

Village of Elbow 2020 Ratepayers Q & A Forum

The Village of Elbow employees and Council would like to take this opportunity to say thank you to our community during these trying times. Your respect of the Covid 19 rules, your patience as we waded through the everchanging game plan, and your volunteer time to get the organizations up and running as safely as possible all helped our community to continue to move forward in a positive manner. Your generosity has helped brighten the days, keep the calm and allowed us all to trudge forward together during this pandemic.

We thank those who have let their name stand as incumbents for the upcoming election and those who have put their name forward as a new candidate for our Municipal Election on November 9th, 2020.

We thank Blake and Heidi for your 4 years of service to the Village of Elbow. You are dedicated to your community, strong, honest, and committed.

Most of all we thank our employees. We have been able to manage through difficult times, hard decision-making processes, triumphs, and many ups and downs. Your guidance and your dedication to this community to carry out the decisions of Council have been top notch. Not one of you have an easy role in carrying out the day to day operations of our community and you all deserve way more thanks and gratitude than you ever receive.

As Covid 19 was still a little overwhelming in the spring, a spring ratepayers meeting was not held. Council did not want to see the fall also go by without some sort of communication plan with our ratepayers. We know we would much prefer to meet with a large gathering in person, unfortunately such is not possible. We asked for those interested to submit questions to Council just as they would do for a ratepayer's meeting and we would somehow publish the questions and answers and get such out to our ratepayers either through Facebook or some other means.

The Village of Elbow created their Facebook page with the intent of having another tool to promote the Village, businesses and organizations both locally and our surrounding area. Informing ratepayers and visitors of all the community events in our area, updates of events, office hours, and important news items we feel our community and visitors are interested in. At no time was it ever our intention for the Facebook page to become a political forum of any sort. We do enjoy positive messages that salute our volunteers and our community. In order to keep the positive atmosphere this page was created for, we will NOT allow any comments in regards to the Ratepayer Q and A forum. We do however, encourage you to contact one of your Council members if you have a comment or question in regards to the Ratepayer Q and A that was published today.

We thank you all for dedicating your volunteer time to our community, your dedication and for being part of something that is great – Elbow!!

Mayor Colleen Hoppenreys, Councillors Heidi Soggie, Joanne Brochu, Blake Dorward, and Cody Gieni.

Back up pumps for water plant and lift station.

Concerns: Fire safety, disruption to water service, precautionary boil water advisories.

Discussion:

Precautionary drinking water advisories.

When the power goes out and our water system loses a certain amount of pressure a **precautionary drinking water advisory (PDWA)** is issued. This is due to the fact that when the lines lose pressure, there is a possibility that contaminated water could enter the system. According to the Water Security Agency, who issue all water advisories, we have had three PDWA's in the last five years related to power outages (2016, 2018, 2020).

A boil water advisory (BWA) is issued when a contamination of some sort (E.coli) is found to be present in our water supply. To our knowledge our Village has only had 1 BWA issued in the last 20 years. The bacteria had entered 1 household's water supply through a private line that was not Village approved.

During a precautionary drinking water advisory, the Village goes to many measures to notify people through displaying a street sign, posters, email notification, Facebook, website, SaskAlert and phone calls to those they know are not on social media or don't have email. During a BWA the Village would take the same measures and more.

Disruption to Water Service

The Village owns a backup generator for water supply (upgrade needed). When the power goes out the generator is started to keep a base level of pressure (20 psi) which will avoid a PDWA. We do not own back up generators for the sewage lift stations, so there is a waste water output limit. The backup generator does not provide the pressure needed to run a fire hydrant at full capacity.

The problem that exists with keeping the water pressure during a power outage, we would have to acquire a back up generator at each lift station so that they do not back up. It is estimated this could add up to about another \$200,000. The only way to remedy this is to purchase backup generators for the lift stations and water plant at a cost of around \$400,000.

Fire safety

If there is a fire during a power outage the fire truck, when empty, would have to fill at the water plant via a hose and pump water from the reservoir. In order to be able to keep enough pressure so the Hydrants can run at full capacity during a power outage we would need to have two pumps at a cost of approximately \$200,000.00.

There is also the concern noted above.

