

MountainViews

Issue 1 – January 2011



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Mountain View
COUNTY

Message From The Reeve



Reeve Paddy Munro

First of all, Happy New Year from Council and staff at Mountain View County! With a new year comes the opportunity for a new beginning for our municipality.

As candidates we promised change and as a Council we intend to deliver. We've formulated strategic directions for the upcoming year, and we have an action plan to make it happen.

Late last year, Council directed staff to take action in six areas over the coming months. These areas are:

1. Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) recruitment
2. An assessment of the organizations and processes of the Planning and Development Services and Operational Services departments
3. A review of the Municipal Development Plan (MDP)
4. The development of an effective public participation program
5. The creation of Staff issues action plan, and
6. The establishment of realistic benchmarks for service

We're not wasting any time on this. The process for recruiting a new Chief Administrative Officer is already underway. A Chief Administrative Officer Recruitment Committee, consisting of all seven Councillors has been struck, and several qualified applications have already been received by Council.

As a Council we want our new Chief Administrative Officer to be a strategic leader, someone who will develop and improve our municipal services in a cost effective and efficient manner. We want Mountain View County to continue be a vibrant and sustainable rural community, so it's important we find the right person for the job.

Council has also moved forward on a review of the operations and processes within our Planning and Development and Operational Services departments. These two departments have the biggest budget impact on the County, and we want to make sure they're running efficiently and cost-effectively. We're committed to ensuring that you receive value for your tax dollars.

To make sure we get the thorough and insightful review we're looking for, Council will be reviewing the successful applicant's work plan before any work is done. The planning and operations review is an important first step in an overall look at the cost-effectiveness and the efficiency of our entire organization, so we have to get it right.

We will also be kicking off a review of the County's Municipal Development Plan (MDP) in 2011. This document needs some work. As a Council, we've already placed a year-long freeze on low density residential along the collector network. We've also placed the Water Valley / Winchell Lake, Wessex and Southeast Sunde Area Structure Plans on hold until a review of the Municipal Development Plan can be completed.

And as always, we need your input. Together, we can make 2011 a big year for Mountain View County.

I thank you for allowing me the opportunity to serve you.

MINDING YOUR BUSINESS

Characteristics of successful entrepreneurs

As you will recall from the first column in this series, I discussed the risks and benefits of starting and operating a small business. This article will examine some of the characteristics common to successful entrepreneurs.

In order to begin, the term entrepreneur should be defined. An entrepreneur is a person who discovers a market opportunity and creates or builds a business enterprise in order to meet customer needs within that market. Notice the emphasis on market and customer needs. As you will see in further articles, the strategic marketing plan is one of the more critical sections of the business plan.

An Entrepreneur Is:

ACHIEVEMENT ORIENTED

He / she places a high personal value on achievement, competition and hard work. This is essential to get through the long hours and other challenges that are inherent in the start-up phase of the new enterprise.

A RISK TAKER

Entrepreneurship is not usually found in a risk - averse personality. However, successful entrepreneurs have been found to take only carefully calculated risks. They do not fear failure, but instead use it as a source of motivation.

INDEPENDENT

He / She has a tendency to resist authority and usually attempts to take control of a situation rather than interact as a member of a team. The entrepreneurial personality strives to take credit, or alternatively will accept blame for the results of his / her actions.

INNOVATIVE

The entrepreneur is creative and willing to try new ideas and methods. He /She is not afraid to evaluate a concept in a nontraditional way and to ask questions such as "Why not?"

THE POSSESSOR OF STRONG VERBAL AND NUMERICAL SKILLS

The entrepreneur has the ability to communicate thoughts well. In addition, numerical skills are above average. These qualities are invaluable when dealing with skeptical customers, suppliers and financing institutions.

AN EXCELLENT PROBLEM SOLVER

An entrepreneur can identify problems in a timely manner and respond with effective solutions. He / She ranks considerably above average at sorting through irrelevant information and identifying the source of a problem.

A STRATEGIC PLANNER

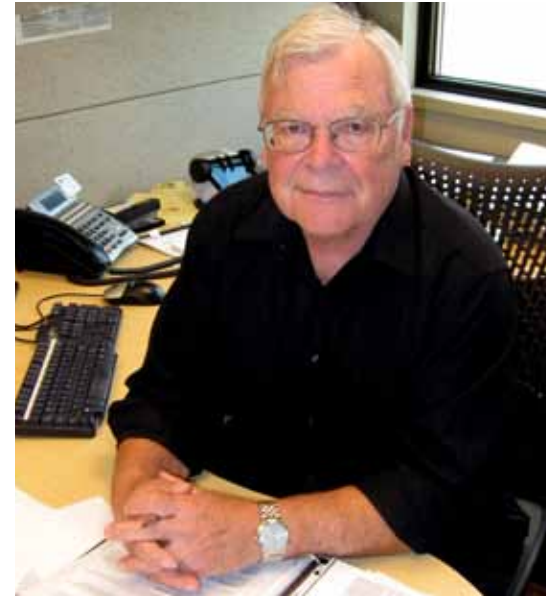
The successful entrepreneur possesses well developed skills pertaining to the setting of business goals and objectives and developing alternate methods of achieving them in a constantly changing environment. Moreover, he / she adapts to change easily and possesses thorough knowledge of the chosen industry.

