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COMMUNITY NEWSPAPER



The Press

Locally Owned & Operated

Vol. 14 - Issue 1 | Wednesday, January 8, 2025

Photo by Addy Watson



Local musician Addy Watson receiving an award.

Photo by Town of Whitecourt



The approved Culture and Events Centre.



Not a sight a snowmobiler wants to see in February.

2024 A YEAR IN REVIEW

The Jasper Complex Fire.



Photo by Jasper National Park

Each year, the Whitecourt Press opens the vault of the previous 365 days and pulls out some memories to share. Here are a few of the things that happened last year!

By Serena Lapointe

Hello, 2025! But wait, before we move forward into the new year, let's take a moment to remember some things that happened in Whitecourt and beyond in 2024. The year featured highs

and lows, as years always do, and here are a few of them.

One of the earliest memories from last year was the lack of snow. For winter enthusiasts, the low powder was disastrous, forcing them to keep their

snowmobiles in the garage. The Whitecourt Trailblazers, who upkeep nearly 500km of trails, ended up canceling its Annual Family Snowmobile Rally and two other rallies in the

continued on page 2

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Each office independently owned and operated



continued from page 1

area. Low precipitation equalled two thumbs down for snowmobilers.

In late February and early March, rumours began swirling that the owners of the Whitecourt Wolverines were planning to move the team to Devon. Signs started popping up in the crowd during games, asking the owners to sell the team instead so that the Wolverines could stay.

Then rumours began floating around that somebody local was trying to buy them. In early June, the truth leaked that local business owners Cory and Terriann Masse were the new owners.

Read more about their decision in this edition's second article.

Also, in June, the residents at Spruce View Lodge in Whitecourt received a fun show from the youth at Whitecourt Taekwondo. The athletes performed a dazzling display of skill, determination and flexibility as they showed their abilities to the eager seniors who excitedly cheered them on. The seniors also gave of

their talents this year, as the knitting club at the lodge created two beautiful blankets and donated them to the Wellspring Family Resource & Crisis Centre. Resident Kay said it felt good. "We get a lot of help from the community and the town. It's so good to be able to give back a little bit. It makes you feel good."

Throughout much of July, the town remained under a strict fire ban thanks to dry and hot conditions and low precipitation. Many municipalities across the province were in the same boat.

One fire-related

them to safety.

On July 22, at 9:59 pm, Jasper was evacuated. Fire departments from 20 to 30 municipalities sent contingents of firefighters and equipment to help fight the fire, including Whitecourt.

Residents did not return until August 16. The town they left and the one they returned to were vastly different. Many Whitecourt residents considered Jasper to be their playground, visiting often. As fundraisers began, residents and businesses found ways to get help to those who were in need from the fire-ravaged mountain community.

In 2024, two big decisions finally concluded after years of planning and discussions. The first was the Culture and Events Centre, which includes three buildings in one construction format.

The building, approved in early July, originally held a performance arts theatre, a new library and a town office. In the end, a multi-use convention space replaced the theatre, lowering the price significantly. It's set to open at the end of 2026.

The second big de-

cision was the Inter-municipal Collaboration Framework (ICF) agreement between the Town of Whitecourt and Woodlands County. It specifies what and how services are paid for and delivered between municipalities that share a boundary, where residents from one community use

2024

A YEAR IN REVIEW



Michelle Wright performing at the AJMC.



A spiffy new Percy Baxter.

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and Woodlands County. It specifies what and how services are paid for and delivered between municipalities

that share a boundary, where residents from one community use

continued on page 3

Early morning frost



A wintery treat for the early morning risers. A beautifully frosted display from Mother Nature.

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- Able to participate in on-call rotation
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- Abide by codes of all regulating bodies, in regard to the necessary reporting requirements for all aspects of the Department

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The U11 Tier 7 Royals' win, is one of the year's best pictures.



The Spruce View Knitting Club with their two donated blankets.



Woodlands County and Town of Whitecourt council members following a happy signing.



Sell the team signs.

continued from page 2
services in another, and vice versa. The creation and signing of the agreement took years. The process started ear-

ly in 2019 and required court intervention. Both groups happily signed the agreement on October 2, appearing eager to work together again.

A new look for Percy Baxter makes the list for 2024. Brand new siding gave the school a completely overhauled look, transforming it entirely. The once lightly co-

loured school now features a strikingly dark hue, but the pops of colour remain. Northern Gateway Public Schools also installed a new drainage system

and landscaping around the exterior. It sure looks spiffy!
Last year's summer season of youth baseball was a great one for several local teams,

including the U11 Tier 7 Whitecourt Royals. The team's season was capped off by winning their provincial tour-
continued on page 4

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Two of Whitecourt's finest having fun clocking speeds during the Wolverine's skills competition.



Photo by Town of Whitecourt
Whitecourt's new Fire Chief Aaron Floyd.



Claire, a youngster from Whitecourt Taekwondo, performing for the seniors.



Kavish had a blast at the Family Day activities at Festival Park

continued from page 3

namment on July 28, at home, in front of friends and family. The team's celebration together is one of this reporter's favourite pictures of the year. Can you feel their emotion?