Solution:

Upgrade the water distribution and sewer system. Estimated costs \$500,000. Council has begun to investigate our existing system, and what it's capable of doing, and will continue the process to determine a cost estimate, funding plan and time line for this need. It would be recommended that Council and the Fire Department meet to consider this situation in developing our EMO Plan

Funding and Grants

No grants have been approved or funding received for a New Build to date. The ICIP grant application for a New Build has been forwarded by the province to the Federal Government for approval. This means that the Saskatchewan Government has committed funds for this project but these funds are only committed if the grant application gets federal approval. The preliminary plans include the library, civic center and rink.

We have been successful in other grant funding directed at infrastructure upgrades, asset management, GIS mapping, updating zoning and OCP bylaws. We have recently applied for traffic safety grant. We have been unsuccessful in applying for grants for planting trees in the town.

Location for Recreational Facility

The current plan is to locate on Village owned property. Acquiring land is not an eligible expense. Parcel B is located on your left as you pass the tracks heading toward the golf course. Having a location determined helped to strengthen our grant application. Parcel B is already owned by the Village and brings along many other advantages such as room for expansion, room for parking, the need to drive through our Community to get to it allows for visitors to see all the businesses along Saskatchewan Street, it is close to Harbor Golf Course and condos.

Electronic LED Signs

Council likes the idea of an LED sign on Saskatchewan Street, especially to advertise all the goings on our volunteers work hard at organizing. We did do some background work in this regard in August of 2016. The best price we could find for an LED sign on Saskatchewan Street was approximately \$40,000 and that did not include the electrical or data line. Many communities that have LED signs rely on advertising dollars from businesses to help offset the initial and ongoing maintenance costs of these signs. We are not sure Elbow would be able to

generate enough advertising dollars to offset even a small portion of such. An LED sign still remains on the long-term planning wish list but Council did not feel it to be a priority for taxpayer dollars at this time.

East block of main street

The Saskatchewan Street improvement long term plan includes all three blocks. Council felt this was an important plan but a plan that needs to be done over time. Some of the reasons that Council chose the west two blocks first was the deteriorating sidewalks that posed a safety risk, the issue with sidewalks sloping towards the businesses which posed a problem of rain water nearing the doorways during heavy rainfalls and the number of businesses along the west two blocks. There is a long-term planning committee member from one of the businesses in the East Block.

Line 19 Recreation Center

Our present buildings that house recreation space, the library, gathering space, meeting space, gym and community events will not take us into the next 50 to 60 years. Our present buildings run us at a deficit of \$45,524.23 (2019), minus the improvements (air conditioning at the Civic Centre 26,197.14) and due to the age of the buildings that deficit will continue to increase. Demand around Line 19 is increasing for a year-round facility that will feature meeting rooms, recreation space, library, kitchen, change rooms, exercise room, and large gathering space. The center will be utilized for hosting community events, meetings, weddings, reunions, pickle ball, floor shuffleboard, senior's association events, bingos, wellness clinics, sporting activities for all ages, library and trade shows. Creating a public space for seniors, children, youth, families and tourism. This investment will serve the needs of our region for the next 100 years. Accessing grant monies to fund a large percentage of a Line 19 recreation center is a phenomenal opportunity. We have the chance to bring close to 5 million dollars into our community.

A new one-level facility, available year-round, will allow for more gatherings, festivals and community driven events. Such events bring tourist dollars to our region through increasing traffic that supports our local businesses and attracting new businesses. Fostering inclusion within our region to attract and encourage users of all ages and backgrounds, this new building will enhance the health and well-being of the community as a whole.

To complete the application process, Council accessed the expertise of Associated Engineering. Their knowledge in cost estimates and preliminary design and planning resulted in a strong application. We did not short ourselves in the cost estimates. If we apply for a grant for a certain amount of dollars and the new building costs more we can not go back and ask for more. They strongly advised us to estimate on the high side and make sure all costs are included such as utilities, parking lot, building amenities, building etc. As noted in the public announcement the total project amount is \$6,500,000, the potential federal share is \$2,600,000, the committed provincial share is \$2,166,450 the Village of Elbow committed share is \$1,733,550. Committed dollars in reserves to date is \$485,000 (\$350,000 from Arena Plex committee, \$100,000 from RM of Loreburn if grant approved, \$35,000 from Enbridge). The Village will need to raise \$1,248,550. Thank you to the ArenaPlex Committee and all the volunteers for your dedication and hard work in the past. Thanks to the RM of Loreburn and Enbridge for your committed funds to date.

