

2018 STATE OF THE CITY ADDRESS

FOR: MAYOR GRANT CREASEY

WHERE: LACOMBE CHAMBER LUNCHEON AT LMC

WHEN: 12:00 PM ON January 24, 2018

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

- Thank you, President Borchuk... Good afternoon Ladies and Gentlemen... Welcome to the annual Mayor's State of the City Address.
- The Lacombe & District Chamber has once again partnered with the City to organize this annual event, and I want to thank both the Chamber and City staff for their efforts..
- At this time, I would like to acknowledge some dignitaries here with us: MLA Orr, MP Calkins, Lacombe County Reeve Law, members of Lacombe County Council, and other VIPs. Thank you for joining us today.
- It was just three months ago that our municipal elections concluded, and I want to thank the residents of Lacombe for placing their faith and trust in a new Council.
- As your newly elected mayor, I have the privilege of working with a talented team of leaders who have been chosen to make the best decisions on behalf of residents, to ensure that you receive the best value for your tax dollars.
- The people of Lacombe have voted in a terrific group of people, who represent a variety of backgrounds and points of view...
- I am certain going forward we will hear multiple perspectives and have lively discussions. This will lead to better decisions for the community.
- Our backgrounds vary, but we have a common vision – to increase openness and accountability in government, to better engage the public on important civic issues, and to promote growth by overcoming any barriers to economic development.
- I would like to take a moment to recognize my team for their dedication to public service ...please stand, Councillor Don Gullekson, Councillor Thalia Hibbs, Councillor Cora Hoekstra, Councillor Jonathan Jacobson, Councillor Reuben Konnik, and Councillor Chris Ross.
- Thank you. It is a real pleasure to be working with all of you and our hard-working City staff. Together, we will ensure service levels, facilities and amenities are meeting the needs of residents.
- Even in this tough economic climate, Lacombe has been growing at a steady pace.
- I would like to begin by sharing a few highlights from the City's major projects over the past year, and then discuss our goals moving ahead this term.
- At this time, I want to acknowledge the dedication and hard work of the previous Council in helping to realize these and other achievements.

- It's no secret that I did not agree with all their choices, but I do value and respect their commitment to our city.

2017 Project Highlights

- 2017 was a busy year for the City: from undertaking major construction projects, maintaining and enhancing our infrastructure, and laying the foundation for future growth through responsible planning
- We saw the successful completion of two major construction projects:

1. The Main Street infrastructure replacement project, which saw the replacement of the sanitary sewer main in the downtown core.

The project also included pedestrian and road safety improvements, along with parking and other functional enhancements to streamline traffic and to accommodate future growth.

I am happy to report that the project is largely complete, with the final lift of pavement to be installed this spring.

2. The renovation and expansion of the Gary Moe Auto Group Sportsplex also wrapped up last summer, and the grand opening was held in early fall.

What started out as safety code upgrades soon evolved into extensive renovations. The refreshed facility is now barrier-free and a viable regional sports and recreation hub for decades to come.

- We also collaborated with neighbouring municipalities on a number of regional initiatives...
- As members of the North Red Deer Regional Wastewater Commission, we began construction, just last spring, on a long-awaited wastewater transmission system connecting Lacombe, Blackfalds and Lacombe County to the regional treatment facility in Red Deer.
- I am happy to report that construction is substantially complete, and this massive \$71 million project is on schedule and on budget.
- Negotiations are currently underway to secure a management and operations contract for this system. I will be in a position to share the Commission's decision next month.
- Other significant achievements from last year include the signing of joint agreements with Lacombe County for upcoming projects...

- Last September, the City and the County celebrated a historic milestone with the signing of a significant joint agreement for the servicing and development of lands near the interchange of QEII and Highway 12, at the western edge of the city.
- Known as the Lacombe West Area Servicing project, it will facilitate the development of the Midway Centre Outline Plan.
- The plan includes major commercial development and high-density residential developments, and a trail system, on the east side of QE II that will provide employment opportunities and promote both new and existing business in the city.
- The project is expected to cost just over \$15 million, and includes \$3.5 million in upgrades to the intersection at 76 Street and Highway 12, which will be used to access the area.
- Detail design work for the water and wastewater systems began last fall, and construction is anticipated this spring.
- While the majority of residents are behind this project, a number of you have expressed concerns about investment in this area.
- I can assure you that construction will not begin until the developer's offsite levies are received in full.
- We also partnered with Lacombe County and the Lacombe Flying Club on a 25-year lease and funding agreement for the Lacombe Regional Airport.
- This partnership gives the airport a solid foundation on which to continue operations; provide services to the community and attract business to the area.
- The volunteers at the Lacombe Flying Club will now be in a better position to plan for the future, and keep this significant asset viable.
- I would like to thank Reeve Law and County Council for their spirit of collaboration.
- The City of Lacombe is proud of the relationship we have with Lacombe County, and we are honoured to be part of a great partnership that has led to many positive outcomes for both communities.
- We will continue to work together on these and other cost-sharing agreements to provide long-term benefits for our region.

