



For Immediate Release

News Release

COVID-19 UPDATE – Emergency Budget Discussions

Edson, Alberta, April 15th, 2020 – Edson Town Council is easing the tax burden as businesses and residents continue to be impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

During their Committee of the Whole meeting on April 14th, Council discussed an emergency budget, which included approximately \$1.8 million in reductions. After discussion, Council has agreed that a portion of those savings should go towards reducing the tax burden for 2020, with the rest being put into a Recovery Reserve until more details are known about Provincial and Federal programs, and allowing time to decide where the money would be best suited to help in the recovery of the community. More details on the specifics of the program will be decided at upcoming meetings. Council is also looking into a potential utility bill credit to be funded from reserves.

In order to reach the approximately \$1.8 million, every department had to review the budget to find areas that could possibly be delayed a year or cut on an interim basis. Some of those cuts will have service level implications for 2020. There were also a few increases for items that needed to be addressed this year.

General (company-wide)

- All Management and Union staff down to a 9 work schedule –savings of 10% of salaries and wages.
- Other staff position adjustments e.g. staff on maternity leave, no hiring of summer students, vacant positions not filled.
- Layoff of 18 staff due to closure of facilities.
- Overtime limited to emergency situations only
- Professional Development budgets decreased significantly.
- Staff Wellness Program removed for the remainder of the 2020.
- Staff Development Budgets reduced
- Conference Registrations and Travel and Expenses reduced.
- Insurance increases for 2020 (added ~\$25,000)
- Reserve transfers suspended for 2020 –\$100,000 Public Safety Initiative and \$360,000 Energy Reserve

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Administration/Legislative

- Council Chambers remodel removed
- Computer Replacement Program put on hold
- Reduced Promotional Spending

Community & Protective Services

- Net reduction in Fines Revenue (added ~\$230,000)
- Reduced Fire Training temporarily
- Bylaw COP 1 staffing delayed
- Increase to Disaster budget for Covid-19 related expenses (added \$50,000)
- Rec and Culture programming cancelled for April-June
- Canada Day cancelled
- Eddies Big Run cancelled
- Mowing reduced by ~50%
- Weeding reduced by ~75%
- No flowers
- Repsol Place temporarily closed –no pool.

Infrastructure & Planning

- Land Use Bylaw external support services removed
- Aerial photo for Munisight Map removed
- Water and Sewer Break Contingency removed (use reserves if needed)
- Private Sewer Camera work removed
- Airport –Less weeding, tree topping, and fence repair
- Landfill – no summer hours implemented for 2020 (other scheduling impacts to be determined)
- Increase to Recycling ~\$60,000
- Roads – no dust control, Line Painting (exception - crosswalks)
- Snow Removal –minimal contracted services, will have noticeable impact to snow removal.

A reminder on other measures taking place in the Town of Edson to help ease the financial burden during this time.

Temporary Tax Payment Due Date. Council has passed all three readings of Bylaw 2244. This bylaw amends the taxation due dates and the subsequent penalty dates for 2020, as directed by the Emergency Management Committee.

- Taxes due – September 30, 2020.
- First penalty run – October 1, 2020
- Second penalty run – November 1, 2020

Automatic payments for tax accounts will continue unless the account holder contacts the finance department with further instructions. Residents and businesses that can make payments are encouraged to keep their accounts up to date.

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Utility Bill Payment Deferrals. Council has approved the Emergency Management Advisory Committee recommendation to defer utility bill payments. The following is now in place:

- The Town of Edson will continue sending out utility bills but suspend processing penalties on unpaid utility accounts until the bills due on August 25, 2020. From that date on, penalties will only apply to new balances.
- Give utility customers until the end of 2020 to catch up on the unpaid balances. This allows them to spread the payments over a number of months if necessary.

Automatic payments for utility accounts will continue unless the account holder contacts the finance department with further instructions. Again, customers that can make payments on time are encouraged to do so. These payments will still need to be made up in 2020.

Please stay apprised on the evolving situation through the following websites.

Edson – www.edson.ca/covid

Alberta – www.alberta.ca/covid19

Canada – www.canada.ca/covid19

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