The public announcement that the Village of Elbow ICIP grant application was being forwarded to the Federal Government for approval occurred as recently as September 21st, 2020. Since this time Council has been discussing their next steps. At our Line 19 New Build public meeting held last spring, and since that time, several people have put their name forward as interested volunteers to sit on a fundraising committee. A meeting to bring these people together was in the works when Covid hit and such got prolonged until the first week of October. These volunteers have the desire to start fundraising regardless of grant approval because they see the dire need of a new building in the future.

There is much more planning required. Once Council receives any further news, they will inform and engage with the community. Many ratepayers have expressed they are very much in favour and excited about such a project. Others are not in favour.

Council plans to raise their committed share through fundraising and the sale or lease of existing buildings. We have communicated with other communities to gain insight and gather data on cost of running their facilities. (ie: Kenaston Place utilities per year are \$5,782 for natural gas, \$7,273 for power, \$1,440 per year for telephone, no water or sewer is charged to the facility. Their total is \$13,055). The Kenaston volunteers fundraise for the operation and maintenance of their facility, and no tax payer dollars go into operating it. Our current utilities, power and natural gas only for the rink, hall & library total 12,824.65 (2019). Until we know for sure if we get the grant, it is difficult to nail down our numbers as we are hoping this building will be built using low cost solutions and design.

Water and Sewer Line to Electric Lettuce Company

Electric Lettuce brought water and sewer to their facility. The Village provided a third of the funding for the portion of these services which passed along the Village owned Industrial Area lots. Our long-term plan is to move our maintenance shop to the industrial subdivision. We will service our facility with water and sewer.

Meeting minutes

Our meeting minutes follow the protocols put out by the Government of Saskatchewan and contain all the legislatively required information. We encourage individuals to attend our meetings if they are interested to know more. Meeting minutes, once approved by Council at the next meeting, are posted to the Village website.

Hiring a Rec Director

The Elbow Service Club has identified the need for the Village to hire a Recreation Director. One idea is to discuss with our neighboring communities to determine if they would benefit from, and help fund, such a position. A plan has not yet come to fruition, but it is still talked about.

Plebiscites/Referendum

At this time the Village has no policy in place to trigger a plebiscite. An elected Council is given the autonomy to act according to its own direction on matters within its jurisdiction. For the Village, a plebiscite is a costly and lengthy undertaking. This Council has increased their ratepayer meetings from one time per year to two, provided upfront and honest information to the ratepayers, as well as communicated successes, struggles and long-term plans. Council encourages ratepayers to write letters to Council, discuss Council decisions with elected officials, as well as attend Council Meetings. The Village has no plans to create a plebiscite policy or hold a plebiscite at this time.

Sewer Clean Out Policy

Council has been working on updating their policies. In reviewing the Sewer Clean Out Policy, Council realized they also had a bylaw that dealt with the same thing. We therefore repealed the policy and updated the bylaw. In the past, some property owners were having repeated sewage blockages due to their failing private sewer lines. The invoices to clean out these lines were being covered by the Village; essentially, the rest of the taxpayers. No repairs were being made. The change has been made so that the Village is responsible for all sewage main issues, and the property owner is responsible for the construction, maintenance, repair, and replacement of their sewer line from the house to their connection to the sewer main, which is common practice in most communities.

When do we tender?

According to the New West Trade Partnership Agreement (NWPTA) and the Canadian Free Trade Agreement (CFTA), municipalities are required to tender for goods and services greater than \$75,000 and construction greater than \$200,000. The Village remains diligent in any expenditure which does not require tender.

Saskatchewan Street Project

The work done by Covenant Construction is part of the Saskatchewan Street Project. Although not required, we made sure we received other estimates from other paving companies for this work. Costs from SAL engineering are part of the Main Street project. The only piece of the Saskatchewan Street project that came in higher than the tendered contract amounts, was the work done by the local contractor.

What would Council consider to be large ticket items?

