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The Press



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Vol. 12 - Issue 1 | Tuesday, January 3, 2023

Do you need speed? A club in town races safely every week and is looking for more members to join. R/C racing (radio-controlled) is a family-friendly hobby for people of all ages, and the Whitecourt & Area R/C Club would love to have you.

Pictured are Josh Firth and his son, Ben, 13, enjoying racing together.



A family-friendly hobby that brings the thrill of competition to the forefront

By Serena Lapointe

Those looking for something to do indoors over the winter might be interested in what happens each week at St. Joseph's hall. The Whitecourt & Area R/C Club

holds weekly racing for members to take part in. "This is our seventh season racing. The hobby store that used to be in town got me started with racing, and then when they shut down, we took

over and kept the racing going," explained Kelly Gunderson, the club's Race Master.

Gunderson said he had always been into

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A new year is here, but first, let's look back at 2022

By Serena Lapointe

At the close of every year, I am tasked with reviewing my articles from the previous 360-ish days, gathering pictures we've utilized, and putting together one massive article that encompasses all of it. It was hard to choose, but here is a brief look at 2022.

As they have for many years now, the Whitecourt Taekwondo Club kick-started the year before most of us had changed out of our comfy Santa pyjamas. For over thirty years, they have celebrated a new January by putting on their uniforms, most without socks and shoes, and exercising outside. There have been some unbelievably cold

events, and 2022 was one of them. At about -25, the picture shows the group moments after completing their tradition, running to the warmth of the open door.

A couple of weather anomalies wreaked havoc last year. On January 22, days after a cold snap, the temperature rose to +9, as captured on the big screen outside Percy Baxter Middle School. Wonky temperatures kept happening, which further exacerbated the problem. Covered culverts and melting snow left massive puddles, which then froze, creating a nightmare for everyone.

Through January and into early February, massive pushback on



COVID-19 restrictions, both provincial and federal, led tens of thousands of Canadians to fuel up their gas tanks and drive. Some Whitecourt and area folks made

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Friendly faces at a peaceful protest in Whitecourt.



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it to Ottawa to peacefully protest in person, while others peacefully protested in Whitecourt, holding weekend rallies and driving around with signs. Those participating had many reasons for doing so, and several MLAs made public statements supporting them, calling for an end to restrictions. Within a few weeks, most restrictions in Alberta ended, letting people return to a more normal state of life.

In mid-February, Woodlands County Council decided to change up an important title. Wanting to reflect the difference between a county and a town, the elected group voted unanimously to change Mayor John Burrows' title to Reeve John Burrows.

After a hiatus, the Whitecourt Potter's Guild held their annual Chili Bowl Fundraiser in support of Tennille's Hope Soup Kitchen. Beautiful, handcrafted bowls made by the loving hands of local artists were filled with delicious homemade chili to support a great cause. On Thursday, April 7, excited buyers stopped into the soup kitchen to pick up their lunch. "It's always a pleasure whenever we do this because we feel honoured that people want our pottery bowls. We are pretty proud of ourselves and are so happy that it goes to such a great cause," said Guild volunteer Janice Janzen.

The Whitecourt Food Bank saw its numbers increase over 2022. The need for support has risen along with inflation as Whitecourt families struggle. Able to help in one of the essential areas, food, the community stepped up in a big way to keep food on the tables of Whitecourt families. Roughly 75 percent of the people who accessed the food bank in 2022 have jobs

but still need help, and one big way to get it is through perishable boxes that are handed out multiple times a week. With prices/inflation increasing steadily with no signs of slowing down, the need will rise in 2023, and the Whitecourt Food Bank will continue to rely on the community for help.

At the end of April, Whitecourt Minor Ball (WMB) board members excitedly revealed they had received funding through the Jays Care Foundation to do work down at Graham Acres. The Toronto Blue Jays provided funding through their foundation totalling 1.2 million to sixteen Canadian communities, including Whitecourt. The \$70,000 Whitecourt received, plus a little extra pitched in from the Town of Whitecourt, helped make WMB's field of dreams come true.

In May, Tracy Stark and her friend and therapist Sandra Young Kolbuc released their powerful book *Gross Misconduct: Hitting From Behind*. The novel recounts Stark's unspeakable loss of her beautiful sons Ryder Patryk and Radek Stryker in December of 2016 at the hands of their father. Stark put pen to paper and shared her profound grief and the courageous path she now walks on behalf of her angels. Her path is about bringing forth much-needed change. "I want the system to look at the children, and I don't know why they are overlooked because, in many circumstances, the children pay the ultimate price," spoke Stark. She said it's also about giving others hope. "Losing a child is one of the hardest things you can get through in life, but there is a light. I want to share that message with the world."

