Ponoka Town Council Approves Property Tax Relief Initiatives during COVID-19 Pandemic

Council Requests Zero Per Cent Budget Increase and Property Tax Deferrals for Citizens Most in Need

(April 16, 2020 – Ponoka, Alberta) – In recognition of the severe financial pressure being felt by many residents and businesses during the COVID-19 crisis, Ponoka Town Council approved two motions this week intended to provide some property tax relief to local business and residential property owners in the coming months.

Council began by directing Town Administration to deliver a zero per cent property tax increase for 2020 when the final budget is brought before Council for approval in May. The Interim 2020 Budget that was approved by Council last November included a 2.7 per cent property tax increase. However, due to the economic impacts being caused by COVID-19 and the crash in oil prices, the objective is now to present a final budget with a zero per cent tax increase while ensuring the Town continues to have sufficient funding and cash flow to provide essential services.

“Administration expects that a zero per cent property tax increase will be achievable due to some of the cost reductions that are being realized during the pandemic,” said Albert Flootman, the Town’s Chief Administrative Officer. He explained that the closure of recreational facilities last month due to COVID-19, along with reductions in travel, an increase in online meetings, and not filling staff vacancies for non-essential positions are resulting in reduced costs that will help the Town achieve a zero increase this year.

Property Tax Relief Program

Council also approved a motion allowing local businesses and citizens who are struggling financially due to COVID-19 to apply to have their 2020 property tax payments deferred without penalty until October 1. “Business and residential property owners who are able to pay their property taxes before the normal July 31 deadline are still encouraged to do so. However, those facing serious financial difficulties during this COVID-19 outbreak will be invited to contact the Town Office and apply to have their property tax payment deferred until October,” said Flootman.

He explained that deferring property tax payments will give residents and businesses that are struggling an extra two months to pay their 2020 property taxes without penalty. Additional details about the Property Tax Relief Program will be provided in May when the final 2020 Town of Ponoka Budget is presented to Council for consideration.
The Town is also waiving late payment penalties on utility bills until the end of June for residents and businesses. Utility customers are encouraged to make full or partial payments as they are able to keep their accounts as current as possible. The waiving of late payment fees is being done to give citizens extra time to pay their utility bills if needed.

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