

COUNCIL BUDGET MEETING MINUTES

**November 13, 2024
COUNCIL CHAMBERS
400 Main Street SE**

PRESENT

Mayor P. Brown
Deputy Mayor H. Spearman
Councillor D. Belyk
Councillor R. Chapman
Councillor A. Jones
Councillor C. Kolson
Councillor T. Petrow

STAFF

H. Galanti, City Manager
M. Lock, Director Community Services
S. Schindeler, Director Corporate Services & CFO
L. Stevens, Director Community Infrastructure
S. Utz, Director Strategic Growth and Investment
K. Weinberger, Director Community Safety & Social Services
B. Anderson, Manager Recreation Services
C. Aragon, Manager Culture, Heritage and Events
M. Bigney, Manager Finance
C. Satink, Manager Legislative Services & IGM/City Clerk
T. Belsham, Team Leader Legislative Services/Assistant City Clerk
K. Spence, Council Technician
K. Rushford, Recording Technician

1. SPECIAL MEETING OF COUNCIL - CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Brown called the meeting to order at 9:01 a.m.

2. 2025 BUDGET DELIBERATION MEETING - DAY 1

3. 2025 BUDGET DOCUMENTS

- 3.1 2025 Budget for Council Deliberation
- 3.2 2025 Detailed Operating Budget for Council Deliberation

4. PUBLIC AGENDA - 9:00 AM

- 1. Mayor's Opening Remarks (Mayor Brown)
Mayor Brown provided opening remarks.

2. Administration Opening Remarks (Shannon Schindeler, Director of Corporate Services and Meghan Bigney, Manager of Finance)

S. Schindeler, Director of Corporate Services, and M. Bigney, Manager of Finance, provided Administration opening remarks.

It was asked why the Provincial government is looking at population numbers rather than housing units. M. Bigney outlined the effect of compounding growth on inflation. Compounding growth effect must be factored into capital investment. Administration can report back with per household statistics. A comment was made that only one RCMP officer is being requested. The City should showcase why our social issues are so low. M. Bigney confirmed that Administration will consider that in future presentations.

3. Airdrie Housing Limited, Airdrie Public Library and Airdrie Mainstreet Square Budget Presentations and Deliberations (Subsidiary representatives in attendance)

1. 2025 Airdrie Housing Limited Budget Update

Mr. Dougal Forteath, Managing Director, Airdrie Housing Limited (AHL), presented AHL'S 2025 operating budget for Council deliberation. AHL had originally requested \$330,000 in operating funding, but since their units will fall under the affordable property tax exemption in Bill 20, the 2025 request has been reduced to \$270,000, being a 15.6% decrease.

2024-C-354

Moved By Councillor Kolson

That Council accepts the 2025 Airdrie Housing Limited budget for information.

Carried

2. 2025 Airdrie Public Library Budget Update

Mr. Daniel Nelles, Airdrie Public Library (APL) Board Chair, and Renee Summers, APL finance committee chair, presented APL's 2025 operating budget for Council deliberation. The 2025 budget request of \$3,009,512 2025 represents a \$959,710 increase. The grant request from the City for 2026 is estimated to be \$3,398,737, being an increase of \$389,225 over the 2025 request, primarily for additional staffing costs above the hiring in 2025.

R. Summers advised that the decrease in Marigold funding is due to Marigold changing the way they calculate their population numbers. In response to a question, D. Nelles advised that two years ago, the Library Board conducted a third party review of belonging to a regional library system. While in the current facility, there has been an enormous cost benefit to belonging to Marigold. Upon moving into the new facility, APL will still be saving money by belonging to Marigold compared to operating by ourselves.

A comment was made that other communities are doing more with less cost. D. Nelles advised that APL anticipates library use to increase exponentially in the new facility. It was asked why fines for late returns have been eliminated. D. Nelles advised that maintaining a fine for late items is a barrier for low income families to access library services.

Concern was raised over bringing new staff on halfway through the year for onboarding. Deb Cryderman, Library Director, advised that most of the staff being onboarded early will be existing staff moving from part time to full time. New staff will be brought in closer to the opening day.

A question was asked as to how many Rocky View County residents take out books or access programming. D. Nelles advised that addresses are not collected for program registration. Council advised that they would like to know the percentage.

A question was asked about the funds that Marigold was holding for Airdrie's collection. D. Nelles advised that funds from 2018 to 2021 have been expended slowly in order to purchase materials for the new facility.

