

September 29 & 30, 2020



Public Engagement Summary Report

Alder Flats & Mulhurst Bay

Overview:

The County of Wetaskiwin No.10 is committed to engaging with our citizens and values the input provided by our residents. Public Participation Policy 12.0.15 states:

“Council recognizes that good governance includes engaging municipal stakeholders in Public Participation by:

- 2.1. Creating opportunities for stakeholders to engage;*
- 2.2. Promoting sustainable decisions by recognizing various stakeholder interests;*
- 2.3. Providing stakeholders with the appropriate information and tools to engage in meaningful participation; and*
- 2.4. Recognizing that Public Participation for matters beyond the statutory requirements can enrich the decision making process.”*

At the 2019 Strategic Planning Session, Council set a goal to move forward with redefining the budget cycle strategy. At the subsequent Tactical Planning Session, a strategy was set to develop a public participation component in the budget cycle strategy and to implement public participation for the 2021 Budget Cycle.

In order to support the planning of future public engagements, Council approved the creation of a Public Participation Committee. The purpose of this Committee is to facilitate the development of Public Participation Plans in accordance with the County’s Public Participation Policy 12.0.15. The Committee is made up of both Councillors and County staff working collaboratively to develop and administer Public Participation Plans. Public Participation Plans will provide an action plan for each public engagement session.

The Event:

Public Engagement Sessions were held on September 29 and 30, 2020, at the Alder Flats and Mulhurst Bay Community Halls. The evenings were broken into two sessions, one from 5:00-6:30 pm and the second from 7:00-8:30 pm. The County of Wetaskiwin hosted two public engagement evenings in 2020 to gather feedback on roads, hamlet revitalization and police costing model/assessment model review.

In Alder Flats, 7 stakeholders attended session one and 31 attended session two. In Mulhurst Bay 10 stakeholders attended session one and 27 attended session two. All 7 County Councillors, the Chief Administrative Officer, Assistant Chief Administrative Officer, Director of Finance, Director of Assessment, Director of Public Works, Communication Officer, and Municipal Intern were in attendance.

The events were advertised in the County’s Spring Newsletter, in the Pipestone Flyer for two weeks, on the County’s website, and through the County’s Facebook page. Online engagement was also available through the County’s website for two weeks following the public engagements.

Both evenings were broken into 3 sections: Provincial Downloading, Roads and Hamlet Revitalization.

Part 1: Provincial Downloading:

This section focused on changes to the police costing model and the proposed assessment model review.

Provincial Policing

As a result of changes to the police funding model announced by the Government of Alberta last year, the County is now required to contribute towards front-line policing costs. The table below shows what the County will have to pay each year going forward.

	% of front-line costs	Cost to County
2020	10	\$284,800.00
2021	15	\$427,506.00
2022	20	\$569,600.00
2023 and beyond	30	\$855,012.00

These numbers are calculated by the province through a formula, which is based equally on the total population and total equalized assessment of each municipality.

Previously, the County also received a credit towards these new costs for contracting with the RCMP for an Enhanced Member. This Member is paid for by the County and is currently based out of the Breton RCMP Detachment. This contract expires in 2021 and the County will no longer receive a monetary credit for that Member. At this time, it is unknown if the Enhanced Member will remain within the County, as they will no longer be paid for by the County and may be assigned elsewhere based on the overall needs of the RCMP as decided by the provincial government. Additionally, the County has received no guarantee from the provincial government that these increased contributions will lead to greater service from the RCMP for our residents.

Assessment Model Review

Over the summer the Government of Alberta announced they were considering changes to the assessment model for oil and gas wells and pipelines. The proposed changes were intended to enhance the competitiveness of the oil and gas industry, but they also would have had serious ramifications on the sustainability of rural municipality and smaller businesses in the industry. If the proposed changes were approved, residents and other commercial property owners would be responsible for subsidizing a property tax break for the oil and gas industry. The County of Wetaskiwin wrote a letter to the Premier expressing our many concerns with these proposed changes. On August 4, 2020, the County sent a letter to all County residents and businesses to inform them of the potential impacts of these changes to our County.

Update:

On October 19, 2020, the provincial government announced a pause on proposed assessment model changes for oil and gas wells and pipelines for the next three years. However, in an effort to attract

more investment and incentivise job creation in the industry, the Minister of Municipal Affairs at the time, Tracy Allard, announced a temporary tax exemption for new wells and pipelines and stated the government will lower assessment for less productive oil and gas wells. While the County is grateful that the proposed changes have been put on hold for now, the upcoming tax exemption and reduced assessment will impact the County's future revenues. For 2021, the County expects to lose an estimated \$725,000 in revenue.

"I would like to thank the County residents and all rural Albertans who lobbied the provincial government about the proposed changes to the assessment model" said Reeve Josh Bishop. "Your voice and support helped us reach a more acceptable alternative for rural municipalities. We appreciate Ministers Allard's willingness to listen and work with rural municipalities on this issue and look forward to working together with the Minister and industry to find a long-term solution."

Part 2: County Roads:

The purpose of this section was to give participants an overview of the County's road maintenance program. The evening specifically focused on snow removal, dust control and gravel road maintenance. This section began with an overview of the current level of service for snow removal, dust control and gravel road maintenance. The Director of Public Work presented what it could look like if each service were increase or decreased. The level of service for each topic area is summarized in the table below.

After the presentation, participants were divided into round table groups with at least one Councillor and one County staff member per table. The number of round tables varied for each session depending on the overall number of participants. The purpose of this section was to allow for more in-depth discussion on each topic. The round table format supported open discussion between participants and County representatives and allowed for questions, concerns, and potential recommendations to be heard.

Service	Current Level of Service		Increased Level of Service		Decreased Level of Service	
	Description	Cost to County	Description	Cost to County	Description	Cost to County
Snow Clearing	72-hour snow clearing	\$1,362,000	48-hour snow clearing	\$2,043,000	96-hours snow clearing	\$908,000
Dust Control	67% Applicant/ 33% County	\$110,000	50% Applicant/ 50% County	\$155,000	100% Applicant pay	\$0
Gravel road maintenance	12 Patrol areas	\$1,462,000	13 Patrol areas	\$1,580,000	11 Patrol Areas	\$1,340,000

Results:

The most common comments throughout the engagement about all three topics was that generally people support maintaining a status quo level of service across the County. However, there was also a general feeling that people were not receiving the level of service that the County stated it provides.

