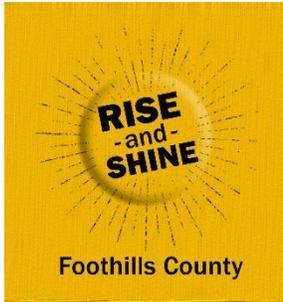


2020.04.24 - Foothills County Div. 4 Update from Reeve/Councillor Suzanne Oel

Greetings! Sharing my News Update...



Message of Encouragement: We have been going through a world-changing few weeks and dealing with a lot of stress. Every morning we have to make a decision whether to be overwhelmed by this new reality, or whether to RISE-and-SHINE! I invite you to do just that: RISE-and-SHINE! Start your day with positive thoughts and action. Think about something you are thankful for and share with your family, friends and co-workers. Help someone. Ask for help. Encourage someone. Read a good news story. Be filled with inspiration. There's hope and we will get through this together. One day at a time. You are valued by Foothills County. We are thinking of you and your families and send best wishes for your health and safekeeping! RISE-and-SHINE Everyone!

Foothills County COVID-19 information: The County is following all AHS rules, keeping services going and planning for recovery. County messaging can be found here: [Foothills County Website](#)

Recovery Planning: Let's look and plan ahead. We are certainly continuing on the response phase of this pandemic, but can also discuss the recovery phase at the same time. Of course it's "health first", we are following all the AHS and Provincial rules and we care about our residents and employees. In addition to that, we are getting prepared to be a part of the Provincial plans to reconvene the economy. Foothills County Council and Staff continue to interact with residents and provide services, community water and wastewater, fire department response and road maintenance. As we navigate the COVID-19 outbreak, we are making an inventory of losses, savings and opportunities. Over the last weeks, our council and administration have been thinking this through and are dealing with this in a proactive way. We are strategizing how the county can best move forward, keep business flowing and partake in upcoming stimulus projects from Federal and Provincial governments.

Electronic Council Meetings: In April, we streamed our first-ever live Council Meeting and will continue to use this means of communication as long as our Municipal Office Building is closed to the public. Using a conference video program, we enable remote attendance of Council and Staff. In May, we are hoping to add electronic public hearings to our agendas, thereby allowing remote attendance of other participants so we can keep business moving on these matters as well. All these changes to Council Meetings have been allowed temporarily through a COVID-19 Regulation under the Provincial Municipal Government Act. You can find the link to watch our Council Meetings on the homepage of our website: FoothillsCountyAB.ca

Budget 2020 on-going deliberations: This topic is quite complicated and has yet to be finalized as we are carefully paying attention to the issues at hand, to be responsive and also prepare for the unknown. We are planning for a zero-increase budget, which is possible now that, thankfully, the Province has removed the school tax increase. However, the policing requisition of approximately \$660,000 is still due to be collected this year on

behalf of the Province. The County has deferred late penalties on utility and tax payments for those who need more time.

Fire Ban in the Forest Protection area of Alberta: In case you are not aware of this yet... As of April 15, 2020, a Province-wide Fire Ban has been instituted in order to keep emergency resources available for responding to non-fire issues or fire issues that are not human-caused. On private and public lands within these areas, all open fires, firepits, briquette BBQs, campfires in campgrounds, back-country campfires, fireworks and exploding targets are prohibited. All Fire Permits are cancelled. Off-Highway vehicles are prohibited from use on public lands. Conditions will be monitored to determine opening this up again. For more information, visit: <https://albertafirebans.ca/>

Foothills County Fire Restriction / Burning Restriction: As of April 20, 2020, there is a Fire Restriction on all open fires that require a permit, including Fire Works. All open fires that require a permit are to be extinguished and any open burning permits cancelled. This Restriction will be in effect until all areas in Foothills County receive substantial changes to the current dry conditions and approval is received to lift this Restriction.

This FIRE RESTRICTION: SUSPENDS all fire permits issued under the authority of the Forest and Prairie Protection Act, REQUIRES all outdoor fires that require a permit presently burning whether set under the authority of a fire permit or not, extinguished, and PROHIBITS the lighting of any outdoor fires that require a permit within Foothills County. This Restriction INCLUDES FIREWORKS, TORCHES or LANTERNS with open flames and any other outdoor fires that require fire permits.

This FIRE RESTRICTION does not apply to: Safe residential fire pits and safe campfires in campgrounds (Non-combustible unit 36 inches in diameter or less), Gas or propane stoves / barbecues and portable propane fire pits when used according to manufacturer's specifications, Charcoal briquette and solid fuel barbecues when used according to manufacturer's specifications, Chiminea's (with screen covers that are located on non-combustible surfaces), Internal household fire places, Wood pellet smokers, Incinerators

Local RCMP Survey: Thx Turner Valley RCMP for doing this survey and sharing your ideas and the results with us. To read the article, click on this link: [Turner Valley RCMP Policing Goals](#)

Road and Drainage Issues: Due to the harsh winter that started in September, we've had to plow County roads dozens of times, which has resulted in significant gravel loss. With that and the continuous snow/rain events, the frost coming out of the ground in these last few weeks and the heavy truck traffic, the problems on our gravel roads have compounded, producing muddy/slippery conditions. The County will continue to tend to these roads and with some dryer weather, conditions should improve. Public Works operators will pull the shoulders, reshape road surfaces, improve drainage and add gravel.

Elk & Wildlife Event delayed: As mentioned in my May High Country News article, I confirm that this event will be held later on in the year. We would like to bring in the experts and hold an info session and discussion about "living with wildlife, with a focus on elk". I'll let you know when it is rescheduled.

Gateway Signage: New Gateway Signage marks the main highway entrances to Foothills County. Installation of the new signs is expected to be completed by the summer of 2020. Our signage replacement was long overdue. Since our municipal name change was contemplated and we wanted to reduce costs, we waited until the official change to "Foothills County" occurred on January 1, 2019, before proceeding with this project. Progress was made on design and planning throughout 2019, but weather delays kept the signs from being installed earlier. We believe this will add a nice feature identifying our County boundaries.

Foothills Fire Department has a New Chief and Deputy-Chief: We welcomed our new Fire Chief Rick Saulnier and Deputy Fire Chief Scott Young in February 2020 and look forward to working with them in their new roles!

Volunteer Firefighters needed: Foothills County is looking for Volunteer Firefighters to serve the Priddis area and other areas in the county. If you are interested, please contact our Fire Chief:
Rick.Saulnier@FoothillsCountyAB.ca

No further Postal Address changes this year: As you may know, some areas of Foothills County have had changes to their postal addresses over the last few years. We checked with Canada Post to see where they are at regarding the remaining addresses. They indicated that they have completed replacing the old green mailboxes with the new community boxes and, at this time, do not plan to convert any more of the Foothills postal addresses to the 911 addresses in 2020. This may resume in 2021, but nothing is currently planned.

Critter Reminder: A number of cougar sightings in the Priddis area have been posted to Facebook recently. Any time of the year, we have a high cougar population in the west area of the County, as we live in their territory. So, just a reminder to avoid attracting the animals to your yard and thereby prevent encounters or conflicts. More info: <https://www.alberta.ca/cougars.aspx>

For Other News & Updates: Please visit my website: <http://suzanneoel.com/>
Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/CouncillorSuzanneOel/>

Best wishes for your health and well-being!

Suzanne