PERSISTENT

Because of the difficulties involved in creating and successfully operating a small business, successful entrepreneurs tend to possess the quality of perseverance in truck load quantities. He / She simply does not quit!

If the above characteristics describe your skills and personality, then you fit the profile of a potentially successful entrepreneur.

I hope that you find this series interesting and informative. Any comments and suggestions will certainly be welcome. You can contact me at 403-335-3311 ext. 161, by email at doug.erdman@mountainviewcounty.com, or drop by for a visit at the County Office.



Doug Erdman,
Mountain View County,
Economic Development
Officer

Residential Property Assessment 101

What County Homeowners Need to Know

We enjoy a quality standard of living in Mountain View County and few would argue the value of the essential services our tax dollars buy.

However – some of us might wonder how our property is valued and why there is a relationship between our property assessment and the tax bill we receive every year. Gordon Johnston, Mountain View County’s Interim Manager of Assessment Services, is determined to help ratepayers understand what can appear to be a bit of a confusing process.

FIRST OFF, WHAT IS PROPERTY ASSESSMENT?

Each year, Alberta Municipal Affairs requires municipalities like Mountain View County to assign a dollar value to properties for municipal taxation purposes. This process is called property assessment and it plays a key role in determining the amount of municipal tax you end up paying each year.

In Alberta, property tax is based on the ad valorem principle which literally means *according to value*. In Mountain View County that translates to market value; a moving target that needs to be assessed annually. In a nutshell, your assessment represents the most probable price your property would bring in an open and competitive market assuming a few qualifiers including:

- Buyers and sellers are equally motivated, well informed and acting in their own best interests
- A reasonable time period is allowed for exposure in an open market
- There are no associated special or creative financing or sales concessions associated with the sale

In Mountain View County, our assessors use a process called Mass Appraisal as an estimate of

market value. This is a common and cost effective method used in many rural counties where there are large numbers of properties that need to be accurately valued in a short period of time. The County’s assessors review property assessments each year as part of a five year cycle. As well they create new assessments for emerging subdivisions and they make changes to property assessments where additions and removals have occurred.

Mass Appraisal is an approved protocol to value a group of properties as of a given date using common data, mathematical models and statistical tests. It requires a review of historical real estate transactions, sales figures and market trends over the previous year to determine a reasonable price range for like properties including the lowest price to the highest.

Johnston points out, “In rural communities, market trends tend to be gentler. In the major urban centers, market value can spike or drop significantly in a calendar year. Our market follows at a distance, reacting at a different pace. However we are not immune to market fluctuation, which is why it’s important to analyze data annually. Residents should be aware that market value and sales trends do vary in different quadrants of the County. For example, residents in the Southwest quadrant will likely see higher property values, while those in areas east of Highway 2 often experience values lower than the average. The Mass Appraisal method doesn’t mean a one-size-fits-all approach—we analyze regional patterns within the County as part of our valuation process.”

When you get your tax notice in the spring you’ll see a market value assigned to your property which represents its most probable selling price in the range as of July 1st of the previous year.

HOW DOES YOUR PROPERTY ASSESSMENT AFFECT YOUR PROPERTY TAX?

Taxation is the process of applying a tax rate to your property’s market value (i.e. your assessment). Each spring, Mountain View County Council sets the tax rate based on the County’s budget as prepared by the County’s Finance Department.

The amount of tax you pay = your property assessment divided by 1,000 x the tax rate

WHAT HAPPENS IF YOU DON’T AGREE WITH THE ASSESSED VALUE OF YOUR PROPERTY?

If you disagree with your property assessment, or you have questions, Johnston encourages you to call the Assessment Department at 403-335-3311. He points out that many concerns can be addressed through a candid review with a County assessor. Beyond that there is a 60 day review period where you can request a formal assessment review that will be conducted by an outside appeal body. If your valuation is revised, you will be issued a revised tax notice. According to Johnston the Mass Appraisal method results in very few appeals. “It’s a fair and reasonable process supported by strong data. County residents deserve this.”

Your County. Your Plan.

Mountain View’s Municipal Development Plan Belongs to You

In Alberta, The Municipal Government Act requires all municipalities with a population over 3500, to adopt a Municipal Development Plan (MDP) as a means of creating a blueprint for long-term growth and development.