Specific Comments: These comments are not word for word but are summaries of the overall comments heard at the public engagement sessions.

Snow Clearing

The key themes that were presented during the snow clearing round table included:

- Overall support for status quo level of service.
 - 72 hours snow removal was considered reasonable if residents receive it.
 - For regular snow falls 72 hours is sufficient. For heavy snow falls roads need to be opened up faster.
- There was significant focus on specific County roads:
 - Participants tended to focus on specific roads in the County rather than looking at the level of service that is provided to the County as whole.
 - Participants also highlighted that different parts of the County may receive differing levels of service related to snow removal.
 - Some areas felt they were not receiving the current level of service while others commented that in their area snow removal could be reduced.
- Overall, participants were looking for increased efficiencies.
 - Participants wanted to see equipment running in two shifts or 24/7 to get roads opened up faster.
 - Current issues surrounding what constitutes a “snow fall”—one option would be to change the threshold to stretch resources; residents seem to be in favour of that option, provided seniors and emergency responses can be covered.
 - Comments were made about private citizen clearing snow themselves.
 - Request to look at joint services with our neighbours as a way to reduce costs.
- Safety on County roads was also brought up in all the sessions. Specifically, safety for school buses, emergency vehicles and seniors on County roads.

Dust Control

- Overall, there was a split between maintaining status quo (30% subsidy) and reducing the level of service to 100% user pay.
- Some participants recommended keeping the subsidy just for seniors and those with health issues.
- Many participants were unaware that dust control was subsidized by the County.
- Some participants also asked if it is fair for all county residents to subsidize dust control even if they do not use it.

Gravel Road Maintenance

- Overall support for status quo level of service for grading.
 - Some participants stated they are not currently receiving the status quo level of service.
 - Some County roads are significantly worse than others.

- Many participants highlighted that the issues with County roads goes beyond Grading.
 - Some stated there should be an increase in brushing and ditching to allow for roads to dry faster.
 - Some participants highlighted issues with graveling. Either too much or too little. Can the County reduce the loss of gravel in the ditches and enhance the methods uses for gravelling?
- There was a significant focus on gravel road construction:
 - Participants highlighted that the County should focus more on capital repairs.
 - Grader can only make it look nice they do not deal with the underlying issues.
- Similarly, to snow removal, safety on County roads was brought up as a concern.
 - Participants raised the concern of better signage when there is road damage.
 - Participants stated when the County receives heavy rains the gravel roads are unsafe.
 - Participants would like to see more communication from the County related to road conditions and road construction.
- Overall recommendation that the County needs to improve the quality of grading and continue to find more efficiencies related to gravel road maintenance.

Part 3: Hamlet Revitalization:

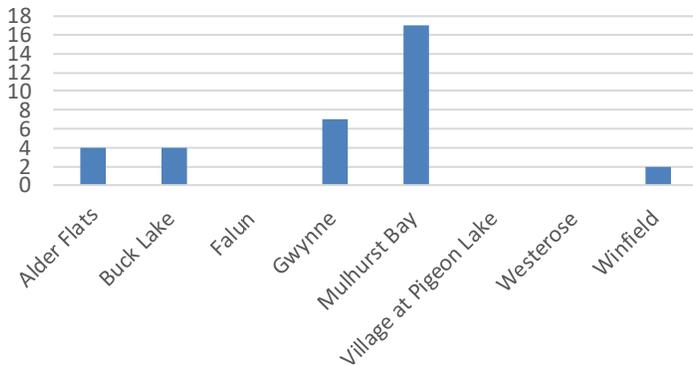
Hamlets are unincorporated communities administered by, and within the boundaries of, the County of Wetaskiwin. Hamlets are important economic and social hubs within rural municipalities. County Council recognizes that importance and sees great potential in the future of County Hamlets. The County of Wetaskiwin has 8 hamlets: Alder Flats, Buck Lake, Falun, Gwynne, Mulhurst Bay, Village of Pigeon Lake, Westeros and Winfield. Each Hamlet is different and has different investment needs. In order to help understand those needs the County is creating a Hamlet Infrastructure Plan which will inventory all infrastructure in the hamlets and identify current and future needs.

Further to the Hamlet Infrastructure Plan, at the 2019 Strategic Planning Session the County of Wetaskiwin identified developing a hamlet revitalization strategy as a priority. As a part of this strategy, the County is looking to gather feedback from citizens to determine priorities for hamlets. The hamlet revitalization survey was available as a physical copy at the events or online from September 28 – October 14, 2020. 29 participants completed the survey either online or in person.

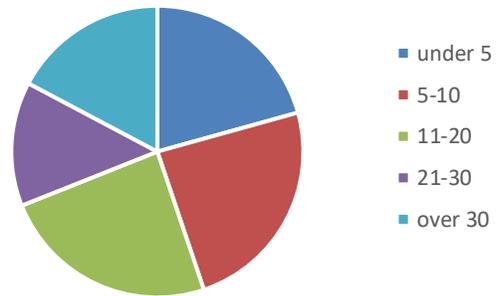
Results:

Demographic Information:

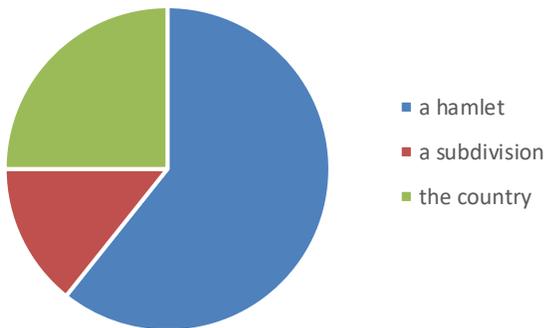
What County Hamlet do you live closest to?



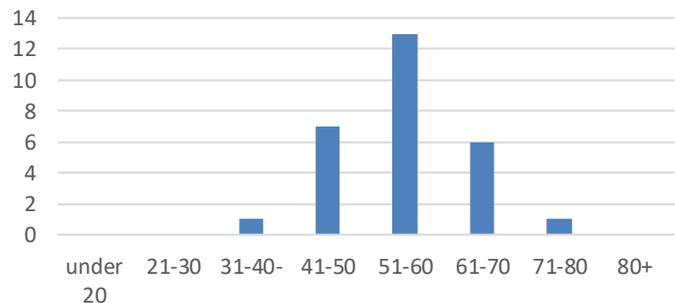
How many years have you lived in the County of Wetaskiwin?