Looking forward to 2018 and Beyond

- Your new Council has a common vision and goals:
 1. To be fiscally prudent,
 2. To increase openness and accountability in government.

3. To better engage the public on important civic issues, and...
4. To promote growth by overcoming barriers to economic development in Lacombe.

- Most realize it is early in our term; however, I am pleased to report a few early successes, which are important to Council.
- Hopefully, they help justify your confidence in us.

1. Our first goal is Fiscal Prudence...

- Last month, Council approved the 2018 Budget, which allows the City to continue service delivery at current levels, while keeping tax increases as low as possible.
- I am proud of the work we have done on this. Council has approved a prudent and realistic budget that is responsive to the needs and preferences of our citizens.
- It considers forward-looking requirements in a fiscally responsible manner.
- This year's Operating Budget has combined total revenues and expenses of \$35.67 million, resulting in a balanced budget.
- Consistent with Council's budget guidelines, the Budget reflects a 1.3 per cent tax rate increase.
- You may be interested to know it is among the lowest increases in small cities across the province!
- This means that an average house valued at \$373,033 will see an increase of \$30.28 for the year.
- The Capital Budget will see a total of \$2.8 million dollars in 38 new projects, and just over \$15 million in carryover costs from last year, for a total of \$18 million.
- Some of the larger projects for this year include:
 - The West Area Servicing project
 - The Henner's Storm Outlet - design and land acquisition only
 - An Eastbound left turn lane at 50 Ave and 58 St
 - A North Taxiway at the Lacombe Airport
 - Roof replacement/washroom renovations for the Public Works Building
- Another example of fiscal prudence I want to mention is that City Administration has initiated active fund management of our Capital Reserves. This will benefit taxpayers with positive cash flow to the City at no added cost.
- Special thanks to senior staff for identifying the opportunity and capitalizing on it! Common-sense management such as this lets everyone know their dollars are being utilized as effectively as possible.

2. Council's next goal is Transparency and Openness...

- Council is committed to conducting business in an open, transparent and accountable manner that enhances public trust in municipal government.
- I am pleased to say that Council's budget process has been open and transparent throughout.
- Public input into the 2018 Budget process was solicited through a citizen budget survey, additional public feedback was received at the budget open house, and the budget presentation was posted online, with a survey link, to gather additional public comments.
- Council appreciates the public's interest in providing input and suggestions, and we will continue this citizen-focused process in future budget cycles.

3. Our third goal is Accountability and Public Engagement...

- Council is working with City administration to make us more accessible and accountable to residents.
- We want to embed these important principles within our various bylaws, policies and procedures.
- I want to inform you that Council is currently deliberating on a number of amendments to its Procedural Bylaw – Bylaw 370 – including:
 - Recorded votes – to provide a public record of how each Council member votes on every issue, to hold elected officials accountable for their decisions.
 - Incorporating live-streaming video at Council Meetings – to allow the public to observe the proceedings without being present, to provide access and improve public engagement, and
 - An open community forum to start Council Meetings – to provide citizens with an opportunity to ask questions on matters of public interest or concern, before a regular meeting is called to order.

Of course, there will be rules and guidelines; it will not be a free-for-all!

- Please note that the Procedural Bylaw contains many other amendments, but I wanted to discuss the changes that will have the most impact.
- We are also making every effort to provide the public with access to as much information as possible, consistent with the legislative requirements under the Municipal Government Act and the Alberta FOIP Act.

4. Our fourth goal in increased Economic Development...

- In recent years, the City has seen steady, consistent growth across our business license categories.