Mountain View County’s MDP was last updated in 2007. At that time, the process included three rounds of public discussion, a two day public hearing and two days of Council deliberation. The result was a forward-thinking, living document that responds to changing issues, trends and economic realities. However, like any living document, it must respond to changing issues, trends and economic realities. Since 2007, there have been major shifts across Canada, in Alberta and locally in:

- Economic performance
- Natural resource allocation
- Demographics
- Urban/Rural movement and dynamics
- Residential and commercial development

As such, the newly elected Council has made a review of the MDP its first order of business.

Says Reeve Paddy Munro, “Perhaps no document has greater impact on how we live our lives in Mountain View County than the Municipal Development Plan. Since 2007, issues have arisen that have encouraged us to take a fresh look at it. For example, one of the provisions in the plan was allowance for two acre clustered subdivisions along the County Collector Network. Recent feedback suggests we may need to revisit this.

“We want you to tell us what parts of the 2007 MDP are still valid, and what needs to be changed or possibly removed. Starting in the New Year, we’ll be holding round table discussions in all quadrants of the County to get your perspective.”

Given the importance of the MDP and its impact on the future of the County, Council has chosen to brand the process of revisiting the MDP with a four part plan:

- Cultivating Consensus (public input)
- Growing Your Plan (incorporating additional information and resources)
- Harvesting Your Vision (building the new plan)
- Bringing it Home (sharing the end result with ratepayers)

Says Munro, “Revisiting the MDP in its entirety is important so we can keep any changes at a strategic level. This is more than changing one or two sections; it’s about making sure our plan works for Mountain View County and that means it has to be owned by the ratepayers.”

Cultivating Consensus.

It’s the first step in a four-stage process to review our Municipal Development Plan.

Get involved in one of four roundtable sessions over the following month:

January 25 - Reed Ranch School @ 7 p.m. January 26 - Cremona Community Hall @ 7 p.m.
 February 1 - Carstairs Elementary School @ 7 p.m. February 2 - Sundre Royal Canadian Legion @ 7 p.m.

For more information check the ‘Your County Your Plan’ project bulletin in your mailbox, or visit the project homepage: www.mountainviewcounty.com/mdpreview.

Your County. Your Plan.

2011 Municipal Development Plan Review








Local Food Markets Set Straight

You can't turn on the TV or radio or open a newspaper or magazine without hearing or seeing something about local food. Sometimes it seems like the jargon changes so quickly that you can't keep up. What does it all mean and is it something you could become involved in? Or are you ready to take your current local food business to the next level?

Mountain View County in partnership with Rocky View County and Wheatland County, Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development (ARD), and Growing Forward are hosting two one-day workshops this winter to help demystify what it means to sell into local markets and to give you some resources to make your decision easier.

The first workshop, *Explore...Local Foods, Local Markets*, will be held on February 1, 2011. This is a must-attend event if you are:

- new to selling direct to consumers
- intrigued about accessing new markets

- excited about new profit opportunities
- curious about how you and your family fit.

"We will give an overview of what it means to sell locally," says Bert Denning, business development officer with ARD's Explore Local Initiative. "We will share industry trends, talk about the different marketing venues, give an overview of regulations, insurance and food safety requirements, provide information on different production practices and share resources. We want entrepreneurs who are new to this industry to understand the basics so they know where to target their additional research and make informed decisions."

On February 10, 2011, a second workshop will follow titled *Expanding...Local Foods, Local Markets*. This workshop will target those individuals who are already involved in selling into local markets and want to further diversify their operations.

"We want to give entrepreneurs more in-depth information on some of the market channels that were introduced

in the Explore workshop," says Marlene Abrams, local market specialist with ARD's Explore Local Initiative, "as well as a chance to hear directly from producers selling in those channels what it takes to be successful."

LOCAL FOOD WORKSHOPS

Explore...Local Foods, Local Markets

**February 1, 2011
9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.**

Airdrie Agriculture Centre
97 East Lake Ramp NE, Airdrie.

To register contact Tim Dietzler at Rocky View County, 403-520-1271 or tdietzler@rockyview.ca.

Expanding...Local Foods, Local Markets

**February 10, 2011
9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.**

Mountain View County office
1408 - Twp Rd 320, Didsbury

To register contact Jane Fulton at 403-335-3311, extension 184 or Jane.Fulton@mountainviewcounty.com.

The cost for both workshops is \$20 per person and includes lunch.

These workshops are sponsored by Growing Forward, a federal-provincial-territorial initiative.

RANCHING OPPORTUNITIES 2011: FROM FARM TO FINISH

February 3, 2011 | Alumni Center, Olds College | 9 a.m. – 4 p.m.