Items that Council has considered, but not all have been undertaken: main lift station repairs, Line 19 Recreation Centre, Saskatchewan Street project, back-up water pump, pavement, dust suppressant, chip sealing, rink roof, public washrooms, tree planting, new boiler system for town office, LED sign, and the industrial subdivision, just to name a few!

Informing ratepayers

We hold two ratepayer meetings per year. Due to Covid 19 there was not a ratepayer meeting held last spring. Topics from the last ratepayers meeting included the Saskatchewan Street Project, bylaw changes, and the new recreation centre grant application. A backup system for the water plant and lift stations has been discussed on a few occasions. Council did not consider, and were not made aware, that our current backup system could be a safety hazard were to be a fire when the power was out.

Dust Suppressant

Ideally there would be no dust in the Village. However, the price of annually applying dust suppressant is not economically feasible without significant cost recovery. The estimated price to treat all of the Village's streets is \$60,000. Dust Suppressant is not a long-term solution. If we have a wet year and the roads need grading the dust suppressant is destroyed. Council has been exploring long term solutions such as chip sealing, recycled shingles and crushed asphalt. Council acknowledges that we need a solution to our dust problem. We currently have a dust suppression policy where ratepayers can apply their own dust suppression at their own cost and the Village ensures that they do not grade the treated area.

Flags

We budget and order flags for all the Village flag poles each year.

Replacing water and sewer systems

The Village administrator has started work on an asset management plan which helps to identify our current assets needs and aids in planning for their management and replacement. We have not finalized our asset management plan. What we have learned to date is that you don't just start digging up lines and replace them. We do know that if we have a line that breaks more than one time in a short stretch, that line is probably in need of replacement. Engineers can only guess on the lifespan of the old water and sewer lines and guide us on what to watch for. When setting prices for utilities and budgeting it is very important to take into consideration the amortization of a utility along with setting up reserves for such. Council has been working toward this.

Trees

The Village of Elbow contracts an arborist that comes to our Village one or two times per year to provide recommendations for trees that are on Village owned property. Regarding planting new trees, over the last 3 years the Village has applied for tree planting grants twice and each time been denied. Each year at budget time we discuss trees but each year it seems to be one of the projects that gets cut. In 2020 we allocated \$1,500.00 to tree planting. We would like to have a long-term plan for Elbow's urban forest in place for the future. We would like to see more trees planted. We would like to see an adopt a tree program.

Engaging our Community

At the beginning of our term Council wanted to engage the wider community in long term planning discussions. Community members have provided valuable input to Council through various committees, such as: the Infrastructure Committee (streets, drainage, etc.), the Facilities Committee (Civic Centre and Rink), New Build Fundraising Committee, and Long Term Planning Committee. Currently there is no Economic Development Committee. WaterWolf District Planning Commission does have this as one of their long-term planning goals.

Building Bylaws

The Uniform Building and Accessibility Standards Act (UBAS Act) requires all Saskatchewan municipalities to enforce the building and accessibility standards established by the National Building Code of Canada. Performing due diligence in regards to any ratepayer, Council does their best to make sure that in no time in the future could our Village ever be held accountable for not enforcing applicable building codes. How could the Village be held accountable? If or when a building is bought or sold and the present owner finds a structural default that may be due to the previous owner not abiding by the laws, the Village may then become liable which could become a costly liability to our taxpayers. We have been informed of this happening in other communities and the importance of enforcing the above Act. The Village is not content to allow a liability to exist for all ratepayers simply because a ratepayer does not want to abide by building codes.

Brownlee LLP

The Municipalities of Saskatchewan (formerly known as SUMA) has partnered with Brownlee LLP to provide members free access to Brownlee's Municipal helpline. Brownlee LLP offers the largest municipal law team in Western Canada. Their in-depth knowledge in all aspects of municipal law provides dependable, practical, and clearly communicated legal and strategic advice.

Village Office entry

The Covid 19 entry and exit plan was designed to allow for easier social distancing. When you enter the building through the door from the ramp you can immediately see if someone is in front of you. The entrance is wider to allow more than one person to stand in the entry way. Council and staff recognize a ratepayer may have an easier time to enter or exit the building differently due to mobility issues and are more than willing to accommodate those when asked.

