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NOTES FROM COUNCIL

Dear Residents & Ratepayers,

The month of October has seen the completion of a lot of recreation board budgets for 2027. These budgets need to be submitted to the County by the end of October so that preliminary costing and estimates can be incorporated into the 2027 Interim Operating Budget. This year is the second year where the County is working with its municipal partners to ascertain how much the urban municipalities can contribute to recreational priorities. How villages contribute to recreation varies from one community to the next and their contribution has, in some instances, not been properly recognized or understood. This is something that the County is hoping to clarify for the coming year, working with its municipal partners to review Intermunicipal Collaborative Frameworks. It is important for all stakeholders to understand the level of service being provided, how it is supported financially and, ultimately, the value to all ratepayers across municipal borders.

Vulcan County has hired the services of a company to facilitate the creation of a new four-year strategic plan. "Strategic Steps" provided in-person sessions on October 1st and 2nd in Lethbridge that included six members of council (one was unable to participate due to illness) and administrative staff from all departments. I was impressed with the approach taken by the facilitators. Working from a preliminary survey, we were able to move quickly through the vision and mission statements, and into developing position statements in four key areas: governance, finance, environment, and culture. This exercise entailed breaking into four working groups that each had a go at reviewing the prior strategic plan, drafting new position statements, and reviewing the work of the other groups. All participants then ranked the goals for their most preferred objectives so the

facilitators could use these materials in drafting the strategic plan. Once a draft plan is received, further review will occur and changes can be contemplated prior to finalizing of the document.

October has been a busy month for the local assessment review board in our region. This service is provided by the Oldman River Regional Services Commission (ORRSC) for all member-municipalities. ORRSC provides clerks and organizes the mandatory training of board members through the provincial Land and Property Rights Tribunal (LPRT). Being a local assessment review board, this quasi-judicial body hears assessment complaints, establishes facts, and then settles the disputed assessment by determining the property assessment for purposes of taxation. The decisions of the local assessment review board can be appealed to the Court of Kings Bench if either the complainant or the respondent remain dissatisfied. However, this is quite rare, and one should appreciate that a municipal assessment is not a property appraisal. Municipal assessment is the value of a property relative to all other properties on the assessment roll of a specific municipality (and only that municipality). This month I participated as a board member for hearings in the villages of Champion and Milo, with the costs of those hearings being incurred by those villages. Assessment can be challenging in small rural municipalities due to the lack of real estate sales for valuation and comparison, as well as the limited number of assessment classes and properties overall.

There will be a Public Hearing on November 13, 2026, in the Vulcan Cultural Recreation Centre at 1:00 PM for Bylaw 2026-023. The proposed amendment to the Land Use Bylaw would add "Data Processing Operation" as a discretionary use in the Vulcan County Industrial Park.

Sincerely, Christopher Northcott