

**MINUTES OF THE ELECTRONIC PUBLIC HEARING  
of the Town of Whitecourt**  
held on Monday, April 26, 2021 at the Town Office Large Boardroom

Present: Mayor Chichak; Deputy Mayor Connell; Councillors Chauvet, Hilts, McAree, Pickard and Schlosser; Chief Administrative Officer Smyl; and Recording Secretary Gallant.

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order at 4:01pm. Mayor Chichak presiding.

Appointment of Chair: 21-137 Moved by Councillor Schlosser

That Mayor Chichak be appointed as Chair of the Public Hearing.

- CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

The Chair reviewed procedures for the public to address Council and also how Council would conduct discussions for the Electronic Public Hearing, noting that anyone wishing to address Council was required to pre-register.

Item: i. Proposed Amendment to Municipal Development Plan Bylaw 1505 and Land Use Bylaw No. 1506;

Councillor Chauvet declared a conflict of interest as he owns property in the area and vacated the meeting at 4:04pm.

Chair Chichak noted that four individuals pre-registered to speak in favour of the proposal.

President of the Whitecourt Chamber of Commerce, Mark Dickin, of 29 Ravine Drive, representing Whitecourt and District Chamber of Commerce members and Board, addressed the hearing, in favour of the proposed amendments.

Mr. Dickin advised that the Chamber canvassed membership and provided several letters and does not believe there is a problem, or that there will be in the future, with regard to parking in the downtown core. Mr. Dickin noted that the Chamber feels that the parking levy is a barrier to opening new businesses and that the levy is ineffective, especially when variances are granted.

Jennifer Sampson of 45 Lyons Crescent advised that she had canvassed businesses to have them sign letters in favour of the proposed bylaw amendments. Comments she received indicated that parking issues should be dealt with by the property owner and not the Town. As a Chamber Director, she indicated that the Chamber would revisit the parking issue should the need arise; and that, with empty buildings in the downtown there are no parking issues.

Elva Roche of 10 – 10 Abraham Drive commented that the downtown core is not helped by having the levy. She noted that although she understood that the purpose of the Hearing was not related to refunding levies that were paid, that she would like to get the money that she paid into the levy refunded.

Aaron Gausvik of 4915 – 52 Avenue agreed with previous speakers, noting that he owns several businesses and locations in the downtown, and that he has been dealing with this issue since 1999. He noted that if a business requires a large number of stalls, it can be expensive to comply, especially when the downtown was designed to maximize store frontages, with little onsite parking. He noted the expense that is imposed if a business requires multiple stalls and cannot provide them on his property when the very design of properties in the core restricts stalls on individual properties.

Development Officer Schaffner advised that further to Council's direction, Administration was bringing forward two amendments; one to the Municipal Development Plan Bylaw 1505, and one to the Land Use Bylaw 1506. Together these amendments propose to remove minimum off-street parking requirements from the downtown core area, including removing the option for property owners to provide money in lieu of parking, otherwise known as the parking levy. These proposed amendments would allow property owners within the downtown core area to plan for, and address, their own parking needs without municipal involvement.

Notification of these proposed amendments was posted on the Town's website, advertisements were placed in the local newspapers during the weeks of April 7 and April 14, 2021 and notices were mailed to property owners within, and adjacent to, the affected area on March 30, 2021.

The proposed amendments were reviewed by the Municipal Planning Commission (MPC) on April 22, 2021, which recommended supporting the proposed amendments. The Commission noted that it has been dealing with this issue for many years, and that it continually comes up as a challenge for new businesses trying to open downtown. The Commission also raised some questions for Council to consider, including what the future plans are for the Town-owned 52 Avenue parking lot, what would happen if there were parking issues in the future, and what would happen to the parking levies that have previously been paid.

Five written submissions regarding the amendments were received from property and business owners in the downtown, along with a package from the Whitecourt & District Chamber of Commerce in support of the amendments.

There was one other general inquiry on the proposed amendments from a resident on 53 Avenue who did not have any issues with the proposed amendments but did not wish to submit any formal comment.

Chair Chichak asked if there was anyone present who wished to speak in opposition of the proposal. It was noted that no one registered to speak in opposition to the proposal.

Chair Chichak asked if there was anyone else present who wished to speak that was affected by the proposal. It was noted that no other individuals registered to speak at the Hearing.

Adjournment:

21-138      Moved by Councillor McAree

That the Public Hearing be adjourned. Time: 4:19pm

- CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

  
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Mayor

  
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Chief Administrative Officer