- Over the past three years, we have seen an average increase of 14% per year in businesses permits issued.
- While the numbers are trending in the right direction, we know that more needs to be done.
- A strong economy is required to build a solid community and similarly, an active community is required to fuel a robust economy... this is a fundamental principle of Community Economic Development.
- They are two halves of the same coin, each equally responsible for strengthening the other.
- To achieve these goals, it is clear that government cannot bring about change on its own.
- We need the help of our key private, public and non-profit sectors to mobilize towards a set of common goals: to encourage free enterprise and attract new investment to increase Lacombe's economic resiliency.
- But, you ask, what is the City's role in all this?
- We are doing our part, working on a number of fronts – and within the limited legal authority we have - to help our business community succeed.
- **I want to briefly discuss the City's role in Land Use Planning...**
- The Municipal Government Act provides the City with legal authority over municipal land use planning, within the guidelines laid out in the Land Use Bylaw and the Municipal Development Plan.
- The Land Use Bylaw and the Municipal Development Plan allow the City to manage and approve standards and types of land development based on sound urban development guidelines and practices.
- This means that development cannot occur at any cost, but within established guidelines.
- It is important to keep in mind that the City does not have the legal authority to determine which specific business goes on a specific parcel of land – that is determined privately, between the developer and their clients, and is beyond municipal control.
- Accountability for the City means that we have collaborated with the developer to the fullest extent possible, and have balanced legislative requirements with overall citizen interest...
- What this means is that the fate of developments like Lacombe Market Square are out of the City's direct control; it is in private hands!

- While we are doing everything within our legal authority to help this development along, we are waiting – like everyone else – for the owners/developers to announce their decisions.
- I also hear from many that bureaucratic red tape has been a barrier to attracting new development to Lacombe.
- I am here to tell you that the City has taken concrete steps to eliminate this complaint by revising the Land Use Bylaw in 2016 to streamline processes, to make it easier for land developers and others to navigate municipal licensing and permitting requirements.
- That said, we are happy to hear of potential issues and to any suggestions for improvement, and...
- To the developer community, I can tell you that the City is mindful of your needs. We are willing to work with you to accommodate your plans within the guidelines, balanced with community standards.
- Council's goal is to nurture a business-friendly culture by fostering an innovative, entrepreneurial environment.
- This includes creating a city that is infrastructure ready, people ready and business friendly – to demonstrate clearly that Lacombe is open for business!
- I want you to know that my door is open to ideas and suggestions on how we can better support our businesses community.
- I believe regular and consistent contact with our existing businesses is necessary to ensure their continued success, and
- By collaborating with groups like the Lacombe and District Chamber of Commerce, and the Echo Lacombe Association, the City has made significant improvements on how we serve local businesses and attract new investment.
- Last year, we launched two innovative business initiatives:
 - The first is the Lacombe Business Toolkit, a new economic development website that provides relevant, up-to-date information to prospective investors.
 - The second is the Placemaker Loyalty Rewards program. This easy-to-use web application can be used by local businesses as a powerful marketing and promotions tool, to reward customers and encourage patronage.
- These and other initiatives, like the Business Partnership Program, the Storefront Enhancement Program, new wayfinding signage, and a number of other grants are designed to help local businesses succeed.

- Council is also working to advance community development initiatives to further improve quality of life in Lacombe and attract new people to the community.
- We are working to balance the needs of all sectors: institutions, businesses large and small, non-profit and community groups, and citizens to help create a safe, inclusive, and vibrant community.
- We have grown Lacombe Regional Tourism's capacity, allowing them to better market our city across the province, to attract more visitors to the area.
- The City has also collaborated with local businesses and community groups to establish viable downtown community markets, and to enhance our annual events and festivals.
- Of course, none of these events could be successful, or even take place, without the commitment and efforts of our volunteers, community organizations and service clubs, as well as the vital support from our business community.
- Please join me in thanking our many wonderful volunteers and sponsors!
- On a related note, I have some good news to share with you. If you have not already heard:
 - We are hosting the Rogers Hometown Hockey Tour next month – on the weekend of Feb 3 and 4.
 - Also, Hockey Alberta has awarded Lacombe the honour of hosting the 2019 Allen Cup. These are big wins for hockey fans, for local businesses, and the community.
 - I am excited by the national exposure these events will provide, and positive economic impacts they will have on our city.
 - I encourage everyone to come out and take part in these fun and exciting community events...

(PAUSE)

- On a more sober note: I know that a good portion of the public is apprehensive by the upcoming legalization of cannabis in Canada.
- I want you to know that Council is looking at strategies with regard to the legalization of medical and recreational marijuana development and use.
- We will do our best to manage the introduction of this new legislation through common-sense rules, while managing the interests and expectations of the community.
- More information will be forthcoming in the months leading up to July 2018.

Conclusion

- In closing, I would like to thank Council, City staff, and everyone here for doing your part in helping to make Lacombe the prosperous and vibrant city it is today.
- I believe Lacombe is on the verge of something extraordinary, and I am excited about our city's prospects.
- However, to reach that level of success, we all must continue to work together – to meet any challenges and capitalize on opportunities that lie ahead with creativity, enthusiasm and a positive, can-do attitude! Are you with me?
- Again... thank you for joining me today; I appreciate your attention. Have a great rest of your day!

END