

Nobleford continues to grow

For Nobleford, 2017 is the stepping stone for the village's upcoming Centennial in 2018. While residents and visitors gear up to celebrate the Lethbridge County community's past 100 years, Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) Kirk Hofman said Nobleford, is modern, first and foremost.

"Look around our community and just see all the work we've been doing. A focus on strong infrastructure — water, sewer and roads. Now, broadband fibre optic. It is the number one thing that brings people to your community and brings businesses. We've got fibre in our community. A huge advantage. I can't say enough about it. The doors are going to open everywhere for us and the future is going to be significantly different from what it has been," noted Hofman.

Hofman added the village is prosperous and will continue to grow with the infrastructure resource fibre optic will bring to the community, but water, sewer and roads are still and always will be very

important.

"We've got a fair amount of infrastructure building going on over the next five years. We've got a list. Our 2012 industrial subdivision — 25 lots — are gone, sold out. Every one of them has a development permit on it," he said.

"I would say we've got five businesses there that have more than 10 employees. I don't know of any of the businesses in there that are just a proprietor, they all have employees. That adds to the economy," Hofman said.

Half of the village's 2016 residential subdivision, Hofman said, have been sold.

"We're probably going to move through those pretty quick because we're having a new subdivision built by a private developer in Nobleford starting now.

According to Hofman, he was going to meet with the developer for a start up meeting last week. He explained the new development will be 20 new residential lots and a fairly large church, as part of the private development.

Hofman said the new private subdivision will be the first in 40 years since

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the Ruby Crescent subdivision. "We hope to do a better job," he joked. "And work very closely with the developer on this one."

Hofman added the village has annexed 100 acres to the east of Nobleford and the private development will start with a 15-acre parcel that is a part of the new 100 acres set aside for development.

Nobleford also raised utility rates this year, but the average for water, sewer and garbage is still under \$50 a month. "We are still the lowest in the area, possibly Alberta."

Nobleford also has a \$3 million budget for 2017 with property taxes going down again, Hofman said. The average municipal portion of tax in

Nobleford for a single-family dwelling is \$100 a year. "Why is it \$100? Because of the minimum tax of \$100 per property," he added. And, Nobleford is sticking with its original plans for no residential municipal property tax for Nobleford's Centennial in 2018.

Hofman explained how the village can offer low to no taxes and keep up with the growing costs of infrastructure and other costs associated with operating a village. "When we plan our budgets — operating budget, we zero-base. We start right from scratch every single year for our budget. We just don't add two per cent or five per

cent, we start over every single year. We've been able to keep our operating budgets — actually reducing in places. One of the big reasons is staff," he said. "There's always too much work to do and not enough people to do it. You have to make sure you have the right people and good people. We have a small staff in the village. They're all the best. We hire the best staff," Hofman added.

With Nobleford's capital budgets and in regards to infrastructure, Hofman explained, council takes a look at 20-year capital plans.

"The planning council is doing with the budget this year, is not for expenditures for next year, it's up five or 20 years down the road. That is why or how we're able to keep our community modern," he said.

Another way Nobleford can keep costs down is through grants. "We can't do these multi-million dollar projects without grants. Provincial and federal government and we leverage their money on other grants continually and it is a complicated process, which I have to remind myself every year, how does all this work and how are we going to multiply that money. It's the 'Nobleford Money Tree.' We make that money grow because we take advantage of every opportunity and every rule, we don't break the rules, but we better make sure we know what

we're doing," Hofman said.

Matching grants is also very important in the process, Hofman noted. "Where do we get the money for only charging \$100 for a household tax? We make a little bit of money off water, our subdivisions, we do make profits in other places. We only collect \$150,000 property tax, but yet we have a \$3 million budget. The money does come from somewhere," he said, adding grants will account for MSI funding in place again, which is nice to see.

"We're also getting a grant for a deep sewer line upgrade. We applied for a grant for a water treatment plant upgrade. We've got some grants for paving. Then we work closely with societies in Nobleford for our park upgrade. The village has not spent any taxpayer dollars since 2005 on parks and recreation and yet there's well over \$1 million worth of new recreational facilities in Nobleford. And it all comes from societies, fundraising and grant applications," he said, and some funds are designated from subdivision development.

A big upgrade is also going on in Centennial Park through Legion Legacy funds, he said. Upgrades will include Legacy plates and some fancy lighting that will definitely transform the park, Hofman said.

With the most current census, there is a population of 1,278. In 2015, there

was a population of 1,250.

"Since then, we've probably added another 50 people in Nobleford. We're a healthy 1,300-person population. That's a 27 per cent increase over the last census. We're fairly strong here," he said.

October 2017 also marks the next municipal election. Hofman said Nobleford council has made the decision to appoint the mayor from the elected five councillors.

Here's what's in store for Nobleford's Centennial in 2018: Nobleford Community Complex Society's Paint the Complex project, Nobleford Parks and Recreation Society's Legacy silhouette displays in Centennial Park, Legion Pavilion Centennial Park, and the Centennial Society is writing and will publish a history book and organizing events for August 2018.

Volunteers are building a bicycle motocross track (BMX track). Other Nobleford news: paving overlay of Highway Avenue is complete. Approved \$148,000 grant from the provincial government with MSI funding. New Railway Avenue sewer line. Construction delayed until 2017 \$650,000 with a 70/30 grant. Paving of North Railway Avenue cancelled due to no support from local improvement contribution.

Additional new treated water storage dome reservoir \$870,000 with a 50/50 grant.