

COUNTY CONNECTIONS

SUMMER 2011



**Planning & Development
Special**

**Erskine
Concept Plan P.6**

**2011 Tax
Rate
P. 18**

TAXES DUE!

OCTOBER 31ST, 2011

There are many different ways that you can pay your property taxes and accounts receivable in the County of Stettler. We accept payments by cash, cheque, visa, mastercard, debit card, online banking or at most major financial institutions. If you are paying your taxes or accounts receivable online please ensure that you are paying them to the County of Stettler No. 6. For accounts receivable, use your customer number and for taxes use either your roll number or owner number. This will assist us with applying the payment to the appropriate balance. If you cannot find our name in the list of payees on your online banking please contact the County office and we will be happy to assist you.

If you are paying bills online the following financial institutes accept County of Stettler payments:



If your financial institute does not have the County listed for accepting payment, please contact our office and we will work to get them added.

NEW WEBPAGES!

The Planning and Development department recently overhauled its web pages on the County of Stettler website at www.stettlercounty.ca. Here you will find most if not all of the information that you need to consider in your planning and development endeavours. We have separate pages for the subdivision process, the development permit process, Safety Codes, approaches and culverts, relevant application forms, rural addressing and all the relevant bylaws, policies and plans. There are also pages with other relevant information that you may want to know, such as Real Property Reports, the Fee Schedule, the site inspection schedule, the subdivision and development appeal process, the authorities for subdivision and development, development setbacks and commercial and industrial design guidelines. We also have a page for "What's new in Planning and Development?". We even have a front page <http://www.stettlercounty.ca/county-services/planning-and-development> to help you understand our role and mandate and the core values of our service to you: professionalism, productivity and respect.

Please check out our new web pages and if you have trouble finding what you are looking for, send us an email or call during office hours and we will be happy to help.

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How do we determine what your property is worth? What increases its value? What if you don't agree? All of these questions are answered and much more!

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2011 TAXES

Council has set the tax rate for 2011. They have carefully considered the budget, our operations requirements and saving for the future - and have settled on a very responsible and conservative tax rate.



County Connections
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I would love nothing more than to meet with each and every ratepayer, buy them a coffee and talk with them about their roads, their tax dollars and their livelihoods. Its the part of the job I enjoy the most, and also feel is the most important. So, consider this column a way for me to have that coffee with you. (Although ... if I do meet you on the street ... I'll still buy you a cup!)

I guess one of the most common complaints that I have received as a councillor is in regards to roads. Most of the people who bring forward concerns apologize for complaining, but I always thank them. When we hear the complaints, we can address the problem immediately. There are about 2700 km of roads in the County of Stettler and 10 grader beats (soon to be increased thanks to your feedback). Grading the roads takes each grader between 17 and 19 days depending on weather . The rainfall last summer put both grading and our graveling program behind. The rejuvenation program, which is essentially shoulder pulling and restoring a crown to the road was also put behind last summer. However, this years road program will see last years graveling addressed and this years program completed due to some adjustments operations has made. We have contracted some stockpiling to have our gravel inventory closer and have also contracted some graveling as well. The contract with the road reshaping contractor was done and we have let that contract go. This will mean that the 20 or 30 km that would have been rejuvenated will not have to be graveled twice. Our own County forces will also be graveling and fixing trouble spots in roads around the County.

And Taxes. This year the council has decided to raise the taxes on farm land by 1 mill. This will increase taxes by about \$150,000 - half of which will go into reserves for maintenance of bridges and the other half will go directly to road maintenance to address some of the road deterioration from heavy vehicles on our county roads. This increase will be slight to ratepayers but it will allow some extra work to be done where it's needed.

Another topic no doubt discussed over coffee by County ratepayers is conventions. When I was first elected I must admit I was also skeptical about the worth of conventions but I have found them very helpful in many aspects of municipal business. Topics from road construction, water and waste water lines, waste management, fire protection to topics such as protective services, annexation, noxious weeds, and many others are discussed in sessions and in the hallways by people from all across Alberta and in the case of the recent FCM convention, people from all across Canada. It is rare to come from one of these conventions without a few good ideas for our own county. Our administration also does business with credit cards that collect air miles. This allows the councillors and staff to travel to out of province conventions and to have their partners accompany them for no more cost than a convention in Edmonton or Calgary.

I have found, in talking to my neighbors in the County of Stettler, that they have many good ideas concerning road building and maintenance, involvement in local projects, drainage, brushing, hamlet improvement and in fact all County business and I encourage them to let council and administration hear their ideas.

ENCROACHMENTS

INTO BUFFALO LAKE ENVIRONMENTAL RESERVES

As you are aware the Municipal and Environmental Reserves (ER) in the Buffalo Lake area are County property and are there for the enjoyment of residents of the lake communities and the general public, including for the purpose of access to the shoreline. In the summer of 2010 the County surveyed the boundaries of all ER parcels in Scenic Sands, Abbey Road, Buffalo Sands, Buffalo Lake Meadows and Buffalo View Estates. Bright orange survey markers were staked at every deflection point along the boundary, both on the lake side where it abuts the provincial water management right-of-way and on the land side where it abuts private properties. These stakes are identified with a tag that states "Alberta Survey Marker Do Not Remove" – it is in fact unlawful to remove or relocate these stakes.

The survey confirmed that a number of private properties have improvements upon them that encroach into the ER. The encroachments include things such as a property fence that was incorrectly placed, a deck built over the ER boundary, a fire pit, a gazebo, a shed, a retaining wall, etc. placed onto the ER. In due course a report will be presented to County Council for information and direction on how the Council wants to proceed to remedy the encroachments. Then each landowner of those properties that encroach into the ER will be contacted with alternative options for remedies.

