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Rural Alberta Report

INDEPENDENT. AUTHENTIC. ALBERTA

Tuesday, November 03 2026 Vol. 2 . Issue 76

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One year ago, this brilliant October sunset transformed the sky near Stettler, casting deep shades of pink and red across the water. A striking reminder of the beauty that comes with the changing seasons on the Alberta prairie. Photo by Jill Rhyson.

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James Nibourg elected County of Stettler reeve

by CHERYL BOWMAN

The County of Stettler council has elected Ward 4 Coun. James Nibourg as reeve following a 4-3 secret-ballot vote at its annual organizational meeting.

Nibourg and Ward 3 Coun. Larry Clarke, the outgoing reeve, were the two councillors nominated for the position during the Oct. 27 meeting. Council had voted earlier in the meeting to use secret ballots for its appointment decisions. Seven ballots were collected and counted during the public meeting, with four votes recorded for Nibourg and three for Clarke.

Council subsequently passed the resolution required to confirm the ballot result. Nibourg then took the oath of office and assumed the chair for the remainder of the meeting.

Ward 5 Coun. Allan Gano was returned as deputy reeve. Gano was the only councillor nominated for the position and was appointed after nominations closed. He also took the oath of office.

The County's agenda package explains that the reeve must be selected from among the seven councillors at each annual organizational meeting. The appointment takes effect immediately and continues until council appoints the next reeve.



County of Stettler council elected James Nibourg as reeve in a 4-3 secret ballot over Larry Clarke. Allan Gano was returned as deputy reeve by acclamation. Screenshot

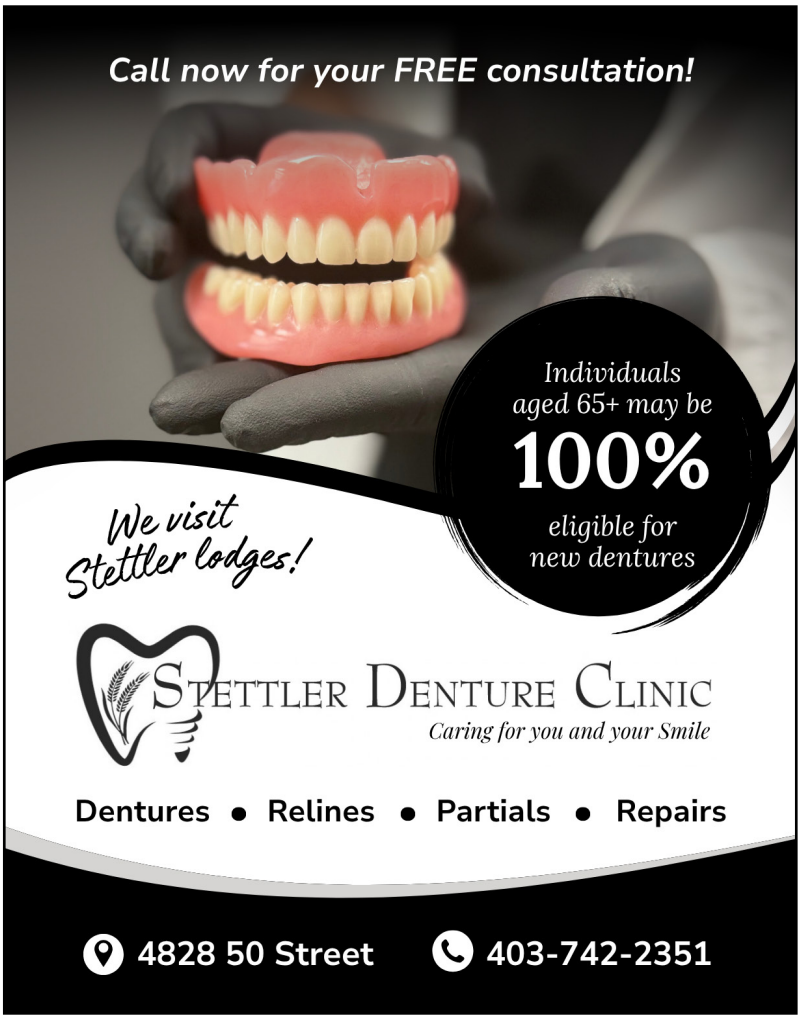
The deputy reeve is also selected annually and performs the reeve's duties when the reeve is unavailable or the office is vacant.

Nibourg represents the Erskine South-Warden ward. According to his official County profile, he is a local farmer and businessman who has served on council since 2010. He was acclaimed to another term during the 2025 municipal election.

