

Summer Village of Birchcliff

Winter 2025 Newsletter



Greetings from Council and Administration.

We are committed to protecting our village values, improving community and quality of life while protecting the environment and your investment. This newsletter provides an update on the following:

1. Elections
2. 2025 Municipal budget highlights
3. 2025 Utility bill
4. Water
5. Land Use Bylaw rewrite
6. Reminder on ice huts
7. Fires on the ice
8. Garbage & recycling schedule

Frank Tirpak resigned from Council in November, after serving for 5 years, to pursue his many interests. We thank Frank for his dedication and service to our municipality in council and as a member of the Municipal Planning Commission.

By-Election Dates

Nomination: January 25 between 10:00am & 12:00pm

Advanced poll: February 15 between 10:00am & 2:00pm

Election: February 22 between 10:00am & 7:00pm

General Election Dates

The 2025 general election date for all five Sylvan Lake summer villages will be on Saturday, July 5, 2025 with the nomination date set for June 7, 2025. Additional details will be provided well before these dates.

2025 Municipal Budget and 3 Year Operating Plan

Overview

Council approved the 2025 budget and 3-year operating plan in December. At the time of preparing the budget, operating expenses were in line with forecasted values providing a solid run rate going into 2025.

The following key items were used to inform the budget:

- 1) Projected \$13,000,000 in residential assessment growth rate for new and redevelopments.
- 2) 2024 annual Consumer Price Index increase was 2.8%.
- 3) Forecasted rate of return on investment income reduction due to lower bank of Canada rate predictions.
- 4) Increase in SG&A costs
 - a. 1.8% cost of living adjustment for staff

- b. Improved employer paid benefits from 50% to 75%. The increase represents the median of all other similar municipalities in Alberta.
- c. Addition of one Junior Development Officer. The new role facilitates succession planning and helps to manage the increase in complexity regarding developments and other permitted and non-permitted uses around the lake.
- d. Addition of two seasonal staff for a 16-week period which replaces the out-going provincial 8-week summer student program which is longer available.

The 2025 municipal taxation mill rate will increase by 2.54% to 2.0677 from 2.0165. This represents an increase of \$51 on a million-dollar property.

Historical Municipal Mill Rates

	2021	chg	2022	chg	2023	chg	2024	chg	2025	chg
Mill Rate	1.8949	0.95%	1.9205	1.35%	1.9205	0.00%	2.0165	5.00%	2.0677	2.54%
per million	\$ 1,895	\$ 18	\$ 1,921	\$ 26	\$ 1,921	\$ -	\$ 2,017	\$ 96	\$ 2,068	\$ 51

2025 Utility Bill

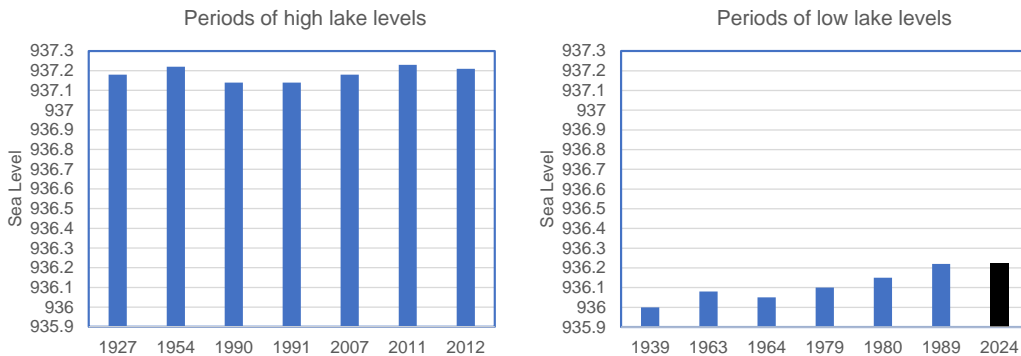
The annual waste water bill will remain unchanged at \$242.30.

The rate for garbage pickup will increase by \$2.57 to \$137.63.

The rate for recycling remains unchanged at \$46.80. Last year the bill was \$15.60 as the billing period was adjusted to 4 months due to service disruptions in 2023.

Lake Water Level

Lake levels this year are amongst the lowest levels recorded in the last 100 years. There have been several years on record with similar or lower levels with 1939 being the lowest at 22 centimeters below where the lake is today. The lower lake level patterns are closely linked to recorded periods of drought. Today’s pattern is similar in that the region is experiencing a long-term drought.



