

**MUNICIPAL DISTRICT OF BIG LAKES
SPECIAL COUNCIL MEETING
May 8, 2006**

Minutes of the Municipal District of Big Lakes Special Council Meeting held at the M.D. Administration Building in High Prairie, Alberta on Monday, May 8, 2006, at 10:00 a.m.

PRESENT WERE:

Reeve: Myler Savill, Joussard
Councillor: Alvin Billings, HP East/Banana Belt
Craig Bissell, Enilda
Randy Ehman, S. Sunset House/Gilwood
Ken Killeen, Kinuso
Fern Welch, Grouard

Absent: David Marx, Prairie Echo/Salt Prairie
Violet Campiou, Faust
Ken Melnyk, N. Gilwood/Triangle

Administration: John Eriksson, C.A.O.
Gerald Loewen, Treasurer
Gilles Lussier, Sup't of P.W.
John Gould, Fire Chief
Gary Braithwaite, Ag Fieldman
Sharon Strang, FCSS Director
Pat Olansky, Community Development Officer
Mark Stabler, Special Constable
Amanda Backs, Secretary

Observer: Dan Sekulich

Press: Chris Clegg, South Peace News

CALL TO ORDER:

Reeve Savill called the meeting to order at 10:03 a.m.

**OVERVIEW OF 2006
ASSESSMENT IMPACTS
AND MILL RATES:**

Mr. Eriksson gave a PowerPoint presentation showing a number of dwellings from communities across Canada and the difference in associated property tax rates.

Council was also provided with an overview of the population distribution throughout the M.D.

Mr. Eriksson advised that the total assessment for 2006 was \$1,323,788,460, which was higher than predicted in the interim budget. The total assessment showed a growth of \$123,528,560 from 2005. He explained that the increase in assessment is due mostly in part to the price of steel.

Mr. Eriksson continued to present Council with maps indicating the cumulative percent of total assessment in various directions across the M.D., the total assessment by green zone and the percentage of total change in assessment.

Mr. Eriksson informed Council that his recommendation remains the same as the interim budget with an increase in the residential mill rate of .15, an increase of 1 mill for commercial/industrial and a reduction in the farmland mill rate to the same level as residential. Council discussed the recommendation.

Mr. Eriksson provided Council with a comparison of the M.D.'s mill rates from 1995 to 2006. The municipal mill rates were proposed as follows: Residential – 4.93 (3.14% increase), Farmland – 4.93 (38.22% decrease), Non-residential including linear except electrical generating – 10.73 (10.28% increase), Non-residential including electrical generating – 10.73 (10.28% increase), Machinery and Equipment – 10.73 (10.28% increase).

Mr. Eriksson also provided council with an analysis of a variety of properties in the M.D. showing the impact of the 2005 general assessment for 2006 taxation.

Special Constable Stabler entered the meeting at 10:34 a.m.

Council discussed the increase in assessment and mill rates over the past several years.

A break was taken from 10:45 a.m. to 10:55 a.m.

**REVIEW OF 2006
CAPITAL BUDGET, OPTIONS
AND APPROVAL:**

Mr. Loewen proceeded to review the changes made from the Interim Capital Budget to the Final Capital Budget. An additional \$5,000 was included under computers as a result of the need to replace the main office printer. Public works equipment was increased by \$5,300, the Riverbend Water Co-op was decreased by \$10,300 due to the completion of work in 2005 and the Jossard water system saw an increase of \$101,000 for the new filtration system. Discussion ensued on the provincial standards for water treatment plants and the rate at which improvements become outdated. Mr. Loewen continued to report that \$25,000 was included for lift station upgrades, and ASB equipment was increased by \$2,434 for a total net change of \$128,434.

**REVIEW OF 2006
OPERATING BUDGET, OPTIONS
AND APPROVAL:**

Mr. Loewen reviewed with Council the changes from the interim budget to the final budget in Operating Revenue and Expenses. Revenue from property taxes was increased by \$320,296. The total 2006 Operating Budget presented to Council was \$25,599,928.