M. Lock, Director of Community Services, confirmed that the capital project is carrying funds for all equipment and furnishings in the public access space. APL is requesting \$200,000 to help move IT equipment and other administrative functions that library staff carry out behind the scenes.

D. Nelles advised that the primary increase in professional fees is the cost to the vendor of new library materials, including cataloging and processing of new materials. It was asked whether it is the responsibility of the City to provide those materials. M. Lock advised that new collections are the library's responsibility. There are no amounts for new collections in the capital budget.

D. Nelles advised that \$850,000 has been raised to date through fundraising efforts, which includes previous donations. APL anticipates receiving another \$922,000 through fundraising efforts in 2025. Fundraising is currently being done in-house. The target has always been to raise \$1.5M for collections.

2024-C-355

Moved By Deputy Mayor Spearman

That Council accepts the 2025 Airdrie Public Library budget for information.

Carried

RECESS

Mayor Brown called a recess at 10:35 a.m. The meeting reconvened at 10:51a.m.

3. **2025 AMSQ Budget Update**

Mayor Brown presented AMSQ's 2025 Budget Update.

2024-C-356

Moved By Councillor Petrow

That Council accepts the 2025 AMSQ budget for information.

Carried

5. DIRECTOR PRESENTATIONS

1. Community Safety and Social Services

K. Weinberger, Director of Community Safety & Social Services, presented the Community Safety and Social Services budget.

A question was asked about the advertising and communication expense for the Housing Accelerator Fund (HAF). K. Weinberger advised that there is a very robust communication plan to engage the community on this project. There will also be weekly engagement with the development industry and the construction industry. The 825% increase in personnel for affordable housing results from going from one position to numerous positions for the HAF program. All of the expenses will be paid out of HAF dollars.

K. Weinberger confirmed that only one FTE is being requested for policing. The other costs are indirect. The RCMP are under contracted services. K. Weinberger noted that the Alberta Sheriffs have a memorandum of understanding with the RCMP that was not renewed this year due to enhancements under the Police Act. Sheriffs will only be doing highway patrol and ticket revenue will not come to the City.

2. Community Infrastructure

L. Stevens, Director of Community Infrastructure, presented the Community Infrastructure budget.

It was asked whether adding an FTE will improve the queuing of traffic lights on 8th Street. L. Stevens advised that Administration has undertaken a complete post-40th Avenue intersection review. The new signal plans will be implemented from late November to mid-December. City staff do not adjust traffic signal timing in-house. Administration would like to bring that expertise in-house in the future to improve our response to traffic signals, but a comprehensive plan needs to be developed regarding contracted service versus in-house services.

It was asked whether the City is asking for any cost sharing with CPKC on the grade separation. L. Stevens confirmed that if upgrades are required for road traffic, the cost falls heavily on the Municipality, although some portion may be attributed to CPKC.

A comment was made that the paving stones on sidewalks in the downtown are in disrepair. L. Stevens confirmed that there is some deterioration on First Avenue and on Main Street. This year's budget includes a request for an additional \$20,000 for sidewalk repair.

It was asked whether the janitorial services for Inspire are only for the City side or also include the library portion. L. Stevens advised that the intention is to centralize all custodial services into the building maintenance department. The City will manage the entire Inspire contract including the library and the common space. M. Bigney confirmed that the City will manage the library's janitorial as a grant in kind.

RECESS

Mayor Brown called a recess at 11:54 a.m. The meeting reconvened at 1:01 p.m.

It was asked whether the road widening to 6 lanes on Yankee Valley BV from 8th Street to QEII will be done at the same time as the grade separation. L. Stevens advised that the design effort will evaluate whether to widen to 6 lanes with the current surface crossing or whether to do it coincidental with the grade separation. The design dollars set aside for 2025 are based on proceeding with the current configuration.

A question was asked about the impact to rush hour traffic of putting a traffic light at Veterans BV and Gateway Drive. L. Stevens advised that any time you add an intersection to an arterial roadway, traffic will not be as free flowing, but the hope is to take some traffic off Main Street and Veterans BV. This intersection will address short term issues to improve efficiency of corridor movements.

L. Stevens advised that there is one oil grit separator in the vicinity of Nose Creek Park, one in Waterstone, plus 1 or 2 more. The current separators are addressing pre-2000 development. We will need to install 5-7 more to address future development.