And we can't forget the retirement of Fire Chief Brian Wynn, who served the department in various roles for thirty-one years and had been chief since 2013. Taking up the post in his place is Deputy Fire Chief Aaron Floyd, who has 18 years with the department and eleven as deputy.

The long-standing dedication by both men in service of their community is inspiring. Thank you just isn't enough.

A significant announcement was made towards the end of the year, which had a community-wide impact. 4.5 kilometres long and 100 metres wide fireguard is being built on the eastern boundary of town to help protect the community from approaching wildfires. The project is funded thanks to a grant from FRIAA (Forest Resource Improvement Association of Alberta)

for 1.5 million dollars.

And how about Party in the Park? Last year's event drew large crowds to Festival Park. Scott Helman and Madeline Merlo were the headliners, and numerous local talents took to the stage over the weekend, including Addy Watson. Following Watson's set, she was presented with her Junior 2nd Place Winner plaque from Country Star Search. Bill Borgwardt from Global Country Canada ventured to Whitecourt to give her the award in person and watch her perform. It was likely a weekend to remember for the local youth.

From Michelle Wright performing at the AJMC to two of Whitecourt's finest having fun speed-checking Wolverines players during last year's skills competition, to kids having fun at the Family Fun Day events, to residents chatting each other up at the popular Park Parties that happened through the summer, to the community's first Youth Week and another successful Seniors Week, last year is definitely one to remember. Here's to you, 2024. Thanks for the memories.

PUBLIC NOTICE

www.whitecourt.ca | facebook.com/TownofWhitecourt | 780-778-2273



CHRISTMAS TREE PICK UP


Starting on Tuesday, January 7, 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.



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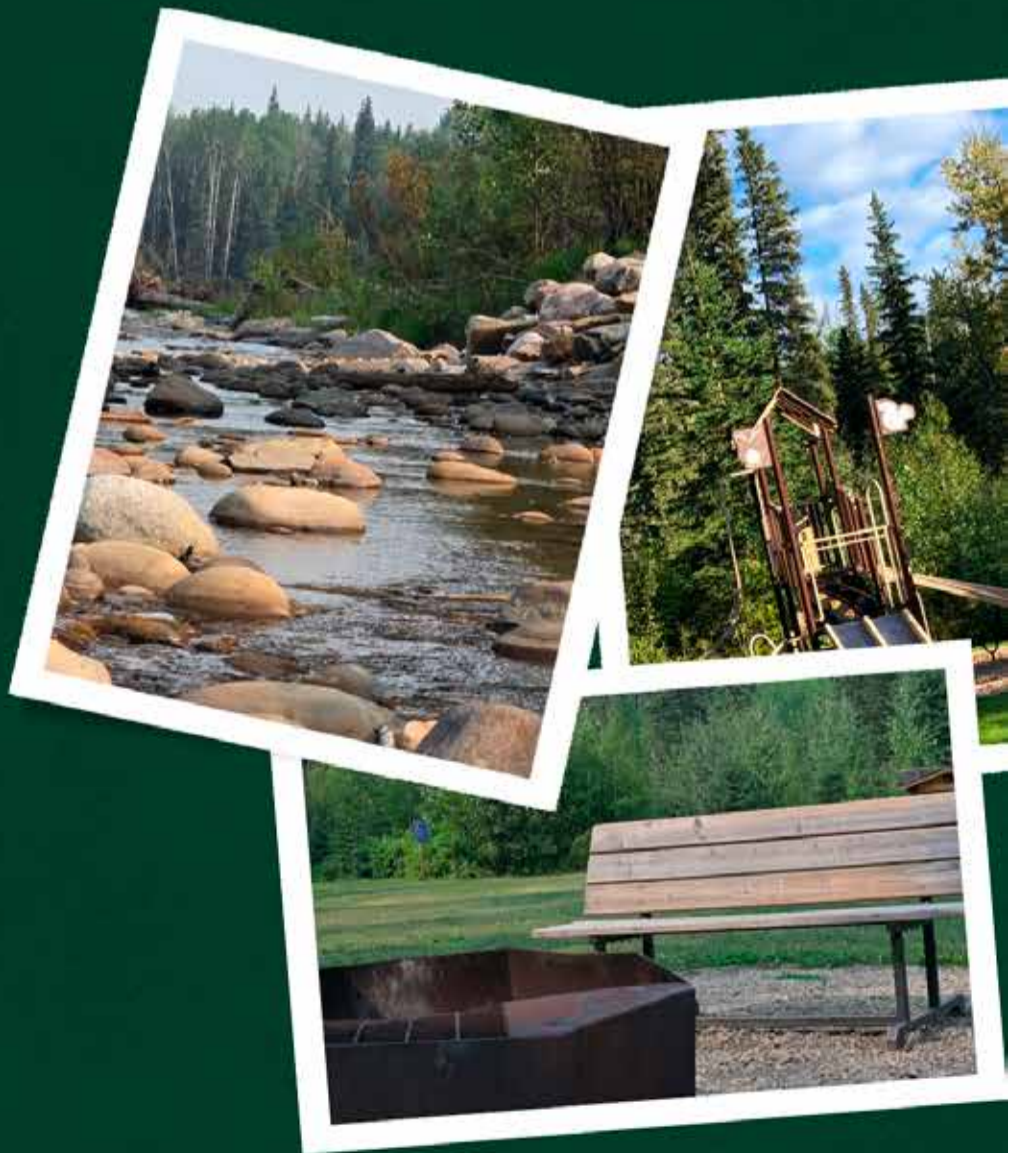
2025 Groat Creek Group Camping

