

Mayor Deb Higgins - November 1, 2013

City Council will soon begin the process of working through proposals for the 2014 budget and put in place the priorities for the coming year. It may seem early to set priorities for the coming year, but there is a definite need to be timelier with our budget deliberations and decisions.

For the City to initiate any major projects, utilize citizen's tax dollars to the utmost advantage, and provide the best services for our community, Council and Administration are aiming to have the budget process begin early for a number of reasons. City Departments need an appropriate amount of time to complete planning and preparation for the coming year, and for any work that needs to be contracted out, tenders need to be issued as soon as possible to receive the best options for the community.

Administration has put a significant amount of work into budget planning. After a number of planning sessions, input from our strategic plan, and the citizen's survey, we will be soon be working our way through budget documents.

Clearly the citizen survey showed a strong need to put roads, streets and sidewalks first on the priority list for the budget. What is under those roads and streets is also important to delivering the services we expect as residents. Water and sewer in older areas of the city are in need of replacement and renewal. Coordinating the replacement of these basic services is the challenge. Nothing annoys residents more than to see a newly paved street being dug up to fix underground pipes - it's a situation that needs to be avoided if at all possible and a prime example where planning and preparation are important.

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 to keep in mind 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 will grow, are services currently available to accommodate that growth, and 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?

Also to keep in mind during budget deliberations is that although numerous areas of City services received good responses in the citizen's survey, we can't ignore those services to backfill others. Citizens stated that they don't want a reduction of services but improvements in areas they felt were lacking.

Moose Jaw today is a considerably different city than it was during our grandparents or even our parents' time. We are seeing growth both on the residential and commercial side at a level that has not been seen in years. While each of us may have different personal goals and aspirations that we work towards, as residents, our views are fairly similar in what we want for our City and keeping those views in mind while setting the priorities for the coming year is top of mind for Council.

Deb Higgins
Mayor