

**District of Mackenzie  
Special Meeting  
Monday, November 08, 2021**

MINUTES of a Special Meeting of the Council of the District of Mackenzie held in the Callahan Room of the Mackenzie Recreation Centre.

PRESENT: Mayor J. Atkinson  
Councillor A. Barnes  
Councillor V. Brumovsky  
Councillor P. Grogan  
Councillor A. Hipkiss  
Councillor R. McMeeken  
Councillor J. Wiens  
Chief Administrative Officer  
D. Smith  
Chief Financial Officer K. Borne  
Director of Recreation Services  
T. Gilmer  
Director of Operations  
K. Gawryluk  
Fire Chief J. Guise  
Finance Manager  
W. Peterson

**1. CALL TO ORDER AT 6:00 PM**

*Mayor Atkinson acknowledged the land on which we gather is within the traditional territory of the Tse'khene People of the McLeod Lake Indian Band.*

**2. PRESENTATION**

Kerri Borne, Chief Financial Officer provided a short presentation to the public regarding the 2022 budget.

Ms. Borne provided the following details:

The tax revenue loss could be up to \$900,000, 16% of the budget. If BC Assessment approves the closure allowance application from the Mackenzie Pulp Mill and removes equipment, the loss could be \$1.5 million, 27% of tax revenue. Ms. Borne asked residents for suggestions on how to fund the loss. Ms. Borne provided several suggestions such as increasing taxes, user fees, reduction of services, a combination of both. She also mentioned that there are other budget items that may be impacted going forward.

**3. PUBLIC COMMENT AND QUESTIONS**

Mayor Atkinson welcomed members of the public to provide any comments regarding the 2022 Budget.

Mitch Mortenson, resident, suggested to continue investing in Mackenzie, if possible, to attract businesses and people (ex. Mining, agriculture, environmental clean-up). Mr. Mortenson also asked if there was any money in the budget for promoting Mackenzie? Ms. Borne replied that the District recently adopted a Tourism Plan and the Community Economic Development plan would be presented at tonight's Regular Council meeting. (November 8, 2021 at 7:15 pm) He also suggested regional partnerships with Local First Nation Communities or neighbouring Municipalities.

Carmen Schalles, resident, asked how much of a potential tax increase would be passed on to residents? Ms. Borne answered, if a house is assessed at \$200,000 a \$900,000 tax increase would be approximately \$315 for the year, a \$1.5 million tax increase would be approximately \$630 for the year. These

estimates do not include the home-owner grant. Any tax increase would be spread over all classes, not necessarily just residential.

Mayor Atkinson noted that we don't want to lose services but may need to pay more for them. She added that there is always room to trim expenses. If user fees had to be increased, there is a program in place to help low-income families.

Jill Irwin, resident, mentioned that she liked the ideas suggested so far and suggested a decrease in spending or a spending freeze for the District. She suggested looking at ways to increase revenue streams, looking at current and future reserve funds, completing a cost benefit analysis and engage with the community. Ms. Irwin also agreed that it is a good idea to spread the loss across all options, not just a tax increase. Mayor Atkinson noted that there are vacant staff positions that will not be filled currently and that we do have reserve funds and are working to build them up for infrastructure future upgrades. Ms. Borne added that the District has reserve funds; they are required for legislative purposes and we are not able to move money around. The financial stability reserve carries 2% of the budget for emergencies. Annual transfers are done for infrastructure upgrades.

Ross Hobbs, resident, suggested looking at a balanced approach and noted the importance of current services available and the progress that has been made in the recent years, adding that he would not lose momentum or see a reduction of investment.

Janice Nelson, resident, asked if the tax revenue from the Bitcoin farm would offset the loss from the Mill? Mayor Atkinson replied no, as they are in different property classes. Ms. Borne added that the tax revenue we would expect to see from the Data Centre would be approximately \$40,000.

Edith Henning, resident, asked how many projects had been repeated over the years, such as the lights in front of the Purple Bicycle? Mayor Atkinson replied that most of the recent projects have been entirely or mostly grant funded. For example, the new Fire Hall was entirely grant funded.

Rudy Weisemeyer, resident, suggested that a balanced approach is the only approach, suggesting that people will not want to retire in Mackenzie if the taxes went up.

Harold Hennig, resident, asked if there was any new industry prospects coming to town? Mayor Atkinson replied currently just the Data Centre. The District continues to pursue investment as there is still industrial property available and tax incentives to encourage investment. There has been a recent influx of people coming to the community, not enough to offset the industrial tax loss.

Jill Irwin asked if the District was aware of the Canfor Timber Supply? Mayor Atkinson replied that the facility has sold, currently waiting on the timber supply. The mill building has been negotiated between two buyers but is contingent on the fibre supply.

Rachel Weber, resident, mentioned that it is important to build relationships with local First Nations and suggested a seat on Council be designated for the Indigenous Community. Mayor Atkinson replied that anyone can run for a seat on Council and they did not have to live in Mackenzie. She also noted that the District had appointed Councillor Barnes as the Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation Liaison at the October 25<sup>th</sup> Council meeting. Ms. Weber also suggested rezoning the properties located on Bell Place to sell at a lower cost.

Cody Ross, resident, mentioned that the future prospect for forestry in this community is a difficult sell and he is not sure what we can rely on in the

future. Mayor Atkinson replied that forestry will still play a role in Mackenzie. The issue is where the fibre is going. Mr. Ross added that there is a lack of creativity in the forestry industry and value-added forest products should be pursued. Mayor Atkinson replied that these are big companies, the number one concern is shareholders and this continues to be an on-going discussion. Mr. Ross also mention that School District No. 57 had recently created a position for Indigenous members and that Mackenzie should as well.

Mayor Atkinson thanked everyone for attending and sharing their concerns. The next public consultation meeting will be on December 13th with further details to be sent out on a Public Notice.

#### **4. ADJOURNMENT**

32179.            MOVED by Councillor Hipkiss  
*Adjournment*    *THAT the meeting be adjourned at 6:49 pm.*

CARRIED

I certify the foregoing to be the original true copy of the minutes of the Special Meeting.

Signed:

Certified Correct:

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Mayor

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Corporate Officer