Reservations open
January 6 for the
2025 camping
season

May long weekend
to October long
weekend

Info & Registration

Contact us at our
Municipal Office in
Whitecourt
1-888-870-6315





PUZZLES

SEE SOLUTIONS PAGE 15



SUDOKU

7		5		4				
			5					
			9					3
	2			3	6	8		
	1	8		2				7
		6				9		
6			2	1				
3				4	8		9	
				7	2			

Level: Intermediate

Fun By The Numbers

Like puzzles? Then you'll love sudoku. This mind-bending puzzle will have you hooked from the moment you square off, so sharpen your pencil and put your sudoku savvy to the test!

CROSSWORDS

1	2	3				4	5	6					
7						8					9		
10			11				12						
13						14	15			16			
17				18			19			20			
21					22	23			24				
				25			26						
			27	28			29						
			30				31						
				32			33		34	35	36	37	38
39	40				41				42				
43				44					45				
46				47					48				
49											50		
											51		
												52	

51. Give the impression of dishonesty
52. Witness

CLUES DOWN

- Of cadmium
- Deliver a sermon
- Inner regions of a shadow
- Aggressive dog
- Smells
- Twofold
- Former OSS
- Computer language
- Indian groom
- Automobile
- Hairstyle
- Atomic #76
- Guy (slang)
- Ladies' undergarments
- Furniture with open shelves
- Back-arc basin
- Partner to flow

- A type of horse
- Possesses
- Split pulses
- Small amount
- Flat-bottomed riverboat
- Not good
- Atomic #31
- Assist in committing a crime
- Chauvinists
- Get away
- One of a people who speaks a Semitic language
- Civil rights college organization
- Combustible dark rocks
- Grocery container
- Central nervous system

HOROSCOPE

ARIES

(March 21 - April 20)



Aries, a special person in your life deserves all of your attention. Romance might be on your mind, and you'll look forward to all of the time you can spend together.

TAURUS

(April 21 - May 21)



You may feel artistically inspired this week, Taurus. Explore projects like home improvements or crafting. There are many things to try.

GEMINI

(May 22 - June 21)



Your attendance at a wedding or another special event could have your thoughts moving in a romantic direction, Gemini. Maybe you're thinking of taking your relationship to another level?

CANCER

(June 22 - July 22)



Cancer, forge ahead in your efforts if you aspire to learn a new skill or take on a different project. This might involve meeting new and interesting people. Expand your social network.

LEO

(July 23 - August 23)



Leo, it is important to put others first this week, particularly your spouse or romantic partner. You don't want any hurt feelings circulating right now.

VIRGO

(August 24 - September 22)



An unexpected visitor might come your way in the next few days, Virgo. This could require overhauling your schedule and even space in your home to make room.

LIBRA

(September 23 - October 23)



Family and friends will have a difficult time changing your mind once you have taken a stance, Libra. You have dug in your heels on this topic.

SCORPIO

(October 24 - November 22)



Scorpio, new work assignments or additional business may complicate matters in the days ahead. That can be great during times of year when spending can get out of control.

SAGITTARIUS

(Nov. 23 - Dec. 21)



As you prepare for the colder temperatures, holistic arts, acupuncture, herbs, and therapies might be on your mind, Sagittarius. You don't want to be sick this go-around.

CAPRICORN

(Dec. 22 - Jan. 20)



Capricorn, you will try to meet the demands of your need for information this week. Chances are you'll be reading the newspaper and news outlets as much as you can.

AQUARIUS

(January 21 - February 18)



You cannot gain traction right now, Aquarius. Perhaps you haven't met the right people yet? Keep your eyes and ears open for new opportunities.

PISCES

(February 19 - March 20)



Pisces, if a career change has been on your mind, the new year might be a chance to get those gears moving in the right direction.

Crossword Clues

CLUES ACROSS

- Central processing unit
- Taxi
- Body part
- Papal court
- Young women making their public debuts
- Metal shackles
- Joseph's wife
- Licensed professional
- Partner to cheese
- Mild fruits
- File format
- Province of Indonesia
- Beloved grilled foods
- Bar bill
- Don't know when

- yet
- Whale ship captain
 - Touches softly
 - Mock
 - Red-brown Pacific sea bream
 - Summer entertainment options
 - Protective crust
 - Cool!
 - Behave in a way that belittles
 - Denial
 - A place to sleep
 - Electronic counter-countermeasures
 - Intestinal pouches
 - SE Asia family of languages
 - Sound
 - Select