I live in?

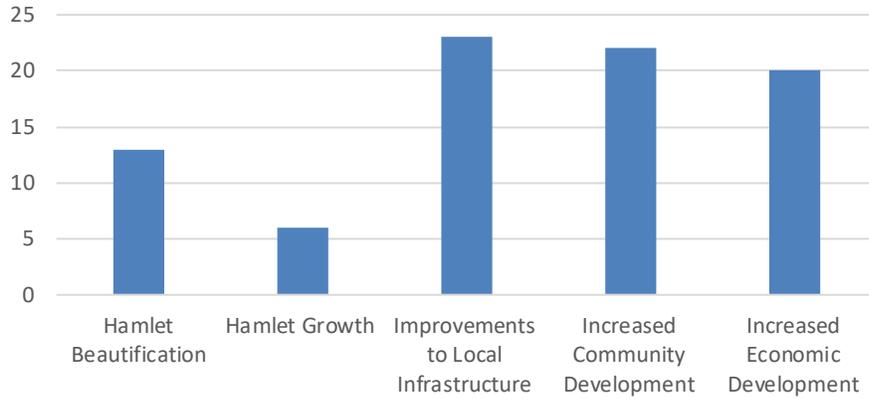


Age of Respondants



Hamlet Revitalization Questions:

1. What does Hamlet Revitalization mean to you?

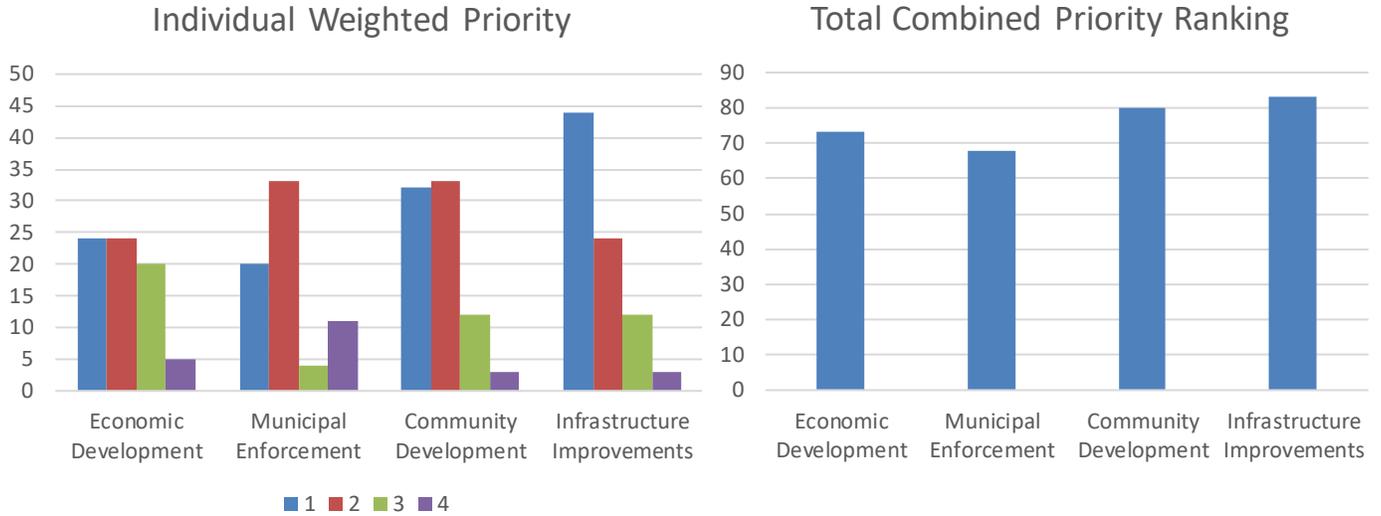


The following questions are prioritization questions. Each question is ranked from the respondent’s highest priority to their lowest priority. In order to show the difference in priority. First place votes have more weight than second place votes. Each of the following seven questions is reported in two ways. The first graph shows individual weighted results based on the number of first, second, third, etc. place votes each category received. The second graph (total combined priority ranking) shows the aggregated results for each category.

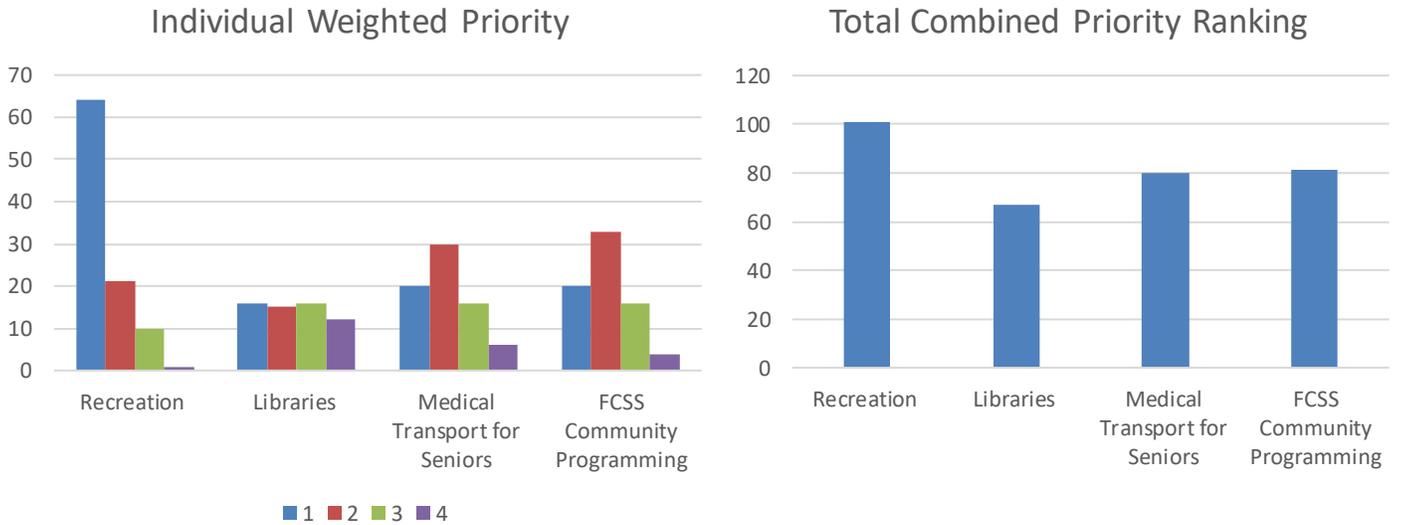
To get the total value for each priority area we took the total number of votes received for each category and multiplied it by the value of the priority. The priority value depends on the number of categories per question. For example, in question 2 there are 4 categories (Economic Development, Municipal Enforcement, Community Development and Infrastructure Improvements). The first place vote is worth 4 points, the second is worth 3, third is worth 2 and the fourth is worth 1. The chart below shows how the total combined priority ranking was determined for infrastructure improvements.

