

Request for Decision

September 2022 Town Hall Report

Written by: Jeff Johnston, CAO
Meeting: Regular Council Meeting
Meeting Date: January 9, 2023
Agenda Category: New Business

Executive Summary

The Town held a Town Hall on September 27, 2022. A total of twenty-five (25) people attended the CAO presentation and seventeen (17) stayed for the consultation portion of the session. The consultation resulted in five (5) focus areas including Short-term Action Items (Low Hanging Fruit), Sports and Recreation, Housing, Business and Health. Administration also followed up by emailing the questions from the consultation session to all the original Town Hall invitees.

Background / Proposal

The short-term action items included:

- **Hosting a town clean-up.**
The fall clean-up was held October 29, 2022. The intent is to do both a spring and fall clean-up annually.
- **Hosting a service club showcase / membership drive.**
This event was held November 24, 2022. The intent is host a similar event at least annually.
- **Hosting a Halloween engagement event.**
A Halloween Teen Dance was held October 28, 2022. The Town will be looking at other events to engage youth.
- **Ensuring the Town Calendar is current.**
There has been a focus on having all Town events in the calendar and encouraging (via advertisement media) community groups to submit their events. The intent is to try and make the Calendar as comprehensive as possible.
- **Increasing Wi-Fi access in Town facilities and downtown.**
The Town is currently working on getting access to fiber-optics for all residents and businesses with a focus on Town facilities. This is far from being low-hanging fruit as supply chain and provider timelines are out of the Town's control.

The Sports and Recreation potential action items included:

- **Continuing to develop sports and recreation infrastructure.**
Administration will continue to focus on renewal of existing facilities including the arena, recreation centre, playgrounds, ball fields and soccer fields. There may be opportunity to partner with the Minor Ball and Soccer associations on additional fields. Any other material capital investment for a new arena and or fieldhouse would be challenging fiscally.
- **Creating a Sports and Recreation Committee.**
The Town will be conducting a Recreation Master Plan in 2023. The purpose of the plan is to establish the vision for all aspects related to recreation and to create an achievable framework for future investment. A critical part of this plan is stakeholder involvement and input. Once the plan is completed there may be an opportunity to establish a Recreation Advisory Committee to aid in implementing the plan.
- **Creating a sports and recreation hub to capitalize on regional opportunities.**
As above, Administration is focused on the renewal of existing recreation infrastructure to ensure all facilities are safe and functional. This will establish a baseline for any potential future investment to enhance services. The Town participates as part of the Grande Prairie Regional Recreation Committee whose goal is "Facilitating collaborative recreation in the Grande Prairie region".
- **Developing a regional sport and recreation mandate and mission.**
As part of the Grande Prairie Regional Recreation Committee the Town is committed to regional sports and recreation.

The Housing potential action items included:

- **Creating a Residential Development Committee.**
There is a need for new lots to be developed and houses to be built in the Town. The Town has limited ability to drive land development. Administration has been working with landowners/potential developers. The Town has a responsibility to understand the capacity of its infrastructure as it relates to the water, sanitary and storm utilities and its ability to accommodate new development. A project to model water and sanitary was approved by Council in the fall of 2022. This project is underway and is scheduled to complete in spring of 2023. Administration is currently working on renewed residential tax incentive policies that will go to Council in February 2023. Administration does not support the creation of a Residential Development Committee.
- **Council Continuing to continue to advocate to the Grande Spirit Foundation and Province for additional seniors housing and supports.**
Council and Administration is invested and continues to advocate for Seniors housing and support services through its participation as a member of the Grande Spirit Foundation and its discussions with the Province. This is aligned with the vision of the Mountview Health Complex and the future development of the property surrounding the complex.

The Business potential action items included:

- **Engaging more business owners for economic development activities related to business attraction and retention.**
The current collaboration between the Town to partner with the Beaverlodge and District Chamber of Commerce has the ability to reach out to and engage with most or all of businesses serving the Town of Beaverlodge. There may be opportunity for tax incentives to help attract new business, Administration will look at this once the residential tax incentive policies have been approved by Council. The Town Economic Development Committee meetings are public and are open to anyone. Administration will promote this for all meetings of Council as part of its strategy to increase community engagement.
- **Developing a relationship between the Economic Development Committee (EDC) and the Beaverlodge and District Chamber of Commerce (BDCC).**
The Town has Council representation on the board of the BDCC and the BDCC has representation on the Town EDC. Additionally, there is a well established working relationship between the BDCC Executive Director and the Town Chief Administrative Officer. 2022 was one of the most collaborative years between the two organizations.
- **Providing economic development training for the Economic Development Committee.**
There is value in providing economic development training to the members of the Town EDC. This topic will be put forth as an agenda item at a future EDC meeting

The Health potential action items included:

- **Continuing to advance the P3 project for the Mountview Health Complex**
The Mountview Health Complex is moving forward. In December 2022 a Letter of Intent was signed with Alberta Health Services to establish them as the anchor tenant for the facility. The functional planning process is underway with AHS, physicians and nurses as the key stakeholders. Once the functional planning is completed detailed design will commence.
- **Continuing to advocate to ensure the facility is sufficiently staffed.**
As a member of the South Peace Professional Attraction and Retention Committee the Town is committed to advocating for health professionals for current facilities in the region and specifically the Town of Beaverlodge. It is expected that this is a long-term strategy that will encompass the Mountview Health Complex staffing.
- **Communicating to the community as plans to the new facility progress.**
The Mountview Health Committee and the Town as a key member of this committee are committed to community information sharing. Since the formal project commenced in early 2021 there has been little opportunity to release details due to the confidential nature of most of the activities. It is expected that there will be more opportunity to distribute information and meet with the community moving forward.