UNDER THE WEATHER

WORD SEARCH

G	A	X	P	A	E	N	I	A	R	G	I	M	H	C	H	P	O	S	F
M	I	K	S	X	Z	L	R	G	M	L	Z	T	O	W	E	M	E	S	V
T	V	N	T	G	V	I	T	E	B	O	A	W	U	V	C	L	A	S	N
E	G	V	R	R	N	R	C	D	Z	D	L	P	H	F	B	L	T	B	C
E	S	X	E	P	E	R	T	U	S	S	I	S	B	I	M	B	D	P	O
D	I	U	P	C	W	S	T	G	V	C	R	A	S	O	G	H	A	T	A
I	T	M	T	A	V	R	P	R	K	X	Z	S	N	I	O	R	H	R	T
S	I	B	H	Z	T	C	I	I	R	X	I	E	N	S	A	O	T	O	L
E	T	Z	R	N	G	O	H	K	W	M	L	F	S	S	O	H	X	H	G
A	A	K	O	E	I	V	O	M	S	L	E	E	I	K	R	O	S	D	U
S	P	N	A	U	M	I	O	N	A	C	N	T	W	I	P	U	N	L	B
E	E	E	T	L	M	D	A	R	T	L	E	O	T	L	R	K	K	O	H
A	H	X	D	F	N	R	K	I	L	S	R	I	A	H	K	W	S	C	C
G	N	C	W	N	T	F	O	I	R	M	S	S	T	P	P	F	P	N	A
E	C	O	L	I	Z	U	I	S	S	E	M	C	H	B	I	C	L	O	M
D	N	V	H	M	S	N	G	P	W	O	T	Z	V	I	R	U	S	M	O
F	B	N	I	X	P	G	D	S	S	A	I	C	U	H	H	X	K	M	T
K	X	E	T	H	D	A	K	I	N	T	W	U	A	E	L	B	T	O	S
T	N	N	P	X	G	L	S	K	P	A	I	N	V	B	S	O	G	C	C
M	G	F	E	T	U	B	E	R	C	U	L	O	S	I	S	U	Z	I	O

Find the words hidden vertically, horizontally, diagonally, and backwards.

WORDS

ARTHRITIS
BACTERIA
COMMON COLD

COVID DISEASE
E-COLI
FUNGAL

HEPATITIS
HOOKWORMS
ILLNESS
INFECTIOUS

INFLUENZA
MIGRAINE
PAIN
PARASITE

PERTUSSIS
SALMONELLA
STOMACH BUG
STREP THROAT

THRUSH
TOXOPLASMOSIS
TRANSMISSIBLE
TUBERCULOSIS
VIRUS

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- Mondays 7:00pm
- Wednesdays 7:30pm

Meetings held at the Family Worship Center upstairs.

ZOOM ID: **818 413 483** PASSWORD: **gratitude**



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This can include help with parking costs for hospital visits, living expenses and unforeseen medical expenses. Applications can be made through the Drs at both Whitecourt Medical Clinics or (office hours, can leave a message):

Kim Nendsa (President of Whitecourt Cancer & Wellness Society) **780-778-0932**
Aimee Grierson **780-262-0222**

<https://wctcancerwellness.com/>

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



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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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Child Support Program:

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Preventative Education:

Provides Workshops, Information and Awareness to Schools, Community Organizations, Agencies and Businesses



Family Resource & Crisis Centre

www.whitecourtshester.ca

GRIEF SHARE

Support group on Tuesdays 6:30pm - 8:30 pm, starting September 17, 2024 at Crossroads Community Church, 4419 44 Ave, Mayerthorpe.

\$35 includes 12 weekly sessions.

Pre-register by calling 780-786-2533.

Whitecourt Alcoholics Anonymous Group



Meetings are three times each week

- Monday 8:00 pm - 9:00 pm
- Wednesday 8:00 pm - 9:00 pm
- Friday 8:00 pm - 9:00 pm

New Women's AA Group on Saturdays @11 am

Located at the United Church Basement 5201 - 50 St

Please Leave a Message for AA member (780)424-5900

or **Contact Addictions Helpline @1(866)332-2322**

CANADIAN Kids Corner



Math Blocks

Fill in the missing blocks with numbers between 0-20.
The numbers in each row add up to the totals on the right.
The numbers in each column add up to the totals on the bottom.

20		1	25
	10	8	21
7	18		37
30	32	21	

12	18	7
8	10	3
1	4	20

Solution

CANADA



HISTORY

1748

The Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle returns Ile Royale and Ile Saint-Jean to the French.

Health FACT:



True or false: Clutter and a lack of organization is linked to negative emotions like tension and stress.

Answer: True

Get Scrambled

Unscramble the words to determine the phrase.

ELANC HET GGRAEA

Answer: Clean the garage

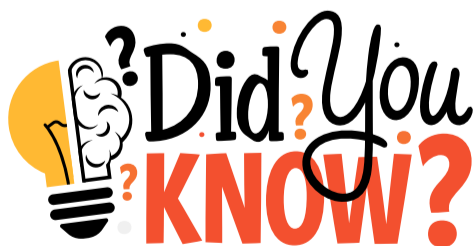
NEW WORD

SORT

arrange systematically in groups

How they say that in...

- English:** Organize
- Spanish:** Organizar
- Italian:** Organizzare
- French:** Organiser
- German:** Organisieren



Being organized boosts energy, maintains focus and may promote creativity. Organization also can reduce stress.



