



Christopher Northcott,
Councillor, Division 6
(403) 423-0158
Christopher.Northcott@vulcan.ca

NOTES FROM COUNCIL

Dear Residents & Ratepayers,

I hope everyone has had an enjoyable Christmas with family and friends. This has been a challenging year for many, and the close of a year is an opportunity to reflect and to prioritise what is important.

The Interim 2024 Operating Budget and Capital Plans were approved at the December 6th meeting of Council. Also at this meeting, a delegation from Alberta Health Services provided an update on operating plans for 2023/2024, as well as reforms that are being implemented to reduce emergency room wait times and improve ambulance response times in rural Alberta. Consideration was also provided on overall patient access, be it for surgery or other services.

Council was given an opportunity provide feedback on a rate and occupancy study that was completed for the Town of Vulcan and Vulcan County on the future development potential of a hotel. This study was paid for by a grant that was received from the Rural Economic Development Microgrant Program. In the study, HVS Consulting and Valuation provided a thorough review of local market conditions and demand, as well as the suitability of a proposed Microtel layout.

A request for comment was received from the Natural Resource Conservation Board regarding a proposed development at the Little Bow Hutterite Colony for additional manure storage and an extension of the poultry barn. In its Intermunicipal Development Plan (IDP) with the MD of Willow Creek, Vulcan County recognized the need for allowing certain expansions for existing Confined Feeding Operations (CFOs) even when they might be located within a CFO exclusion area. With respect to this application, Council directed Administration to provide comment regarding the need for appropriate drainage mitigation.

Councillors Gateman, Nelson, Logan and I have been appointed to the Municipal Development Plan (MDP) Review Committee. The development of a new MDP is a significant project that will take to the end of our elected terms. This committee will meet on a regular basis to provide feedback and direction. Please stay tuned for a survey that will be forthcoming as your input is greatly appreciated.

Authorization has been given to enter a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Twin Valley Regional Water Commission for the servicing of the Vulcan County Industrial Park. This MOU is a communication document to ensure that the collective needs of the commission are met while avoiding unnecessary delays to the County's project due to lack of communication and understanding between the parties.

Council approved the adjustment of council remuneration by 15% based on an internally updated market comparison. We hope this is the last time we find it necessary to do a significant adjustment to this line item for the County to remain comparable to similar municipalities. This is a separate adjustment to the cost-of-living allowance review that is undertaken for the entire organization annually. The rationale for this market comparison is provided on my website, along with my expense reports. I have been seeking public input on Council remuneration since the Summer.

Also, Council approved establishing a second Community Peace Officer position. We believe this will provide more effective bylaw enforcement while avoiding employee burnout. The Ag Services department is also getting a new tractor after competitive pricing was reviewed. The tractor being replaced is nearly 23 years old.

Best wishes for 2024!

Sincerely, Christopher Northcott