Options

Option 1: Approve the report with Administration's follow-up to each action item.

Option 3: Provide direction to Administration to revise its follow-up to any action item and bring back.

Source of Funding

N/A

Municipal Plans

Strategic Plan: This project is in alignment with the approved 2022-2026 Strategic Plan – Primary Focus Area No. 1 – Improved Communication and Primary Focus Area 5 – Good Governance.

Capital Plan: N/A

Communication / Public Participation

☐ **Inform** (one-way communication)

Goal: to provide balanced, objective information to citizens.

Tools: ☐ Public Notice ☐ Article ☐ Other

☒ **Consult** (two-way communication)

Goal: To obtain feedback, listen and respond to public concerns.

Tools: ☒ Survey ☒ Open House ☐ Public Hearing ☐ Other

☒ **Involve** (involve the public to ensure their concerns and aspirations are considered in decision)

Goal: to work with the public through the process

Tools: ☒ Public Notice ☒ Open House ☒ Community Workshop ☐ Other

☐ **Not Applicable**

Administrative Recommended Action

Administration recommends:

That the Town Hall Report be approved with Administration's follow up to the action items identified through the consultation session of the September 27 Town Hall consultation session and subsequent survey.

Attachments

Holly Sorgen Beaverlodge Town Hall Summary Report, October 27, 2022

Beaverlodge Town Hall Report

Tuesday, September 27, 2022

7-9pm, Community Centre

Prepared by: Holly Sorgen, EmPower Up!



Summary

Jeff Johnston, CAO for the Town of Beaverlodge approached Holly Sorgen to facilitate a Town Hall meeting, specifically to consult with the community on a variety of subjects and to reinforce Council's commitment to consistent communication with its residents and business community.

The meeting began with a welcome from the mayor and then Jeff presented an update of the Town and Council's Strategic Goals and Actions. He outlined each and progress made in each, taking question along the way. 25 residents attended this portion of the meeting.

Holly then introduced the concept of the consultative portion of the session, including – goals of the session, the process, namely roundtable discussion topics, recording and reporting and Council's commitment to ongoing connections and communication.

The goals of the consultation session included:

- Engage a good cross section of the community and its residents from young families to seniors
- Identify opportunities for the Town
- Close the loop on the conversations
 - Commitment to:
 - Listen
 - Discuss
 - Communicate
 - Act, when able and logical

17 people continued into the consultation portion of the session. The group that participated was a wide cross section of the community, including those representing the recreation sector, business owners and advocacy representatives, young families, and seniors.

8 Questions were asked of the group and each table discussed each question, recording answers and reporting back to the larger group. The following is a breakdown of the high-level trends, commonalities, and recommendations for future action for the Town, residents, and business owners.

Findings

Given the beautiful weather that evening, it was a pleasant surprise to have the number of participants who attended and contributed to the session. This is indicative of an engaged community, and the diverse nature of the participants was also a positive as those who attended represented a multitude of interests, backgrounds, experiences, communities, and interest groups.

Business

As a highly engaged group, those in attendance also identified ways the community and the business community could be engaged at higher levels to assist Council and Administration in some of the “work.” One suggestion that came out of the meeting was to create a Residential Development Committee to engage residents, developers, etc. to inform the housing development process.

It was also suggested to strengthen the Economic Development committee, engaging more business owners in informing economic development activities as it relates to business retention, business attraction, import replacement (buy local) and strengthening the overall local business environment. There appears to be strong support in the community for the local Chamber of Commerce so the further development of a relationship between the economic development committee and the Chamber is and should be a priority, especially as it relates to connecting with the business community.

If the committee has not yet engaged in economic development training, a further recommendation may be to engage in economic development training that is offered through many venues included Economic Developers of Alberta, and several post-secondary institutions in Alberta, including SAIT Polytechnic. University of Waterloo offers a designation in Economic Development and have recognized the EDA courses as part of the building blocks to designation. EDA also has a unique offering specific to Elected Officials for Economic Developers.

The Economic Development Committee can then inform Council’s business development strategy specifically related to the areas identified during the consultation – tax incentives, business development incentives, a local procurement policy, etc.

Health

Access to healthcare and healthcare professionals remains a priority for residents, which is the same for the entire Northwest region. With that in mind, it is imperative that council continue to advance the P3 arrangement they are developing to build a new health facility and continue work with PHAC to ensure the facility is sufficiently staffed.

As a regional hub, the Beaverlodge health facility can house primary care, acute care, and tertiary care as a one stop shop and/or the Town can consider create a health and wellness cluster for the community to further develop and full-service regional health cluster that serves all manner of healthcare and wellness needs. Strategic, regular communication to the community is essential as the plans for the new facility advance and progress.

Next Steps:

Given the excellent turn out, engaged group and Council commitment to regular communication and consultation with residents, it is recommended that similar type events are hosted once per year, in Fall, to gather data, feedback and information/recommendations from residents and business owners. Other communication events such as Coffee with Council will also continue to be valuable to the consultation process.