Get the PICTURE?



Can you guess what the bigger picture is?

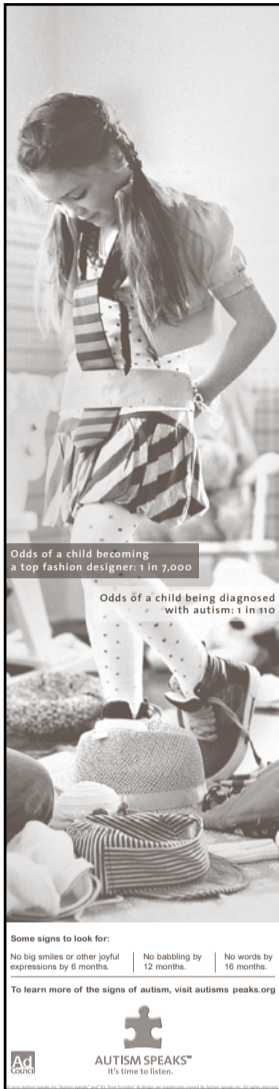
Answer: Closet



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The Press
www.whitecourtpress.com

Call Valerie Winger at 780.706.1858 or email wctpress@gmail.com

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Grande Prairie
Parkland Medical Centre
#202, 10127 121 Ave Grande Prairie, AB

Airdrie
Apple Wellness Center
229 1 St. SW Airdrie, AB

A look at the local weather	Wed., Jan. 08	Thu., Jan. 09	Fri., Jan. 10	Sat., Jan. 11	Sun., Jan. 12
P.O.P.	20%	30%	30%	30%	10%
High	4°C	0°C	3°C	-1°C	-5°C
Low	-1°C	-1°C	-1°C	-6°C	-8°C
Wind	W 29 km/h	SW 7 km/h	W 9 km/h	W 22 km/h	W 11 km/h
24-Hr Rain / Snow	-	-	-	-	-

Whitcourt approves 2025 interim budget

Whitcourt Town Council has approved the 2025 Interim Budget. The budget, totaling \$106,288,969, consists of a \$53,481,399 operating budget and a capital budget of \$52,807,570. The budget maintains service levels and funds important capital investments with a 3.77% tax rate increase.

“This budget is about preparing for the future,” stated Whitcourt Mayor Tom Pickard. “It includes investments of over \$5.5 million in emergency preparedness and mitigation, and capital investments that will ensure resi-

dents needs continue to be met. This budget also includes services and initiatives that are part of the recently signed Intermunicipal Collaboration Framework with Woodlands County, which allows our communities to continue to build new partnerships and endeavors that will benefit our economy and quality of life.”

The 2025 Interim Budget Report can be viewed on the Whitcourt website at www.whitecourt.ca/yourtown. 2025 Capital Budget Highlights:

- The Culture & Events Centre is the biggest capital in-

vestment for 2025, and is scheduled to be complete in

- late 2026.
- A Community Fireguard, approximately 4.5 kilometres long and 100 metres wide, will be constructed on the eastern boundary of Whitcourt.
- Phase One Flood Protection mitigation projects will be completed to protect the Town’s water and wastewater infrastructure in the event of a flood.
- Phase 3 of the Centennial Park Pathway Improvement Project will be completed.

2025 Operating Budget Highlights:

- Continue to develop youth-focused programming, including the Doors Open Program and Teen Week.
- Continuation of the social prescribing services for seniors in the region, with support from the United Way and Health Aging Alberta. This program helps connect seniors with non-medical programs and services in the community to enhance their quality of life.
- The Transportation Master Plan will be completed, and will

include an evaluation of the 55 Avenue and Dahl Drive/Mink Creek Road intersection. The Plan will provide a strategy for the orderly, timely and economic development of roadway systems in Whitcourt to serve the future growth of the community.

- A comprehensive review and update of Off Site Levy Bylaw 1532 will be completed.
- A general municipal election will be held in October 2025.
- The Wastewater Treatment Plant Study will be completed to provide op-

tions to consider to support community growth.

- A comprehensive market analysis of the local business environment attraction and a strategy for retention will be completed.

The 2025 Budget will be finalized in the spring of 2025 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.

Whitcourt Town Council update

The Province of Alberta recently made policy changes to the Automated Traffic Enforcement (ATE) Program that has impacted Whitcourt’s program. Under the new regulations, there are 16

school zone sites approved for photo radar enforcement within Whitcourt, and all locations along Highway 43 are now prohibited. In the new year, the Province will be accepting business cases from

municipalities to permit ATE in high frequency of collision locations, and Whitcourt will be exploring options to submit a case for locations along Highway 43 as the program significantly enhanced safety

in the community. Since ATE was introduced in 2008, there has been a 50% reduction in intersection collisions along Highway 43 in Whitcourt.

Whitcourt Town Council has awarded

the Community Fireguard Stumping & Debris Disposal Contract to Martushev Group in the amount of \$856,677.29. The Town of Whitcourt, with support from Alberta Forestry and Parks, will be constructing a community fireguard with

access points, approximately 4.5 kilometres long and 100 metres wide, on the eastern boundary of town.