Number of votes for infrastructure improvements:	Number of votes for each priority multiplied by value of each priority:	Total value per priority:
11 First place votes	11x4	44
8 Second place votes	8x3	24
6 Third place votes	6x2	12
3 Fourth place votes	3x1	3
Total value of Infrastructure Improvements:		83

2. Please rank the following from your top priority to your least priority (from 1 to 4, with 1 being the highest):

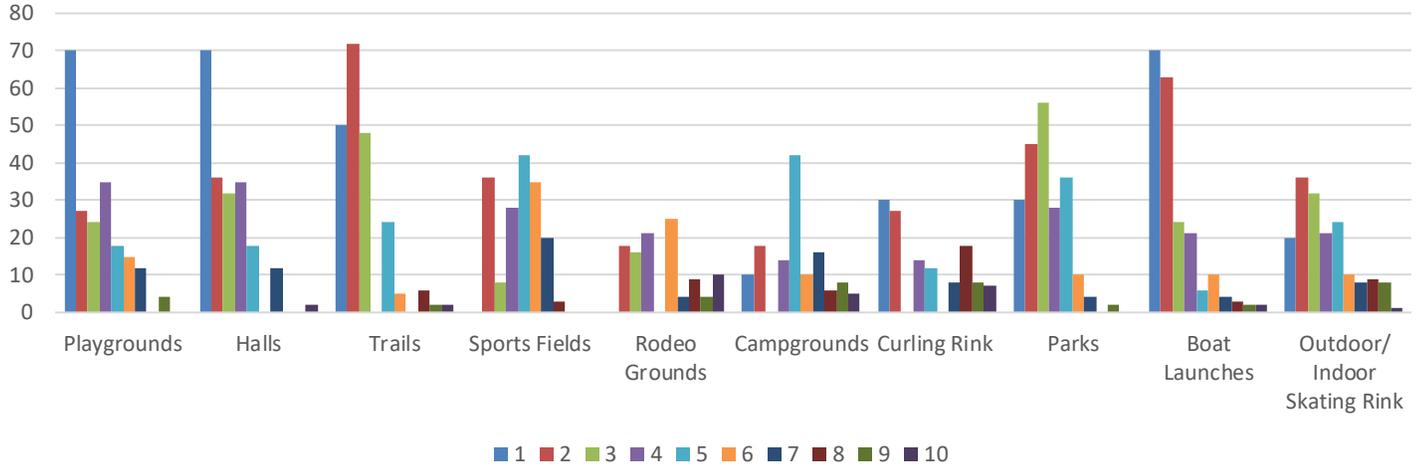


3. Please rank the following from your top priority to least priority for community development programs currently offered by the County (from 1 to 4, with 1 being the highest):

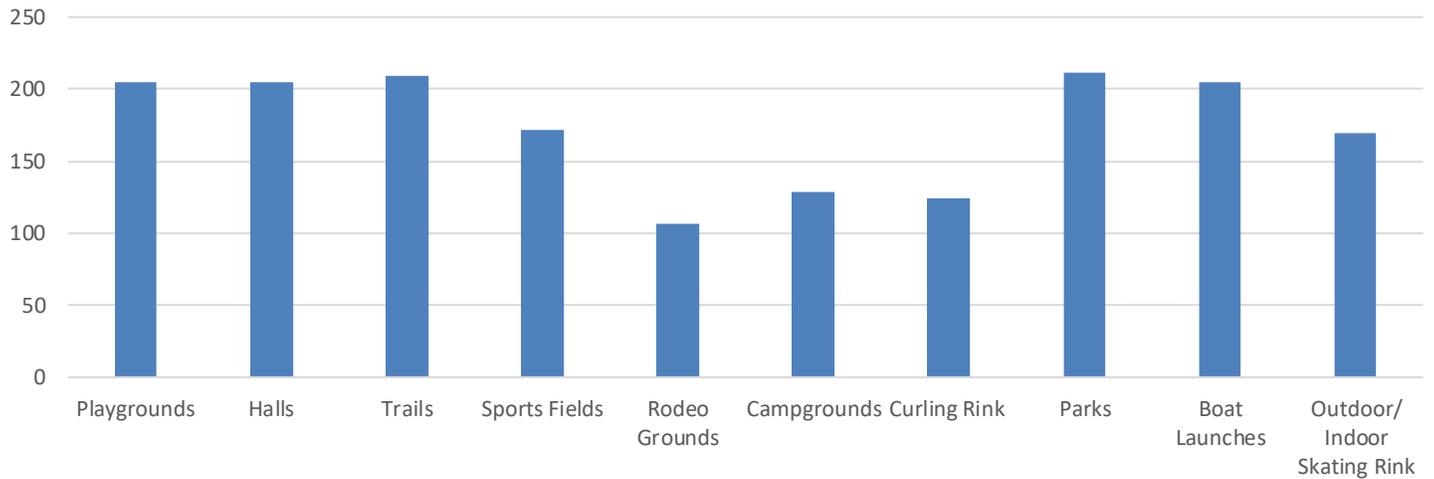


4. Please rank the following from your top priority to your least priority for recreation in Hamlets (from 1-10, with 1 being the highest):