Mr. Eriksson made note of correspondence in the regular council meeting agenda from the Hon. Ty Lund, Minister of Alberta Infrastructure and Transportation, announcing that he is prepared to approve funding for intersection improvements at Grouard and S.H. 750.

Mr. Eriksson informed Council that the M.D. of Greenview has agreed to provide funding to SARDA.

Special Constable Stabler left the meeting at 11:19 a.m.

Council agreed to defer discussion on public transit system to the May 10th regular council meeting unless time permits today.

Councillor Ehman suggested that Council allocate \$5,000 under the FCSS budget towards volunteer recognition for M.D. residents. He indicated that there are around 100 volunteers from the M.D. Council discussed the suggestion. Funds will be allocated under General Administration for volunteer recognition.

Reeve Savill expressed concern over the rate of interest earned on capital reserve accounts. Mr. Loewen explained that a figure of 1.5% is used for budget calculation purposes only. He advised that this year's actual rates will not be determined until following his meeting with RBC Investments.

Discussion continued on the proposed residential mill rate adjustment and the financial impact to the M.D. as a result of new recreational facilities.

The meeting recessed for lunch at 11:46 a.m. and reconvened at 1:00 p.m. Mr. Lussier joined the meeting. Mr. Sekulich did not return to the meeting.

2006-09-282

MOVED BY COUNCILLOR KILLEEN that the 2006 Capital and Operating Budgets be approved.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

**REVIEW OF 2006
PROPERTY TAX
BYLAW #7-2006:**

Bylaw No. 7-2006 to authorize and establish property tax rates for the year 2006 was presented to council for first reading.

2006-09-283

MOVED BY COUNCILLOR BISSELL that Bylaw No. 7-2006 be approved for first reading as presented.

Reeve Savill requested a recorded vote

For: Bissell, Billings, Killeen

Against: Savill, Ehman, Welch

DEFEATED

Reeve Savill suggested that Bylaw No. 7-2006 be amended to maintain the residential mill rate at 4.78 as in 2005, decrease the farmland mill rate to 4.78 and to increase the industrial/commercial mill rate by 1 mill as proposed.

2006-09-284

MOVED BY REEVE SAVILL that Bylaw No. 7-2006 be approved for first reading as amended.

Councillor Bissell requested a recorded vote

For: Billings, Ehman, Savill, Welch
Against: Bissell, Killeen

CARRIED

OTHER:

PUBLIC TRANSIT:

Mr. Eriksson presented Council with information he obtained in regard to his proposal to apply for funding for a public transit system under the new Canada Alberta Municipal Rural Infrastructure Fund. He suggested that three new Thomas 25-seater buses with handicapped lift capability be purchased at a cost of \$200,000 each. Mr. Eriksson noted that the High Prairie School Division is licensed to do warranty work for three different manufacturers, including Thomas. Council reviewed a proposed budget. Mr. Eriksson advised that at this point the M.D.'s portion of the project equates to .25 of a mill and has been included in the final budget. Discussion took place on proposed fares, ridership estimates and scheduling for two regular bus runs. It was also suggested that one bus could potentially make a regular run into Slave Lake for mill employees.

Reeve Savill questioned if the M.D. could apply for the grant and contract out the buses to the private sector. Mr. Eriksson advised that they could. He noted that the Federal Government recently approved a rebate program for bus passes.

2006-09-285

MOVED BY COUNCILLOR WELCH that the item regarding a proposed M.D. public transit system be placed on the May 10th regular council meeting agenda.

CARRIED

NEXT MEETING:

The next regular Council Meeting will be held on May 10, 2006 at the M.D. Administration Building.

ADJOURNMENT:

There being no further business, Reeve Savill declared the meeting adjourned at 1:37 p.m.

Myler Savill, Reeve

John Eriksson, C.A.O