

Municipality of Jasper
Special Council Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, August 13, 2024 | 9:30am

Virtual viewing and participation	Due to the Jasper Wildfire Complex and subsequent evacuation this meeting was conducted virtually and available for public livestreaming through Zoom. All meeting attendees participated or observed by electronic means.		
Present	Mayor Richard Ireland, Deputy Mayor Helen Kelleher-Empey, Councillors Scott Wilson, Wendy Hall, Kathleen Waxer, Ralph Melnyk, and Rico Damota		
Absent	none		
Also present	Bill Given, Chief Administrative Officer Natasha Malenchak, Director of Finance & Administration Emma Acorn, Legislative Services Coordinator Jon Large, Parks Canada, Unified Commander Peter Shokeir, The Fitzhugh Bob Covey, The Jasper Local 74 observers		
Call to order	Mayor Ireland called the August 13, 2024 Special Council meeting to order at 9:32am.		
Additions or Deletions	none		
Approval of agenda #337/24	MOTION by Councillor Waxer that Council approve the agenda for the August 13, 2024 Special Council meeting as presented.		
	FOR 7 Councillors	AGAINST 0 Councillors	CARRIED
Update from Incident Management Team	Council received an update on the Jasper Wildfire Complex from Parks Canada Unified Commander Jon Large which included time for questions from Council. CAO Bill Given also made a short presentation on the service delivery and Incident Command structure, including a review of the roles within Unified Command, the Emergency Advisory Committee, and how the main roles in the incident will change over time.		
2024 Council Meeting Schedule #338/24	MOTION by Councillor Wilson that Council cancel all Committee of the Whole meetings currently scheduled during the months of August, September, and October 2024 and hold Regular Council meetings at the same dates and times as the cancelled Committee of the Whole meetings would otherwise have been held; and That Council change the start time of its Regular meetings from 1:30pm to 9:30am on the first and third Tuesdays of the month until the end of October 2024.		
	FOR 7 Councillors	AGAINST 0 Councillors	CARRIED
Financial Relief Recommendations	Council received recommendations and alternatives from Administration for financial relief following the Jasper Wildfire Complex and subsequent evacuation. The report, which was not ready in time for the publishing of the agenda package on Friday, is attached to the minutes.		
#339/24	MOTION by Councillor Waxer that Council authorize the financial recommendations as presented: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• That Council authorize the immediate suspension of pre-authorized tax payments on all damaged or destroyed properties.• That Council direct Administration to defer collection of property taxes outlined in Tax Rate Bylaw #261 beginning July 22, 2024; and,		

- That Council authorize that any penalties on outstanding property tax amounts not be applied for July 2024, as per Bylaw Tax Penalties #40.
- That Council direct Administration to return with a report outlining the options and cost associated with refunding property taxes for the period following July 22, 2024 on damaged or destroyed properties.
- That Council authorize the immediate suspension and waiver of all water, sewer, solid waste, recycling charges outlined in Utility Bylaw #259 on all damaged or destroyed properties as of July 22, 2024.
- That penalties on outstanding amounts under Utility Bylaw #259 from May and June 2024 be waived for all properties.
- That Council direct Administration to return with a report recommending options or strategies to mitigate the municipality’s loss of utility and property tax revenue.

	FOR	AGAINST	
	7 Councillors	0 Councillors	CARRIED

Recovery Office Structure and Committee Terms of Reference	Council received a report from Mr. Given regarding the long-term recovery effort the town is facing in the wake of the Jasper Wildfire Complex. Administration has identified establishment of a Recovery Office with guidance from a multi-stakeholder Recovery Committee as the key first steps in the recovery process.
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#340/24	MOTION by Councillor Melnyk that Council direct Administration to develop draft Governance and organizational structures for a Recovery Office and a Terms of Reference for a Recovery Committee and return to a future Council meeting; and
	That Council approve the establishment of a Director of Recovery position reporting to the CAO.