In the summer, the Town of Whitecourt unveiled a new venture



Oilers Day in Whitecourt with a Wolverines puck drop from Jason Strudwick and Kevin Lowe.



Jenga fun at a Whitecourt Park Party!



Vibrant green skies were the norm last summer.



Plus nine degrees in January.

Jays grant funding will impact many Whitecourt baseball players, like this young Royal.

called Park Parties. Each month, a community park was chosen for a fun evening of neighbourhood building. Residents came out to play games and meet and greet with police officers, councillors, firefighters, and Town staff. The partnership with the Rotary Club of Whitecourt, Whitecourt Crime Prevention and the POWER Group of Whitecourt was such a hit that more events will be happening this summer.

In July, Whitecourtians were treated to colourful skies. Not only were there beautiful sunrises and sunsets, but those awake overnight were dazzled by the aurora borealis. Vibrant greens, purples, and pinks that typically stick closer to the north were on display throughout the summer.

The new roadway for Rotary Park kicked off in 2022, sparking debate over the removal of the trees that used to divide the park and downtown. The street had been in the plans for years. After

scoring a large amount of grant funding for the project, the Town of Whitecourt went ahead with the road, which will not only give a second entrance/exit to the area, increasing safety, but will encourage town visitors to drive through the downtown, and hopefully stop and shop.

Sticking with Rotary Park, a brand-new attraction was approved in 2022. A Jumbo Jumper will be making its grand debut in the summer of 2023 and will undoubtedly become a hot spot of fun. It was hoped that the massive pillow-like structure could be installed late

last summer, but timelines didn't pan out.

The 2022 Remembrance Day ceremony found a temporary home at the Allan & Jean Millar Centre. With renovations still underway at Central School, using the gymnasium wasn't an option. The switch was well-received as more people could fit in the larger space.

On October 1, enthusiasts from the Whitecourt Skatepark held Skate Jam '22. The thrilling event featured crazy jumps that left spectators speechless, like the duo somersault

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A couple of fearless kids at the Whitecourt Skatepark.



Tracy and Sandra with boxes of their book *Gross Misconduct: Hitting from Behind*.



Running to the warmth!



A year to be proud of for the Whitecourt Wolverines.

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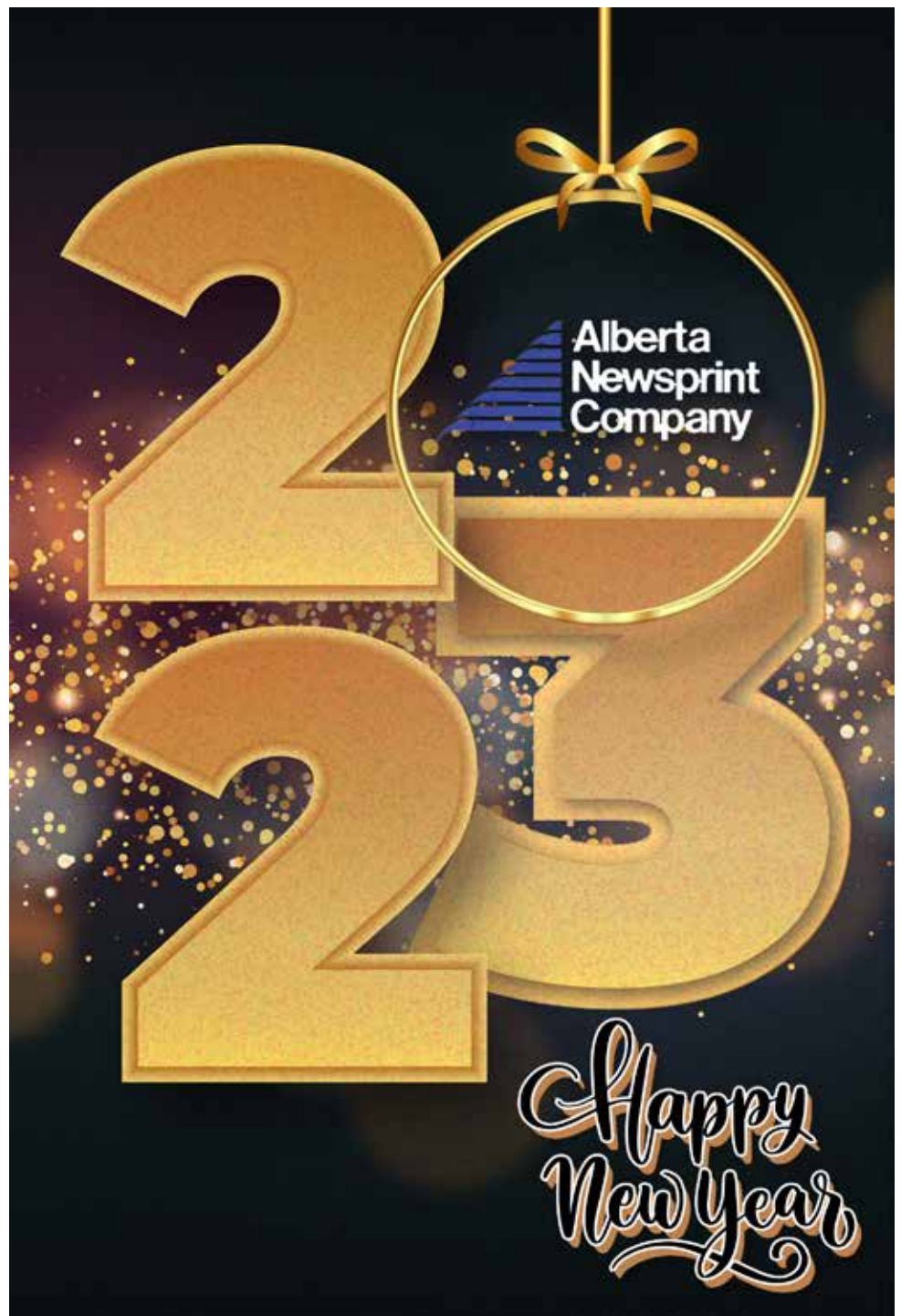
pictured. Kids of all ages took part, showcasing their abilities on their wheels, from bikes to scooters and skateboards, and it was all kinds of awesome. Mid-October, Ecole St. Joseph School received an outdoor facelift. An area of land beside the school, near the main parking lot, was a water collector and utterly unusable. After a request to the town council, the area was levelled and seeded. In 2023, it will finally see use as a soccer pitch.

