

**2025 ANNUAL RATEPAYER MEETING
SPECIAL AREA NO. 4, SUB-DIVISION NO. 1, 2 and 3
Gem Centre, Consort
June 5, 2025**

Shaune Kovitch called the meeting to order at 1:31pm, welcoming the 8 ratepayers in attendance.

Laurie Ference nominated Doug Noble for chairperson; seconded Gordon Long.
CARRIED

Taryl Abt read minutes from May 23, 2024 ratepayer meeting. Minutes were declared adopted on a motion by Pat Rutledge; seconded by Lorna Rooney.
CARRIED

OLD BUSINESS

Shaune Kovitch gave an update on the Loyalist Truck Fill Station. Usage is measuring in the 20,000 to 23,000 m3 range. There is a long-range plan to increase the tank size but the usage will continue to be monitored with seasonal increases noted.

Discussion on truck fill stations. A new payment system is being explored because the old system has become hard to maintain with no technicians available and coin boxes are being stolen. Tying the Youngstown truck fill to the same payment options would be convenient.

Discussion on speed reduction on RR 8-5 south of Veteran to fix dust issue for acreage owners at NW-05-35-08-W4. Changing the mandated speed on a public road is difficult. Other options could include suggested reduced speed signs such as “kids playing”, increased bylaw enforcement, traffic counter to determine type of traffic and dust abatement by ratepayer or industrial users of the road.

Doug Noble introduced Shaune Kovitch as the new Special Areas Board Chair and Darren Jones as the new Director of Finance and Administration.

SPECIAL AREAS BOARD REPRESENTATIVE REPORTS

Shaune Kovitch, Chair

Shaune gave a brief history of his time with Special Areas.

Shaune presented a PowerPoint presentation on the following:

- **Special Areas Board Member Changes:** Jordan Christianson’s appointment ending in March 2025 but will assist with the transition until end of June 2025.
- **2025 Municipal Election** on Monday, October 20, 2025: Nominations open until September 22, 2025; gave a summary of the roles of Advisory Councilors.
- **Municipal Partnerships:** Our rural and urban partnerships continue to be strong
- **Consort & District Medical Centre Board:** The Nurse Practitioner has been well received. One fulltime position was filled in June 2024 and she has a current patient panel of 861. There are also a geriatric and pediatric Nurse Practitioners joining the clinic. There are a panel of Doctors available for consultation on complex matters and referrals to specialists occur the same way as a referral from a Doctor.
- **Acadia Foundation:** The Assisted Living/Dementia Care facility in Oyen is under construction. The \$11.7M project is funded by GOA and

partnered with Special Areas. Operational date has been moved to summer 2026.

- **MD of Acadia & SA Irrigation Project:** Phase One was completed in 2022 and Phase Two was completed in spring 2025 with the report to be completed in fall 2025. The next phase is the funding phase.
- **Tax Recovery Land Sale:** The TRLS continues until July 16, 2026.
- **Resident Satisfaction Survey:** The Survey is open now and until September 2, 2025. The goal is to help focus priorities.

Discussion on paving the Powell/Girletz road (TWP 31-2 going east from Sec HWY 884 in SA3). This will need to be addressed at Advisory Council this fall.

Discussion on Tax Recovery Land Sale interest rate (7.25%). It will not change as it is a set rate within the approved policy.

Darren Jones, Director of Finance & Administration

Darren gave a brief background of his time with Special Areas.

Darren presented a PowerPoint presentation reviewing the 2024 audited financial statements.

- Special Areas continues to be in a strong financial position with significant financial reserve from Tax Recovery Land Sale and investments.
- Limitations during COVID (projects not going forward, capital spending restrictions, and supply chain issues) raised surplus amounts which led to planned deficits to draw down the surplus.
- 2024 had a planned deficit of \$18M but came in at \$8.9M. There is a planned deficit of \$9M for 2025

Discussion on TRLS revenue.

Discussion on employee pensions. The pensions are handled by the Public Service Pension Plan and are not a factor in Special Areas financials.

Discussion on industrial assessments and taxes. Renewables brought in \$355M in assessment and tax revenue was up \$7.2M. The industrial mill rate takes into consideration the bad debts that can occur.

Shaune Kovitch, for the Director of Municipal Services

Shaune presented the report for Municipal Services as the position has not been recruited yet. Road maintenance was done on 6400km of road with 36 graders in 2024. Road Committee meetings showed that there was more pressure on graded trails as equipment gets bigger and people wish to keep it off main roads.

Shaune presented a PowerPoint presentation on the following:

- **Roads:** 26km of construction; 30km of re-crowning and 30km surfacing planned for 2025
- **Secondary Highways:** A new maintenance agreement is in place with Alberta Transportation and a plan is being developed to address the graveled three digit highways which are not included in the current agreement.
- **The Granular Base Course (GBC) program** has 3-5 years remaining and a 10 year paving plan based on surface condition & strength data is being developed.

Discussion on the price of oil and effect on road program.