Where the encroachment is an insignificant matter such as a property fence that was slightly placed into the Environmental Reserve, the County will find a way to address the situation in a manner that is the least disruptive to the landowner. Where it is a shed, fire pit or other moveable structure that is illegally placed on the Environmental Reserve, the County will work with the landowner to have these structures moved off of the Environmental Reserve. Where the encroachment is more serious, such as a deck or retaining wall having been built onto the Environmental Reserve, the County will consider other available options to have the situation corrected.

If you currently have a valid license agreement with the County to occupy Municipal or Environmental

Reserves, you may continue with the occupancy under that agreement until it expires. Please note that the County will not entertain any new requests for license agreements to occupy Municipal or Environmental Reserves or requests to extend existing agreements.

PLEASE TAKE NOTE that, in order to prevent future encroachments onto ER, the County's Municipal Planning Commission directed Administration to strictly enforce the Municipal Government Act provisions regarding the use of Environmental Reserve, namely that it must remain in its natural state or be used as a public park. These provisions prohibit any person from placing any structure on the ER without municipal approval and from cutting down trees (healthy or deadfall) on ER. The County is aware of one or more situations where the lot owner cut down trees on ER to clear a space and placed a fire pit, and is in the process of taking the appropriate action to have these corrected.

Another step that Administration has taken to prevent future encroachments onto MR or ER is to require, as a condition of a development permit, a Real Property Report at the foundation stage of any development that occurs adjacent to a MR or ER boundary.

Some of the lake communities have a restrictive covenant on their land titles that prohibits the cutting of trees on the private lot and/or the MR and ER, or the placement of structures within a pre-determined setback distance from the MR and ER boundaries. You should check your land title to see if this applies to you. The County does not enforce the provisions of a Restrictive Covenant as those were imposed by the developer for the benefit of landowners. Either the developer or one or more landowners may take legal action against landowners in their subdivision that do not comply with these provisions.

If you have any personal property items on Municipal or Environmental Reserves, please remove them before you return to your home at the end of the summer. Any items remaining within Municipal Reserve or Environmental Reserve lands will be removed by the

cont. p.6

cont. from p.5

County and will become the property of the County, pursuant to Section 610 of the Municipal Government Act (see extract below).

For further information, please contact the County's Planning & Development Department at 403-742-4441.

Lost or unclaimed property

610 (1) *Lost or unclaimed property coming into the possession of a municipality must be retained for at least 30 days from the date it comes into possession of the municipality unless it is unsafe, unsanitary or perishable, in which case it may be disposed of at any time.*

(2) *If property is not claimed within 30 days, it becomes the property of the municipality and the municipality may dispose of the property by public auction or as the council directs.*

(3) *The purchaser of lost or unclaimed property is the absolute owner of it.*

(4) *A prior owner of lost or unclaimed property is entitled to the proceeds of the sale less all expenses incurred by the municipality if the prior owner makes a claim to the municipality within 90 days after the date of the sale.*

(5) *If the sale proceeds are not claimed within 90 days from the date of sale, the rights of any prior owner to the sale proceeds are extinguished and the sale proceeds belong to the municipality.*

RSA 2000

Section 610 Chapter M-26

MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT ACT



Do NOT Start a Non-Agricultural Development WITHOUT a Permit

At a recent meeting of the Municipal Planning Commission the County's Development Officers were instructed to strictly enforce the Land Use Bylaw, specifically the provision that requires anyone who intends to undertake a non-agricultural development in the County to first obtain a development permit. Sometimes a person applies for a development permit and then starts construction before the development permit is issued. This is not any different than starting construction without the benefit of a development permit. Recently the Development Authority has made applicants aware of this situation, and from now on the instruction is clear to impose the appropriate penalties. The County's Fee Bylaw states a penalty of \$1,000 for residential development and \$2,000 for commercial development that is started without the benefit of a development permit under the Land Use Bylaw. The penalty for starting development without the benefit of a Building Permit under the Safety Codes Act is a double fee.

The County does not want to penalize anyone. Instead we want to work with people to help them obtain the permits they need in order to comply with municipal, provincial and federal regulations. We want you to view us as your agent, contact, information desk or any other helpful resource in all your planning and development endeavours. Please do not view us as your enemy.

For further information, please contact the County's Planning & Development Department at 403-742-4441.



ERSKINE CONCEPT PLAN

Your Community Your Future

With a population of over 350 people and a strategic location as a Gateway to Buffalo Lake, Erskine is an important hamlet within the County of Stettler. Together with its close proximity to the Town of Stettler and the rising desire of people to live in close knit communities, continued growth and development in the hamlet can be expected. This creates the need for an effective growth plan to determine how and where development will take place. In a proactive effort to ensure the community continues to meet the needs of residents, the County of Stettler has partnered with Sandalack + Associates Inc. to develop a Concept Plan for Erskine. Once complete, this concept plan will provide guidance for future goals, actions and priorities within the hamlet.

In an effort to gain a full understanding of the specific characteristics, issues and opportunities available in Erskine, consultants will undertake a variety of tasks including, but not limited to:

- A review of historical and cultural resources,
- Public consultations,
- Environmental Inventory & Analysis,
- Agricultural patterns, uses and trends
- Infrastructure review – sanitary sewer, storm water and other utilities.

An Erskine Concept Plan would be incomplete without the participation of area residents to guide the process by sharing their thoughts, ideas and visions for the future of Erskine. In light of this, a workshop will be held as an opportunity for those living in and around Erskine to meet with the consultants as well as the County Councillors and Administration. This workshop will include a “walkabout” of Erskine and a hands-on meeting to gain valuable insight into the design of the Concept Plan. This initial workshop will be held on Wednesday, July 13, 2011 and will begin at 5:00 p.m. in the Erskine IOOF Hall. (See the ad on the back cover of this magazine!) As it is a well-known fact that everybody works best on a full stomach, beef on a bun and light refreshments will be provided.