The Rotary Club of Whitcourt will be purchasing and placing a Peace Pole in Festi-

continued on page 13

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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@gmail.com.



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Woodlands County Council appoints Chief Administrative Officer

Council is pleased to announce that Mr. Matthew Ferris has been selected as the new Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) for Woodlands County. He will be assuming his new role and responsibilities on January 27th, 2025.

“Mr. Ferris brings the right combination of education, hands on experience, and a proven track record in moving communities in a positive direction and we look forward to his contributions to Woodlands County,” said Reeve Dave Kusch. “Council undertook a comprehensive executive search with support from Human Edge and we feel that Mr. Ferris is well qualified to lead our dedicated staff and manage the services and growth of Woodlands County responsibly.”

Mr. Ferris joins Woodlands County

with over 15 years of experience in executive and municipal leadership roles. His extensive experience spans a wide range of roles and responsibilities, supporting municipalities of all sizes across Canada, with a particular focus on rural and remote communities. From the very beginning of his career Mr. Ferris was drawn to public service by a desire to make a tangible difference in the lives of others. He thrives on the challenges that come with municipal governance—whether it’s navigating tight budgets, addressing unique community needs, or finding creative solutions to complex problems.

Throughout his career, Mr. Ferris has embraced the realities of working with limited resources, using these constraints as a

catalyst for innovation. His ability to maximize value for taxpayers and develop new revenue streams while fostering meaningful partnerships has been a hallmark of his leadership. Whether managing multimillion-dollar budgets, developing economic strategies, or guiding councils through strategic planning processes, Mr. Ferris has consistently delivered results that benefit the communities he serves.

With a collaborative leadership style, Mr. Ferris combines a deep understanding of municipal operations with a commitment to collaboration and transparency. He enjoys working closely with councils, staff, and residents to identify priorities and implement practical, cost-effective solutions.

As a dedicated mu-

nicipal leader, Mr. Ferris continues to prioritize fiscal responsibility, strategic vision, and community-driven decision-making. Mr. Ferris is familiar with the area, bringing strong relationships with municipal neighbours, a solid understanding of the challenges the County has faced and the skills required to support Council in their future direction for Woodlands County. Mr. Ferris looks forward to joining the administrative team and continue the positive momentum in enhancing our great community.

Council wishes to thank Mr. Paul Benedetto and Mr. Rod Hawken for their leadership and commitment to Woodlands County over the past year and their assistance helping Mr. Ferris transition to the new role.

Woodlands County Council recap

Following budget discussions, Council adopted the 2025 Operating and Capital budgets. The budget reflects a 4.5% taxation increase and a 2.8% increase in operating revenue. The Capital budget contains \$4.89 million in funding for capital projects through taxation and \$772,000 transferred to reserves. The budget will be finalized in the spring pending the completion of property assessment values, provincial requisitions collected on behalf of the Government of Alberta, and seniors’ funding requisitions. The budget document can be viewed on the Woodlands County website: <https://woodlands.ab.ca/p/budgets>.

Sgt. Matthew Clarke, Sgt. Craig Park and Crime Prevention Coordinator Tina Prodaniuk with Whitecourt RCMP provided an update to Council on the upcoming implementation of body worn cameras, the department’s staff-

ing and activities for the 2024 year including crime prevention programming and response to calls in Woodlands County. Since January 1st, Whitecourt RCMP have responded to 1,208 calls in the municipality.

Barrhead RCMP’s Sgt. Colin Hack was also in attendance to provide an update on the current staffing levels and the department’s activities in the Fort Assiniboine area. He noted a decrease in copper theft crime in the Fort Assiniboine area. Council confirmed “visibility of police” as a priority for the Barrhead RCMP detachment.

Bylaw 590-24 – Elections Bylaw was passed. In accordance with the Local Authorities Election Act, Council appointed Koren Scott as the Returning Officer and Dawn Fortin as the Deputy Returning Officer for the 2025 Municipal Election. The election

will take place on October 20, 2025. Nominations will be accepted at both Woodlands County offices starting January 2, 2025.

Blue Ridge and Fort Assiniboine residents are asked to assist in removing extension cords and other objects from sidewalks in the hamlets after a snowfall to ensure the safe and efficient clearing of snow. Extension cords and objects left on sidewalks can be covered by snow and are a safety concern for staff, a tripping hazard for residents, and could damage snow clearing machinery.

As per the Woodlands County/Town of Whitecourt ICF Agreement, Woodlands County provided written input to the Town of Whitecourt regarding the use of Whitecourt Pierce Aerial Pump (Tower 1) within Woodlands County. The Town of Whitecourt has confirmed that Tower 1 may re-

spond to incident types approved by Woodlands County within the county for up to a maximum of \$25,000 in 2025. Responses beyond the maximum will require approval from Woodlands County.

Council appointed Mr. Matthew Ferris as Chief Administrative Officer for Woodlands County effective January 27, 2025. Mr. Ferris joins Woodlands County with over 15 years of experience in executive and municipal leadership roles.

Upcoming scheduled meetings:

- Regular Council – Wednesday, January 15, 5:00 pm
- Regular Council – Wednesday, January 29, 9:30 am

Meetings are held in-person at the Municipal Office in Whitecourt and streamed on the Woodlands County YouTube channel. Agenda packages are available on the Woodlands County CivicWeb Portal.