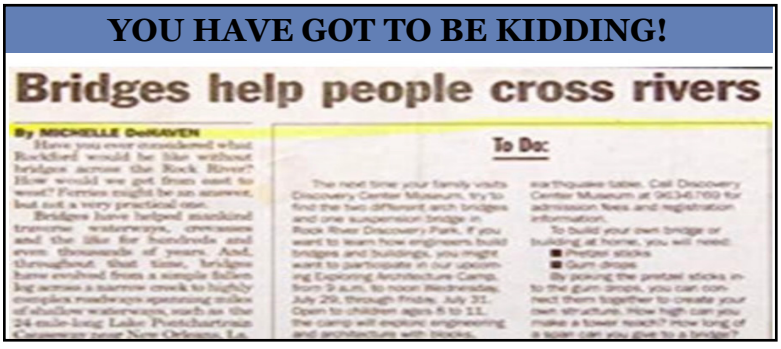
Clarke remains the councillor for the Botha-Gadsby ward, while Gano represents the Stettler ward.

Council also agreed to retain its existing seating arrangement and regular meeting schedule. Regular meetings will continue to be held at 10 a.m. on the second and fourth Wednesday of each month.

The annual organizational meeting is used to establish council's leadership, committee assignments, appointments and administrative policies for the coming year.



YOU HAVE GOT TO BE KIDDING!



Bridges help people cross rivers

By MICHELLE DeRAVEN

To Do:

Have you ever considered what Rockford would be like without bridges across the Rock River? How would we get from east to west? Ferries might be an answer, but not a very practical one.

Bridges have helped mankind traverse waterways, canyons and the like for hundreds and even thousands of years. And, throughout that time, bridges have evolved from a simple fallen log across a narrow creek to highly complex roadways spanning miles of shallow waterways, such as the 24-mile-long Lake Pontchartrain Causeway near New Orleans, La.

The next time your family visits Discovery Center Museum, try to find the two different arch bridges and one suspension bridge in Rock River Discovery Park. If you want to learn how engineers build bridges and buildings, you might want to participate in our upcoming Exploring Architecture Camp, from 9 a.m. to noon Wednesday, July 29, through Friday, July 31. Open to children ages 8 to 11, the camp will explore engineering and architecture with blocks, earthquakes (also, Call Discovery Center Museum at 963-6799 for admission fees and registration information).

To build your own bridge or building at home, you will need:

- Popsicle sticks
- Gum drops

By joining the popsicle sticks into the gum drops, you can connect them together to create your own structure. How high can you make a tower reach? How long of a span can you give to a bridge?

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Lacombe County approves $312,500 in equipment purchases

by KCJ MEDIA GROUP

Lacombe County council approved an estimated $312,500 in Community Services capital equipment purchases at its Oct. 22 meeting, including replacement pickup trucks, rescue tools and equipment intended to reduce firefighter injury risks.

The purchases will be funded through the county's Fleet and Equipment Reserve. Council also authorized the county manager to proceed with tendering and awarding the purchases, along with disposing of or transferring used equipment.

Fire and Emergency Services accounts for $245,000 of the planned spending, while a replacement agricultural services pickup carries an estimated cost of $67,500.

The agricultural services truck will replace a 2012 Dodge Ram 1500 with more than 400,000 kilometres. Its estimated trade-in value is $1,000, bringing the projected net withdrawal from the reserve to $311,500.

The fire services purchases include $95,000 to replace hydraulic rescue tools used by the Eckville District Fire Department. According to the agenda report, the existing tools have reached the end of their service life.

Another $40,000 will purchase two powered lifting systems for folding water tanks, with one installed on a water tender in Alix and the other in Bentley. Each system is estimated to cost $20,000.

The report identified loading and unloading the tanks as a significant safety hazard and potential source of injury.

Council also approved an estimated $85,000 replacement for the county fire chief's 2019 Chevrolet Silverado 1500. The existing truck will be transferred to the Clive district for use as a utility vehicle.

A further $25,000 will fund a retrofit of the pump skid system on Clive's brush truck. Crews reported that the current system has been problematic and frequently requires repairs.

Administration requested approval ahead of 2027 so replacement equipment could be ordered and delivered in time for operational use.



Lacombe County council approved $312,500 in 2027 equipment purchases at its Oct. 22 meeting, including replacement trucks, rescue tools and firefighter safety upgrades. Source: Unsplash

Community Services uses a three-year projected operating budget and a 25-year capital replacement schedule to plan equipment replacements costing more than $5,000.

