



AGENDA ITEM

2021 Budget - Establish Meeting Date

June 25, 2020

BACKGROUND

Staff are in the preliminary stages of developing the 2021 – 2024 operating budget and the 2021 capital budget. The first step in this annual process is the development of the budget schedule. Council involvement is key to the success of this process. Administration is proposing several changes to the traditional budgeting process in recognition of the uncertain economic times the province is currently in.

Council set an initial pre-budget meeting date of August 28, 2020 at its organizational meeting on October 22, 2019. Administration is proposing an additional meeting with Council during the week of July 27th to begin the budgeting process. Departments have already begun the 2021 budgeting process and senior management will begin budget discussions on June 26th.

The 2021 budget meeting of Council is currently scheduled for Friday, November 27th at 9:00 a.m.

ANALYSIS

Traditionally, the purpose of the pre-budget meeting is to allow Council the opportunity to provide input into services levels and capital priorities. Administration also provides an estimate for expected inflation rate for 2021 for Council's endorsement.

The proposed meeting in July would allow for an initial discussion with Council concerning possible scenarios regarding the 2021 economy and the impacts this would have on the County's budget. This would provide context to the discussions that would take place in August.

The detailed presentation of the budget would still occur at the November meeting. Council will also have the opportunity to approve the 2021 interim budget at this meeting. Approving the 2021 interim budgets prior to the end of 2020 gives the County the authority to incur 2021 expenditures commencing January 1st.

The final budgets and property tax rate bylaw will be presented to Council for approval in late April or early May of next year following confirmation of the



County's 2021 assessment as well as the senior's foundation and provincial education requisitions.

ALTERNATIVES

1. Council can approve the additional meeting date as recommended.
2. Council can propose an alternative date.
3. Council could decide to leave the meeting schedule as currently approved.
4. Council could decide to include public consultation meetings to the budget schedule.

BUDGET IMPLICATIONS

The preparation and discussion of the annual budget falls within the normal activities of the County. Should Council decide on a public participation component that activity would have a cost which would be dependent on the level of engagement Council would like to participate in.

LEGISLATIVE RESPONSIBILITIES

Sections 242(1) and 245 of the Municipal Government Act (MGA) require Council to adopt an operating and capital budget annually.

PUBLIC CONSULTATION

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.

Council has had several discussions regarding public input into the preparation of the 2021 budget. Should Council be open to such a process, best practices suggest the following:

1. Stakeholders be encouraged to participate.
2. Online tools should be transparent and interactive be it: simulations, surveys, or other feedback mechanisms.
3. Detailed information is needed in order to tell the story and provide context.
4. Feedback mechanisms should be easy and simple to use.
5. Budget options should include the consequence and impact of the decision.



STRATEGIC PLAN

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

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

Our Mission: "Building a safe and vibrant community through leadership, innovation and the development of healthy relationships".

Key Principles: 1) "Integrity: Honesty and Trustworthy", 2) "Accountability and Transparent for our decisions and for our actions" and 3) "Fair and Objective in our decisions and how we treat individuals"

Key Success Measures – Financial/Viability: "Success at working within budgets" and "Taxation and fee levels"

Key Success Measure – Process and Improvements: "Adoption and implementation of innovative ideas and suggestions"

Key Success Measures – Sustainability: "Current services are maintainable and provide benefits for the future, while minimizing negative impacts on the community"

RECOMMENDATION

That Council pass a resolution to set the 2021 pre-budget meeting for July 30, 2020 commencing at 9:00 a.m.

PREPARED BY: Michael Minchin, Director of Corporate Services

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REVIEWED BY: Tim Timmons, County Manager

A blue ink signature of Tim Timmons, written over a rectangular box.