Individual Weighted Priority

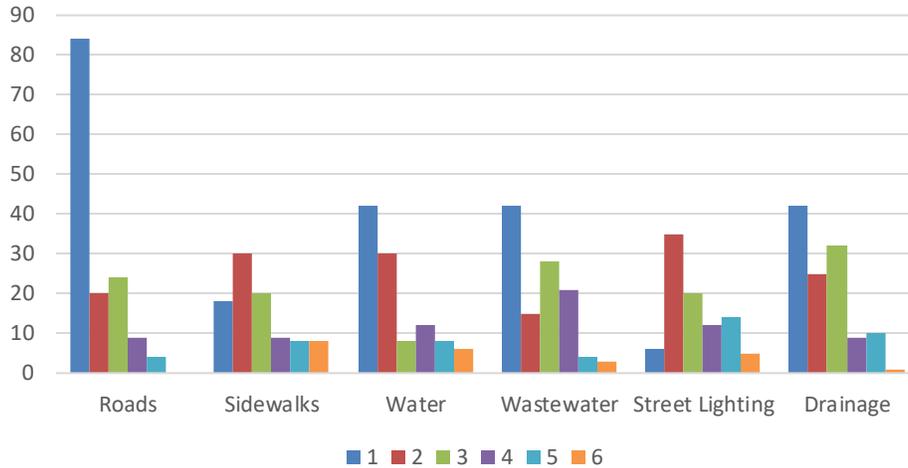


Total Combined Priority Ranking

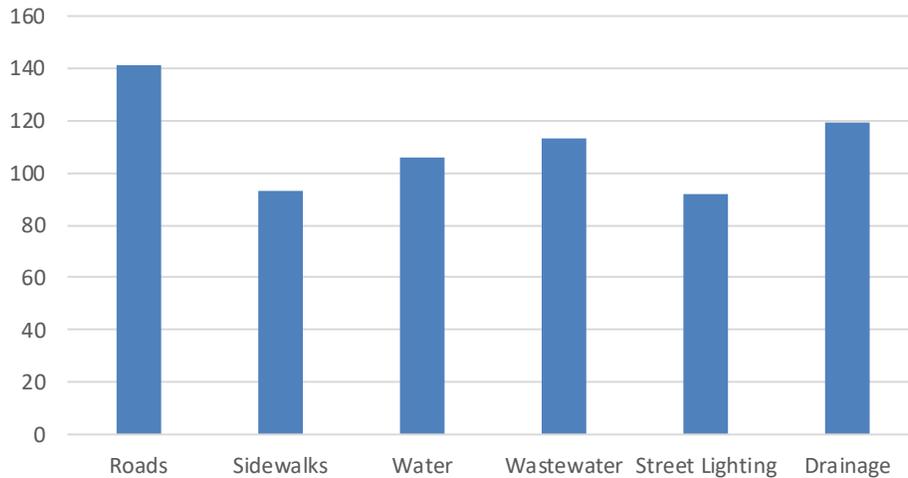


5. Please rank the following from your top priority to least priority for infrastructure improvements in Hamlets (from 1-6, with 1 being the highest):

Individual Weighted Priority

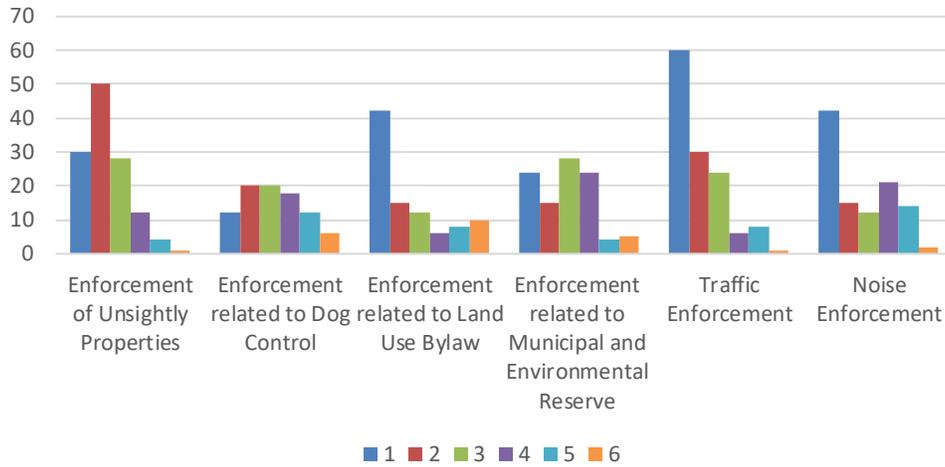


Total Combined Priority Ranking

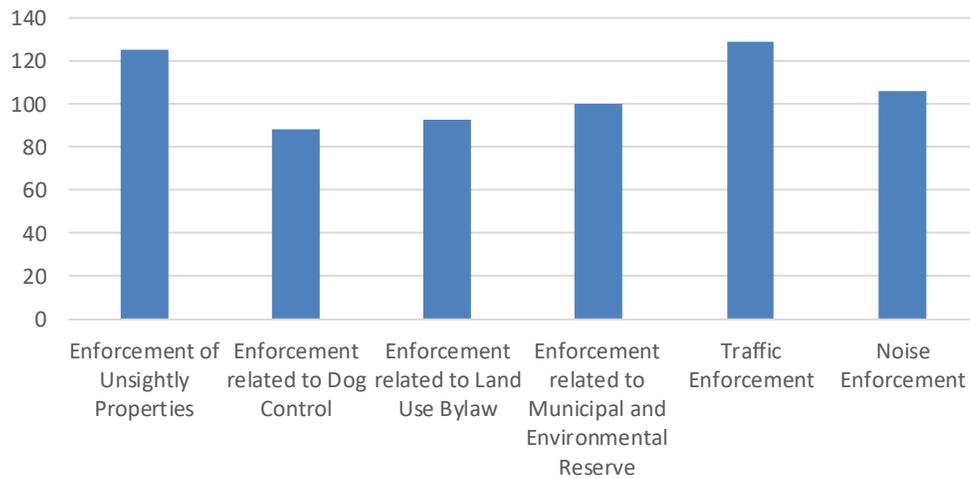


6. Please rank the following from your top priority to least priority for enforcement in Hamlets (from 1-6, with 1 being the highest):