County of Stettler cancels $30,891 in municipal taxes on two business park lots

by CHERYL BOWMAN

The County of Stettler has cancelled $30,891.37 in 2026 municipal property taxes on two developed lots in the Heartland Business Park.

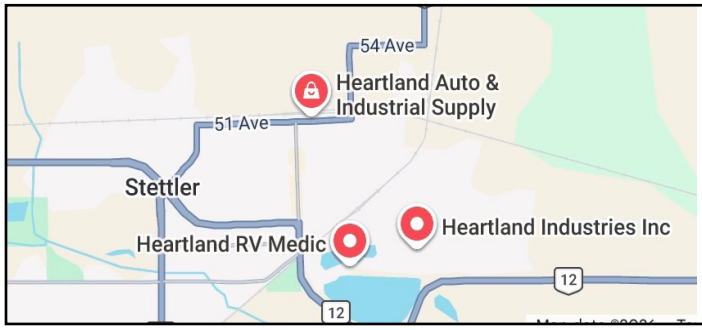
Council approved the cancellation Oct. 28 as part of an existing three-year tax exemption agreement with Highway 12 Real Estate Inc.

The decision applies to the municipal portion of the property taxes on Lots 7 and 8 in Block 1 of Plan 2522388. The two properties cover 1.97 acres and 1.57 acres respectively.

The property owner remains responsible for all other taxes and requisitions, including those for education, housing, waste management, recreation, policing and physician recruitment.

Council initially approved the three-year agreement in September 2025. It provides a 100 per cent exemption from the municipal portion of property taxes in 2026, 2027 and 2028.

Administration told council the cancellation must be approved and recorded during each year in which the taxes are levied, despite the earlier multi-year commitment.



Stettler County council cancelled $30,891.37 in 2026 municipal property taxes on two Heartland Business Park lots under an existing three-year development incentive. Screenshot

Discussion during the meeting indicated 2026 is the first year the completed improvements carry their full assessed value. The properties had little or reduced improvement value while construction was underway.

Coun. Allan Gano moved the 2026 cancellation, which council approved without further debate. The two lots are in the Heartland Business Park east of Stettler.

Immediately afterward, council gave second and third readings to a separate non-residential tax incentive bylaw. That program offers three years of municipal tax exemptions on eligible assessment increases from qualifying projects with at least $500,000 in capital costs.

Administration said the bylaw creates a formal application process that can reduce the need to bring individual tax-cancellation requests back to council every year.

The broader program does not apply to projects where another regulator's approval takes precedence over the county's authority. The agenda identifies power generation, oil and gas development and confined feeding operations among the excluded project types.

Lacombe County approves $102,070 for community programs

by KCJ MEDIA GROUP

Lacombe County council approved $102,070 in Family and Community Support Services (FCSS) project funding for 2027 at its Oct. 22 council meeting.

The allocations will support community programs serving children, youth, families and seniors throughout the county.

The approved amount is $4,000 above the $98,070 recommended in the agenda report, with funding included for Youth Unlimited Central Alberta's young families programming. Administration had recommended no allocation for that program, citing uncertainty about other funding sources following its recent reintroduction and limited project funds.

Lacombe and District FCSS will receive the largest allocation at $26,125, followed by Alix Mirror Wellness Supports Society at $18,355 and Bentley Community Services at $13,690.

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Lacombe and District will receive $6,000 for mentoring programs. Youth Unlimited Central Alberta will receive $6,000 for youth programming in addition to the $4,000 for young families programming.

Friends of Mirror Library Society will receive $5,400 for community engagement programming.

In Blackfalds, Abbey Centre Camp Curious and FCSS seniors programs will each receive $4,000. Another $4,000 will go to Lacombe FCSS programming serving Clive, Mirror and Tees.

BGC Wolf Creek Lacombe and Eckville and Community Youth Society will each receive $2,500. Eckville Recreation Board's summer camp and Eckville & Area Children's Playgroup will each receive $2,000.

Alix Family and Community Support Society will receive $1,500 for its income tax program.

According to the agenda report, staff assessed applications based on the amount requested, previous funding, the number of county residents served, the groups being supported and geographic distribution across the county.

Most applications involved programs for children and youth, although several agencies also sought support for seniors and other adults.

The project allocations are one component of the county's broader FCSS funding. The school social work and extended home support programs receive the majority of that funding.

The report lists the county's 2027 provincial FCSS grant at $317,320, unchanged since 2023. The county must contribute at least $79,330 in municipal funding to receive the provincial grant.

