

CAO's REPORT

November 26, 2019

1. Economic Development Report – see attached
2. As per Council's direction on November 5, Administration finalized Clearwater County's audit engagement with Metrix Group for the year ending December 31, 2019 and the next two years at a cost of \$30,000 plus expenses.
3. By invitation, Administration attended Red Deer County's Broadband Steering Committee meeting on November 22, 2019, to learn of their experiences and best practice with installation of fiber optic cable lines to bring internet access to the Junction 42 business area.

Upcoming Events

November 29 – Nordegg Open House

December 2 to 3 – Munis 101 Course

December 6 – Annual Town/County Christmas Party

December 6 – Village of Caroline Christmas Light Up

December 11 – Central AB Mayors' & Reeves' Meeting

December 11 to 13 – 2020 Budget Discussions

December 17 – Special Meeting of Council to approve 2020 Budget

December 24 to 26 – Christmas (Clearwater County Offices Closed)

January 1 – New Year's Day (Clearwater County Offices Closed)

January 20 – Strategic Planning Council Committee Meeting

Economic Development Update for November 26, 2019 – As Submitted by J. Pratt

The Economic Development Officer, Jerry Pratt, attended the Ministers Dinner held by the Economic Developers of Alberta. Jerry Pratt spoke with Michele Evans, Assistant Deputy Minister for Economic Development about the importance of the business development nodes along the Highway 11 corridor near Nordegg. The key message was that without designated land being zoned for development, infrastructure and business investment will continue to be unlikely.

The Tourism Business Forum was held on November 7 with 28 people attending representing about 20 businesses. Discussions included season staffing, how to promote events, and tracking visitor origins. New brochures and maps were presented along with a discussion of the importance of being a visitor friendly community, prepared for a tourism economy.

Jerry attended the Travel Alberta Industry Conference. The GOA announced a goal of increasing business from tourism from \$10 billion in 2020 to \$20 billion by 2030. The emphasis of the conference was the need for businesses and communities to share their history and culture in ways that visitors can experience them and then promote them.

Jerry participated in the CAEP meet and greet with Dr. Linda Vennard, CRTC Regional Commissioner for Alberta and the Northwest Territories. The main point of her message was that the CRTC role does not allow them to mandate development of broadband infrastructure, although they have created a fund that is meant for infrastructure development in underserved areas. Generally, the CRTC has not seen private companies building infrastructure in rural areas because of the high cost of capital investment and the need for ROI in 3 to 5 years. Other underserved municipalities are investigating their options, and Red Deer County is installing broadband infrastructure to their own industrial development at Junction 42 east of Penhold.

Jerry has been visiting businesses in the County since spring and has been hearing some consistent messages from them.

- The Energy Industry as a whole is running very lean with very little new business in exploration expected for the next few years.
- Companies are spending more money to combat theft and vandalism. Equipment of all sizes is being stolen and the companies feel like very little is being done to reduce or prevent this growth in crime.
- Hiring is becoming more difficult as people have moved away for more stable forms of work.
- Finding people with the right skills and experience is becoming more difficult. There is a need for people with trades certifications and I.T. experience, but some of these trades are not easy to fill locally and attracting people from larger centres to rural Alberta can be challenging.
- Over the past several years companies have identified increasing problems with drugs, especially among young men 17 – 30 years old. Some companies are letting more than a third of new hires go because they are not passing drug tests. The energy industry is very safety conscious, and one employer said, “While marijuana may be legal, insurance companies don’t care.”

Jerry has been in contact with St. Dominic Catholic High School and the Wild Rose School Division to discuss how this information can be used in the schools. He will present some short classes at St.

Dominic Catholic High School, with their Guidance Counselor, on local careers that are in demand in December, and on impacts of drugs and alcohol on careers in January. He is meeting with all the Guidance Counselors in the Wild Rose School Division in January to discuss how to best roll out this information at those schools.

Jerry will be attending the CATA Trails Workshop on November 19 and the CAEP Fall Meeting on November 20. He has also started attending the West Central Stakeholders meetings.