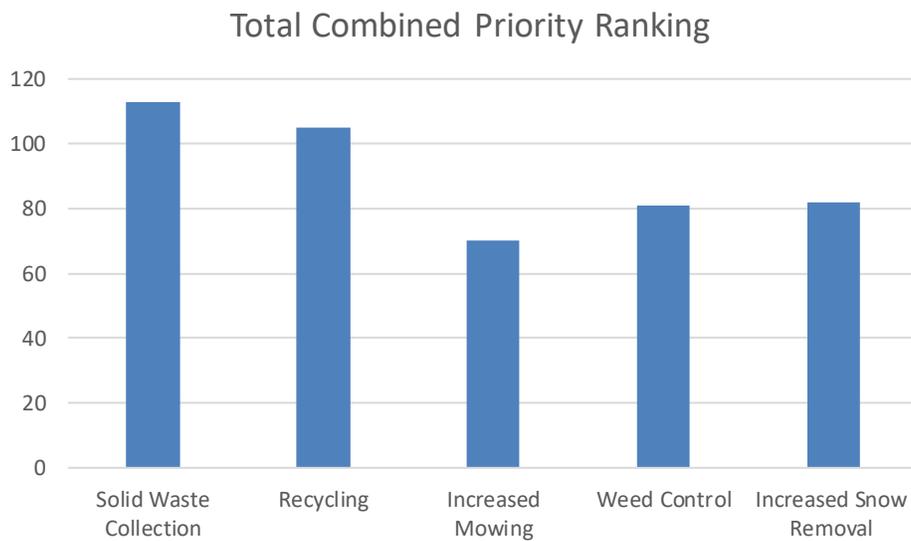
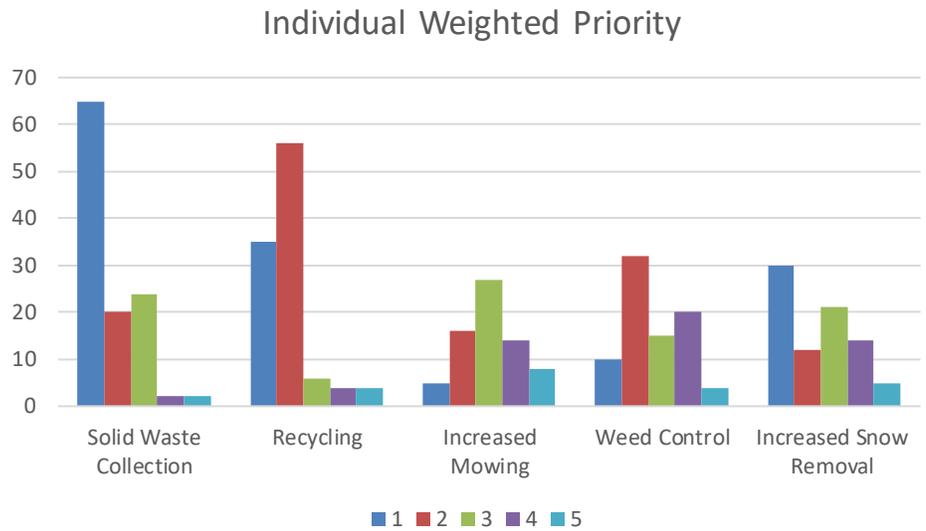
Individual Weighted Priority



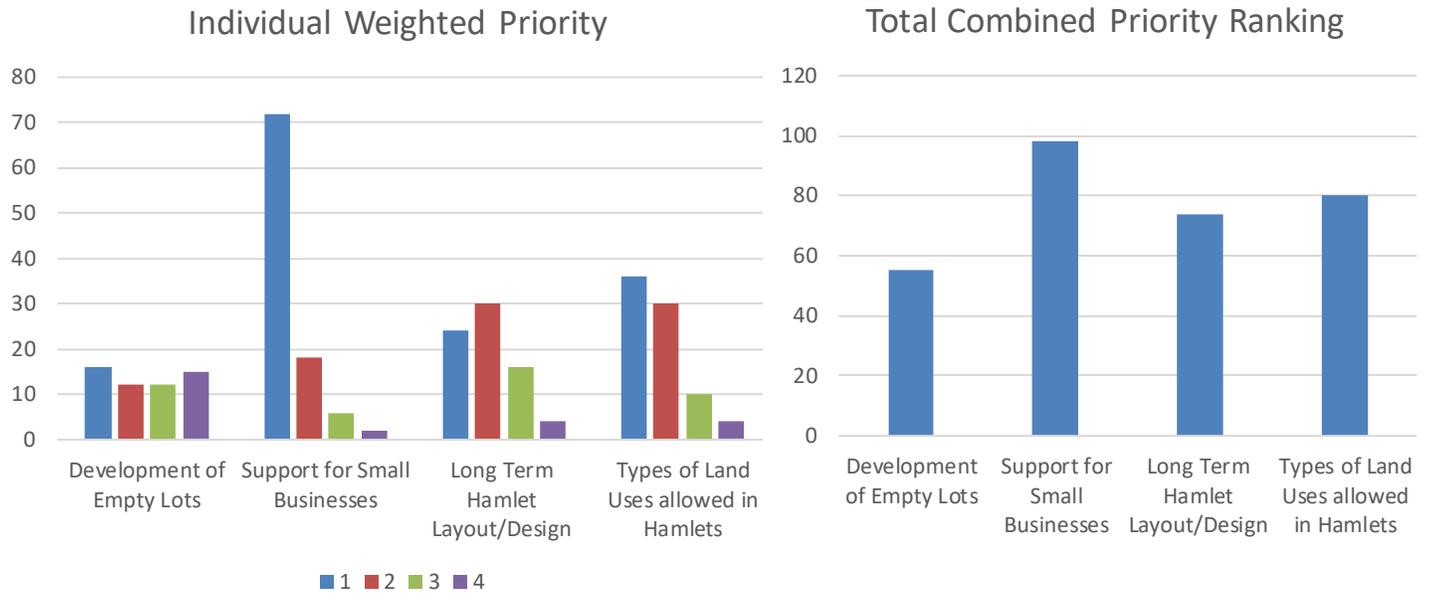
Total Combined Priority Ranking



7. Please rank the following from your top priority to least priority regarding servicing in Hamlets (from 1-5, with 1 being the highest):



