

Legislative Services, Rocky View County  
November 7, 2023

Re: Proposed budget, 2023

I've read the draft 2023 budget as well as the background document for a new MDP and a separate growth assessment for industry and commercial development. They frighten the hell out of me as they all ignore a fundamental of human survival that is protection for the environment, protection for water, environmental sustainability, maintaining biodiversity/wildlife and, amazingly, even climate change and nature based tourism. These get cursory or no recognition, consideration or provision. I find this scary.

For example, under section 4.2 of the MDP background document, Policy and Concepts, environment/biodiversity/nature appreciation and tourism do not even rank a mention, except in a cursory way under "county wellbeing". Of course it follows that there are no budgetary considerations/provisions for these either.

Why is there no budgetary recognition of the need to safeguard such fundamentals as habitat for pollinators (much less for native wildlife), water be it ground or surface, nature based tourism and for providing for all those folks who move into RVC expecting to enjoy a "country lifestyle" where they can experience and appreciate nature? It is shameful that the largest county in Alberta has protected less than 0.05% of its vast landscape, and most of that protection is provincial, not municipal.

In my view, environmental/water/habitat protection, climate change and nature based tourism deserve to be separate budget items demanding separate funds allocated and qualified staff to attend to them. These deserve similar separate treatment as has been given to industrial and commercial development, and a whole separate study of their place in RVC. We need, for example to study and fund:

- mapping and protecting wildlife corridors
- support for wildlife under and over passes in places of mass road slaughter like 1A highway between Calgary and Cochrane, and at suicide hill on Hwy 567.
- protection for remaining areas of environmental sensitivity and pollinator refuges
- provision for nature based appreciation including trails for those moving to RVC to experience these
- protection for ground and surface water
- better growth planning in order to protect natural features and environmentally significant areas
- consideration of climate change in far more of RVC's decision making
- recognition of the role and value of nature based tourism and provision for it

All of this deserves full budgetary recognition and the hiring of staff. Right now I see little to no provision for environmental protection and that puts RVC in a perilous position. Reallocation of budget items for unnecessary and expensive new fire stations at Bragg Creek and Madden, for example, could begin funding a new and vital environmental protection department.

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