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New local ownership for the Wolverines has invigorated the franchise, and fans are here for it

By Serena Lapointe

It's been almost six months since a pair of local business owners, Cory Masse, Chief Operating Officer of GFI Solutions Ltd, and his wife, Terriann Masse, owner of Tri-Steel Salvage Ltd, purchased the Whitecourt Wolverines from the AJHL, saving the beloved local franchise from being moved out of the community.

When rumours began last spring that then-owners Craig Kibblewhite and Jason Fischer of the Spruce Grove-based Parkland Hockey Group had done an arena tour in Devon, and that conversations were happening behind closed doors about moving the team, local fans started getting worried.

Cory and Terriann had been the main sponsors for the last three years, and quickly saw the purchase

as something worth taking seriously. "We didn't say, hey, let's go buy the Wolverines.

But, with us sponsoring them and Terriann being on the Chamber, we got involved once we heard the team might leave. We're from this community and are fortunate enough to have a couple of successful companies, so we said, let's be some of those people that step up," explained Cory.

Getting the team back under local ownership was another big push for the pair. "I think we're young and motivated and can do something with it, and just being locally owned again was the biggest thing. To keep them in town, somebody needed to buy the team. So, here we are," Cory chuckled.

The pair created a

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After a chance opportunity presented itself last year, Cory and Terriann Masse became the proud new owners of the Whitecourt Wolverines AJHL franchise. While it might not have been something they thought about prior, when it came down to the team leaving or staying, the Masse's knew what needed to be done. Pictured are Cory and Terriann Masse, the proud new local owners.



Tim Horton's management presented a cheque for \$2,880.17 to Judy Stanski, President of the Friends of Whitecourt Society. The funds were the proceeds from the sale of Smile Cookies.

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non-profit to make the purchase, the WCT Wolverines Sports Society, and received support from past owner Brent Stark. "He gave me advice and told me what it was all about. He had the team for a long time, so I was able to lean on him a little bit for that," explained Cory.

Stark owned the team from 2012 until 2021 when he sold it to Kibblewhite and Fischer. The team was important to Stark, and he wanted to see it stay in Whitecourt, so much so that Stark added a Right of First Refusal clause in the contract, which gave him a say on whether the team could move within five years of selling it. With only three years since selling, Stark invoked the clause and threw the potential move to Devon out of the realms of

possibility, waving a magical wand only he could wave.

"Not many people know that this all started with that clause, where they couldn't move the team within five years without his permission," explained Cory. Stark's plan had worked, thanks to his foresight. "So, the league ended up dissolving the Wolverines and taking it over and then the old owners started their new team, the Devon Xtreme, and we bought the Wolverines franchise off of the AJHL," said Cory. The purchase officially went through in August, and the new owners hit the ground running.

"What the Starks did with the hockey community here and bringing the AJHL to town is incredible, and we are honoured to be the new people to do it, but with the same style as before," smiled Cory. By that, he means community-oriented

and involved. "We're seeing it already. Some of the players have started their own snow removal business, and they are going to the schools again, reading to the children and hanging out with them," said Cory. "And now the schools are coming to us. It's already starting - integration back into the community like the team and players used to be," added Terriann.

Being local owners also means creating a family atmosphere for players, which Terriann is excited about as she learns more about the team and the sport. "I wasn't involved in hockey before, so this is all new to me, and it's exciting. My favourite part has been getting to know the boys. I didn't realize how young they were. We all need to take care of them. If we can positively imprint on them to help them

go wherever they're going, then our job is done," she said.

Cory said one word he keeps hearing is local, proving how much it means to fans and the business community to have a local owner. "Businesses and business owners are the backbone of the community, big companies and little ones. All of them are important. The arena is filling up more and more every week. We put on a high-level hockey game and play better when that rink is full. When it's full, those boys go the extra mile and turn it up."

Cory said they've enjoyed the first six months and can't wait for the years ahead. "The things we've learned this year; we can change next year. We're just going to keep this thing rolling. We want everybody to know that we are here for the long haul.

We're going to be just like the Stark family. We're not going to say, see you later in a few years," said Cory.

That's one of the reasons the pair decided to slash ticket pricing. "Times have been tough, and we wanted to make it more affordable. We wanted to make those changes to show everybody that we care," he explained. Terriann said it's also about building trust with the local fan base, showing them that Whitecourt's team isn't going anywhere.

Cory said the coaching staff and team are top-notch. "We're going to win a championship if we can keep that barn full. That's where we are heading." He added that they are adding different games between the periods and creating more of a show for attendees. "We have a whole bunch of different ideas. We also want

to do T-shirt tosses."

Cory and Terriann both said they have a positive outlook on everything because they see the support they are receiving. "Without the community backing it, we can't have these things. We can't have an AJHL hockey team. We can't have the kids play baseball or football. You need the community to come together and help each other out." He said passing down the community mindset to future generations is also a part of it. "That's how we can successfully have these things in town."

One thing the pair both want to say is thank you. "Thank you to Whitecourt and the surrounding area, the residents and the businesses. Everybody supported us from the get-go. We have an amazing team, and we're going to prove that. Let's go, Wolverines!"

