

ANNUAL RATEPAYER MEETING
Special Area No. 2, Subdivisions No. 7 & 8
Buffalo Hall
May 27, 2026

The meeting was called to order at 1:38 p.m. with approximately six ratepayers in attendance.

Debbie Ross moved, Gail Andrus seconded to nominated Daryl Swenson for Chair.

Byron Jaques moved the 2025 minutes be adopted as presented.

ADVISORY COUNCIL REPORTS

Daryl Swenson – Subdivision 7:

- Oyen apartment complex work stalled this winter but has restarted
- 7 beds SL3, new build of 7 SL4 beds is looking good and nearing complete.

Brad Osadczuk – Subdivision 8:

Sent Regrets.

SPECIAL AREAS BOARD REPORTS

Shaune Kovitch, Chair, Special Areas Board:

Commented on:

- 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 Girletz, 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 recruitment underway, 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, 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 and Reservoir: three lots sold, two under option, interested parties on the other lots. No development permits have been issued.

Jordon 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).

Discussion:

- Weeds blowing off unfarmed cultivated land blowing into neighbouring lands and yards, need to contact Agricultural Fieldman for an inspection, possible weeds notice
- Unsightly dangerous conditions on fields not farmed and messy yard sites
- Road into the Buffalo Fire Hall needs addressed for wash board
- Bad spot on Highway 555, should at least be signed but should be addressed – tell AB TEC
- The whole of Highway 555 needs to be addressed between Highway 41 and Jenner
- Rural address signage in Cavendish is confusing and misleading
- Debbie Ross does not have a rural address sign
- Usage of the Bindloss and Buffalo Waste Transfer sites, which are unmanned. How often are they emptied? Regular use by outsiders with 3 ton loads coming in. Both sites' gates need fixed at minimum. Staffing twice a week would be helpful.
- Ever increasing taxes and mill rates
- Level of services provided by Special Areas
- Consideration of putting residential mill rates to zero and letting industry pay; this is not allowed by the province

- How schools are funded, Special Areas remits portion of the property taxes
- Buffalo Campground, because of fee, not used as much, possible fee by donation to Halo or other charity, was lots of use by locals prior to fee implementation
- Timing of the ratepayer meeting should be in April
- All meetings should be moved to February/March as way more people could attend them.

SA2SUB7&8 - Motion 1 - Pat Kukura moved that the fee for the River Campgrounds be removed. Seconded by Debbie Ross. **Carried.**

SA2SUB7&8 – Motion 2: Pat Kurkura moved that Special Areas install a card read system at the Buffalo Water Truck Fill. Seconded by Byron Jaques. **Carried.**

SA2SUB 7&8 -Motion 3: Bart Haahr moved Special Areas Advisory Council look into all or any ways to remove residential property taxes in their entirety. **Not seconded. Defeated.**

SA2SUB 7&8 - Motion 4. Debbie Ross moved that Special Areas Board apply pressure to have AB TEC prioritize Highway 555 upgrades from Highway 41 to Highway 884. Seconded by Pat Kukura. **Carried.**

Daryl Swenson called to adjourn at 5:22 p.m.



Brett Richards, Administrator
Special Area No. 2

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