

Summer Village of Birchcliff

Winter 2021 Newsletter



Greetings from Council and Administration.

This winter has definitely seen a lot more activity in our village and on the lake as people look for more ways to take in outdoor activities and trade in warm weather travel plans for winter recreation at the lake.

Council is committed to protecting our village values and improving community and quality of life while protecting the environment and your investment. This newsletter provides an update on the 2021 budget and 3 year operating plan, our new administrative offices, by-law updates, a reminder on ice huts and key dates for the 2021 Birchcliff Municipal Elections.

2021 Municipal Budget and 3 Year Operating Plan

Overview

Council approved the 2021 budget and 3 year operating plan in December. At the time of preparing the budget, our operating expenses were in line with the forecast with a solid run rate going into 2021. A key objective going into the plan was to keep residential tax increases at a minimum as the Covid pandemic and pull back in the economy has put financial pressure on too many of our residents. Assumptions used to inform the budget and plan included a 2% inflation rate on expense items and a 1.2% residential assessment growth rate for new and redevelopments.

Provincial Charges and Municipal Expense

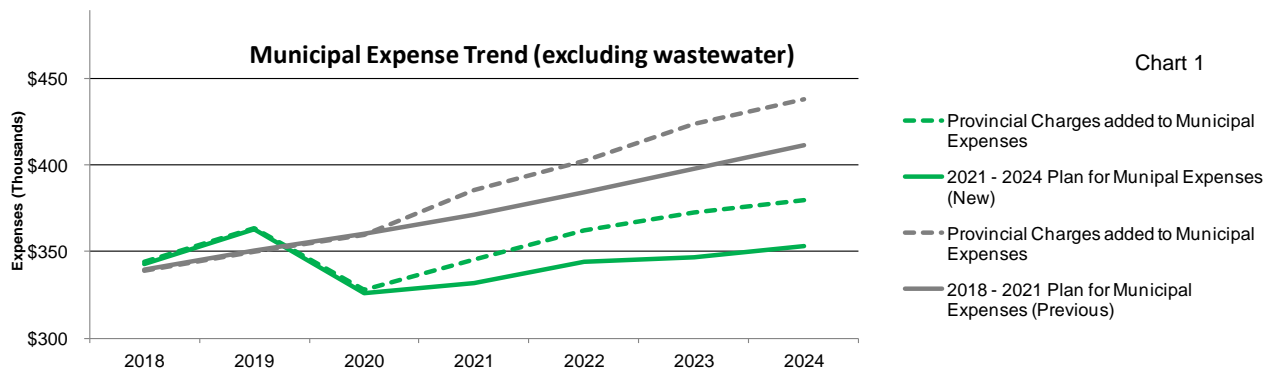
In 2016 the province added Family and Community Support Services charges to municipalities and in 2019, the province announced it would transfer RCMP service charges onto municipalities. These charges increase substantially in 2021, 2022 and 2023 and have a direct impact on municipal expenses and your property tax bill. As an example in 2021, the download from the province will increase to \$14,067 representing 4.07% of municipal expenses. The provincial charges along with inflation and assessment growth will increase total expenses by 5.37% in 2021 as the following table shows.

table 1	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
FCSS	\$ 800	\$ 800	\$ 701	\$ 701	\$ 2,140	\$ 2,104	\$ 2,104	\$ 2,146	\$ 2,189
RCMP Services						\$ 11,963	\$ 15,939	\$ 23,929	\$ 23,927
Total Charges	<u>\$ 800</u>	<u>\$ 800</u>	<u>\$ 701</u>	<u>\$ 701</u>	<u>\$ 2,140</u>	<u>\$ 14,067</u>	<u>\$ 18,043</u>	<u>\$ 26,075</u>	<u>\$ 26,116</u>
% of expenses	0.29%	0.27%	0.20%	0.19%	0.65%	4.07%	4.98%	7.00%	6.88%
Change Year over Year	1.29%	6.44%	17.12%	5.79%	-9.81%	5.37%	4.78%	2.90%	1.86%

Expense Trend (excluding wastewater)

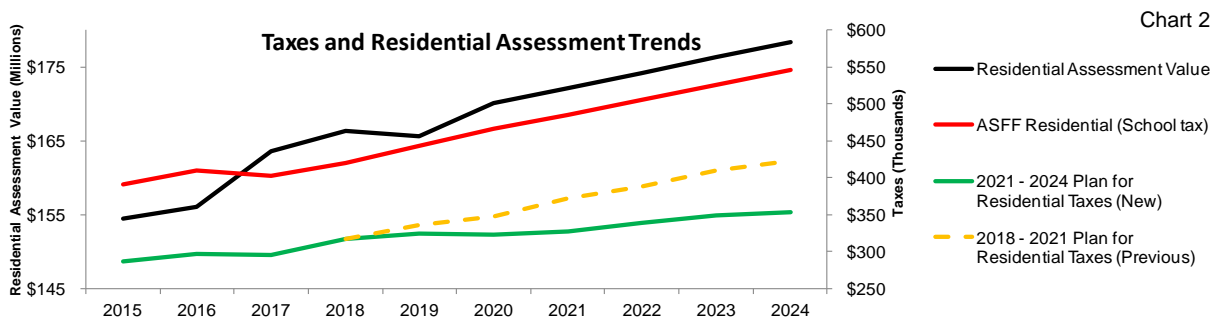
2020 was a pivotal year as operating expenses were reduced by 9.81% as per forecast and noted in table 1. This reduction resulted in a 0% municipal tax increase and eliminated our dependency on bank reserves to subsidize operations. The changes implemented in 2020 will have a favorable impact on municipal reserves and your municipal tax bills. See Table 2, Chart 1.

table 2	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
2021 plan compared to 2018 plan	-8.86%	-10.34%	-10.02%	-12.10%	-13.32%



Taxes

Municipal taxes are collected from residents to pay for municipal operating expenses and represent the majority share (90%) of total revenue. Other sources of income include the MSI operations grant funding (province), return on investments, development charges, fines, and transfers from reserves (if required). Municipal taxes are trending favorably to the Alberta School Foundation Fund, Residential Assessment Values and the previous 2018-2021 Plan. See Chart 2.



