



AGENDA ITEM

LACOMBE COUNTY FIRE SERVICES

BILLING FOR FIRE RESPONSES

June 11, 2020

BACKGROUND

Currently, Lacombe County Policy F(1), *Fire Protection and Emergency Response* Part D states "Subject to the exceptions listed, no charge will be made for fire or emergency responses of residents and ratepayers of Lacombe County and other municipalities (excluding the Town of Blackfalds) within the County."

The listed exceptions to this statement include; responses within Summer Villages, mutual aid responses outside of the County, responses to incidents involving non-residents, and other situations where Lacombe County invoices for fire department responses.

In October of 2019, Lacombe County Council directed Administration to prepare a report detailing the options for invoicing for fire department responses within the boundaries of Lacombe County where residents are involved.

ANALYSIS

In 2019 the Lacombe County Fire Service responded to 87 billable motor vehicle collisions. Of those collisions Lacombe County invoiced Alberta Transportation or non-residents for 53 of those responses. The remaining 34 responses involved Lacombe County residents and were not invoiced for.

In addition to this, Lacombe County Fire service crews responded to 10 structure fires within Lacombe County that also were not invoiced for as per our current policy.

When an insurance claim is made for a motor vehicle collision, any invoice for fire response is recoverable through that claim. And, most home insurance policies contain a special rider for this type of invoicing.

While historically Lacombe County has not invoiced for fire responses this practice does take place in jurisdictions throughout Alberta and is becoming more common



as municipalities explore alternative revenue sources. Responses invoiced for in other municipalities include; motor vehicle collisions, fire responses, rescue responses and hazardous materials responses.

Public perception of this change in policy is likely to be negative as residents contribute to the funding of fire departments through their taxes. Those tax contributions are used primarily to ensure Lacombe County provides prepared, trained and well-equipped fire fighters and the costs of response could be considered an additional expense.

ALTERNATIVES

1) That Council direct the County Manager to amend the Lacombe County F(1) Policy to allow for the invoicing of residents for fire department responses to motor vehicle collisions and structure fires using Alberta Transportation rates to motor vehicle collisions and a separate rate for fire responses.

2) That Council direct the County Manager to amend the Lacombe County F(1) Policy to allow for the invoicing of residents for fire department responses to motor vehicle collisions and structure fires using Alberta Transportation rates for all chargeable fire responses.

3) That Council direct the County Manager to amend the Lacombe County F(1) Policy to allow for the invoicing of residents for fire department responses to motor vehicle collisions and structure fires using a flat fee based on cost recovery for these types of responses.

4) That Council direct the County Manager to continue not invoicing residents for responses to motor vehicle collisions and structure fires.

BUDGET IMPLICATIONS

If the 34 MVC responses in 2019 had been invoiced for, the revenue from these responses would increase from \$130,843.75 to \$208,026.25 a difference of \$77,125.50.

If the structure fire responses in Lacombe County had been invoiced for using the current rates in policy this would amount to \$33,580.00.

There would be some additional administrative burden to these changes that would likely be covered by the increased revenue. In addition to this, changes proposed for 2021 to remuneration for paid on call fire fighters amounts to an estimated \$100,000.00 increase which would also be majority covered by these revenues.



LEGISLATIVE RESPONSIBILITIES

Section 3 of the Municipal Government Act (MGA) states the purposes of a municipality are:

- a) to provide good government,
- b) to provide services, facilities or other things that, in the opinion of Council, are necessary or desirable for all or part of the municipality, and
- c) to develop and maintain safe and viable communities.

Section 5(b) of the MGA states that a municipality has the duties that are imposed on it by the MGA and other enactments and those that the municipality imposes on itself as a matter of policy.

Section 180(1) of the MGA states that Council may act only by resolution or bylaw.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Lacombe County sees the value in engaging and informing the public/stakeholders through a variety of mediums as outlined in the *Policy AD(40): Public Participation Policy*. The appropriate level of engagement for each public participation opportunity is selected on a project-to-project basis. For this item, the following engagement will take place:

- *Inform*: To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions.

Highlights of all County Council meetings are published on the County Website and in the County News.

STRATEGIC PLAN

The following elements of Lacombe County's Strategic Plan are relevant to this issue:

Our Vision: "An attractive, balanced, and progressive community".

Our Mission: "To build a safe and vibrant community through leadership, innovation and healthy relationships".

Our Key Principles: "Recognizing our history and solid foundation, we approach



the role of providing the best possible level of municipal services for our citizens through a base of collaborative and supportive teamwork.

RECOMMENDATION

That Council direct the County Manager to amend the Lacombe County F(1) Policy to allow for the invoicing of residents for fire department responses to motor vehicle collisions and structure fires using Alberta Transportation rates to motor vehicle collisions and a separate rate for fire responses. And to present this amended policy to Council for consideration of approval at a future Council meeting.

PREPARED BY: Drayton Bussiere, County Fire Chief

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REVIEWED BY: Keith Boras, Director of Community Services

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REVIEWED BY: Tim Timmons, County Manager

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