Following the workshop, consultants will compile everything they have learned about the history and aspirations of Erskine residents into a single Concept Plan. This plan will be presented at an Open House to be held later this summer.

For further information, please contact the County’s Planning & Development Department at 403-742-4441.



I reside on the family farm Northwest of Erskine. For 25 years I had a small dairy and served both as a Delegate and Board of Director for Alpha Milk. I semi-retired to grain farming in 2003. On June 29, 2008, I married my wife Circun, and became an instant parent of three, Mary, David and Amanda. On August 29, 2009, we welcomed a fourth child, Isabella, into our busy fold. The ages of the children encompasses a fifteen year span – diapers to zits. Parenthood is great!

I am now in my third term and with time has come wisdom. Imagine running a 30 million dollar operation without history. Within my council position came many secondary boards, including County Agriculture Services chair, Alberta Provincial Agriculture Services, board of Central Alberta Economic Partnership, Buffalo Lake Management Team, Family Community Support Services and many others.

Condition of the roads with increasing traffic and loads have been front and centre with council and staff. It is near impossible to maintain a road built 50 years ago with elevating graders. Topsoil was buried in the road and cannot support the heavy and continuous traffic we have today.

I believe that there are three stages of roads. Newer roads need gravel and grading. Others may need some course 1.5” gravel worked in to increase the carrying capacity. The third type of road would need total rebuilding. This third option of providing a higher grade road would cost significantly more per mile, thus we must proceed in a prudent manner.

I look forward to discussing any questions or concerns you may have. I am eager to take your calls.

Councillor Joe Invites You ...

I have learned that patience is a virtue when it comes to County proceedings.

As an individual, if I want to go shopping I grab my keys and head to town. If I want to go shopping, and my wife Circun comes along, we need a little more lead time. If the children are also included, the preparation time goes up exponentially. Now take that to the County's prospective. Virtually everything involves more than one person making decisions. Sometimes actions go very quickly while other proceedings are very slow caused by regulations, manpower, ideal conflicts, budgets, weather and equipment.

The County of Stettler, and more pointedly, Erskine is on the cusp of a monumental change. The Council has authorized administration to purchase 16 acres of land on the east side of Erskine. This bare land will be part of the Erskine concept planning session set for July 13th. On this parcel, Erskine council is planning a 110,000 gallon reservoir and truck fill. This reservoir will give the NW part of the County water for fire fighting, agricultural usage and water distribution for both rural and Erskine proper (when enough residents ask for it).



So take some time, talk with your neighbors and bring your suggestions to the open house Concept Planning Session on July 13 at the Erskine IOOF hall.

ESSENTIALS OF PERMITTING



The Planning & Development Department is buzzing with activity during the long anticipated days of summer. Many folks have been anxiously awaiting the nice weather to commence a new development on their property. Before the hammers and nails start to fly there are a few steps you will need to take in order to facilitate the development approval process.

1. Submit your completed development permit application to the County of Stettler office in ample time before the expected start date:
 - If the proposed development is listed as a permitted use in your zoning district a site inspection will be conducted, providing the development complies with the County's land use bylaw and no issues are determined, a development permit will be issued within several days of the site inspection.
 - If the development is listed as a discretionary use in your zoning district a site inspection will be conducted and your application must be referred to the Municipal Planning Commission for review and approval. A report is prepared by administration and presented to the Municipal Planning Commission at the regularly scheduled meeting on the fourth Wednesday of each month. If the proposed development is approved by the Municipal Planning Commission a Notice of Decision is sent to all adjacent land owners and other affected parties as well as advertised in the local paper. A two week referral period enables anyone opposed to the decision to submit their appeal to the Subdivision and Development Appeal Board. If no appeals are received following the two week appeal period the development permit is issued.
2. Upon issuance of the development permit you may apply for a Building Permit. (Please note that it is the landowner's responsibility to comply with the Safety Code Act.)

Please refer to the check list below to ensure your building permit application is processed promptly and to avoid any unnecessary delays –

- A copy of your approved Development Permit.
- Two sets of building plans that include the following:
 - A site plan that shows the size, shape and position of the proposed building on the property. The distance from the building to the property lines, roads or streets and other buildings on the property must be shown on the site plan. The site plan must match the site plan that was approved in your Development Permit, including any variances to yard setbacks
 - A floor plan for each floor level that shows the size and use of all rooms and floor areas plus the floor joists, beams and column sizes and location.
 - Elevation drawings of each face of the building. Each elevation must show the size and position of each opening (windows and doors) and the finished ground level.
 - Cross-section that describes, with dimensions, every part of the building that appears in the cross-section. The foundation must be included in the cross-section.
 - Electrical information that shows the position of every light switch and electrical receptacle.
 - Mechanical information that describes the heating and ventilating systems in the building.

Professional involvement is required for construction methods that differ from what is prescribed in Part 9 (Housing and Small Buildings) of the Alberta Building Code. These construction methods must be designed by a professional engineer licensed to practice in Alberta. Some examples that require professional involvement are:

- Shallow foundations (foundations less than 1.2 m below grade or less than frost penetration, requires the seal and signature of an engineer on the plans).
 - Pile and grade beam foundations (seal and signature of an engineer on the plans).
 - Pile foundations (seal and signature of an engineer on the plans).
 - Preserved wood foundations (seal and signature of an engineer or architect on the plans).
 - Hydronic radiant floor heating systems (seal and signature of the engineer on the pre-engineered or custom engineered package).
 - Timber framing, post and beam and archrib construction (seal and signature of an engineer or architect on the plans).
3. Your building permit application will be forwarded to the County’s contracted inspection agency, IJD Inspections Inc., for review and approval by a building inspector. The issued copy of your permit will be returned to the County office and forwarded to you with a sign to be displayed at the construction site. Upon issuance of the building permit you are ready to begin your development project.
4. Please contact IJD Inspections to schedule inspections @ 1-877-617-8776 at the following construction stages:
- Foundation: Complete with weeping tile, washed gravel, damp proofing prior to backfill
 - Framing and Insulation: Framing of walls, floors and roof complete
 - Final Inspection: Project is complete
5. Electrical, Plumbing , Gas and Private Sewage Disposal System Permits can also be obtained at the County office or completed online @ www.stettlercounty.ca.