2021 – 2024 Wastewater Budget

Wastewater revenue and expenses are budgeted at the same time as municipal operations and is largely driven by the Sylvan Lake Regional Wastewater Commission budget and business plan. Expenses are paid for from your annual utility bill and our wastewater reserves. Wastewater operational costs fell by 10% in 2020 and are forecasted to fall by an additional 5% in 2021. These reductions have eliminated our reliance on wastewater reserves (\$21,000 in 2019 and \$11,000 in 2020) several years ahead of plan.

The 2019 Sylvan Lake Regional Wastewater Business Plan harmonizes transmission rates across the eight member communities in 2024 reducing our wastewater transmission expenses by about 30%. These savings will be reflected in your sewer bill at that time.

New Administrative Offices

In October 2020, the Summer Villages (Birchcliff, Sunbreaker Cove, Half Moon Bay, Norglenwold and Jarvis Bay) purchased the Regency Flooring building at #2 Erickson Drive, Sylvan Lake, located next to Tim Horton's just off Highway 20. This new location is 5,000 square feet on one level and will provide ample parking, handicap access, more space for meetings, a public gallery as well as more space for Administration. The plan is to move to this new location in the spring of 2021, following building renovations and rebranding for administration. As part of the Joint Services Agreement, each of villages will have a 20% equity share in the new building. Jarvis Bay provided the MSI grant funding to purchase the building while Norglenwold provided the MSI grant funding to renovate. The current office will be sold and may be rented out until such time as a sale takes place.

Intermunicipal Development Plan (IDP) Update

As mentioned in the summer update, the IDP was created by the eight municipalities (Villages of Birchcliff, Jarvis Bay, Norglenwold, Half Moon Bay, Sunbreaker Cove, the Town of Sylvan Lake, and the Counties of Lacombe and Red Deer) that border the lake and share the Sylvan Lake watershed. The IDP received its final reading by council in January. The IDP has been posted to the Birchcliff website.

Bylaws and Policy Updates

Reserves, Parks and Pathways Bylaw

As we continue to develop pathways and trails in our village, it will be important to protect the key features of those spaces. The purpose of this bylaw is to protect our reserves, parks and pathways as a follow up from the 2017 Forest Management Strategy and the Open Space Plan. First reading was given in January.



Off Highway and Maintenance Vehicle Bylaw

The intent of this bylaw is to provide our residents with legal access to the roadway for insured and licensed off road vehicles. Currently, without this bylaw, anyone using the roadway is subject to fines and penalties as per the Highway Traffic Act. First reading was given in January.

Community Pier Policy

Council plans to give approval to the necessary policy and access agreements at the February Council meeting in preparation for the 2021 open water season. Zoom Meetings will be held with eligible residents in March.

Gated Community Policy

Policy was adopted by council in January and has been posted to the Birchcliff website.

Memorial Benches Policy

The Memorial Bench Program provides an opportunity to remember loved ones who have passed and to beautify our open spaces with donations from the public. The policy was adopted in January and can be found on the Birchcliff website.

Snow Removal Policy

Snow clearing will first be completed along Birchcliff Road from RR 14 through to the west end of Birchcliff. Operators will then proceed to clear snow in Sunbreaker Cove. Once completing snow clearing in Sunbreaker Cove the snow removal contractor will return to Birchcliff and clear all remaining roads and closes. The previous policy cleared the road from RR 14 through to RR 15 leaving the west end to the return end of the process. The change was implemented in December with the policy was adopted in January.

Ice Huts

A provision has been added to the Alberta Guide to Sport fishing Regulations stating that no person shall leave an ice fishing shelter unattended on ice-covered water, unless that person's wildlife identification number and/or their name, address and telephone number are clearly and permanently marked on the outside surface of the shelter. Alberta Environment and Parks (AEP) will continue to seek voluntary compliance for the current 2020-21 ice fishing season. In situations where voluntary compliance is not attained, AEP may use enforcement tools under section 181 of the Environmental Protection and Enhancement Act, prohibiting the deposit of waste on ice or in water. Our community will continue to advocate, alongside our partners around the lake, for the success of the "Take it Off" program goal of having zero ice huts left on the lake come the end of the ice fishing season. Volunteers of the committee will be circulating this winter season to remind enthusiasts of the current regulations and advertising will consist of pamphlets dropped off at ice hut locations as well as media coverage such as radio advertising.

2021 Elections

Council passed the following resolutions in January;

- Nomination Day: Saturday, June 5, 2021, from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.
- Advanced Poll: Saturday, June 26, 2021, from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.
- Election Day: Saturday, July 3, 2021, from 10:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m.

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