



## AGENDA

Regular Council Meeting held in Council Chambers at #6, 3<sup>rd</sup> Ave. W, Empress, AB  
On

Wednesday September 18, 2024 commencing at 6:30 p.m.

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1. Call to Order: a) Oath of Office

At the close of nominations on September 10, 2024 one person filed nomination papers for the vacant Council position. As a result, Clinton Steinley has been declared Councillor for the Village of Empress and must take the Oath of Office. A full Organizational Meeting will be held in October.

*(Commissioner of Oaths, Tamara Ravenwood, to administer the Oath of Office for Councillor Steinley.)*

2. Adoption of Agenda: September 18, 2024 Regular Council Meeting Agenda

*(approve agenda as is or with amendments)*

3. Adoption of Minutes:

a) August 21, 2024 Regular Council Meeting

*(approve minutes as presented or with amendments)*

4. Delegations: a) Jonathan Schwartz, Empress Resident

Mr. Schwartz would like to discuss a purchase offer (agenda item 8.k) and development permit application.

*(That the information and discussion be accepted for information.)*

b) Kelsey Martin, Aggregates Manager and Darcy Ferguson, Director of Finance, Special Areas

Kelsey and Darcy will be reviewing surveys and information regarding the Empress Gravel Pit.

*(That the information and discussion be accepted for information.)*

5. Reports: a) Committee and Council Reports

i. Mayor Martin



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ii. Deputy Mayor Burgess

*(that the committee and Council reports, as verbally presented, be accepted, for information)*

b) Financial Report

- i. Cheque Listing
- ii. Account Balance
- iii. Revenue and Expense Report

*(that the financial report, as presented in writing be accepted for information.)*

c) Public Work's Report (will be provided at meeting time)

*(that the public works report, as presented in writing, be accepted for information.)*

d) Chief Administrative Officer's Report

- i. Meetings, etc
  - a. Alberta Transportation, Denette Leask, AMWWP water reservoir grant, September 9, 2024
- ii. Water Reservoir replacement
- iii. Water System Connectivity & Electrical issues
- iv. Connectivity issues with ATB
- v. Gas Tanks
- vi. CCBF grant agreement
- vii. Website
- viii. Land Use Bylaw Rewrite Update
- ix. Road Closure Bylaw 14-2020

*(that the CAO report, as presented, in writing and verbally, by Chief Administrative Officer Angela Duncan, be accepted for information.)*

6. Information and Correspondence:

- a) August 19, 2024 email from Alberta Municipalities regarding 2024 Resolutions.
- b) August 21, 2024 letter from Economic Development and Business Supports Assistant Deputy Minister, Sylvia Lepki, regarding changes to the northern and regional economic development program.



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- c) August 9, 2024 letter from Municipal Affairs Minister Ric McIver regarding 2025 fire services training program grant.
- d) August 24, 2024 Marigold Library System – Notes to Council.

*(that the information and correspondence items be accepted for information.)*

7. Old Business: a) Gravel Pit – Letter from Municipal Affairs

In follow up to the recent accusations and inquiries regarding the Empress Gravel Pit, on August 26, 2024 Municipal Affairs Minister Ric McIver, sent a letter to Mayor Martin and Council concluding that the gravel pit accusations were due to a change in accounting practices implemented in 2021 and further thanking the Village for our attention in working with Ministry staff to better understand the situation. To be transparent, administration recommends that the letter be posted to the website.

*(that the August 26, 2024 letter from Municipal Affairs Minister Ric McIver regarding the Empress Gravel Pit accusations and inquiry be accepted for information and further that the letter be posted to the Village of Empress website,*

*Or,*

*Some other direction as provided by Council at meeting time.)*

8. New Business: a) Canada Community Building Fund (CCBF) – Memorandum of Agreement

The CCBF agreement between the province and the federal government and subsequently the province and municipalities expired in 2023/2024. The province and federal government have come to a new agreement for 2024/2025 to 2033/2034. In order to receive funding, municipalities must now enter a new agreement with the province.

*(That the Memorandum of Agreement between His Majesty in Right of Alberta (Alberta Government) and the Village of Empress regarding the Canada Community Building Fund be signed and its' execution authorized.)*



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### b) 2023 Municipal Indicators

Every year Municipal Affairs publishes information about every municipality on their Municipal Dashboard. This dashboard tracks 13 municipal indicators with the intent of measuring long term viability and keeping local governments accountable. In 2023 Empress received flags on 2 indicators – tax collection rate and population change.