	FOR	AGAINST	
	7 Councillors	0 Councillors	CARRIED

Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate & Energy	Council received a report from Administration investigating the costs and benefits associated with Jasper applying/agreeing to become a member of the “Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate Action”.
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#341/24	MOTION by Councillor Wilson that Council receive the report for information, recommend administration renew Partners for Climate Protection (PCP) membership, support Tourism Jasper with their initiative to obtain a GreenStep Sustainable Tourism Destination Certification and take no further action to join the Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate & Energy (GCoM) at this time.
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	FOR	AGAINST	
	7 Councillors	0 Councillors	CARRIED

Adjournment #342/24	MOTION by Councillor Kelleher-Empey – BE IT RESOLVED that, there being no further business, the Special Council meeting of August 13, 2024 be adjourned at 11:02am.
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	FOR	AGAINST	
	7 Councillors	0 Councillors	CARRIED

Mayor

Chief Administrative Officer

ATTACHMENT TO AUGUST 13, 2024 SPECIAL MINUTES

REQUEST FOR DECISION

Subject: 2024 Jasper Wildfire Complex Tax and Utility Deferral of Payment
From: Bill Given, Chief Administrative Officer
Reviewed by: Natasha Malenchak, Director of Finance and Administration
Date: August 13, 2024



Recommendations:

- That Council authorize the immediate suspension of pre-authorized tax payments on all damaged or destroyed properties.
- That Council direct Administration to defer collection of property taxes outlined in Tax Rate Bylaw #261 beginning July 22, 2024; and,
- That Council authorize that any penalties on outstanding property tax amounts not be applied for July 2024, as per Bylaw Tax Penalties #40.
- That Council direct Administration to return with a report outlining the options and cost associated with refunding property taxes for the period following July 22, 2024 on damaged or destroyed properties.
- That Council authorize the immediate suspension and waiver of all water, sewer, solid waste, recycling charges outlined in Utility Bylaw #259 on all damaged or destroyed properties as of July 22, 2024.
- That penalties on outstanding amounts under Utility Bylaw #259 from May and June 2024 be waived for all properties.
- That Council direct Administration to return with a report recommending options or strategies to mitigate the municipality's loss of utility and property tax revenue.

Alternatives:

- That Council receive this report for information and direct Administration to maintain the current property tax and utility billing system.

Background:

As a result of the wildfire disaster, Administration continues to review municipal operations and assess whether considerations are required to adapt to the changed environment. Currently, Utility Rates Bylaw #259 and Tax Rate Bylaw #261 and associated Tax Penalties Bylaw #40 are in effect. These bylaws were established to outline a scale of charges, rates, fees and penalties to collect levies associated to each property.

The wildfire disaster has not only impacted access to municipal utilities, but also on the ability of residential and commercial customers to make payment on outstanding amounts owing.

The Jasper Wildfire Complex destroyed approximately 820 residential and nonresidential properties on July 24, 2024.

A preliminary, non-visual evaluation has revealed a potential loss in improvement assessment at approximately \$283,000,000.00. This equates to an approximate \$2,200,000 of Municipal, Evergreen and Alberta school property taxes for the 2024 fiscal year.

Discussion:

The wildfire has caused significant damage, displacing families, disrupting businesses, and creating an urgent need for recovery and rebuilding efforts.

This disaster has placed an extraordinary burden on many members of our community, making it challenging for them to meet their financial obligations. By deferring tax and utility payments, Council would provide much-needed relief, allowing residents and business owners to prioritize immediate needs such as housing, repairs, and necessities.

Given this recent catastrophe and the impact on the Jasper community, it is understandable that Jasper homeowners and businesses have their attention focused elsewhere and may miss tax and utility payments. Administration is therefore recommending that residents and businesses not be penalized on unpaid amounts until September 2024.

This extra time could also be used by Council to consider additional support in tax relief or deferral for those hardest hit residential and commercial properties who may have lost or sustained significant damage to their homes.

Strategic Relevance:

- Communicate and engage with residents.
- Ensure residents receive quality service that provides strong value for dollar.
- Pursue alternative revenue sources and equitable distribution of costs.

Inclusion Considerations:

This measure would not only demonstrate the Council's commitment to supporting the community during this crisis but also help to ensure that those affected have the time and resources necessary to recover and rebuild without the added stress of financial deadlines.

Relevant Legislation:

Alberta Municipal Government Act
Municipality of Jasper

- [Tax Rate Bylaw #260](#)
- [Tax Penalty Bylaw #40](#)
- [Utility Rate Bylaw #259](#)

Financial:

Deferral of utility and tax payments will affect the Municipality of Jasper's cash flow going forward and the municipality will need to seek solutions to off-set the revenue loss to maintain pre-existing service levels.