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continued from page 10

partnerships. Whitecourt Town Council has adopted By-law 1581 that rescinds the Downtown South Area Structure Plan, and has adopted an amendment to the Land Use Bylaw that has rezoned a portion of land in downtown south as future urban development.

partnerships. Whitecourt Town Council has adopted By-law 1581 that rescinds the Downtown South Area Structure Plan, and has adopted an amendment to the Land Use Bylaw that has rezoned a portion of land in downtown south as future urban development.



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Stephen W. King
Age 30

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Whitecourt's latest black belts

Following a tough testing period that involved mastering nine patterns, which are choreographed movements with 18 or more moves, wood board breaking, brick breaking, sparring, and vocabulary testing in Korean, a new crop of area athletes is starting the new year as Taekwondo black belts (center). New, and advanced, black belts showing off their well-earned belts.

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Registrations for the supply of gravel trucks and/or equipment are effective from January 1, 2025, to December 31, 2025. All applicants who wish to register may obtain new registration packages at either of the Woodlands County offices after January 1, 2025, between the hours of 8:15 a.m. to 12:00 noon and 1:00 p.m. to 4:30 p.m.

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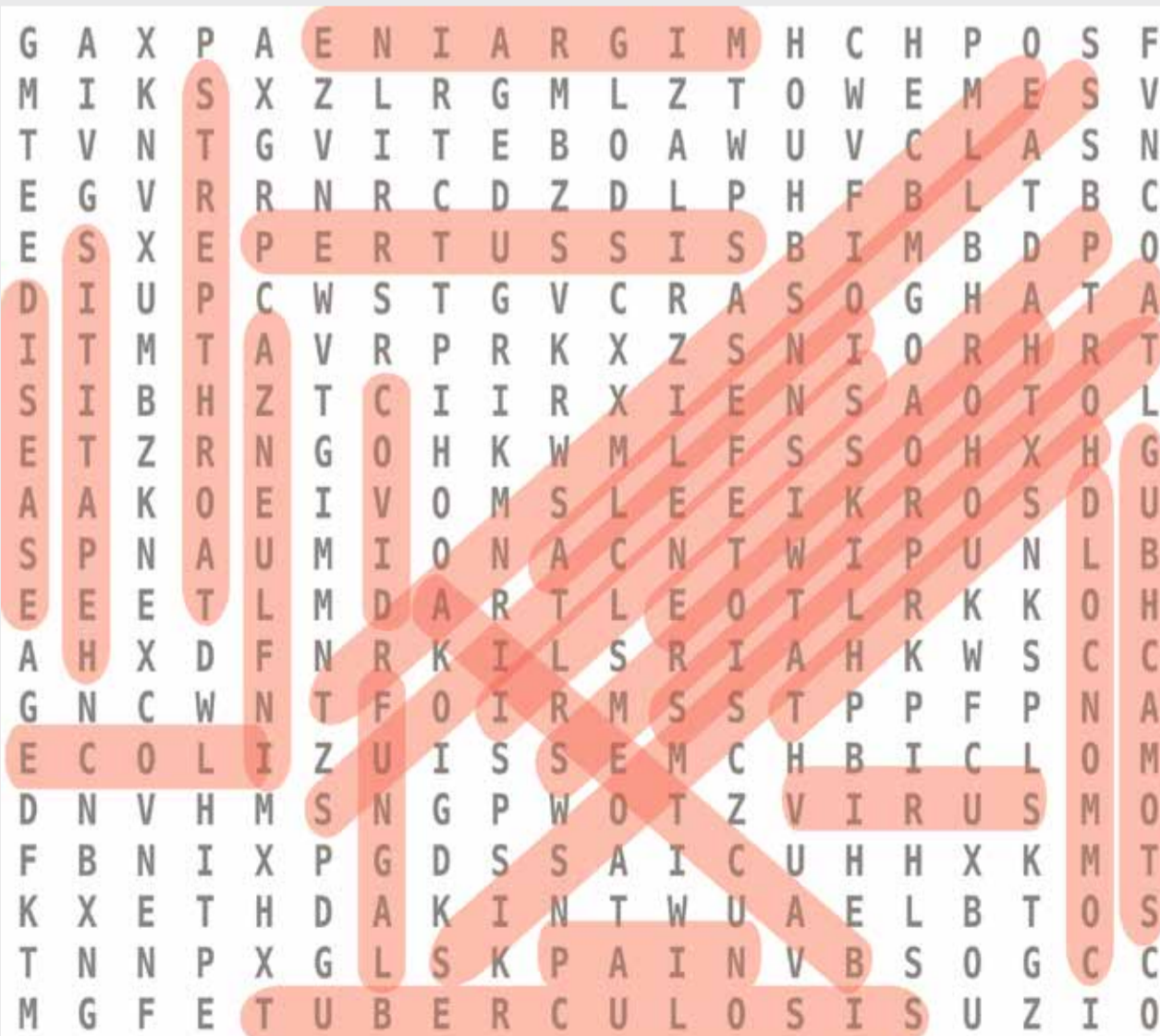


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