

What You Should Know About Issues Before Voting!

By Janet Ballantyne, Rocky View Forward

Rocky View's election is Monday, October 18th. If you want a council that values your interests and represents you effectively, you need to evaluate your choices carefully. Choosing a candidate who supports a resident-focused approach on key issues is critical.

Where do they stand on fiscal responsibility?

County debt has increased significantly. In 2005, Rocky View's external long-term debt was \$347 per person. In 2020, it was \$1,199 per person – second only to Calgary in the region. This doesn't include the \$20 million borrowed in 2021 to purchase two water / wastewater utilities. It also doesn't include the growing amount that has been "borrowed" from ratepayers, both to reduce external long-term debt and to finance new capital projects. That adds another \$25 million contributed by ratepayers.

Off-site levies should recoup costs from the development that benefits from the infrastructure. Past councils set levy rates too low to recoup those costs. The current council majority approved levy rates lower than Administration recommended as necessary to recover costs.

It's your tax dollars that cover the borrowing costs when council fails to ensure that development pays its own way.

Where do they stand on sustainable development?

Sustainable development matches reasonable growth expectations. Rocky View is expected to maintain its 3% share of the region's population over the foreseeable future. That requires housing for about 800 new residents each year over the next decade – 300 new homes each year. Given this, did it make sense for the current council majority to approve many times that number? Especially given the thousands of homes approved by earlier councils but not yet built.

Sustainable development does not impose costs on existing communities – it should strengthen them. The current council majority ignored this and repeatedly approved developments that will negatively impact neighbouring communities.

Sustainable development also must have economical and environmentally-sensitive servicing. Inadequate servicing can have serious detrimental environmental impacts and ends up costing ratepayers in the long run. We should be able to expect that growth respects what is already here and doesn't impose costs on the existing residents.

Where do they stand on regional planning?

Rocky View benefits significantly from surrounding Calgary

on three sides. Our residential and business communities access Calgary's services and infrastructure and vice-versa – we are part of the regional economy.

The question is whether the County will change its tune and play nicely in the regional sandbox or continue to belligerently insist that we only need a "made in Rocky View" solution.

Where do they stand on gravel policy?

Gravel is not scarce in Rocky View. We can easily have good policy to ensure that gravel pits are located and operated in a responsible manner than minimizes negative impacts on residents and the environment.

Proper evaluation of technical issues for gravel applications is highly complex – a job demonstrated to be beyond Rocky View's in-house expertise. However, this council majority refused to obtain independent third-party assessments of the gravel companies' technical studies. Why?

Where do they stand on bullying?

Everyone knows that the current council has been seriously divided. The cause has been just as obvious – the majority's refusal to listen to any questions or criticism of their agenda. It is clear where all the incumbents stand on this issue. It is less clear where new candidates stand. Some say they would work to make council less dysfunctional. Would they join the current majority and continue silencing those who question them? Or, would they try to ensure that council had strong and ethical leadership that maintained the basic democratic principle of hearing all sides before making decisions?

Where do they stand on communicating with residents?

Clear lines of communication are essential for a council to operate in a transparent manner and with accountability to its ratepayers – the people who pay the bills.

To achieve transparency and accountability, a new council needs to make changes. The budget process needs to be revamped so people can more easily understand and participate. Newspaper advertising needs to be reinstated and additional methods of communicating need to be explored so people can more easily know what is happening around them. Information on upcoming development proposals needs to be more readily available so potentially affected people can participate more effectively. The list could go on and on.

Answer these questions – then be sure to vote

There are good candidates running in each division. Do your homework.

Get Informed – Vote!

Rocky View's election is October 18th. Together we can make a difference

Rocky View Forward – your grassroots residents' advocacy group
www.rockyviewforward.com