

## **Mayor Deb Higgins - August 22, 2013**

Summer is supposed to be a time when things slow down a little, when we get to spend time enjoying outside activities, and hopefully get some time to relax and enjoy the summer. Here we are, nearing the end of August, and the back to school flyers are arriving in the mailbox, sending us a sure sign we're at the tail end of the season. I'm still not sure where it's gone.

This summer really didn't slow down. It's been a busy couple of months with many activities going on in Moose Jaw. Hopefully you've had an opportunity to get out and attend at least some of the events held here in our fair city.

For City Council, this fall will continue to be busy as we, along with City Administration, work towards timelier budget deliberations. Last year, municipal elections set the process back and we went well into late spring before final budget approval which is definitely too late. This year we're starting early in the fall and finalizing the Operating and Capital Budgets early in the new year. This way, City departments will have a better opportunity to plan and prepare to gear up for spring work.

There is a significant amount of work that needs to be completed prior to budget discussions and decisions. The senior administration is in the process of preparing two discussion papers for two separate Council Planning Sessions being held in late August and early September. The topics are Infrastructure, and Planning and Land Development.

Having a solid understanding of the city's infrastructure, what's currently there, what needs to be improved and what capacity we have to develop new areas are all significant issues and information we need when making decisions at budget time. Planning and Land is also important. With substantial growth happening in the City, there are many questions as to where the City should expand. Are services currently available to accommodate that growth? What do we want our City to look like? What mix of residential, commercial and light industrial is the best for not only today's demands but for years to come?

These discussions will provide Council and Administration with a solid basis for moving forward at a Strategic Planning Session in September where we will review our current Strategic Plan and provide direction as to the initiatives Council would like to see as priorities not only for 2014 but for future years. The results of the recent Citizen Survey along with a City employee survey will also add information to the discussion at the Planning Session. The updated Strategic Plan will then serve as a blueprint as each City department prepares their business plans for 2014.

While a budget may be viewed as a basic discussion on funding available and the inevitable discussion on taxes and revenue, there is a great deal of preparation and work that goes into the development of the City's budget. Making sure Council and Administration keep in mind the long term goals of the community and a long term vision for the City is key to the process being successful.

Deb Higgins  
Mayor