4. PUBLIC AGENDA (continued)

4. CIBC Economic Update

Mr. James Hobson and Mr. Charet Chahal, Hobson Chahal Advisory Group, CIBC Wood Gundy, presented the CIBC Economic Update. Mr. Hobson outlined the Monetary Cycle and inflationary elements. Mr. Chahal discussed the housing stock affordability crisis. Alberta's housing stock per capita is the lowest in the country and households in Alberta have been the hardest hit by high retail sales. Canada's unemployment rate is rising more than in other regions; however, Alberta has one of the best labour pools in all of Canada.

It was asked whether any forecasting has been done on tariffs from the U.S. Mr. Chahal advised that President Elect Trump is pro-energy, which will be positive for Alberta, but we will need to wait and see the actual tariff policies.

5. DIRECTOR PRESENTATIONS (continued)

3. Strategic Growth and Investment

S. Utz, Director Strategic Growth and Investment, presented the Strategic Growth and Investment budget. In response to earlier questions, S. Utz advised that the percentage unit growth will be about 6.2% in 2024, based on what has been constructed so far this year. The Northern and Regional Economic Development Program (NRED) grant covered 50% of Sport Tourism work in 2024, which allowed us to develop a Sport Tourism Strategy. In 2025, we will be doing economic impact studies based on that Strategy.

A question was raised about current and projected transit ridership numbers. S. Utz advised that ridership is 21% higher than last year and is expected to rise to over 820,000 rider trips next year. The downtown route is cost neutral. A question was asked about the ridership on Route 900 from Airdrie to CrossIron Mills to Calgary compared to coming the other way. This was put on the parking lot.

A question was asked about the landfill post-closure monitoring program. S. Utz advised that this relates to the site on Main Street. This is a continuation of work that was done previously. The surveys relate to reserve land. He will report back with more information on the surveys.

A comment was made that it would be helpful to see net job numbers (job losses as well as new jobs). S. Utz noted the comment. In response to a question, S. Utz advised that incentives were about 22% of the total cost toward capital improvements in the downtown last year. The downtown has increased by 34% in the last two years. We will continue to monitor incentive programs and come back with potential changes to the program next year.

A comment was made that it would be helpful to see how many people get on the local buses and at what time of day. S. Utz advised that they do a manual count of riders. There will be more technical tracking in the future. 55% of payments are online. A comment was made that in non-peak hours, there are very large buses on the local routes with very few riders. S. Utz advised that we have excess inventory so buses can be cycled out for repairs. Administration believe that we have the right balance of buses at this time.

RECESS

Mayor Brown called a recess at 2:29 p.m. The meeting reconvened at 2:48 p.m.

4. Community Services

M. Lock, Director Community Services, presented the Community Services budget and provided clarification regarding the FTE positions at Genesis Place.

C. Aragon, Manager Culture, Heritage and Events, outlined the services provided in his area due to the reorganization. The \$50,000 for Cultural Performance is for an increase for Indigenous activities.

A question was asked about Bert Church Theatre staff moving to Inspire. C. Aragon advised that Administration is looking at smaller, more affordable, family-oriented shows at Bert Church Theatre. This move will allow staff to develop the visual arts program at Inspire.

C. Aragon advised that the projected revenue for unallocated tenant space at Inspire is a placeholder based on market average for similar kinds of space. It was asked how Airdrie Arts and Culture Council (AACC) will participate with cost sharing and resource sharing at Inspire. C. Aragon advised that Administration did not receive direction from Council to provide space for the executive director of AACC. Discussions with AACC have focused on programming. Legislative Services will look into the request for the executive director to have space at inspire.

A question was asked about solar panels in Rob Ebbesen arena. B. Anderson, Manager Recreation Services, advised that this is being studied now. Timing is tied to a potential grant.

A question was asked about the difference in cost between aquatic paint and retiling of the pool. B. Anderson advised that aquatic paint is 10% of the cost of tile, but we are having issues with the existing paint at Genesis Place. Some patches can be done underwater,

so the pool will not need to be drained. The acoustic panels in the pool area are original to Genesis Place in 2003 and need to be replaced.

5. City Council

C. Satink, Manager Legislative Services & IGM/City Clerk, presented the City Council budget. There were no questions or concerns.

6. City Manager's Office

H. Galanti, City Manager, presented the City Manager's Office budget. M. Bigney clarified regarding the increase in personnel and training costs.

C. Satink advised that the permanent elector list is now required by legislation. Information will need to be collected and supplied it to the Provincial government each year.

6. **ADJOURNMENT**

Mayor Brown adjourned the meeting at 4:07 p.m.

Mayor

City Clerk