- **Water:** The Hwy 570/895 truckfill expansion is complete. The SMRWSC line expansion from Pemukan to Compeer is expected to begin this year. There were public engagement meetings for expanding potable waterlines.
- **Emergency Services:** Regional fire training continues. The Cessford Fire Hall was completed in June 2025. It is a joint project with SAB Roads as it has a shop bay as well. A new Fire Tender (water tanker) was placed in Cessford to cut down on the mutual aid calls due to water supply. Regional Emergency Management Plan collaboration continues with partner municipalities. Justine Comeau was the successful applicant for the Emergency Services Coordinator position. A table top and some functional exercises are planned.
- **Community Peace Officer:** He will continue to protect surfaced roads and provide enforcement support.
- **Parks:** Garret Stefan is the new foreman for Blood Indian Park. Blood Indian has had playground improvements and there is a new fisheries directive. Prairie Oasis Park has received boardwalk improvements and upgrades to the concession and shower house. Carolside has had power installed with serviced sites to be ready in 2026. Gooseberry Lake and Little Fish Lake are in a 10 year operational agreement with the Province.
- **Facilities Management:** Brian Christie is the new Facilities Foreman. Shaune reviewed facility projects.

Discussion on the Esther Hay Meadow Dam. The Meadow was not flooded this spring which will see a loss in hay yield and increase in grasshoppers. Taryl Abt acknowledged that it wasn't closed in October and will ensure that it is closed in October 2025.

Trent Caskey, Dir. Property Administration

Trent presented a PowerPoint presentation on the following:

- **Assessment:** Oil & gas assessment resumed in 2024. Renewable energy assessments are coming online and they should be a steady assessment of approx. 75% for 7 years
- **Assessment Appeals:** Tax Notices were mailed May 15 and July 21 is appeal deadline
- **Annual Rate Review:** Cultivation Leases have no change from the 2024 rates. Grazing Leases will increase by 13% to \$85.15 due to increases in the cattle market. We are still below the provincial rates. Community Pasture fees will increase to \$1.10/head/day with stocking rates at 75%. Nolan Ball is now leading the administration and management of Community Pastures. Buffalo Atlee Breeding Association is looking to take over the day to day management of the pasture in 2026 as a trial. This will include an operational agreement and Special Areas will continue to set allotments and inspect the pasture.
- **Land Use Order:** The review began in 2021 and it was approved Aug 24, 2024. There may be minor edits coming in the next year or two.
- **Tax Recovery Land Sale:** There has been a high uptake. Trent provided a review of breaking restriction and the voluntary exchange list.
- **Sheerness Industrial Park:** It is a 320 acre rural industrial park. Funded in part by the Canada Coal Transition Initiative. There are 40 acre lots and 75% of lots have agreements to sell.
- **MD of Acadia and Special Areas Irrigation:** Phase 2 report being completed. The project will see 108K acres irrigated from the Red Deer River.

Discussion on the Irrigation Project. The Red Deer River has capacity to be utilized for this project. The Government of Alberta is looking at more river storage. There would be a settlement canal for sediment.

Discussion on irrigation subscriptions. The project is not at that point yet but approximately 100 farms could receive irrigation. This could lead to market development (potatoes, sugar beets, pedigree/hybrid seed, processing plants) in the area.

ADVISORY COUNCIL MEMBER REPORTS

Gordon Long, SD #1

- **Acadia Foundation:** Occupancy rates are averaging at 71% (Consort 63%), Assisted Living/Dementia Care centre opening next year in Oyen. Promotional videos are being created to increase occupancy.
- **East Central Ambulance:** Business as usual.
- **Big Country Waste:** Conversations continue with Southern Alberta Energy From Waste Association (SAEWA).
- **SA4 Agricultural Service Board:** The SA4 Ag Fieldman position is still open.

Laurie Ference, SD #2

- **Shirley McClellan Regional Water Services Commission:** The extension from Pemukan to Compeer is scheduled to start this summer.
- **East Central Housing Society:** Gave updates on fundraisers. Gem Centre usage has been steady.
- **Alfred Brown Handibus:** Their mandate has been amended to set usage age at 65. Casino is set for Sept 6/7.
- **Consort Medical Board:** Our Nurse Practitioner Christie Brulhart has been here 1 year. The Clinic is functioning very well with positive feedback.

Discussion on the Lodge vacancy rates. The same issue with vacancy rates is province wide. Some issues include the lack of medical access and experience with the COVID lockdowns.

Doug Noble, SD #3

- **Consort Medical Board:** They are seeing a benefit in initiating our own programs to fill gaps.

Discussion on the ditch cutting program. The mowing used to start in July but now it is in June. The procedure for submitting requests to hay your ditches was reviewed.

NEW BUSINESS

The meeting was adjourned at 5:10pm by Doug Noble.

Jody Bishell, Office Manager
Special Area No. 4, Consort

Motion to approve minutes to occur at the next annual ratepayer meeting.