

City passes 2024 budget

On Monday, Dec. 11, Council approved the city's \$359 million 2024 budget. The City's budget is made up of funds allocated to support the operation of all City services, such as our parks, roadways, police and fire.

Ensuring residents continue to receive these essential services is vital. With construction cost inflation, property insurance increases and labour contract obligations, property taxes will increase by 4.62 per cent with a 0.5 per cent infrastructure levy for a total of 5.12 per cent on average.

A property owner's tax could increase or decrease depending on the assessed value of their property by BC Assessment in comparison with the average change across the city.

The budget was guided by Council with their 2022-2026 Strategic Plan in mind. Some of the biggest items in the budget are Abbotsford Police Department at \$70.2 million; Parks, Recreation and Culture at \$37.9 million; Engineering Services at \$33 million and Abbotsford Fire Rescue Service at \$24.8 million.

Commercial Truck Parking Strategy moves to Stage 2

On Monday, Dec. 11, Abbotsford City Council voted to proceed to Stage 2 of the Commercial Truck Parking Strategy.

Staff presented the findings of the Stage 1 report to Council, which consisted of background research. The report discussed the growth and importance of the trucking industry and Abbotsford's position as a major transportation and trucking hub.

The report also examined regional influences such as a shortage of industrial land and the resulting high cost of rent, and how this has made it difficult for truckers to find adequate parking.

Stage 2 of the process will see staff develop strategy options with the input of key stakeholders to get an industry perspective.

Staff will then prepare a Draft Strategy and present this to the public for feedback.

'Service dog' wording updated

On Monday, Dec. 11, the proposed Parks Amendment Bylaw passed third reading and on Tuesday, Jan. 9 it was adopted by Council. The amendment clarifies the Parks Bylaw's regulations concerning dogs in city parks and facilities and updates definitions in the bylaw.

Notably, the existing definition of "service dog" is being replaced with wording found in the BC Guide Dog and Service Dog Act. This change aims to avoid misunderstandings where someone may refer to their non-certified dogs as "service dogs" and bring them into city facilities.

Culture Services Delivery and Governance Review advances

On Monday, Dec. 11, Abbotsford City Council voted to proceed to Stage 2 of the Culture Services Delivery and Governance Review.

Consultants presented their findings to Council as part of Stage 1 of the review, the background research portion. Some of the opportunities they identified include expanding cultural services and programs through local partnerships and collaborations, raising awareness of existing arts and culture activities and programming in Abbotsford and engaging the arts and culture community on a regular basis.

The consultants' findings will form the basis of Stage 2, the "exploring options" phase of the review.

