these funds in two installments. When those funds will be dispersed has not been indicated by the government.

The provincial government has indicated help for municipalities will be coming, however, no date has been set and no details have been released.

For more information or to arrange an interview:

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