8. Please rank the following from your top priority to least priority related to development in Hamlets (from 1-4, with 1 being the highest):



Questions and Answers from the Public Engagement:

- 1) Does the County fix roads for oil companies? *The County does maintain one lease road in Division 7 that our County residents live on. On rare occasions such as an emergency, the County will then bill back to the oil companies at road builders' rate less 10%. This may happen once every 5-10 years. The County will continue to grade the roads as per the schedule.*
- 2) Do oil companies pay for dust control? *Yes. They will also often reimburse residents for dust control in front of their residences.*
- 3) Who signs off on these roads damaged by oil and gas companies? Who inspects oil lease roads and signs off on them? *The County has Road Use Agreements (RUA) between the County and a Hauler. The Hauler has a number of conditions to adhere to. Namely, they are responsible for any damages. As spelled out in the RUA, there is a pre-haul inspection and a post haul inspection. The Hauler is responsible for all interim maintenance and any damages. The contracted road inspector will monitor the roads and if required will direct the oil companies to gravel/grade or to shut down. If there is still an issue the Public Works Manager of Operations will step in.*
- 4) Can there be a tax deduction/reduction if there are less trips made on a road? *No. The annual budget reflects an average level of service in each department. Some roads need more upkeep, others not as much. Taxes are based on assessed value and are not quantified by actual service.*
- 5) Do we own our own equipment? *Yes. None of the County's equipment is leased or has any money owed on it.*
- 6) Does dust control last all summer? *Typically, yes. This depends on the weather, traffic counts and road base.*
- 7) How does \$14,500 per KM compare to other municipalities? *The County does not currently have this data. There are many variables to take into account when comparing road maintenance costs. It is often not easy to find apples to apples comparable to look at. Each municipality is not created equal.*
- 8) Roads are constantly slippery; how much can the County change up the snow plowing side of gravelling to improve conditions? *The County (when weather dictates) can change grader blades to scarify the ice and improve the surface conditions.*
- 9) Is County fully caught up on construction projects (culvert repairs, etc.)? *The County is several years behind on construction projects. Construction projects consist of road rebuilding and grading (raising the height of the road). Culverts, shoulder pulls, ditching, and brushing are maintenance issues. These issues are all ongoing as roads wear out, ditches fill in, culverts rust and get silted in.*

- 10) Is the County planning on rebuilding dead-end roads? *Each road is assigned a rating based on many factors. The road construction program uses these factors to determine priority for any given year.*
- 11) How many plows and grader do we have? *13 graders and 4 snowplow trucks.*
- 12) Wife drives school bus - is there a way to open one side for the road in 1-2 days then come back and open the whole road? *There is a method to open a single lane following a snowstorm, however this presents a safety problem with bi-directional traffic and restriction to one lane.*
- 13) Can the equipment be on the roads for 16-20 hours a day? *Yes, the County would have to coordinate different crew schedules to limit hours of work under the Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) Act.*
- 14) Can people put water on their own road or used oil? *It is not advisable, and the persons would be liable if there was an accident, either during the application or following the application if it is done poorly and makes the road unstable. Depositing of material on a roadway without approval is against the rules under the Highways Development and Protection Act. However, individuals may have the ability to inquire as to the ability to utilize approved dust control products through a request to Public Works. Petroleum, lignosulfonates, or salt based dust control products must be pre-approved by the County. Used oil on road surfaces is prohibited by environmental laws .*
- 15) What determines how often a road is graded? *The overall budget for Patrol Operators, the number of patrol areas and the number of graders, traffic volumes, weights, time of year, and public input.*
- 16) How much experience do operators have? *Ranges from 5 years to 40 years.*
- 17) What does changing the number of KM per beat do to the equipment cost? *If the County was to eliminate 1 grader beat (160 KM), the level of service would decrease as each beat would have more kilometres added. The County would also need to look at revising the snow clearing policy to lengthen the time required to clear snow from the roads. There would also be a need to look at the length of time the County would own a grader for this may require a 4 year turnaround instead of 5 years. The County currently has a 5 year retention program as it is the most cost effective.*
- 18) Can the County focus on and identify higher travelled roads for dust control targeting? *The dust control program does not target high traffic roads. A resident can apply for dust control regardless of traffic volumes.*
- 19) If each grade does 160 kms – why does it take 3 weeks to do a beat? *That is an average of 11 km per day. The County has moved to a 4 pass grading system, the aim is to finish 16 KM per day or about 10 days to complete the area. There are many factors that will disrupt a schedule; such as*

weather, traffic (silage, manure hauls) etc. If there is 160 KM in a grader beat and with a 4 pass system that is 640 lane kilometres the operator is required to complete.

- 20) Why do we need 5 year old graders? *The County purchases new graders and runs them for 5 years to take advantage of the Warranty and guarantee buy back programs so there is a known cost of ownership. The County has looked at ownership of 3,4,5,6 and 7 years, with 5 year being the most cost effective. The warranty covers all non-consumables and also covers the cost of trucking if the grader needs to be transported.*
- 21) Does the county record the number of complaints they receive about 72 hour snow clearing? *In June 2020, the County initiated a Public Works Call Centre, where all calls are documented into the Service Request Management System. This system can be queried to provide a list of specific concerns reported by ratepayers.*
- 22) Concerns over rural addressing signs and not being picked up on GPS; is the problem on the County's side or on the province's? *The answer is neither the County nor the province is the source of the problem. The County has no control over the data that GPS vendors use in their devices (that would include Google Maps). The County has tried on multiple occasions to correct information in some of these vendors data bases and have had little or no success.*
- 23) Signage MRs and ERs—have they been placed? Are they coming? *Signage related to Environmental Municipal, and Conservation Reserves is a matter that is contemplated with the developer at the time that development is undertaken. Such signage is done at the cost of the developer and at this time, the County does not have funds allocated for the placement of signage along all Environmental Municipal, and Conservation Reserves.*
- 24) How often do we inspect culverts to ensure they are operating properly i.e. water flowing under culvert? *Bridge size culverts 1500 mm or greater are inspected through the Bridge Inspection & Maintenance System (BIM). Grader operators and the travelling public report help to determine problem areas. There are many culvert repairs done that are reactionary. The County has thousands of culverts and does not have the resources to inspect all the culverts unfortunately.*
- 25) Why only one spray truck in County to spray ditches? *Prior to 2019, the County had 2 three ton trucks that would start at the beginning of July and travel the respective grid area and apply herbicide to control weeds in the County ditches. Once the grid was complete (usually by August long week end), those crews would then use a ton truck, side by side and quad to start spot and brush spraying. Due to the differing times that weeds appear (i.e. Hawkweed appears in June to July where Canada Thistle and Toadflax appear in late July or August), since the County selectively sprays its' ditches (we do not blanket spray) and in order to control hot spots that appear throughout the year more effectively Agricultural Services made some adjustments to the roadside spraying program. The lowest priority for the spray crew was County Properties and rarely would the spray crew have enough time to spray these areas before the end of the season.*