Being named the first-ever Celebrating Oil Country Community will

be a highlight for Edmonton Oilers fans in Whitecourt. On Wednesday, October 19, Oilers' alumni Kevin Lowe and Jason Strudwick, Oilers Entertainment Group (OEG) staff including president Stew MacDonald, radio voices Bob Stauffer and Jack Michaels, Hunter the mascot, and the Orange & Blue Ice Crew arrived in Whitecourt to spend the day. The icing on a memorable day was playing La Bamba at the Scott Safety Centre that night after the Whitecourt Wolverines kicked butt against the Bonnyville Pontiacs.

Through the ups and downs of 2022, White-

courtians continually supported one another. All one needs to do is search the Whitecourt Ask Away for posts about someone needing help. Countless residents quickly offer to help or provide items, eager to bless someone in need. Whether it's fundraiser tickets to support a sports team, a toy drive for the Whitecourt Christmas Hamper, a fundraiser for the Whitecourt Food Bank, or generosity for any other organization in town, people come through and support it. That, my friends, makes this place one-of-a-kind, and everyone should be proud of that. Cheers to 2023!



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Phone: 780-778-2341


Located within the Carlan Services Community Centre
The Whitecourt Food Bank is operated by the Town of Whitecourt Food Bank Coordinator and dependent on volunteers to operate. The Food Bank relies on donations of cash or food from individuals and organizations. Local grocery stores drop off baked goods including bread and pastries weekly. Other corporations and schools schedule food drives throughout the year.
Open: Mon, Wed, & Fri 11 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. Phone: 780-778-2341

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Preventative Education:
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Family Resource & Crisis Centre
www.whitecourtshester.ca



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wctcancerwellness@gmail.com

***Monthly meetings have been postponed due to COVID-19*

Whitecourt AA Group Of Alcoholics Anonymous



Meetings three times each week

- Monday 8:00 p.m..... (12 Step Meeting)
- Wednesday 8:00 p.m...(Open Topic Meeting)
- Friday 8:00 p.m.....(Big Book Meeting)

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More info Contact: (780) 396-8777. Please Leave A Message For Our AA member or Contact Addictions Helpline @1(866)332-2322

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Whitecourt

CHRISTMAS TREE PICK UP

Starting on Monday, January 9, crews will be picking up trees from across the community on a weekly basis throughout the month of January as time permits. There will be no set schedule, and pick up may be delayed due to snow or other higher priority tasks.

Please place your tree where you would normally place your garbage. For those residents in cul-de-sacs who place their garbage further out into the street, please don't place your tree where it will obstruct traffic.

Trees must be free of all decorations and tinsel. Please do not place the tree in garbage or tree bags.

The Whitecourt Regional Landfill also has a drop-off area for you to dispose of your tree. The Whitecourt Regional Landfill is open Monday to Saturday from 9:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.