Stettler County defers 3.3-kilometre water extension

by CHERYL BOWMAN

County of Stettler council has deferred a request for a rural water connection that would require approximately 3.3 kilometres of new pipeline.

The request involves a property where the water would be used for a residence and cattle. According to the County's Oct. 28 council package, the property currently relies on a failing well.

Connecting the property would require about 3,300 metres of three-inch DR11 high-density polyethylene pipe extending from the nearest existing County waterline.

The proposed work would also include a flushing hydrant, metering equipment, excavation, drilling and installation labour.

Administration told council the property is more than three kilometres from the existing system. The project's preliminary estimated cost exceeded the County's tendering threshold, meaning the construction work would have to be publicly tendered if council proceeded.

The preliminary price was withheld from the public agenda to protect the contractor's competitive position during a possible tender process.

Under the option presented to council, the property owner would pay the County's $20,000 rural water connection fee. The remaining construction cost would be paid from municipal reserves.

continued on page 08



Agriculture

Canadian cattle producers warn Mercosur deal could weaken beef industry

by KCJ MEDIA GROUP

Canadian cattle producers warn a Mercosur trade deal could increase beef imports, discourage herd rebuilding and put pressure on Canadian farm incomes.

Canada's cattle industry is warning that greater access for South American beef under a Mercosur trade agreement could undermine herd rebuilding and expose Canadian ranchers to more competition without delivering equivalent benefits.

The Canadian Cattle Association and National Cattle Feeders' Association outlined their opposition in a joint statement May 6, calling on Ottawa to exclude additional beef market access from an agreement.

The organizations support expanding international trade but argue that any deal must provide reciprocal opportunities and protect the long-term viability of Canadian production.

Mercosur is a South American trading bloc. Canada's negotiations involve Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay. Talks began in March 2018 and were relaunched in October 2025 following a pandemic-related pause.

Ottawa presents the negotiations as an opportunity to diversify export markets and strengthen commercial relationships beyond the United States. However, the interests of agricultural exporters, input suppliers and livestock producers do not necessarily align.

For cattle producers, a central concern is the effect additional imports could have on decisions to rebuild Canada's breeding herd.

The cattle organizations argue that producers recovering from drought, higher costs and market disruptions need confidence in future returns before expanding. They warn that greater competition from lower-cost imports could discourage investment, limiting domestic production and increasing reliance on foreign beef.

In a separate May 25 statement, the Canadian Cattle Association reported that imported beef accounted for approximately 30 per cent of Canadian consumption in 2025.

The association said total beef imports reached their highest level since 1993 and imports from Mercosur countries had increased 238 per cent since 2021.

Those figures describe existing trade, rather than an increase caused by a new agreement.

The association also argues that differences in animal-health, environmental and labour requirements leave Canadian farmers competing against producers with lower compliance costs.

Animal-health concerns featured in the joint statement as well. The cattle organizations questioned disease reporting and sanitary compliance in parts of Mercosur. Those concerns represent the industry's assessment and do not, by themselves, establish that imported products are unsafe.

The groups also warned about possible friction with the United States, given the Canadian beef sector's integration with North American supply chains.

Agricultural reporting reflects the division over the proposed agreement.

AgCanada reported in May that beef producers were bringing their objections to legislators. Its June coverage highlighted support for a Mercosur agreement from the fertilizer industry, contrasting that position with livestock producers' concerns.

The difference matters when assessing whether a



deal benefits Canadian agriculture. An agreement could expand sales for agricultural suppliers while increasing competition for farmers producing food.

Federal consultations also found differing positions within agriculture. Some cereal, grain, sheep and potash interests supported renewed negotiations, citing export opportunities. Beef, pork and supply-managed sectors sought protection against additional market-access concessions.

An archived federal economic assessment published in 2020 projected broader Canadian gains, with manufacturing and industrial tariff reductions identified as a major driver of increased production.

However, that model assumed the removal of all agricultural and non-agricultural protections, including sensitive products. It was not an assessment of final negotiated terms or a forecast of individual farm incomes.

For Canadian ranchers, the unresolved question is whether any additional export opportunities would outweigh increased competition at home. The cattle organizations' position is that further Mercosur beef access would put domestic production at risk.