Topics & Speakers Include:

- Breeding Trends - Brenda Schoepp
- Cargill Panel - Order Buyer
- Mob Grazing - Terry Gompert, Nick & Janet Warner

Breakout Sessions Include:

- Breeding Trends Q & A – Brenda Schoepp
- Carcass Quality Ultrasound – Rod Wendorff
- Low Stress Livestock Handling – Dylan Biggs

Registration is \$30 per person and lunch will be provided. Registration deadline is January 25, 2011. To register please contact Amber Hines at 403-335-3311 ext 163.



ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL

Abandoned wells pose a risk to excavation and construction

Oil and gas exploration is a part of the Albertan way of life. The iconic drilling rig and nodding pump jack are symbols of our identity as much as they are drivers of our economy.

Although well sites are another common sight across rural Alberta, we may not tend to give a lot of thought to what happens once a well is decommissioned.

Since records were first kept beginning in 1945, we know of approximately 140,000 abandoned wells in Alberta within the province of Alberta. A small portion of those can be found within the boundaries of Mountain View County.

While a well is in production the County ensures that setbacks are maintained through the Subdivision and Development Regulations. Active well sites are noted as a caveat on titles and are visible on the surface of the land.

However, once a well is capped and the surface is reclaimed caveats are removed from the title. From this point on there is generally nothing visible remaining on the land or on the title to indicate the presence of the abandoned well.

Typically abandoned and reclaimed well sites will not pose a problem for the land owner. On occasion, however, abandoned wells will require maintenance due to a leak or other circumstance. Should the need for maintenance arise, provisions will need to be made for a service rig or a drilling rig, with the latter requiring a larger work area and access.

The risk to public health and safety from an abandoned well is very low. But if you have built your barn or machine shed overtop of an abandoned well and it needs to be

excavated, you are in for some trying times. On the other hand, if you are excavating and contact is made with an abandoned well bore, the safety of construction equipment and the equipment operator could be at risk.

While most of us know to call before we dig, Alberta One Call does not have information with respect to abandoned wells. Therefore, it is important to make sure that if you are a new landowner, or you are planning to build or excavate, that you make an appointment with Mountain View County to ensure there are no surprises waiting for you beneath the soil. You may also contact Energy Resources Conservation Board (ERCB) Information Services to get information on abandoned well sites on your land.

The ERCB is currently developing specific setback distances that will be incorporated into the County's Subdivision and Development Regulations. In the interim, it recommends a setback consisting of a 20 metre by 35 metre work area surrounding the abandoned well. The setback boundaries should be established so that the well is no less than 5 metres from the setback boundary. An 8 metre access to this setback area is also needed.

Efforts to ensure that abandoned well sites are appropriately considered and suitable setbacks incorporated will ensure that planning, development, and construction decisions in the future will be made safely and responsibly.

For more information please contact Shirley Madge or Jessica Ross at 403-335-3311.



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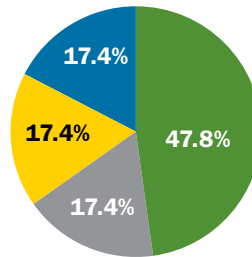
Mountain View County 2010 Communications Survey Results

1. When looking for information about the County, I consult:

95.7%	The Mountain View Gazette	34.8%	The Hitching Post News
73.9%	The Mountain View County website	26.1%	A Friend or Relative
34.8%	My Councillor	17.4%	Other

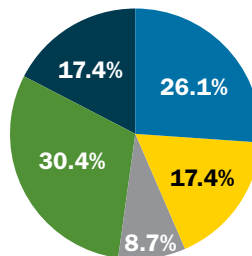
2. Twice per year each division has a town hall meeting for ratepayers to meet with their Councillor directly. If you had an issue that you needed addressed, how likely would you attend one of those meetings?

● Likely ● Unlikely ● Very Likely ● Very Unlikely



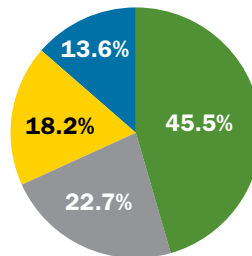
3. Every Wednesday the County Reeve has a short radio spot on 96.5 CK-FM entitled "County Connection". The spot is replayed every Thursday on Rock 104.5 FM. How useful do you find the information the Reeve provides?

● I know about the spot, but I've never heard it before
● Useful ● Useless ● Undecided
● I was unaware of the radio spot



4. Would you be in favour of receiving a monthly newspaper from Mountain View County delivered to your mailbox with greater access to County-related information while providing significant cost savings when compared to present methods of communication?

● Yes I would ● No, thank you
● I require more information ● Not sure



DECEMBER VIEWPOINT RESULTS

Last year, Mountain View County provided \$1,201,612 in funding to Carstairs, Cremona, Didsbury, Olds and Sundre for use of libraries and recreation centres and other facilities by County residents. Do you support the distribution of these funds by Mountain View County to our neighbouring urban centres?