Racers in the background with the racetrack before them.



Lined up on the stage overlooking the race track.

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the R/C world, but when indoor racing began locally, he jumped at the chance to do something fun throughout the winter when he couldn't race outside. Each week, the club meets at St. Joseph's hall at 7:00 pm. Sometimes they get together on Tuesdays, but they mainly utilize Wednesdays.

After working as a group to lay out the massive carpet and design the evening's track, the group sets up tables for each racer and moves part of the stage over to the far wall. Racers stand up on the stage, overlooking the race track, giving them a bird's eye view of their vehicle's movements.

They run three classes of vehicles. "Our first class is the Euro trucks. Those are like the semi trucks they race in Europe. The second class is the car class, US GT, which incorporates anything from cheaper cars to really expensive ones, and the third class we run is the short track which is the rough and tumble jumpy off-road trucks," explained Gunderson.

On a typical night, the club sees anywhere from six to fifteen racers, and Gunderson said they would really like to see the club grow. "The most we have had in one night

was twenty-two racers. That same night we had racers from out of town come. We had people from Fox Creek, Edmonton, and Edson."

Each racer that takes part gets a table to lay out their vehicles. Between each race, there's a pause, allowing participants to do any needed work to their cars ahead of the next one. "Whitecourt is a big motorsports town. Everyone's got a jet ski or a jetboat, or they go and race oval or whatever. This is something to do in the winter. You can come and hang out indoors and have fun. There's still a tuning element; you get to buy different tires or bodies, and you can modify your vehicles too. It doesn't matter how good of a driver you are, either. We've got beginners here that are thirteen, and we've got racers who've been doing it awhile that are 75. It's for everybody," said Gunderson.

When it's race night, Gunderson places sandwich boards in highly visible areas to attract those interested in seeing what R/C racing is about. "We had eight people here one night that stopped in because they saw the signs. I'm sure there will be some R/Cs under some Christmas trees after those visits," smiled Gunderson. On December 13,

two attended to check out the action after spotting a sign.

One of the biggest parts of joining the club is grabbing a vehicle that can be run within the classes. Gunderson said before buying something, join their Facebook group and ask questions. He also said that they have a couple of Euro trucks for people to try out most nights. "We usually suck them in after that," chuckled Gunderson. Pointing across the hall to a gentlemen racing, Gunderson said the man had come in two weeks before to check things out. "Now, he has all three vehicles. He bought them all and is fully into it. That's usually how it happens."

Those interested in learning more about the fun club are invited to pop in and see it for themselves. "We typically start racing at the end of October and run until the end of April. Once the weather is nice, people don't want to be inside anymore. That's when it's time to race outside. Through the winter, though, this is the place to be."

Depending on the vehicle, getting into the sport can cost a few hundred dollars or as high as a thousand. Gunderson said some vehicles, such as the Euro trucks, need to be

assembled, which can add to the fun. Some cars can be purchased ready to go out of the box. "You can push it to the limit and not have the consequences of hurting yourself. You just might have to spend a bit more time fixing your car in between races," chuckled Gunderson.

Fellow racer Rod Wilde has been into R/C's for about twelve years. "It's something to do with the kids. We started out thanks to Santa Claus buying three R/Cs one year, one for me and one for each of the boys," he laughed. "They were more of an outdoor version, so we went to a track in Spruce Grove

through the summer. That was a bit costly to get there every weekend, but that's what we did. When the opportunity presented for us to race indoors here in town, we got all the right cars to race here."

Wilde agreed with Gunderson's comment about R/C racing being easier on the body. "For years, I raced full-sized cars, real cars, and this is about as close as you can get for a fraction of the cost, and it's way easier on the body." Cory Anujoks, who used to race thirty years ago, is excited to get back into it and had his young granddaughter in tow, learning the ropes. "This is an excellent hob-

by for anyone and just takes a bit of practice. It's a great family thing. You can be a spectator, a corner Marshall or race a vehicle."

The club hopes to raise some cash to replace their carpet one day soon as it has begun showing its age. "We put every bit of the race fees back into the club," said Gunderson. During the summer, the group volunteered at the Motocross track in Blue Ridge as flaggers during races, raising some dollars. Any organizations needing volunteers where some cash can be made should give the Whitecourt & Area R/C Club a shout.



Working on the vehicle following a race.

Whitecourt Town Council has approved the 2023 Interim Operating and Capital Budget

“This has been a challenging budget to develop when you consider that the municipality is dealing with continued reductions in provincial and intermunicipal funding, inflation costs that we have not seen in over 35 years, continued increases in the cost of living, new federal carbon tax increases, and increased policing costs. This budget reflects the community’s desire to maintain current services, and ensure that we are prepared to meet our community’s growing needs in the future,” stated Whitecourt Mayor Tom Pickard.