It is expected that tax collection rates are above 90%, Empress' 2023 tax collection rate was 89.15%. Administration submitted the following response *"Since 2019, the Village has made significant improvements in collecting property taxes. With very few properties in the village and even fewer houses, it doesn't take very many not paying to show a lower than desired tax collection rate. Adding to this, there are a number of village residents who own multiple properties in the Village. One of these residents is in a perpetual state of tax arrears on their properties."*

It is anticipated that population will not decline more than 20% over a 10-year period. Empress' population has declined by 21.28%. Administration submitted the following response *"While it is not clear why the population is declining, it should be noted that the population decline appears to start in earnest around 2021. During 2021 and subsequent years there has been significant governance and administrative instability in the Village."*

*(That the discussion and response regarding Empress' 2023 Municipal Indicators be accepted for information.)*

### c) Water Reservoir funding

The tender for the new water reservoir closed on September 11, 2024. A meeting will be set up in the near future to review the tenders and decide on next steps. In the meantime, I have been working on a plan to pay for the project. When the grant application was submitted, the project was estimated to cost \$1,582,000, with the AMWWP grant covering 75% of the costs or \$1,186,500. The new estimated cost of the reservoir is \$2,036,157 but the grant amount remains unchanged. Additionally, new items have provisionally been added to the project to make it a 21<sup>st</sup> century water system (chlorine and manganese analyzers, chlorine injectors, demolition of the old tower, and backup power). These



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additions are out of scope of the original grant approval. With the provisional items, the estimated cost is \$2,284,157. It must be stressed that these are ESTIMATED NUMBERS. It is prudent for the Village to send a letter to Minister of Transportation Devin Dreeshen requesting additional funding as well as a change of scope for the provisional items. In my discussion with Alberta Transportation they stressed that a letter of support from the MLA would also be helpful.

*(that a letter be sent to the Minister of Transportation, Devin Dreeshen, requesting additional Alberta Municipal Water and Wastewater Program (AMWWP) funding for the Empress Water Reservoir Project as well as a change of scope and further that Mayor Martin reach out to MLA Nate Horner to request a letter of support,*

Or,

*Some other direction as provided by Council at meeting time.)*

e) Letter of Support – Empress Friendship Center Grant Application

The Friendship Center is applying for a New Horizons for Seniors grant with the intention of redoing the flooring in their hall. Due to the tight timelines, Council approved a letter of support through email to be ratified at the meeting.

*(that the letter of support for the Empress Friendship Center New Horizons for Seniors grant application be ratified.)*

f) Resident Letter – proposed rezoning

This letter discusses proposed rezoning in the Village and asks Council to reconsider the proposal. While I am working with Palliser Municipal Services on a new Land Use Bylaw, draft zoning maps have not been finalized, nor have they been presented to Council or Public for feedback. All residents and stakeholders are encouraged to participate in the Land Use Bylaw engagement once it begins.

*(that the correspondence from David Fish regarding proposed rezoning be accepted for information and further that all residents and stakeholders are encouraged to participate once the Land Use Bylaw public engagement begins,*

Or,



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*Some other direction as provided by Council at meeting time.)*

g) Resident Letter – trailers on properties

This letter discusses trailers in the Village, as well as trailers that are not connected to water and sewer. In accordance with Land Use Bylaw 2013-07, Administration is aware of several unpermitted trailers in Empress. Many of these trailers are not connected to sewer and water because they are not in compliance with the Land Use Bylaw 2013-07. Additionally, in Alberta, trailers are not approved for year-round living. Council will be considering zoning and permitted/discretionary land use during the land use bylaw review, making this a poor time to start enforcement of this issue.