Please contact IJD Inspections at 1-877-617-8776 to schedule your inspections as required at the following stages (Please allow a minimum of 48 hours advance notice for inspections.):

- Electrical:** All wires are terminated in boxes and stapling of wires is complete.
All connections of mechanical systems are complete, breakers installed, service panel is labelled, gas and water lines bonded (if required)
- Plumbing:** (more than 5 fixtures only): Prior to covering
Job completion
- Gas:** Gas Company to perform air test
Job completion
- Private Sewage Disposal System:** Prior to covering

**The Planning and
Development Department
would be happy to
help you through the
Permitting Process.
Please call !!
403-742-4441**

Where's My GRADER?

Nothing is more visible in the County of Stettler than our roads, and we take their maintenance very seriously.

In the past few months, deficiencies and problem areas have arisen and we are currently using these examples as launching points for a renewed Maintenance Strategy on our road network.

Grader Beats

The issue with maintenance boils down to the miles of road we must maintain and the time it takes to do so. In order to address this issue, our solution is the addition of 2 more graders. These graders will be "roaming" the County, assisting operators in particularly wet or troublesome beats with their tasks. These 2 graders are not new, but rather were scheduled to be sold this year as part of our capital replacement program, but will instead remain in the fleet so that we can better address our roads. Constant, repetitive grading keeps the roads in better shape and allows our construction crews to focus on building better roads.

Council has authorized the tendering of 100 more miles of contract gravelling. Weather has slowed down our own crews considerably as they continue to work in the dry areas and with the commitment from council to complete to program this year these extra contracted miles will help our crews get back on schedule. Although these contracted miles are additional to the budget, in the current economic climate, contracting is turning out to be a cheaper option and we are getting some cost savings.

"Beat"
A grader "Beat" is the miles of road that one grader and operator is responsible for maintaining and grading in the work-time allotted.

Patch Truck

To deal with the small pieces of road that need a minor repair, we will now be implementing a patch truck which will be dedicated to patching small discrepancies in the road network. This will free up our regular construction crew to continue to work on the road construction projects outlined for 2011. We have in excess of 125 small areas to patch, and this crew will address these areas. While these crew members are not additional hires, they will be dedicated to the repair of immediate safety and quality issues.





BOOZE AND BOATS

A boat operator with a blood alcohol concentration of above .08 is 10 times more likely to be killed in a boating incident than a boater with a blood alcohol concentration of zero.

Many people who would never drive their cars after drinking alcohol don't think twice about combining boating and alcohol. The truth is, it's a lethal combination. The effect of alcohol varies from person to person; however, the impairment process starts with the first drink. Research indicates that boating stressors such as sun, wind, noise, glare, vibration and motion can heighten the effects of alcohol on your balance, vision, judgement and coordination. In a boating incident, alcohol slows reaction and reflexive response time, it can cause an inner ear disturbance, making it impossible to distinguish up from down when suddenly immersed in cool water, and it can accelerate the onset of hypothermia.

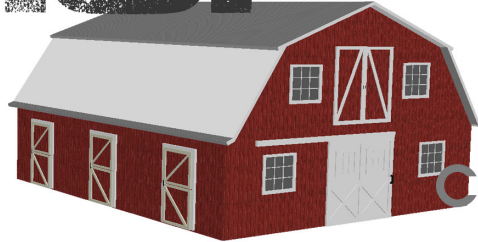
Boating while impaired is an offence under the Criminal Code of Canada. Upon conviction a person is liable for the following: first offence – a minimum fine of \$600; second offence – imprisonment for not less than 14 days; third and each subsequent offence – imprisonment for not less than 90 days. The maximum sentence for these offences may vary depending on provincial statutes.



BE RESPONSIBLE

- Wait until you are off the water before consuming alcohol.
- Don't allow a person who has consumed alcohol to operate a boat.
- Provide non-alcoholic beverages for boat operators and passengers. Non-alcoholic drinks ensure everyone is alert in case of emergency.
- Wear lifejackets or personal flotation devices (PFDs).
- Remember, alcohol is a factor in half of all boating fatalities.

BUILDING A "SHOP"



What's the Difference

between a

Farm Building

and a

Commercial Building?

Often a person will say "I am going to build a shop at my place". They could mean anything from an oversized garage to a barn or agricultural equipment storage shed or a storage shed for their business equipment. What does the Land Use Bylaw have to say about these structures?

Well, right off the bat I should say that the Land Use Bylaw does not recognize a building or a land use that can be called a "shop". The Land Use Bylaw provides two land use/building definitions that could accommodate what people mean when they say "shop".

Firstly, when the building is going to be used for agricultural purposes, the Land Use Bylaw classifies it as an "Agricultural Operation". This could be a hay shed, a livestock shelter, a barn, an equipment



shed, a farm produce stall (for direct sales or "U-Pick"), or any other structure or building that is directly associated with agriculture. The building must be set back 125 feet from the centerline of the road, and three feet from the side and rear property boundaries. You do not need to obtain a development permit under the Land Use Bylaw or a building permit under the Safety Codes Act for such

a building, provided that it is used for agricultural purposes and only the property owner has access to it (you do need to obtain electrical, plumbing and gas permits). When the purpose of the building changes, for example if you want to store your motor home and ATV's in it, you will need to obtain the appropriate permits.

