

Reeve's Report for 2008

Council continues its support for fire and medical emergencies in the county. After seven years we have almost completed replacing our fire pumper trucks for each of the fire districts. These new trucks cost almost \$450,000 when they are fully outfitted with hoses and additional equipment. This past year council approved support for the Medical Co-responder program. Numerous volunteer fire fighters have now completed an 80 hour course that allows them to assist paramedics at incidents. As well, council decided to show their appreciation for everyone completing this course by presenting them with a cheque for \$500 at the Cypress County Award Banquet. All firefighters that completed an advanced MFPA 1001 course that takes 400 hours of instruction to complete would receive \$1000. Again this year, Cypress County presented Medic Air with a cheque for \$75,000 to help with the operating cost of the medical emergency helicopter. In 2008, we implemented a Deputy Fire Chief position during the summer months and have renewed this position for 2009. Last year we implemented a fire burn permit system, so if you are planning on doing some burning, call the office for a permit - they are free. The big wind storm of July caused much damage and the county was busy helping with clean up throughout the area. We were instrumental in getting the province to help offset some of the costs incurred by residents.

Our road and utility department continues with improvements in our hamlets. One of our challenges in this area is the increase in provincial and federal standards. We completed a water treatment plant in Hilda as well as replaced water lines in Hilda and Schuler. Council approved a new water treatment plant in Irvine and we are hoping to upgrade the water in Walsh. We continue improving our road network with more oiled and paved roads. This past year we completed three miles of paving on the Eagle Butte Road at a cost of over \$3,000,000. This year we increased the cost for oiling a 200 metre strip in front of rural residences. The cost to the County to lay the oil down has increased to \$16,000 and council felt that it was time to increase the fee from \$200 a year to \$400. Council has undertaken a couple of pilot projects for recycling. Volume, distance and markets for recycled material are a major challenge for the County in order to provide recycling at a reasonable cost.

The Inter-municipal Development Plan continued through 2008. We are hoping that this agreement between Medicine Hat, Redcliff and ourselves will be ratified this year. This process has taken over three years, we have had numerous meetings, open houses and interviews with landowners. Its purpose is to establish a regional framework for attracting economic opportunities and managing land use, subdivision and development around Medicine Hat and Redcliff.

Our interest income from our investments have reduced due to the uncertain economic times but council held the mill rate the same as it has been for the last 25 years. At our last meeting council again voted to leave the mill rate unchanged for 2009. If your taxes increased, it is due to an increase in the assessment of your property. Residential and farmland only pays 16% of the tax collected. Plans for remodelling the office are complete and have gone to tender. If they come in on budget we will start construction this summer.

The County is having an annual meeting at the county office on June 2 at 7 pm. Stop by for a coffee - council and staff will be there to answer your questions.

Respectfully submitted,
George Russill, Reeve