The Interim Budget includes over \$49 million in capital and operating expenditures, and proposes a 6.49% overall tax change. The budget has incorporated \$3.275 million in reductions from 2019 to

2022, and includes funding to maintain service levels and continue with investment in local infrastructure. The 2023 Interim Budget Report can be viewed on the Whitecourt website at www.whitecourt.ca/your-town.

“It’s important for the community to know that Council still has work to do before the final budget is adopted and tax rates are finalized,” added Mayor Pickard. “Town Council has directed Administration to research options that could reduce the 2023 rate for final budget consideration, and these options will be reviewed early in the new year.”

2023 Capital Budget Highlights:

- The 2023 Street Improvement Program includes street, lighting, and sidewalk repairs

at locations throughout the community.

- Completion of the extension of 50 Street/Legion Street from downtown into Rotary Park to increase safety and access into the Park.
- Following funding approval of \$15.6 million for the construction of an Arts & Culture Centre and new library from the Investing in Canadian Infrastructure Program, a partnership/sponsorship campaign was initiated in 2022 and an update will be provided to Council on funding for the proposed project so that further decisions can be made regarding the facility.

2023 Operating Budget Highlights:

- Continued collaboration and development of new agreements

based on the arbitration decision with Woodlands County for services that benefit residents of both municipalities.

- Completion of the review of the Municipal Development Plan and Land Use Bylaw, and adoption of the North Flats Area Structure Plan that will help to guide development in the community.
- Whitecourt will launch a new app for transit users at the end of 2023 as the current version of the Transloc App, the app that tracks Whitecourt Transit buses, is being phased out.
- Continue to act as an Alberta Advantage Immigration Program “Designated Community” under the Rural Renewal Program and Entrepreneur Streams.

These programs will support workforce development by helping to address long-term labour shortages by attracting newcomers; and encourage new investment in Whitecourt by attracting entrepreneurs and new businesses.

The 2023 Budget will

be finalized in the spring of 2023 once the Provincial budget is adopted, and final assessment figures are established. Specific tax rate impacts will vary by property type depending on the assessed value of a home or business, and will be determined once the final budget is adopted.

Whitecourt Town Council updates

The 2022 FireSmart Annual Report was presented to Council at the December 19 Regular Meeting. The report outlines activities completed and initiatives undertaken to safeguard our community from fire risks, and the report is available on the Whitecourt website at www.whitecourt.ca/live/public-safety/fire-department.

Whitecourt Town Council provided first and second reading of Fees, Rates and Charges Bylaw 1551-7 at the December 19, 2022 Council Meeting. A Special Meeting of Council has been scheduled for 11:45am on Wednesday, December 21 to further discuss the proposed bylaw. The bylaw reflects rates and fees outlined in the 2023 Interim Budget for services provided by the Town of Whitecourt and, if approved, will come into effect on January 1, 2023.

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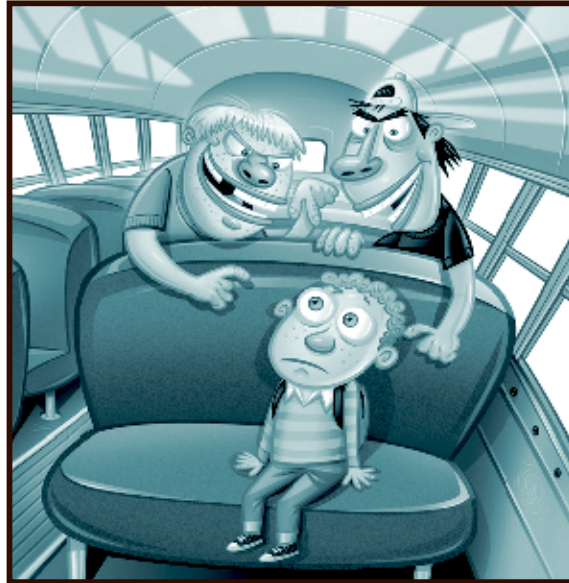


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Olivia Grace Murphy
Age 16

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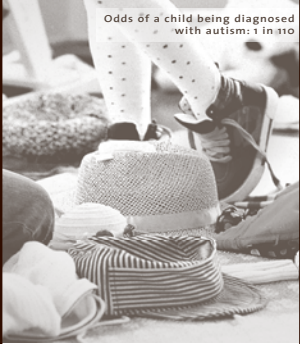
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The Press welcomes readers to write letters to the Editor. A maximum of 300 words is preferred but not necessary. Letters must carry a first name or two initials with surname and include an address and daytime telephone number. All letters are subject to editing. Please email letters to wctpress@telus.net.



