

Questions from École Meridian Heights School

Council Meeting – April 12, 2016

INTRODUCTION

Gabby :

Good morning to all! Bonjour! We are grade six French Immersion students from École Meridian Heights School. We are glad to be here to learn some more about our municipal government. Our class has been preparing questions for your Council. We have seven questions in total.

QUESTION 1:

Ava:

We saw on your website that Parkland County has an animal adoption program. How does the animal adoption program work and how many animals are rescued on average by month?

Answer:

Dogs and cats are brought into the Parkland County Animal Shelter after being found running at large or stray in Parkland County or other contracted agencies such as: Stony Plain, Spruce Grove, Spring Lake, Onoway, Wabamun, and Alberta Beach.

*When a dog or cat is impounded at our Shelter, its photo is posted on **the animal shelter's** Facebook page and PetLynx (lost/found animal website). We scan them for microchips and check for tattoos or any other identifiers in hopes of returning them to their owners. If the animal is not claimed by its owner after at least 72 hours, it will be put up for adoption. Before being put up for adoption, all dogs must pass a Behavior Evaluation that tests the dog for any aggression. If the dog does not pass its behavior evaluation, he/she will not be available to adopt to the public, however it will be available only to local animal rescues who will work with their behaviour issues before adopting them to the appropriate home. Animals are not euthanized at the Parkland County Animal Shelter unless it is recommended by a veterinarian for humane reasons only.*

When animals are available for adoption to the public, they are adopted out on a first-come, first-serve basis. Anyone can stop by our Shelter at any time during our business hours to view our impounded animals. The fee to adopt a dog or cat is \$162.65 for females, and \$146.90 for males. This fee includes a certificate to attend one of our contracted Veterinary Clinics and receive a check-up, vaccination, spay/neuter, and microchipping of your new adopted pet. We adopt Dogs and cats however be aware that Parkland County does not have a cat Bylaw so any cats that are in our facility come from one of our contracted communities.

QUESTION 2:

Gracie:

How is Parkland County prepared for natural disasters, such as tornados, forest fires, floods, etc.

Answer:

Parkland County is required to prepare emergency management plans and programs. Parkland County recently adopted a new Emergency Management Plan. This plan has been developed in conjunction with various municipalities in the Parkland region.

The Emergency management plan is based on organizing staff to deal with any emergency whether that emergency be a natural disaster such as a tornado or forest fire or a man-made threat like a train derailment or chemical spill. This all-hazards approach to emergency management relies on specific training for staff in their roles within the Emergency Management Plan.

QUESTION 3:

Bronwyn:

On your website, we saw that Parkland County has three different levels of grants for home-based businesses so if Parkland County was to give grants to home-based businesses that are not doing well, which level would they give to 1, 2 or 3 and how would that be decided?

Answer:

There's a variety of grants that businesses can apply for. Agriculture and farm based businesses typically have the most access to grant funds.

To get help finding and applying for grants, businesses could speak with an economic development officer.

If you want to start a business and you're a youth you can apply for a business loan and some mentorship with groups like "futurepreneur", which start helping people as young as 18 start businesses. You could also ask your teachers to have Junior Achievement come to your school. Kids as young as grade 3 can learn how to start a business!

QUESTION 4:

Ben:

How is the state of the oil industry and the economy going to affect the services in Parkland County? Are there services that will be affected more than others?

Answer:

Parkland County has a number of businesses that are directly related to the oil and gas industry. Most of these businesses provide field machinery, equipment, construction and support services to the industry.

Business sales are impacted in two ways: through lower oil prices which lead to lower prices for certain products and services; and through lower sales volumes of oil and gas field machinery and equipment. When companies aren't making as much money, they must make tough decisions in order to stay in business. Many have had to lay off employees in order to keep their costs lower while still making a profit. When people are losing their jobs, they don't spend as much money on other things such as travel, entertainment, dining out, clothing, etc. because they struggle to pay their bills. We refer to this as a 'trickle down' effect, because eventually almost all types of businesses are impacted by the oil industry over time.

Parkland County, like all places, has been impacted by these factors. We've seen less businesses expanding or opening business, and even a few businesses closing. It has not been as severe as in other places though. The County is quite diversified; meaning we have a wide variety of businesses that are not directly related to oil & gas. Plus, the County does not have a lot of retail stores (clothing, restaurants). So while things have certainly slowed down, Parkland County continues to grow. Part of our jobs as County employees is to find new and innovative ways to attract businesses while supporting the businesses we already have. We work very closely with all business sectors in order to gain a better understanding of what affects them the most.

QUESTION 5:

Bailey:

What does Parkland County do to protect the environment and wildlife near the Chickakoo Lake Recreational area? Do you use pesticides and fertilizer or other harmful chemicals there?

Answer:

We are currently installing an aeration system in Chickakoo Lake which will increase oxygen levels in the water and provide the trout that are stocked into the lake every year enough oxygen to survive year round.

All of Chickakoo Lake Recreation Area has a no hunting designation which allows the wildlife in the area to have a bit of sanctuary.

There are also bird houses placed throughout the park which provide nesting for many different types of birds.

Herbicides are used in moderation on a case by case basis in Chickakoo Lake Recreation Area because of invasive species that are present that are regulated by the Alberta Weed Control Act. These invasive species threaten biodiversity so to control them we use an integrated approach including spot spray application, hand trimming, hand pulling and mowing.

QUESTION 6:

Jinnaya: **Parkland County's population is growing rapidly.** How do you plan to continue building enough homes and still keep Parkland County as a rural area?

Answer:

*By the year 2044, the County could potentially see a population of 50,000 – we are currently just over 31,000 residents. **New residents may want to live in more “urban” type neighbourhoods, while others may want a rural type of lifestyle (larger lots out in the County).***

The County's Planning Department – along with Council - has to clearly distinguish which areas of the County will become urban and which will stay rural. For instance, areas closer to the City of Edmonton will most likely become more “urban” in how they look (smaller lot sizes, possible houses with servicing like water and sewer) since Edmonton's development is very urban in nature. This will help cater to new residents who want to live closer to the big city and have more services.

That said, there are parts of the County which are further away from the major urban areas that we want to keep rural for people who want a rural lifestyle. In these areas, we will keep these areas rural by:

- allowing new homes and subdivided lots to stay relatively large (2 acres sizes and larger per house lot)*
- making sure adjacent areas are used for farming and agricultural uses (i.e. keeping land maintained for farms)*
- limiting the number of lots allowed in certain areas (i.e. only 4 lots are allowed on 160 acres at a time) – **this limits your housing and population “density” in rural areas encouraging people to have a lot of trees and landscaping on their property.***

We also may look at focusing development in the hamlet, like Entwistle, to provide an alternative, small-town location for people.

By “balancing” where we would support “urban” and “rural” development in the County, the County will be able to accommodate the new growth and population.

QUESTION 7:

Autumn:

When the landfills get too full in Parkland County and there is no more space left to create more of them, where will the garbage go? Will it go to neighbouring cities/communities or will there be a more productive way to solve the problem?

Answer:

Parkland County currently ships all waste dropped at all Transfer Stations to large landfill facilities outside of the County. In future it may be possible to open another landfill within our County. As research continues in the field of waste reduction and utilization we will continue to explore options to better handle and/or utilize the waste produced in the County.

CLOSING

Harmony:

Thank you for allowing us to attend part of your Council meeting and for giving us the chance to ask questions. This is a great learning experience for all of us. Have a great day! Au revoir!