Secondly, when the building is going to be used for residential convenience, the Land Use Bylaw classifies it as an "Ancillary Building". This could be a regular two or three car garage with some storage space, it could include a recreation room with a pool table. Or it could be a boat house, a garden shed, a tool shed or a gazebo. In just about every land use district that accommodates residential use, the bylaw provides for a maximum 1,500 ft² Ancillary Building as a permitted use, which means every property is entitled to it, and for a maximum 2,400 ft² Ancillary Building as a discretionary use, which means every property may ask permission for this and the neighbours may appeal the application. A 1,500 ft² Ancillary Building could measure 39 ft by 38 feet which is a large three car garage, and a 2,400 ft² Ancillary Building would have a 40 ft by 60 ft floor space, which would be a triple car garage with additional space for storage or recreation. Few people would need more than this area for residential convenience. If the building has a permanent foundation or is larger than 192 ft² (12 ft by 16 ft), you need a development permit and a Safety Codes building permit. Importantly, a development permit for a "Detached Ancillary Building" will only be issued if there already is a dwelling unit (a detached dwelling or manufactured

home) located on the property or if the landowner holds a valid development permit for such a dwelling unit on the property (i.e. the dwelling unit does not have to be built at the same time).

Thirdly, when the building is going to be used for commercial or employment purposes, the Land Use Bylaw classifies it as a “Contractor’s Business – Home Based”. This could be a building to store equipment and provide workspace related to a person’s employment, such as seed hauling or a gravel truck or it could be a workshop where a person repairs automobiles or for cabinetry, welding, etc. There is no maximum size for such a building. This is the type of building that the County’s Land Use Bylaw classifies



as a “shop”, and you need to obtain a development permit for it. You also have to comply with the Safety Codes Act by taking out a building permit for this building. The bigger the building, the more codes there are to meet, which could make the building more expensive. But for most buildings the additional cost of taking out a building permit would not be onerous – most engineered structures that you could buy from the UFA would come with the required engineering stamps and would meet the codes.

In the fourth place, when the building is going to be used as a granary, a fertilizer or chemical distribution depot, fuel depot or the servicing of agricultural equipment, the Land Use Bylaw classifies it as a “Agricultural Supply Depot”.

The last category of building that should be discussed here is “Value Added Agricultural Industry”. This land use category includes buildings like a cheese plant,

slaughterhouse, hemp fiberboard manufacturing plant, a meat-packing plant, or a seed cleaning plant. The requirement is that the activity must add value to a primary agricultural product.

What would happen if someone built an agricultural building (such as a barn) and later decides to use it as a welding shop for employment purposes, where two or three employees and perhaps some customers came in to work every day? In this instance the person would first have to obtain a development permit for a “Contractor’s Business – Home Based” and then comply with the Alberta Building Code. Also, even if the person did not obtain these approvals at some point in the future the County’s property tax assessors will come around and they will assess that building as a commercial building, with resulting higher property taxes. Depending on the circumstances the County may also have to issue a Stop Order on the further use of the building until the appropriate permits have been issued.

So, please remember that it is not always as simple as saying “I am going to build a shop at my place”. Please call the County’s Planning & Development Department at 403-742-4441 when you start to plan your “shop” and before you start construction or order a package building.

Development Setbacks

Please remember that you do not need a development permit for an agricultural operation as long as any structures such as a hay shed, granary, livestock shelter, barn and shelterbelt meet the 125 feet setback from the centerline of the road. For more information, please contact the County’s Planning & Development Department at 403-742-4441.

We have all seen, through recent events in Alberta, the devastation wildfires can cause to communities, buildings and families. It has been noted in many studies that 9 out of 10 wildfires could have been prevented with just a little more care and attention from each one of us. Here are some things you should be doing to prevent a wildfire disaster from hitting close to home.



Smoking

Smoking poses many fire hazards, but none more so than carelessly tossing a cigarette butt on the ground. Dry grass, dead leaves, and twigs on the ground can provide fuel for very fast-moving wildfires. Leaving cigarette lighters or matches lying around is almost an invitation to a curious child to play with fire.

- If you must smoke, do so outside.
- Make sure to put cigarettes out completely.
- Avoid using flowerpots as ashtrays. Peatmoss can ignite and cause a fire.
- Use large and deep ashtrays, partially filled with water.
- Remove debris and dry vegetation from your yard.
- Drink responsibly. Tobacco use and excessive alcohol consumption are contributing factors in many fires

Wildfires

9 OUT OF 10 WILDFIRES ARE PREVENTABLE.

IF NOT YOU, WHO?

Barbeques

Heat or flames from a barbeque can ignite nearby vegetation, wood, vinyl siding, paper towels and similar items. Keep barbeques a safe distance from anything combustible.

Gasoline

Vapours from gasoline can catch fire from a small spark. It is very unsafe to use gasoline on campfires or barbeques. Avoid smoking around gasoline, especially while re-fuelling. When dispensing gasoline into your recreational or yard utility vehicles, ensure there is proper ventilation and provisions for storage.

If ignited, vapours from one gallon of Gasoline can explode with the same force as

14

sticks of dynamite

Campfires

When visiting Alberta’s backcountry, campgrounds or in your own backyard, be safe around campfires. Even a small campfire has the potential to be a wildfire.

- OBEY ALL FIRE BANS
- Clear the area around your campfire of all debris to at least one meter
- Never use gasoline to start your campfire
- Use your campfire only for cooking or warmth
- Keep fires small and manageable
- Build your campfire downwind, away from tents or trailers
- Never leave your campfire unattended
- Keep a ready supply of water nearby
- Extinguish fire before leaving site. Let the fire burn down and soak the fire with water. Stir the ashes and soak again until extinguished. Test the campfire for heat before vacating.



Grassfires and Trash Burning

Outdoor burning can be dangerous at this time of year because vegetation is very dry and it burns easily. The County of Stettler has specific rules in place for burning stubble, grass and burn barrels so check with the County Office before proceeding with your burn. When burning, make sure all debris is cleared from within 3 meters of the burn barrel, or 30 meters from a controlled grass or stubble burn. Keep a rake, shovel and hose nearby and do NOT leave the fire until it is completely extinguished. Your burn barrel must be equipped with a screen to dissipate sparks. Failure to follow the municipalities guidelines and rules will result in a charges and fines.

Report all fires to the Fire Department by calling

911

Bottom Line is:

Common Sense will prevent wildfires. Let it start with you.

2011 Tax Rate

How Does Council Decide?



Each year, municipal councils determine the amount of money they need to operate their municipality. From this amount, the council then subtracts known revenues (ie. licenses, grants, and permits). The remainder is the amount of money the municipality needs to raise through property taxes in order to provide services for the year.

This revenue requirement is then used to calculate the tax rate. The tax rate is the percentage of assessed value at which each property is taxed in a municipality. The revenue requirement is divided by the assessment base (the total value of all assessed properties in the municipality). The tax rate calculation is expressed in the following formula:

$$\text{Revenue requirement} / \text{Assessment base} = \text{Tax rate}$$

The tax rate is applied to each individual property assessment using the following formula:

$$\text{Property assessment} \times \text{Tax rate} = \text{Taxes payable}$$

This formula means that the assessed value of the property in dollars is multiplied by the tax rate set by the municipality. The result is the amount of taxes to be paid for each assessed property.

If the council requires more revenue to run the municipality and the assessment base in the municipality has remained the same, the council will have to increase its tax rate to generate the additional revenue.

What Does That All MEAN For My Tax Bill?

We thought the best way to illustrate this would be to use an example.

Meet Rose and Poppy. They have a family home situated in a hamlet. The lot is standard sized lot that they have worked hard at landscaping and improving over the last three years. Their house is only 5 years old. The total value is \$250,000

Year	Residential Tax Rate	Value of Property	Municipal Tax Bill	School Tax	School Tax Bill	Total Taxes
2011	4.0099	\$250,000	\$1002.47	2.4167	\$604.17	\$1,606.45
2010	4.0099	\$250,000	\$1002.47	2.2349	\$587.25	\$1,589.72

Rose and Poppy also own several quarters of land that are classified as farmland outside of the hamlet. They had heard on the radio that the County increased the farmland mill rate by 1 mill to offset costs of road maintenance and bridge repair.

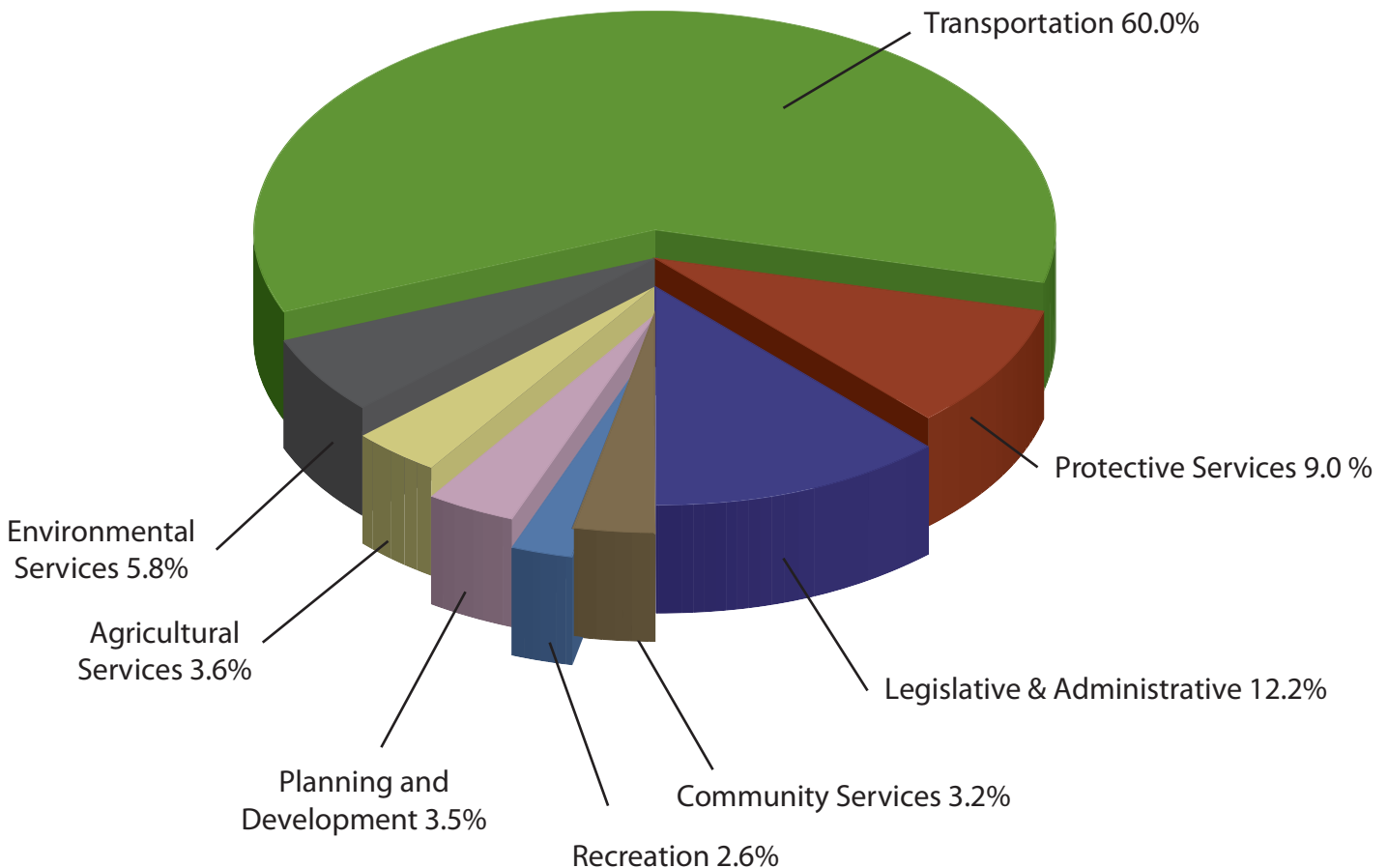
They wondered how much their farmland tax bill would increase.

