

## Coaldale Town Council Approves Operating and Capital Budgets

*The budgets come with a 2.65% residential and 3.89% non-residential property tax increase to maintain service levels and to carry out capital projects.*

At its December 11, 2023, Regular Council Meeting, Coaldale Town Council formally approved a 2024-2026 Operating and 2024-2028 Capital Budget.

As per Section 244 of the Municipal Government Act, each year Council must pass a balanced budget. To balance its 2024-2026 Operating Budget, Council needed to find an additional \$506,240 in revenue (approximately \$424,476 to maintain current service levels and \$81,764 to fund minor service enhancements).

The need for this additional revenue stems primarily from high inflation. According to the Bank of Canada, from 2019 to 2023 inflation has increased by 16.11%. What this effectively means is that a “basket” of goods and services that cost \$100.00 just prior to the COVID-19 pandemic today costs \$116.11.

Across the province, municipalities have had to contend with high inflation in the same way that individual households have had to contend with it. They have had to do one of three things:

1. increase revenues (raise taxes) to maintain current services levels;
2. cut back on spending and reduce service levels; or
3. adopt some combination of spending cuts and tax increases.

In neighboring Lethbridge, residents will see an increase of at least 5.1% in their property taxes year over year for the next 3 years. In Calgary and Edmonton, residents will see a property tax increase of 7.8% and 6.6%, respectively.

In Coaldale, Town staff presented Council with two options – both of which included modestly increasing property taxes/franchise fees. Ultimately, Council approved a 2.65% residential and 3.89% non-residential property tax increase, a 2% increase in franchise fees for natural gas and electricity, and a 3.9% utility rate increase to keep pace with

rising operating costs and critical infrastructure projects.

With these increases, the financial impact on a \$400,000 home will amount to \$15.63 per month or \$187.56 per year. The extra revenues will go towards:

### **Municipal Services (\$10.46 per month)**

- new personal protective equipment (PPE) for the Coaldale Fire Department;
- additional investments in the Town’s Community Services and Municipal Enforcement Program;
- funding for the increased operational costs of the Town’s municipal utility program (water, storm, sanitary & waste collection);
- inflationary pressures associated with maintaining service levels and the fulfillment of Council’s Strategic Plan;
- Coaldale’s participation in the Alberta Advantage Immigration Program; and
- the replacement of aging financial management software.

### **Capital Investment (\$5.17 per month)**

- completion of the Town’s new multi-use recreation facility;
- construction of a new potable water reservoir & pump station;
- construction of the outdoor space behind Civic Square (“Coaldale’s Community Living Room”);
- renovations at the Coaldale Public Library and the Coaldale Seniors Centre;
- construction of the Town’s Malloy 2(B)(1) storm water project;
- upgrades to the Town’s Sanitary Truck Line;

- construction of an at-grade pedestrian crossing at the corner of HWY 3 & Land O' Lakes Drive;
- an annual road rehabilitation program, starting in 2025; and
- renovation of Coaldale's Skate Park in 2025.

"Inflation is impacting every town and city across Canada, and Coaldale is no different," observed Jack Van Rijn, Mayor of the Town of Coaldale. "We're seeing a universal rise in the cost of goods and services, forcing many municipalities into a situation where they either have to hike property tax-

es or cut services to manage their budgets. Fortunately, our Council and Town staff continue to navigate this challenge in a fiscally responsible and relatively successful manner. Unlike a lot of municipalities in Alberta, we've managed to preserve existing service levels without imposing a major hike in property taxes. At the same time, we've been able to put forward a robust capital budget that continues to address many of the priorities laid out in our 2021-2025 Strategic Plan, and that's largely financed through grants and Town reserves."

## 5th Annual Country Christmas Contest a Huge Success

*This year, contestants could enter into four different categories including "Best Traditional Display", "Best Small Display", "Best Large Display", and "Best Business Display".*

On December 18, 2023, members of Coaldale Town Council, along with members of Town staff, took to the streets to determine the winners of the Town's 5th Annual Country Christmas Contest.

This year, contestants could enter into four different categories including "Best Traditional Display", "Best Small Display", "Best Large Display", and "Best Business Display".

In judging each display, four criteria were considered:

1. the uniqueness and creativity of the display;

2. the storyline or theme of the display;
3. the placement of decorations and animated objects; and
4. the display's overall presentation.

Ultimately, the award for "Best Traditional Display" went to 204 Fairway Drive, while the awards for "Best Small Display" and "Best Large Display" went to 1820 10th Street and 1013 22nd Avenue, respectively. As for "Best Business Display", that award went to the Coaldale Fire Department.