These adjustments were started in the 2019 spray season and include:

- *starting the grid spraying (roadside ditches) in mid June with three ton truck in the west end of the County in order to be more effective in timing of control of Hawkweed and having them work east where timing for Canada Thistle and Common Tansy was more appropriate.*
- *using the one ton truck and side by side and quad, spot spray the ditches (especially along the edge of the fence in the ditch) where weeds occur. This crew usually starts in the Battle Lake to Winfield area and focusses on Hawkweed, Tall Buttercup and Oxeye Daisy then moves onto Common Tansy and Canada Thistle.*
- *Using the quad and/or side by side, spot spray County Properties, Subdivisions, Hamlets, lagoons, transfer stations and gravel pits.*
- *Once the grid spraying is complete (usually by the end of July), this crew focusses on brush control and then will shift onto spot spraying.*

26) Did the enhanced RCMP position decrease crime by a measurable amount? *Statistics related specifically to the hiring of the Enhanced Member are not provided by the RCMP and with the position no longer being considered an Enhanced Member that the County is directly paying for and having say over, it is unlikely that said statistics will be provided. However, over the 2020 year, crime has overall decreased throughout the County of Wetaskiwin by over 20% as calculated by the RCMP.*

27) Why are we paying CPOs for jobs the RCMP don't want to do? *Community Peace Officers (CPOs) provide a supplementary service to other law enforcement agencies such as the RCMP to allow for the RCMP to focus on Criminal Code matters in which the CPOs do not have jurisdiction for, but have jurisdiction for the majority of the other jurisdiction that RCMP Officers have. In accordance with the strategic direction of Council, CPOs focus on the protection of County infrastructure, particularly roads, rural roadway safety, traffic management, assisting other law enforcement agencies, commercial vehicle enforcement, public relations, preventative patrols, and simply all law enforcement duties except those that relate to the Criminal Code and are exclusively granted to other law enforcement agencies such as the RCMP. CPO Services are also generally cheaper than what an Enhanced RCMP Member would cost the County.*

28) How municipal contributions to policing in Alberta (price per capita and number of police per capita) compares across the province and compares to other provinces (B.C, Quebec, Sask., etc.) *The County does not have readily accessible or accurate information with respect to how costs compare across the province or how it compares to other provinces as all municipalities vary in scope and service when it comes to policing, whether by the RCMP or other law enforcement agencies. However, the following documents from the Rural Municipalities of Alberta (RMA) may provide some more insight for citizens:*

<https://rmalberta.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Policing-and-Rural-Crime-Position-Statements.pdf>

<https://rmalberta.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/AAMDC-Funding-Options-for-Law-Enforcement-Services-in-Alberta-Report-June-2013-FINAL.pdf>

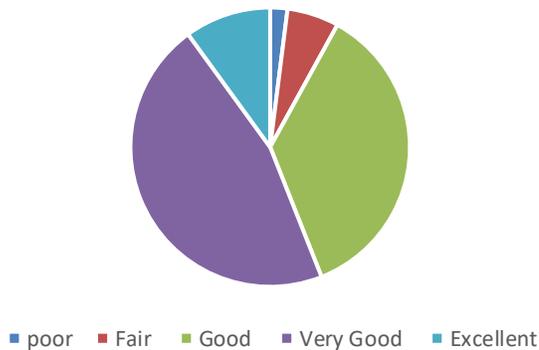
- 29) Why doesn't the County mow the grass at the Graves Wildlife Reserve (60th ave) anymore? *The wildlife sanctuary is private land owned by the Parks & Wildlife Foundation. The County does mow the grass at the County lift station adjacent to the Wildlife Sanctuary.*
- 30) Does Cameron Highlands get dust control? How does it work? Highland Drive specifically, Scott Avenue. *Cameron Highlands can acquire dust control by individual or group application. The County has a Dust Control Policy on its website to review where all the conditions of applying are included. Note that a Subdivision can work together to apply and get all of their area done.*
- 31) If a county road returns to gravel, is it policy for that road to get dust control? *There is not a policy regarding this; this would be done through the direction of Council. If the base does not support the oiled product, the existing oil surface would be replaced with a dust control product as per Council resolution.*

Evaluation:

The County of Wetaskiwin would like to thank everyone who participated in our 2020 Public Engagements. We recognize that there were challenges related to COVID-19, changing the dates, and advertising. Thank you to those to who provided an evaluation of these engagements. We will use this information moving forward to enhance our future engagements.

Evaluation Results:

How would you rate tonight's event?



Overall, participants reported enjoying the round table format and the ability to speak directly to Council Members and County Administration.

What could the County do to make public engagements better?

- Make it clearer what the meeting is about.
- Allow more time for questions.

- Increased advertising. More local advertising.
- More public engagement events.
- Follow up on concerns.
- Have a portable microphone so questions are heard better.

Next Steps:

The results from the public engagement event were present to Council on October 19, 2020 during Council's strategic planning process. The information was used to inform discussions related to level of service in the County. Moving forward Council would like to increase the number of public engagement opportunities in the County.

Thank you

The County of Wetaskiwin Council and Administration would like to express our sincere thanks to everyone who participated in the Public Engagement Sessions for their valuable input. The County of Wetaskiwin is your home, your community, and we appreciate your time and effort to be a part of the decision-making process for your community and the entire County.

If you have further questions please contact Naomi Finseth, Communications Officer at 780-361-6220 or email nfinseth@county10.ca.

County of Wetaskiwin No. 10

780-352-3321 / Toll Free 1-800-661-4125

Website: www.county.wetaskiwin.ab.ca