

ANNUAL RATEPAYER MEETING
Special Area No. 2, Subdivisions No. 3 & 4
Hardgrass Hub, Pollockville
June 29, 2026

The meeting was called to order at 1:30 p.m. with 15 ratepayers in attendance.

Norma Slorstad nominated Justin Griffith as the meeting Chair. Seconded by Gwen Torie.

Brett Richards read the 2025 ratepayer meeting minutes. Kevin Slorstad moved the 2025 minutes be adopted as presented. Seconded by Gwen Torie. **Carried**

ADVISORY COUNCIL REPORTS

Brad Slorstad – Subdivision 3:

- Been an active year, coyote incentive program was defeated at council, fixed a few roads.

Justin Griffith – Subdivision 4:

- SAB gave a contribution of \$50,000 to Duchess Ag. Society for the new ice plant.

SPECIAL AREAS BOARD REPORTS

Shaune Kovitch, Chair, Special Areas Board:

Commented on:

- Jordon Christianson, now director of Regional Initiatives
- Ryley Girlitz new director of Municipal Services
- Advisory Council and Board composition
- Strategic Planning, including Business Plan and a review of service standards
- Empress Viability Review, ongoing with Municipal Affairs
- Municipal Partnerships, partnership projects, industrial tax transfer
- Tax Recovery Land Sale Policy, expires July 16, 2026, applications must be submitted
- Resident Satisfaction Survey, intended to help guide long term planning

Ryley Girlitz, Director of Municipal Services:

Commented on:

- 2026 Priorities: focus on service standards, to ensure alignment with Advisory Council
- Road Program, including construction, surfacing, recrowning
- Water Services, programs and possible expansion lines
- Emergency Services, Regional Fire switched to Alberta First Responders Radio Communications System, recent Emergency Management Mock Exercise was successful
- Parks and Campgrounds, improvements planned, push button showers installed included fee
- Facilities Management, new manager hired, Blood Indian new spillway and Bartman Dam repairs
- Big County Waste Transfer Sites – cost to rebuild transfer sites is not economical, plan to replace with roll off bins, with little doors to open no dumping from a hydraulic truck.

Mr. Girletz also presented the Path to Pavement Strategy regarding surfaced roads in Special Areas and a current update on what is proposed for the next 10 years.

Trent Caskey, Director of Property Administration:

Commented on:

- Annual Rate Review: cultivation leases (no change) and grazing leases (41% increase from 2025)
- Community Pastures: Rate at 1.15/head/day, close to full allotment, Nolan Ball overseeing Special Areas Community Pasture program, Buffalo-Atlee managed by Grazing Cooperative for three-year trial, Dustin Aebly is the contact, Special Areas charges the cooperative rental and taxes, and capital agreement
- Tax Recovery Land Sale, applications due July 16th, 2026, process will continue after the date but with timelines
- Sheerness Industrial Park (SIP) and Reservoir: three lots sold, two under option, interested parties on the other lots. No development permits have been issued.

Jordan Christianson, Director of Regional Initiatives

Commented on:

- Regional Support for Local Health Services: recruitment and retention, new clinic buildings in Oyen and Consort
- Consort Nurse Practitioner Pilot Program
- Oyen Assisted Living/Dementia Care Facility, nearly complete
- MD of Acadia & Special Areas Joint Irrigation Project; phase 2 complete, \$2.6B cost to build, creating a municipally controlled corporation is next step
- Regional Economic Development, Palliser Economic Partnership, Special Areas and Oyen Development Corporation.

Darren Jones, Director of Finance and Administration:

Commented on:

- Taxation and Assessment Notices: have been mailed, assessment appeal deadline is July 21, 2026
- Assessment Trends: up to \$5B of assessment
- Mill Rate Trends: 2026 mill rates increased 3% (largely provincial school portion)
- 2025 Financial Statements: \$85.2M in revenues, \$89M in expenses, with planned deficit spending
- 2026 Planned Budget: revenue \$94M, \$96.3M in expenses, with planned deficit spending of \$2.3M to draw down accumulated surplus (included paving on SH 899, which is now deferred to 2027).

New Business and Discussion:

- Bartman Dam will not be drained for the planned repairs
- Passing lanes on Highway 36 should be added
- Find a way to make bin on hydraulic feed trucks used by ratepayers work for new waste solution if not replacing waste transfer sites
- Number of acres of irrigation in the joint project are in Special Areas 58,000 out of 108,000 acres
- Details of joint irrigation project: \$115/acre from bottom of river to farm gate, large portion of cost is power for pumping, so planning 30MW gas fired and 30MW solar behind the fence. Pumping from river and from reservoir. Some open ditch and pipeline.
- There will be additional charges to the landowners but no details are known

- Recruitment of PAs and NPs from other countries. NPs working are fairly local, PAs just beginning to be recognized in Alberta
- Sheerness Industrial Park – What industries are going in and are there data centres
- Were water agreements given when lots were sold, no guarantees given nor requested
- Were NDAs signed with all purchasers at SIP – three sold had NDA, wanted to protect their name, did not want to be used as advertising. Others were similar reasoning.
- Was the entire SIP project funding by the coal transmission? Did Special Areas and Harvest Sky apply together? One application was from Harvest Sky and one from SAB
- Was Special Areas contacted by data centres prior to the SIP Project? No. SIP project started in 2020, before talk of data centres.
- Got into the SIP project because if power plant shut down the cost to pump the water to Henry Kroeger and the irrigation downstream would be very high without other industrial users.
- Is there an auxiliary pipeline to the reservoir? No not yet.
- Will there be water wells drilled in SIP? We don't know.
- Will there be an open house before an AUC application? The AUC requires public engagement, and an open house will be required for the development permit application.
- Will open houses be advertised on the website as newspapers are not effective?
- Requirements for development permit applications for data centres?
- Requirements to build in purchase agreements, what is the timeline? This varies.
- Interest in an open house for general Data Centre information in Special Areas vs specific project open houses; information is always good.
- Irrigation licences verses agreements with AB Environment with the new Irrigators Corporation
- Progress on the Splash Park for Carolside Park, Advisory Council brought it forward to look at the feasibility, the Cessford Wardlow water line is near capacity without a booster station. Administration is looking into feasibility of the project. Power to the campground is in for irrigation and next year is in the budget for power camping spaces.
- Park bench at Carolside Park is not the answer, it is too temporary and moved by campers.
- Mowing of Highway 876 should be done earlier in the year; this in AB TEC responsibility.

Motions:

SA2SUB3&4 – Motion 1: Trevor Kingcott moved to appoint Andy Andrus to replace Greg Gordon on the 2-3 Road Committee. Seconded by Norma Slorstad. **Carried.**

SA2SUB3&4 – Motion 2: Myles Gray moved that Special Areas Board implement a new Tax Recovery Land Sale after the current sale is closes. Seconded by Les Nester. **Carried.**

SA2SUB3&4 – Motion 3: Myles Gray moved that Special Areas Board implement a coyote bounty. Seconded by Mike McNiven. **Carried.**

SA2SUB3&4 – Motion 4: Les Nestor moved that the roll off bins replacing waste transfer sites accommodate dumpsters unloaded with hydraulic decks. Seconded by Brent Horner. **Carried.**

Norma Slorstad moved to adjourn at 4:48 p.m.



Brett Richards, Administrator
Special Area No. 2

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