



NEWS RELEASE

December 19, 2025

Council Approves 2026 Budget with Focus on Core Services and Long-Term Rural Sustainability

(Rocky Mountain House, AB) – On December 19, 2025, Clearwater County Council approved the 2026 operating and capital budgets, reflecting Council's commitment to prudent financial management, reliable core services, and the long-term needs of Clearwater County's rural and agricultural community. These approvals were made following three days of detailed review and discussion from December 10–12, during which the Strategic Planning Committee carefully reviewed project timing, scope, and funding to ensure available resources are directed where they provide the greatest value to residents and ratepayers.

"Strong, well-maintained roads and bridges are essential to agriculture, industry, and rural life in Clearwater County," said Reeve Jordon Northcott. "By prioritizing core infrastructure and taking a measured approach to spending, Council is supporting producers today while planning responsibly for the future of our communities."

The 2026 operating budget includes total operating revenues of \$76,861,516 and operating expenses of \$58,866,409 (excluding amortization), with an additional \$782,011 in restricted funds allocated to operations. The capital budget includes \$8,572,521 in capital revenues and \$40,311,347 in capital expenditures, supported by \$31,732,826 in restricted funds for capital projects.

Key capital investments focus on sustaining core infrastructure with Gravel Road Rehab, Bridge Reconstruction and Asphalt Overlay. Council has also prioritized the assessment and initial reconstruction of infrastructure within the newly formed Hamlet of Caroline, with the Caroline Arena Ice Plant and wastewater infrastructure identified as first-phase priorities. Based on the final draft budget, the County anticipates an increase in tax revenue of just under five percent, which will likely include a combination of assessment base growth and tax rate increases.

To allow key decision-makers time to fully understand the complexities of the County's long-term 10-year capital plan, while maintaining fiscal responsibility and sound infrastructure management, several capital projects have been deferred or paused. These include holding Broadband expenditures at \$2,828,601 pending a decision on the future of the project. The Solid Waste Central Site, new Nordegg cemetery, South Townsite Access Road, Nordegg Centre Street construction, and Nordegg Trestle No. 2 have also been postponed to future years to support more informed decision-making.

Council's approval of the 2026 operating and capital budgets provides clear direction for projects moving forward, as well as those requiring additional information to ensure fiscally responsible decisions that serve the best interests of Clearwater County residents and businesses.

By focusing on essential services, carefully managing infrastructure investments, and respecting the County's rural character, Clearwater County continues to balance today's needs with long-term financial sustainability.

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