*(that the correspondence from Keith Brady regarding trailers be accepted for information,*

*Or,*

*Some other direction as provided by Council at meeting time.)*

h) Resident Email – Land Use Bylaw Rewrite

This email details the general contents of a Land Use Bylaw (LUB) and their importance to the community. She is asking for a steering committee to be struck regarding the LUB rewrite. At the June Council meeting, Council approved the Land Use Bylaw Engagement Plan, included in your package. Administration has a working copy of the draft Land Use Bylaw and was waiting to have a complete Council before moving forward with the planned Council Workshop. It should be noted that this has put us behind the timelines in the engagement plan. The workshop is an opportunity for Council to review, provide feedback, and request changes to the draft bylaw. It is Council's discretion if you would like to strike up a committee, which would require us to bring a new engagement plan back to Council and will set back the timelines for engagement and approval of the new bylaw.

*(that the email from Vivian Mosely regarding the Land Use Bylaw rewrite be accepted for information and further that all residents and stakeholders are encouraged to participate once the Land Use Bylaw public engagement begins,*



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*Or,*

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- i) Wildwillow Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) and Administration Contract

The CAO and Administration Contract between Empress and Wildwillow Enterprises expires on December 31, 2024. As per the letter in your package, Wildwillow Enterprises and CAO Angela Duncan have submitted notice that we will not be renewing our contract with the Village of Empress. We have truly enjoyed working with Empress and getting to know the community. However, necessary internal restructuring at Wildwillow, the amount of time and money needed to bring Empress to what we believe is an acceptable administrative standard, and the distance to the Village have led to this decision.

*(that the correspondence from Wildwillow Enterprises and CAO Angela Duncan regarding the non-renewal of the CAO and Administration Contract be accepted for information.)*

- j) Chief Administrative Officer Position

With Wildwillow Enterprises not renewing the CAO and Administration Contract, Council will need to make some decisions regarding next steps. Wildwillow is happy to assist with the recruitment process. Council should review the job description for the CAO and post an advertisement on various websites and job platforms, as appropriate. I have included in your package the most recent description I could find, but I am not sure if it is approved. While costly, Council could also consider hiring a job recruitment firm to assist in the search. Another option is to reach out to neighbouring municipalities to see if a shared CAO is feasible.

*(direction as provided at meeting time.)*

The next agenda items deal with land sales, the background is included as public information, however, Council has traditionally discussed these in CLOSED SESSION.





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- k) Purchase Offer: 1940's Hospital 326 1<sup>st</sup> Street East (Plan 0910147, Block 2, Lot 47)

An offer has been made to purchase the 1940's Hospital 326 1<sup>st</sup> Street East (Plan 0910147, Block 2, Lot 47). The offer amount will be forwarded separately. Administration is not making a recommendation as to the suitability of the offer and Council is welcome to make a counteroffer.

- Zoned G-General
- 2023 Assessment is \$60,780 and it is listed on our website for \$45,000.
- There are no caveats on title.

*(direction as provided at meeting time.)*

- l) Purchase Offer: 218 3<sup>rd</sup> Street West (Plan 5043AV, Block 22, Lot 27-28)

An offer has been made to purchase 218 3<sup>rd</sup> Street West (Plan 5043AV, Block 22, Lot 27-28). The offer amount will be forwarded separately. Administration is not making a recommendation as to the suitability of the offer and Council is welcome to make a counteroffer.

- This lot is not serviced, although there are services in the area. It has been noted in the past that there are concerns with lines freezing in this area, but administration has not been able to validate this concern.
- Zoned G - General
- Current assessment is \$4980. The lot is not listed on our website. However, the website directs buyers to the village office to inquire about lots that are not on the website. It is questionable if this meets the legislative requirement to advertise the property for sale.
- There are no caveats on title.
- This property was transferred to Empress in 2005, it is unclear why.

### 9. Closed Meeting Session:

- a) 8.k Purchase Offer: 1940's Hospital 326 1<sup>st</sup> Street East (Plan 0910147, Block 2, Lot 47)





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- b) 8.I Purchase Offer: 218 3<sup>rd</sup> Street West (Plan 5043AV, Block 22, Lot 27-28)
- c) Administration Contract

*(Pursuant to section 197(2) of the Municipal Government Act, that Council go into a closed meeting session at \_\_\_\_\_ p.m. to discuss the following: Purchase Offers – disclosure harmful to economic and other interests of a public body, FOIPP Act Section 25)*

*(that Council come out of closed meeting at \_\_\_\_\_ p.m.)*

*(further direction as given by Council at meeting time)*

10. Next meeting: October 16, 2024 at 6:30 p.m.

11. Adjournment: