

Council approves 2018 budget

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Innisfail Town Council on Monday approved the Town's 2018 operating and capital budgets, setting the tone for an optimistic, yet responsible, fiscal year. The operating budget of \$20,892,332 and capital budget of \$5,084,566 were accompanied by a zero per cent tax rate increase. Proposed budgets for 2019 and 2020 were also adopted.

Budget Highlights

Assessment

Residential and commercial tax assessments for 2018 are estimated to increase by 0.65 per cent and 0.35 per cent, respectively. Council, recognizing the challenges presented by the current economy, is proposing a zero per cent tax rate increase, meaning citizens for the most part would see little to no change on their tax bills (depending on assessment increases/decreases). When final assessment numbers are known and provincial school requisitions have been received, the Tax Rate Bylaw will come to Council for approval in spring.

Utility Rates

Water rates will increase from \$2.20 per cubic metre to \$2.25 per cubic metre, reflecting an increase of the same amount applied by the Mountain View Regional Water Commission. The water flat rate will remain unchanged at \$10 per metered site.

Wastewater (sewer) rates will increase from \$3.05 per cubic metre to \$3.15 per cubic metre, again corresponding with an increase of the same amount applied by the South Red Deer Regional Wastewater Commission. The wastewater flat rate, however, will decrease from \$15 per metered site to \$10 per metered site.

Solid waste (garbage) rates will increase from \$17 per month to \$18 per month, and recycling will remain the same at \$5 per month. Administration in 2018 will continue to explore the viability of moving toward an automated garbage collection system, with a view for any potential action to occur in 2019.

Staffing

Deliberations for the 2018 budget generated conversations around staffing levels and the need for additional staff in a number of areas. Accordingly, new positions will be considered in FCSS (Family and Community Support Services), health and safety, and aquatics.

Capital Budget

The following items were approved in the 2018 capital budget:

1. Reconstruction of 49A Avenue and 41 Street - **\$2,625,000**
2. Third phase of sewage lagoon reclamation - **\$935,000**
3. Sewer and manhole relining - **\$500,000**
4. Road grader - **\$450,000**
5. Ice resurfacer - **\$115,000**
6. Curling rink header trench - **\$100,000**

Reserves

The Town's reserves will see the addition of \$1,517,535 from the 2018 operating budget, and the withdrawal of \$1,895,916 for 2018 capital items. The resulting balance will be \$13,758,427.

"The 2018 budget represents a sensible approach to maintaining and expanding service levels in the pursuit of steady, stable growth. We're pleased to be able to achieve this in the absence of raising taxes, and through careful planning have endeavoured to ease the burden of a still-challenging economy."

— Mayor Jim Romane

-30-

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