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NOTICE TO CREDITORS AND CLAIMANTS

ESTATE OF HELEN DELORES GIESE (aka DELORES H. GIESE) who died on November 22, 2022 and the ESTATE OF GARY GEORGE GIESE who died on April 22, 2022.

If you have a claim against these estates, you must file your claim by January 24, 2023

with TIMOTHY A. VERHAEGHE at Verhaeghe Law Office Barristers & Solicitors #203, 10525 - 170 Street NW, Edmonton, AB T5P 4W2

and provide details of your claim.

If you do not file by the date above, the estate property can lawfully be distributed without regard to any claim you may have.

A look at the local weather

| | Tue., Jan 3 | Wed., Jan 4 | Thu., Jan 5 | Fri., Jan 6 | Sat., Jan 7 |
|-------------------|-----------------------|----------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------|
| | Mix of sun and clouds | A few flurries | Mix of sun and clouds | Mix of sun and clouds | Cloudy with sunny breaks |
| P.O.P. | 20% | 40% | 30% | 30% | 30% |
| High | -2°C | -9°C | -8°C | -10°C | -9°C |
| Low | -13°C | -13°C | -13°C | -15°C | -14°C |
| Wind | W 10 km/h | E 11 km/h | SW 9 km/h | E 3 km/h | S 3 km/h |
| 24-Hr Rain / Snow | - | <1cm | - | - | - |

Money Matters

One Canadian Dollar = 0.73 US Dollar at an exchange rate of 0.7386 (using nominal rate).

Dollar Values as of January 3, 2023

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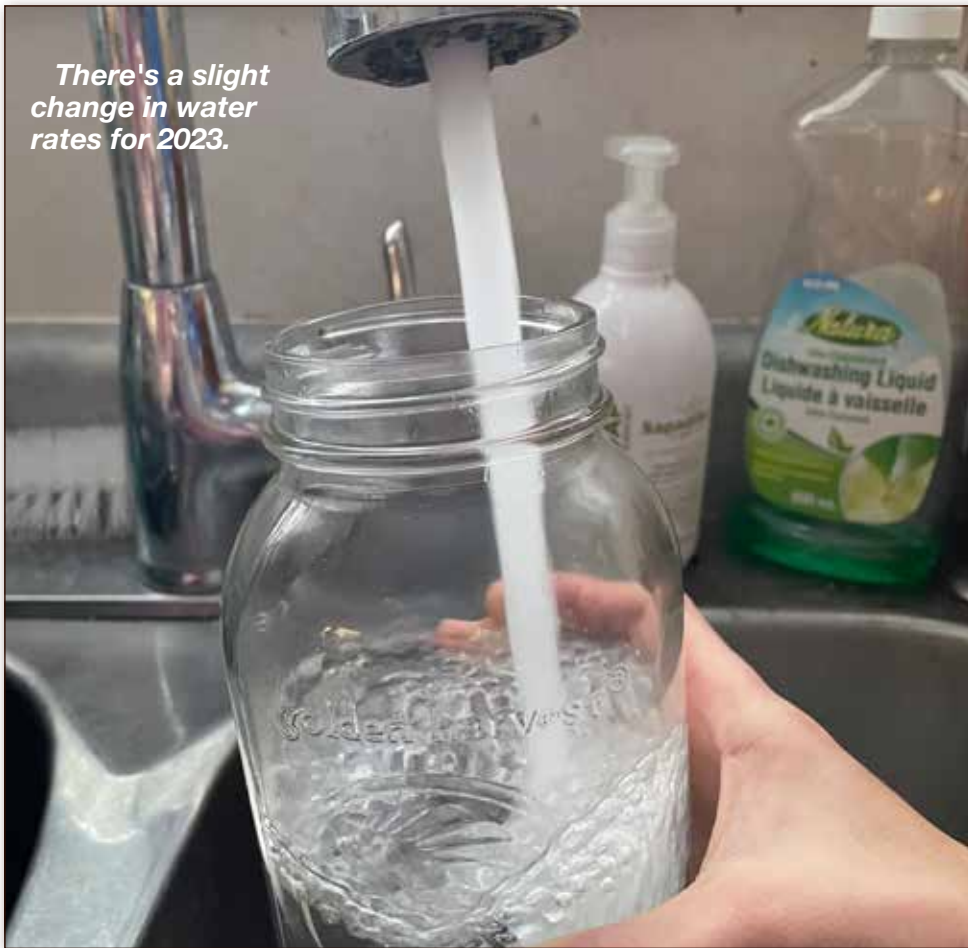
Water and sewer rates for 2023

By Serena Lapointe

Ahead of January 1, 2023, Whitecourt Town Council reviewed the rates and fees for water and sewer. The goal is for both services to be sustainable and for all costs to be recovered. “The proposed rates that we have is that the average customer will see an increase of about .42 cents per month for both water and sewer. For the administration charge, they will see a dollar a month for water. This is based on consuming twenty cubes of water. For sewer, there’s no increase,” explained Judy Barney, Director of Corporate Services, during a recent Policies and Priorities meeting.