Year	Farmland Tax Rate	Value of Property	Municipal Tax Bill	School Tax	School Tax Bill	Total Taxes
2011	10.6229	\$30,000	\$318.66	2.4167	\$72.50	\$391.161
2010	9.6229	\$30,000	\$288.69	2.2597	\$66.78	\$355.47

Rose and Poppy were happy to see that their tax bill only increased by \$35 on that one piece of land.

The County of Stettler has only ever increased the farmland mill rate 5 times since 1997 and decreased the mill rate twice. The rest of the years, it remained unchanged. For Rose and Poppy, with their average farmland quarter, their taxes have only increased a total of \$75 over the last 15 years. (with fluctuations up and down considered.)

Where Do My Tax Dollars Go?



Assessment More Than Just Market Value

Ever wonder exactly how your property assessment is determined?

Often the terms “assessment” and “taxation” are considered to be interchangeable. However, assessment and taxation are very different. Although one impacts the other, each is a distinct and independent process.

“Assessment” is the process of estimating a dollar value on a property for taxation purposes. This value is used to calculate the amount of taxes that will be charged to the owner of the property. “Taxation” is the process of applying a tax rate to a property’s assessed value to determine the taxes payable by the owner of that property.

What is Assessed?

Not all property is assessable for property tax purposes. The Municipal Government Act outlines what property is assessable for taxation. The Act defines property as:

- A parcel of land
- An improvement
- A parcel of land and the improvements to it

Property assessment in Alberta is based on a combination of market value and regulated rates. Residential and some non-residential properties are assessed at market value. Assessments are prepared annually.

REGULATED RATES

There are four types of property that are assessed at a Regulated Rate determined by the Government of Alberta. Regulated assessment comprises approximately 28 percent of the assessment base

1. Farmland
2. Machinery and equipment
3. Linear property
4. Railway property

Farmland

Farmland is assessed on the basis of its productive value; that is, the ability of the land to produce income from the growing of crops and/or the raising of livestock. The productive value of farm land is determined using a process that sets a value for the best soils, and then make adjustments for less-than-optimum conditions such as stones, the presences of sloughs, or topography not conducive to farming practices. Therefore, farmland is assessed based on regulated rates which reflect top farmland at \$350.00 per acre and less productive land at a percentage thereof.

Examples of farmland use is production of crop, fish, livestock, poultry, fur production or beekeeping (where an agricultural product is marketed). As in the past, there is little change to the 2010 farmland assessment for 2011 taxation.

Machinery and Equipment (M&E)

Machinery and equipment includes such things as oilfield plants, batteries, satellites, and equipment used for processing and manufacturing, Machinery and Equipment is assessed based on depreciated regulated replacement cost rates. These rates are derived from a Provincial Assessment Manual.

Linear

Oil and gas wells, pipelines to transport petroleum products, electric power systems (generation, transmission, and distribution facilities), telecommunications systems (including cellular telephone systems and cable television systems) Linear property is assessed by Provincial Assessors using regulated rates and depreciation which applies specifically to this property class. Each year the power portion of linear property assessment declines in accordance with regulated depreciation schedules.

Railway

Railway property is based on a fixed dollar amount per kilometer, based on the annual tonnage transported on the railway right-of-way. Each rail company must annually report the type of and length of line in each municipality to the assessor. Rates are determined by the province, documented in the Minister's Guidelines and applied by the assessor.

Property is classified according to its actual use.

MARKET VALUE

The market value based standard is used to determine the assessed values for the majority of properties in Alberta. Market value is the price a property might reasonably be expected to sell for if sold by a willing seller to a willing buyer after appropriate time and exposure in an open market.

Key characteristics of market value are:

- It is the most probable price, not the highest, lowest, or average price.
- It is expressed in terms of a dollar value.
- It assumes a transaction between unrelated parties in the open market.
- It assumes a willing buyer and a willing seller, with no advantage being taken by either party.
- It recognizes the present use and potential use of the property.

Sometimes the market value based assessment of a property is assumed to be the sale price of an individual property. It is important to note that a market value based assessment may not be the sale price. The sale price is an historical fact.

Residential Property

Residential properties comprise of houses, cottages, garages, acreages, and yard sites.

Municipal Affairs have established manuals for use to assess residential buildings. The style of the building is determined by the assessor and classified according to the manuals. The assessed value of residential property should be the approximate

average market value as of July 2010. Since assessment reflects mid range sale values, it may be slightly higher or lower than an actual sale price on a particular property.

Non-residential Property

Includes industrial and commercial properties.

Industrial/commercial properties are also assessed at the average market value as of July 2010. Each year the assessment roll is completed by February 28.

