MEDIA RELEASE

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Innisfail's 2024 budget builds for the future with modest rate increase

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
December 11, 2023

On Monday, December 11, 2023, Innisfail Town Council approved the Town's 2024 operating and capital budgets.

The 2024 budget sees a modest 2.8% increase, less than the increases passed in many other Alberta communities. After no increase in tax rates for several years, followed by a 4% increase in 2023, this increase should equate to less than $8 extra each month on the municipal tax portion of each resident's bill (before school taxes are added).

Council approved an operating budget of $27,780,667 and a capital budget of $9,728,000, with no funds allocated to contingency.

The operating budget reflects the increased costs associated with the continued rise in inflation rates. Despite this challenge, the 2024 budget ensures the continued delivery of essential core services. The tax rate increase allows the Town to direct funds into facility reserves, advancing the plan for the future development of a new recreation facility.

The capital budget includes upgrades and repairs to infrastructure and facilities, new initiatives including projects to address housing issues, and a plan for a new pedestrian crossing at the intersection of Highway 54 and 42 Street. Most notable, however, is the development of a Town-owned solar farm in the Southwest industrial area. Costs for this project will be offset by a debenture which is expected to be repaid using the revenues generated by the facility once the project is complete.

The Town will receive additional funding from different levels of government. Provincial grant totals for the Town's capital projects in 2024 are $1,200,000, with federal contributions totalling $490,000. Concerns still remain over the lack of infrastructure funding provided to communities from higher levels of government.

Despite these ongoing challenges, the Town remains in a financially strong position. Council continues to collectively share a clear vision for the future, providing administration with the tools to ensure the long-term viability of the community.

Utility Rates

Innisfail has water rates that are comparable to those in many other communities in central Alberta, mainly because the town is connected to regional water and wastewater systems.

The Town continues to build reserves, intended to ensure residents have a properly-functioning water delivery system well into the future. Newer water and wastewater lines benefit all residents by reducing costly emergency repairs and minimizing the down time caused by older, failing infrastructure.

The Town cannot provide services at a deficit. Rate increases in 2024 help to cover the increased delivery costs incurred by the Town. Water rates will increase this year from $2.86 to $3.01 per cubic metre. This increase is in part due to an $.08 increase in the rate charged to the Town by the Mountain View Regional Water Commission, the supplier of the town's water.

Wastewater (sewer) rates will increase from $3.80 per cubic metre to $4.00 per cubic metre. This $.20 increase partially reflects a $.05 increase in rates charged by the South Red Deer Regional Wastewater Commission. The monthly wastewater flat rate will also increase from $10 to $12 at each metered site.

2024 Capital Projects

Provincial and federal contributions to municipal projects continue to be a concern, as grant money provided to the Town remains lower than the historical average. Despite this, council approved a capital projects budget that continues to address the town's aging infrastructure. Council also chose to focus on key projects aligned with their strategic priorities identified earlier in 2023. The capital projects included in the 2024 budget are listed below (budgeted project amount in parenthesis):

- Solar Farm development ($4,000,000)
- 2024 Surface Improvements ($1,520,000)
- Construction of 4 Units, Napoleon Meadows ($1,500,000)
- Sanitary Force Main 42 Avenue and 51 Street ($1,000,000)
- New Pickup Trucks ($445,000)
- Hwy 54 Pedestrian Crossing ($175,000)
- Arena Lobby Flooring and Partition ($170,000)
- SW Residential Development Design ($150,000)
- Arena Sound System ($125,000)
- Skid Steer ($100,000)
- Water Truck ($100,000)
- Parks Shop Radiant Heater Replacement ($70,000)
- Town Office Windows ($50,000)
- Make Up Air Unit Replacement ($45,000)
- Alarm Upgrades ($38,000)
- Operations Yard Electrical Upgrades ($35,000)
- Reservoir 3 Radiant Heater Replacement ($30,000)
- Town Office Committee Room Renovation ($30,000)
- New Floor Cleaning Machines ($25,000)
- Combi Tool ($22,000)
- Parks Shop Water Heater Replacement ($20,000)
- Side-by-Side ($18,000)
- Snow Blade Attachment ($15,000)
- CPO Radios ($15,000)
- Fire Hall Sanitary Venting ($10,000)
- Curling Rink Mechanical Slab Repair ($10,000)
- LLC Hot Water Tank ($10,000)

The 2024 capital budget reflects Council's ability to balance the community's current needs while attempting to address the issues that will be faced by future generations. The overall 2024 budget is mindful of this legacy.

"In the fall of 2023, Council reviewed the priorities identified in our Strategic Plan. The budget that has been approved supports these priorities, as well as ensuring the Town of Innisfail continues to deliver the excellent services the community expects.

We have witnessed one of the highest inflationary periods in decades which has been challenging, but Innisfail is experiencing assessment growth, increased economic activity that includes business expansion and new builds, and interest from residential developers. Administration and council are always looking for innovative ways to seek return on invested capital through projects such as the new industrial park and solar project that increase our revenues, thereby lessening the tax burden on residents and businesses.

We are committed to a continued focus on housing, economic development, maintaining necessary infrastructure upgrades, management of reserves aligned with our asset management plan, recreation, and community funding, to support the great quality of life we enjoy in Innisfail."

— Mayor Jean Barclay

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For more information, contact:

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