Barney explained that an anticipated increase in bulk water sales helped offset the impact of higher rates. “The overall combined increase is about 1.72 percent higher than the previous year and a \$1.84 a month. What you’ll see for a total bill is that it will be \$76.58 versus \$74.74, from the prior year, per month.”

To show where White-



There's a slight change in water rates for 2023.

Whitecourt Town Council looked at the rates for water and sewer just before the new year. New rates kicked into action as of January 1, 2023.

court’s rate sits compared to other municipalities of similar size or area, Barney included data comparing Whitecourt against Athabasca, Drayton Valley, Grande Prairie, West-

lock, Edson, Barrhead, Valleyview, Hinton and Fox Creek. When comparing water and sewer rates, Whitecourt is the third lowest. The average rate between the commu-

nities is \$94.23 monthly for water and sewer. At \$74.74, Whitecourt is well below the average. When Hinton’s extra infrastructure and capital enhancement fees are

added to the mix, Whitecourt would technically be the second cheapest. The highest monthly fee of the nine municipalities was Athabasca which averages \$129.42 per month.

On the bulk side, Whitecourt is the cheapest across the board for two of the three categories, 50 cubic metres, 200 cubic metres, and 500 cubic metres. At \$315.21 per 50 cubic metres, Whitecourt is \$47 cheaper than the next closest municipality, which is Westlock (\$362.50). In the 200 cubic metre category, Whitecourt comes in at \$1,389.21. The next cheapest community is again Westlock which charges \$60 more. The highest charge is in Fox Creek, where users buying 200 cubes pay \$2000, over \$600 more than Whitecourt.

“We have a practice that we take the percentage increase for water, which is 3.47 percent for 2023, and we apply it to the rates for bulk,” explained Barney. Councilor Lapointe asked why there was an increase

in water fees, not sewer fees. “I would’ve guessed that if the water side increased, the sewer side would automatically increase too.”

Barney explained that it had to do with a few things. “They are two separate budgets, and they have different things happening. There is some staffing that is shared across, but you have different functions, and they have different projects that they are doing. For example, on the waste side, you have the hauling of the sludge, but you don’t have that on the water side. Also, there’s a slight difference in the volume forecast. We have some accounts that just receive water and no sewer, so because of that, we don’t have the same volume that we are billing, so that does affect the rate.” Barney said it goes back and forth, with sewer sometimes being higher and water lower.

Lapointe asked if the expected rise for 2023 was due to more industrial use or if it had to

continued on page 11

NOTICE OF DECISION

The following development permits have been conditionally approved under the provisions of the Land Use Bylaw

| PERMIT | LOCATION | PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT | DATE OF DECISION | APPEAL DEADLINE |
|-----------|--|---|------------------|-----------------|
| 15-071-22 | PT NW 18-59-11-W5M L6 B3 P 094-0273 | Accessory Building: workshop/storage | 21-Dec-22 | 11-Jan-23 |

Any person affected by this decision may appeal to the Secretary of the Development Appeal Board by forwarding a written appeal along with a \$500.00 fee, to the address listed below, prior to **4:30 p.m. of the appeal date noted above.**

Attention: Peter McKay, Development Officer
Woodlands County
Box 60, #1 Woodlands Lane, Whitecourt AB T7S 1N3
Telephone: 780-778-8400
Toll-Free: 1-888-870-6315

Information regarding this application may be obtained by inquiring at the address noted.

REMINDER NOTICE REGISTRATIONS FOR GRAVEL TRUCKS / EQUIPMENT

Registrations for the supply of gravel trucks and/or equipment are effective from January 1, 2023, to December 31, 2023. All applicants who wish to register may obtain new registration packages at either of the Woodlands County offices after January 2, 2023, between the hours of 8:15 a.m. to 12:00 noon and 1:00 p.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Registrations forms are also available on Woodlands County Website www.woodlands.ab.ca.

A copy of valid insurance must be attached, with Woodlands County added to your insurance, as additionally insured.