The Town of Sylvan Lake has proposed a project that would install and license up to 5 new water source wells in the area to supply their North Reservoir. Sylvan Lake is growing, and there is a need for more water to meet the demands of population growth. The town has hired ISL Engineering and Land Services to help identify new well locations, assist and supervise well drilling, installation, and connection to the town water system. The Summer Villages on Sylvan Lake wrote a letter of concern to the town regarding the potential impact on private wells, water levels, and the overall watershed. The town responded to say that the project has undergone rigorous hydrogeological assessments to ensure that the wells, accessing the deep

aquifers, are sustainable and will not interfere with surface water resources, including Sylvan Lake and that groundwater extraction from the aquifers supplying the municipal wells will not directly influence lake levels. Comprehensive hydrogeological assessments have already been and will be conducted following well drilling to evaluate the aquifer's capacity, recharge rates, and potential impacts on nearby wells. These studies, along with ongoing groundwater monitoring, provide detailed data on the aquifer's health and any potential impacts, which align with the intent of Section 8.2.7 of the IDP. The Electrical Resistivity Tomography (ERT) and observation wells will further verify that the aquifers are not directly connected to Sylvan Lake, ensuring no significant environmental risk.

In November, the Intermunicipal Planning Committee representing the eight municipalities in our watershed directed administration to send a letter to the Sylvan Lake Water/Wastewater Commission responsible to provide Water and Wastewater utilities asking them to move forward with doing the work required to provide water studies and further work with the Town of Sylvan Lake to ensure water will be available. We will continue to advocate that a water utility be brought in to meet the need of increased population growth in the region.

Land Use Bylaw Rewrite

A land use bylaw's primary purpose is to regulate and control how land can be developed and used within a municipality by dividing land into different districts and specifying the permitted uses and development standards for each. This ensures orderly and compatible development while minimizing negative impacts on neighboring properties. Essentially, it dictates what can be built and where on a parcel of land within our community.

Earlier this year, the Summer Village of Birchcliff Council engaged Municipal Planning Services (MPS) to assist Administration with a review of the Summer Village's current Land Use Bylaw (LUB). The purpose of this work is to provide better clarity making it easier for residents and developers to use and to ensure development is in keeping with our Vision.

We have made a few directional changes that align more closely to the Village vision;

Nestled along the northern shore of Alberta's premier lake, Birchcliff stands as a beacon of lake community living. Here, safety is paramount, ensuring peace of mind for all who call this place home. Residents find comfort in a welcoming, inclusive, diverse, and progressive environment. Birchcliff's character is defined by its quaint country lanes set within the trees and natural areas, flanked by a natural shoreline. Woven throughout the landscape are carefully groomed trails and pathways. Birchcliff environmental stewardship is upheld by residents' reverence for surrounding natural beauty. Every aspect of Sylvan Lake and its watershed, from lake health and water quality to wildlife and natural habitat, is cherished and protected. Birchcliff is more than just a place to reside, this is home, where the spirit of the community thrives and where people matter.

Birchcliff hosted an open house on the Land Use Bylaw project online on December 10th and in-person on December 11th. If you missed those events, please find the video recap link to the YouTube video at www.sylvansummervillages.ca/bc-land-use-bylaw-rewrite.html. Your feedback has and continues to help refine our LUB. Your comments regarding the bylaw can be sent to khubbard@sylvansummervillages.ca.

Ice Huts

To protect the health of Alberta's waterbodies, encourage stewardship, and promote conservation, anglers using ice shelters (huts) are now required to label their shelter if they are leaving it on the ice for longer than 24 hours. Label it in a contrasting color with text 2.5 cm or taller with the following information:

- Your Wildlife Identification Number (WIN), or
- Your name and telephone number

Fires on the Ice

Alberta municipalities are advocating for the use of fire pits rather than allowing fires directly on the ice. This measure would not only enhance safety but also contribute to preserving the pristine condition of our lake. Please participate in the "Take It Off Program" where there is no trace left on the ice when you leave, including burnt material that will pollute the lake upon spring thaw and can be a danger to persons engaged in water sports.

Weekly Email Notifications

Signing up for weekly web update email notifications will keep you up to date on pertinent information within our municipality, and to provide us with a tool for communicating effectively in the event of an emergency.

On behalf of Council and Administration, enjoy the rest of the winter keep safe and stay healthy.

Roger Dufresne
403 404 6684

roger.gj.dufresne@gmail.com

Garbage & Recycling

Recycle Only

Garbage Only

Birchcliff Garbage & Recycling Schedule 2025

Pick up times may vary; please place your container out by 7 am to ensure pick up.

January						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
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