Land for Sale by Tender

SW 15-32-17-W4 in Starland County, Alberta. 146 cultivated acres (+/-). One surface lease with Prairie Provident Resources Inc. Bids must be unconditional and be accompanied by a certified cheque or bank draft payable to Smith & Hersey Agribusiness Law LLP equal to 5% of the bid price as a deposit. Bids can be delivered to Smith & Hersey offices in Hanna (Mondays and Tuesdays only), Three Hills (Tuesdays and Wednesdays only), Drumheller, or Medicine Hat. The owner will not be obligated to accept the highest or any bid submitted for consideration. Bids must be submitted by 4:00pm on November 27, 2026, with closing on December 20, 2026. Please contact M. Smith & Hersey Agribusiness Law LLP for additional information at (403) 527 5506, shane@smithhersey.com, or visit https://smithhersey.com/land-tenders/.

Crime

Red Deer RCMP warn of spoofed police phone calls

by KCJ MEDIA GROUP

Red Deer RCMP are warning the public about fraudulent phone calls in which scammers pose as police officers and make it appear the calls are coming from an RCMP phone number.

On Oct. 29, Red Deer RCMP received multiple reports of fraudsters claiming to be RCMP sergeants or other police representatives.

The callers provided false regimental numbers and used technology known as phone number spoofing to make the caller identification appear to show the Red Deer RCMP.

People who received the calls reported being told police were investigating their involvement in a crime or that their personal information had been compromised. The callers then attempted to obtain personal information and, in some cases, directed people to follow a link.

RCMP said similar fraudulent calls have targeted people in Alberta and Ontario.

Police are advising anyone who receives a suspicious call not to provide personal or financial information.

Protect yourself from phone scams

RCMP recommend several precautions:

Never provide personal details such as your address, date of birth, banking information or passwords unless you initiated the contact and have verified who you are speaking with.

End the conversation if someone pressures you to immediately provide information or send money.

Verify suspicious calls, emails or messages independently. Contact the organization using a phone number listed on its official website rather than a number supplied by the caller.

Report suspicious activity even if no money was lost or personal information was provided.

Anyone who believes they may have been the victim of fraud should contact their local police service and the Canadian Anti-Fraud Centre.

The Canadian Anti-Fraud Centre also recommends gathering documents, receipts, emails and text messages connected to the suspected fraud and contacting any financial institution involved in a transfer of money.

People are also encouraged to share information about scams with family members, friends, neighbours and co-workers to help prevent others from becoming victims.

Red Deer RCMP continue to investigate the reported incidents. Anyone with information is asked to contact Red Deer RCMP at 403-406-2200.

Two charged after Fox Creek RCMP seize drugs and weapons

by KCJ MEDIA GROUP

Members of the Western Alberta District RCMP Crime Reduction Unit, assisted by Fox Creek RCMP, executed a search warrant Oct. 28 following a multi-week investigation into local drug distribution.

Police reported seizing 300 grams of cocaine, 231 grams of methamphetamine and more than one litre of GHB. Officers also found various quantities of ketamine, psilocybin mushrooms, suspected heroin and unidentified pills.

A sawed-off 12-gauge shotgun and a crossbow were also seized.

Christopher Leigh Doucette, 45, of Fox Creek, faces six counts of possession of a controlled substance for the purpose of trafficking and three counts of possessing firearms, weapons or ammunition contrary to an order.

He is also charged with possession of a prohibited firearm, two counts of possession of a weapon for a dangerous purpose, possession of proceeds

continued on page 08



Business

Paper Maps in a GPS World

by JEFF MCLARTY - FOCAL POINT EDMONTON

When I started out in the workforce, nobody explained much of anything. You showed up, watched and got told once, maybe twice. If you didn't get it, you either figured it out on your own time or found a new job.

Like a lot of Gen Xers, I took a certain pride in being self-sufficient. We were the latchkey kids. We learned to find our own way through a challenge.

So I'll admit it: the first few times a young employee needed more direction to learn something new, it was easy to get frustrated and chalk it up to a lack of work ethic. But after a while, it occurred to me that they'd simply been raised to use a different kind of map.

Here's the best way I've found to explain the gap. Most Gen X managers learned to navigate work with a paper map. You knew the general direction, watched for landmarks and, when you took a wrong turn on a range road, backed up and tried again. There was no calling a friend for help.

Nobody told you how you were doing. You knew you'd arrived when you got there.

Gen Z grew up with GPS. They're used to seeing the destination before they leave, getting turn-by-turn directions and hearing "recalculating" the moment they drift off course. They expect to know the arrival time, too.

Then add social media to the mix. This is a generation that grew up posting something and knowing within minutes whether it landed. Likes, comments and shares provided feedback that was constant, instant and out in the open.