Bayshore building permit

No building permit was waived due to the fact that no building permit was required.

What is the percentage of the budget that is covered by grants?

In 2020 - \$175,411.60 has been received in grants; which is 14% of the operating budget. Other revenue comes from taxes (41%), and fees & charges (45%)

How are water and lagoon fees how set/determined?

The Annual Waterworks Information is available on our website for anyone to view (https://villageofelbow.com/our_village/utilities.html) Information on the rate policy, capital investment strategy, reserves are available there.

What does Council remuneration consist of?

Council remuneration is set by Council after giving public notice that they will be discussing it at a meeting. For Elbow, it is the amount they are paid to attend meetings. The current rates are as follows: \$100 per Council Meeting; the Mayor gets an additional \$250/month. Council members may also claim a per diem for attending meetings or conventions (\$150 for a full day; \$75 for a half day).

Elbow First Responders

If you're in need of emergency medical help, please dial 911. Should you wish to contact the First Responder group for a non-medical need, such as to inquire about how to become a First Responder, please contact the coordinator, Janet Hundebly at 306-854-2167.

Status of the Industrial Subdivision

The subdivision of future Industrial lots is currently a work in progress.

Will more sidewalks be poured?

It is this Council's intention that the rest of Saskatchewan Street will be completed sometime in the future. It has been Council's policy for years that the Village is not replacing sidewalks in the residential areas.

Does Elbow collect taxes on the golf course and trailer facilities?

Harbor Golf and the Lakeside RV Development are both outside of the Village of Elbow corporate boundaries; so no – we do not collect property taxes from them.

What is a hotsy?

A hotsy is a portable hot water pressure washer that is used to clear frozen culverts.

Lake Diefenbaker Task Force terms of reference

This a committee formed under the WaterWolf District Planning Commission to protect our lake against aquatic invasive species; most notably Zebra Mussels.

Asset Management and GIS mapping status

GIS mapping is complete; although anytime something is new or changed it needs to be updated. The Asset Management plan is nearing completion with Council needing to complete the risk assessment. Both of these tools will continue to be working documents for Council and staff to use and update.

Outside old curling rink maintenance

Council's first approach was to repair the leaking roof. The back portion of the old curling rink roof is rotten. Council will continue to assess this in the spring.

Future of Tuft's Bay

The Tuft's Bay beach is harrowed at the beginning of the season. Tuft's Bay beach is not one of our nicest sandy beaches around the lake. It is more like a gravelly beach. Continual harrowing and removing rocks will allow for more of the sand to go away from the beach.

Renaming Elbow, "Elbow Harbour"

This is an interesting idea! Thank you for providing background information and reasoning along with your recommendation. This will be passed on to the new Council.

More work on the Community Orchard

We have dedicated more employee time to the Community Park/Orchard; this will have to be reviewed during budget discussions, as well as having some discussions with the committee volunteers that have been helping out with the Orchard.

Truck route and King Street

We have a truck route north of King Street. It would be unfortunate if large trucks were using King Street instead of the truck route as designated for large trucks. This may be something the Village should monitor along with speeding issues and perhaps report to the RCMP. Council did install a three way stop sign on King Street last year due to the long stretch, increased traffic, and speed issues. Watering down all the gravel streets would be labour intensive and require much more time and labour than our budget allows for maintenance employees. Council has also applied for a grant from SGI to purchase a speed monitor sign that can be moved to high traffic areas where speeding is a concern.

Weekend Employees

One of our employees does work Saturdays for a part day out at the Transfer Site. It is due to the fact that our community is even busier on the weekends than during the week that our employees work hard each and every week day to keep caught up with their work when there isn't so much traffic to contend with or work around. Our Town Foreman is also on call, and at times has had to come in on weekends.

Rink Work

Our priority for the rink this year was to do the roof repairs required to stop some of the roof leaks. The company that we contracted was successful in fixing the leak in the gym area and for the most part, the leaks in the arena area. There may still be some small leaks in the arena area. If we get enough rain to assess such, and if needed, we will take another look at the roof.

We received a lot of great questions. The volume dictated answers grouped around certain topics. If your question was not answered we apologize. If you have a question that you want to have answered or a position that you would like to see the Village take, please contact the Village Office or Council member.