Do You Disagree?

The first step an assessed person should take if he or she believes his or her property assessment is unfair or inaccurate is to contact the assessor. The assessor can be reached by calling the County office at 403-742-4441. The assessor may request to inspect the property to determine if an error was made. If the assessor agrees that the original notice is not accurate, a corrected notice may be issued.

Complaints must be filed in the form prescribed in the regulations on or before the deadline shown on the assessment notice.

The complaint must:

- indicate what information shown on an assessment notice or tax notice is incorrect,
- explain in what respect that information is incorrect,
- indicate what the correct information is, and
- Identify the requested assessed value, if the complaint relates to an assessment.

If an assessment notice and tax notice are combined, the deadline for filing a complaint is on the tax notice. Municipalities must give the assessed person a minimum of 60 days from the date the notice was sent to file a complaint.

Complaint Form is available on website: www.municipalaffairs.alberta.ca

INTRODUCING...

The Planning & Development

TEAM



Cara McKenzie, Development Officer

Cara started with the County in 2007 in Agricultural Services but eventually got tired of stomping around fields wearing heavy, steel toed boots and fighting swarms of mosquitoes. She started with the P&D department in September 2010 and brings a lot of knowledge and expertise into her new position. She is currently pursuing her Land Use Planning Certificate from the U of A. Cara lives in Stettler with her husband Scott and spends most of her time avoiding sporting events of all kinds. She can often be found

walking with her dog Sophie (and wearing very cute, non-safety related shoes).

Jacinta Donovan, Development Officer

Jacinta is the Rock of Gibraltar for the P&D department. She started with the County in 2004 and has worked hard over the past few years to achieve her Land Use Planning Certificate from the U of A. She continues to expand her knowledge through further studies in the NACLAA program at U of A. Jacinta and her husband, Mike, live in their empty nest on an acreage north of Stettler. They have two sons, Nicholas & Nathaniel, who live nearby. Jacinta enjoys camping with her family & grand-puppies as well as gardening in her leisure time.



Johan van der Bank, RPP MCIP

After three years Johan is just starting to settle into his position as Director of Planning and Development, and is getting used to the pinching of the bulls-eye that they make him wear on his back. He wishes he knew as much as Jacinta but he still has to learn what she has forgotten a long time ago. Johan works day and night pushing paper at the County during the day and milking goats and collecting eggs at his small acreage out past the Stettler airport evenings and weekends. He often sleeps under his desk, sometimes outside of coffee breaks. Sometimes his dear wife and three children miss him and fondly wonder together when he will be back from the FasGas.



ITS ABOUT THE **FACTS** 

Table 1: Development Permits Processed

2007	2008	2009	2010	2011*
175	131	112	108	37

Table 2: Subdivision Applications Processed

2007	2008	2009	2010	2011*
55	44	26	25	6

Table 3: Safety Code Permits

SCC Permits	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011*
Building	120	91	72	73	19
Electrical	190	170	112	106	26
Plumbing and Gas **	264	169	159	135	20

*As of May 2011

** Includes Private Sewage Disposal

SITE INSPECTIONS

Many County residents have at some point or another discovered that they needed a development permit in order to expand their homes, or add a garage, or even to begin a new business. And, as is so often the case, people want to get going on this project as soon as possible. While there are many circumstances in which the issuance of a development permit is almost automatic (e.g. building a first residence on a residential property) there is still one very important step that the County must perform before issuing a development permit.

We need to inspect the site to be certain that there will not be a future issue or potential issue with the proposed development. We need to evaluate the roads leading to the land, the approaches, the slope of the land, and that it does not infringe on any wetlands, as well as any other concerns that we might have in regards to a specific application. In order to be as efficient as possible, Planning and Development has begun to have scheduled "Site Inspection" days twice a month on the second and fourth Tuesdays of the month. To ensure that your

application gets a site inspection as soon as possible after you submit it, and is not delayed too much pending the site inspection, it would be prudent to submit your application by the Friday previous to these scheduled site inspection dates.

The upcoming Site Inspection Dates for the remainder of 2011 are:

- July 12 and 26**
- August 9 and 23**
- September 13 and 27**
- October 11 and 25**
- November 8 and 22**
- December 13 and 27**

As always we here in Planning and Development would encourage you to contact either Cara McKenzie, Johan van der Bank or Jacinta Donovan at (403) 742-4441 with any questions or concerns you may have. We will be happy to answer any questions and help in any way we can with your questions and concerns.



ERSKINE

CONCEPT PLAN

Your Community Your Future

Wednesday, July 13, 2011
I.O.O.F. Hall, Erskine

5:00 pm - 5:30 pm - Open House and Gather at I.O.O.F Hall
5:30 pm - 6:30 pm - Walking Tour of Erskine
6:45 pm - 8:30 pm - Workshop

We all want what's best for our community. We all want our children to be proud of where they grew up and the community they call home. This is your chance. This workshop is specifically designed for your community. The County of Stettler has partnered with a Professional Planning firm to help us plan for your communities future. We want nothing more than for you to fully participate in the future of your community.

We want your visions for Erskine. What does it need to make it a better community? A more desirable place to live? What is that you really want out of your community? This is once in a lifetime opportunity to help shape your community. Much like your own family budget and plans, we can't achieve it all in one year, but having an outline, a concept and goals will help the County of Stettler develop a community that will meet the needs of the current and future residents.

PUBLICATIONS MAIL AGREEMENT 41398593
RETURN UNDELIVERABLE CANADIAN ADDRESSES TO:
COUNTY OF STETTLER NO. 6
BOX 1270
STETTLER, AB T0C 2L0

Did I mention we are serving Beef on a
Bun? Food is Good.