So when a young employee goes three months without hearing how they're doing, they may not assume no news is good news. They may assume they're missing the mark. For many of us, a once-a-year review was plenty. For someone accustomed to regular feedback, a year between check-ins can feel like driving with the GPS switched off.

Neither way is wrong. Both get you there. But if you hand a GPS kid a paper map and say, "Figure it out like I did," don't be surprised when they pull over and start looking for another ride.

Previous generations often stayed put to prove loyalty, believing it would eventually be rewarded. Sometimes it was. Sometimes it wasn't.

Many younger workers measure a job differently: Am I learning? Does this matter? Do I have a life outside of it? If the answer is no, they may leave, sometimes without much warning. Those who have felt like disposable labour may see little reason to offer loyalty in return.

It's easy to write that off as entitlement. I'd suggest a different read. Funny enough, Gen X was the generation that pushed back on "live to work." Gen Z just took us at our word. Gen X was told the what. Gen Z wants to know the why.

Let's say we run an agricultural equipment dealership and have just hired a 22-year-old apprentice service technician. Here are two ways to bring them on board.

The first: "Shadow Dave for a few weeks. You'll pick it up."

That's how many of us were trained. But to a new hire, it can sound like no destination, no directions and no idea how you're doing until something goes wrong.

The second: "For your first 30 days, you'll work alongside Dave on pre-season inspections. The goal is for you to be doing them on your own by day 30. Every Friday, you and I will take 15 minutes to talk about what went well, what you're stuck on and what's next.

"And here's why your work matters: if we miss something that needs fixing on a combine in August, a farmer could lose days in the middle of harvest. Farming is hard enough as it is."

Same job. Same Dave. But the second version gives a destination, a route, regular course corrections and a reason the work matters. The weekly check-in takes about 15 minutes.

That brings me to work ethic. We tend to measure it in hours in the chair and never complaining. But a young employee who asks good questions, wants feedback and leaves at five to make it to ball practice isn't necessarily lacking work ethic. They may be telling you exactly what they need to do their best work.

Work ethic isn't how long you'll tolerate being left in the dark. It's how much you care about doing the job right.

Not every 24-year-old fits the mould, and not every Gen Xer is a gruff paper-map driver. People are people, and they're all a little different. But the managers I see keeping good young staff have one thing in common: they've stopped expecting new employees to read their minds and adjusted the way they manage.

Leading the next generation doesn't mean lowering the bar. It means showing people where the bar is, why it's there and how they're progressing toward it.

So here's my question for you: if your newest employee were asked tomorrow where they're headed in your business and why it matters, could they answer?



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FOX CREEK continued from page 06



Two Fox Creek residents face drug trafficking and other charges after RCMP seized drugs, weapons and more than $13,000 in Canadian and U.S. currency during a residential search. Submitted

of crime and failure to comply with undertaking conditions.

Jessica Hough, 34, of Fox Creek, faces one count of possession of a controlled substance for the purpose of trafficking and two counts of failure to comply with a release order.

Sgt. Wade Oliver, commander of the crime reduction unit, said both accused had been subjects of an April 2026 drug investigation. Police said they were under release conditions and awaiting court appearances on those earlier charges when the latest arrests occurred.

RCMP warned that the variety of substances seized raises concerns about accidental or intentional cross-contamination in drugs.

The charges have not been proven in court. The release did not provide the accused's next court dates or their custody status following the arrests.



Ghosts of the Grasslands

The sharp barbs of a boundary fence framed against the eerie outline of a long-abandoned property. Is it just an old building or is there something more hiding behind the fence?

Photo by : Alicia Lineham | Iron Roots Photography| Red Deer County, AB

ironrootsphotography.ca

WATER EXTENTION continued from page 04



The second option was to defer the request for consideration during future water-system planning.

Administration indicated that postponing the extension could provide time to determine whether other residents in the area are interested in connecting. Additional users could affect how a future extension is planned and funded.

During the discussion, council requested that maps be included with future water-connection reports. Councillors said maps would help them compare the location of a requested service with the County's existing water infrastructure.

Coun. Justin Stevens moved to defer the connection request to future planning. The motion carried.

The County's Water and Wastewater Bylaw sets an initial rural water connection fee of $20,000. It generally provides for service when a property abuts an existing County waterline, sufficient system capacity is available and the applicant meets the other service requirements.

Because the property involved in the Oct. 28 request is about 3.3 kilometres from the nearest line, council authorization would be required for the additional construction expense.

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