If you wish to obtain further information, please contact wilma.harris@woodlands.ab.ca

Woodlands County
Municipal Office
Box 60, #1 Woodlands Lane
Whitecourt, AB T7S 1N3
Telephone: 780- 778-8400
Facsimile: 780- 778-8402

OR

Woodlands County
Regional Municipal Office
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continued from page 10

do with out-of-town residents who buy water. “Both. We are anticipating more on the bulk side for oil activity. Then we are also seeing the demand increase for bulk sales for commercial and residential,” explained Town CAO Peter Smyl.

Mayor Tom Pickard said he didn’t have a concern with the cost-recovery model used for residential rates but was concerned with the cost of bulk water sales. “We’ve got other town users who are not part of any infrastructure support, and we are giving them the discount, the town rate when we are selling water. It’s a valuable commodity. Our town taxpayers have paid a significant amount for the infrastructure, and I feel that these bulk rates

are a gift to people that didn’t pay for any of the infrastructure.”

He said he agreed with the proposed rates for residential users but felt the bulk water needed to come up in price. “I don’t feel that our rates are high enough. I would like to see a substantial increase in the bulk water rates for that purpose on those over the 50 cubic number. Where? I don’t know, but I would certainly be more of an advocate for an increase on that side because of my argument.”

Councillor Derek Schlosser agreed. “I entirely agree with the mayor. I was going to suggest something like that. My question to Peter and Judy is, what’s the sweet spot? If we have too much of an increase, are people not going to buy it, or is it that they are still going

to buy it, but they are just going to pay more?”

Smyl said that users in the 50/200 cubic meter ranges are unlikely to travel to get water. “Water is a heavy commodity. For the 500 cubes, they may (travel) because you’re talking about heavy users. Those might want to be looking around checking rates but normally, with the other ones, you’re not.” Smyl said Administration could put together a report showing how many users there are in each of the three categories.

Council passed the fees bylaw during a special meeting on Wednesday, December 21. New rates began on January 1, 2023. Council will look closely at the bulk rates sometime in the new year once they receive the user information.

COVID-19 Tool Now Assesses for Range of Respiratory Illnesses

AHS has launched an updated respiratory assessment tool to provide Albertans - including families with young children - with guidance to manage a wide range of respiratory illnesses, how to care for symptoms at home, and when to seek additional care by knowing your options.

Previously used to analyze COVID-19 symptoms and book PCR testing, the updated AHS respiratory illness tool will now provide an assessment of all respiratory illness symptoms, helping bring COVID-19 management in-line with other respiratory diseases like RSV, and influenza.

“Building off the success of our COVID-19 online assessment tool, which has been accessed over 15M times, we have released an updated version with guidance and advice for a range of respiratory illnesses,” says Dr. Kristin Klein, Medical Officer of Health, AHS. “This tool is an example of the steps that AHS is taking to ensure that the guidance we provide to adults and parents is reflecting the current reality of the mix of viruses this respiratory illness season.”

With the increase in cases of respiratory illness across the province, and with the influx of young patients at our pediatric acute care facilities, the updated tool provides

Albertans with another option to obtain tangible advice for symptom management. The tool will help guide individuals to the best care options for their symptoms, including self-care at home, or seeking care at a walk-in clinic, family physician, or pharmacy for mild to moderate symptoms. As always, those with severe symptoms will be recommended to seek care at an urgent care centre, or an emergency department.

“This is another tool, in addition to other available resources such as the HEAL website, to help know your options and use appropriate care whether that be in-home or elsewhere,” says Dr. Klein. “Above all, however, we strongly encourage all Albertans to get immunized against influenza and COVID-19 this season, stay home when sick and do everything we can to reduce the spread of illness in our communities.”

The online tool can be accessed quickly and easily from a computer, mobile, or hand-held device. If individuals are not able to use the tool by themselves, Albertans can also continue to call Health Link at 811 for assistance.

Albertans are reminded that with this updated respiratory tool, all criteria for obtaining a PCR test through AHS remains the same. As always, rapid

test kits for COVID-19 will continue to be available at participating pharmacies across the province which can be found through the Alberta Blue Cross website.

As cases of respiratory illness continue to rise in our province and with the holiday season upon us, we continue to encourage everyone to stay home and away from others when feeling sick.

To prevent spread of any illness, we encourage frequent hand washing with soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds or use alcohol-based hand sanitizer. It’s also important to cover coughs, and avoid touching eyes, nose, or mouth with unwashed hands. Albertans are also encouraged to wear a well-fitting, high-quality mask in public places if they choose to do so. Book your influenza and COVID-19 immunizations at ahs.ca/vaccine.

The updated respiratory assessment tool can be found on the AHS website.

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Amanda Lind, CPA, CA will be in the Fox Creek office (20 Commercial Court) every Wednesday. To set up an appointment please contact our Whitecourt office.

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