

Township of Madawaska Valley Service Improvements and Barriers

The Township of Madawaska Valley has strived to continue improving services for its citizens. This report details how various services have been improved.

General Government

The Municipality has improved efficiency and effectiveness in the way it handles tax and water/wastewater payments by introducing internet and telephone banking to its ratepayers. The municipality felt that there was a need to provide ratepayers with options on paying amounts due and alleviate the pressure on property owners requiring to either mail or attend at the municipal office or the local bank to submit payments. As a great deal of our ratepayers are from out of town, they had to rely on the postal service to deliver their payments on time and because many of the local people were at work during normal office hours they found it difficult to attend at the office or bank to pay their bills. By allowing people to pay at their leisure, either on-line through the internet or by telephone banking, the municipality has noticed a great many people are paying their bills by the due date or at least making payments on their account as their budget allows. Accepting payments in this manner has also alleviated some of the time pressure experienced by staff at the municipal office as well as at the local financial institution as these types of payments can be processed as time allows rather than when people present their bill along with their payment.

Protection Services

Fire

Fire costs have remained constant however the municipality is gradually acquiring new equipment to replace aged ones and continually encourages more extensive training of its firefighters.

Barriers to Further Improvement:

- The continually increasing costs of new and updated equipment as well as the need to provide personnel training to conform to Provincial Legislations will undoubtedly prevent the municipality from keeping costs constant.

Policing

The Crime rate per 1000 persons has decreased however the total costs have increased per household

Barriers to Further Improvement:

- The municipality has no control over crime rates in the area therefore costs for this service can fluctuate from year to year depending upon the kind of offenses and the amount of time needed to investigate such occurrences. As has been the case costing for police protection has continually been rising and the municipality has little alternative but to closely monitor the cost of this service to ensure that the ratepayers are getting the best coverage for its dollar.

Protection Inspection and Control

The number issued and value of building permits has improved therefore increasing the assessment base of the municipality. Although the square metres of new residential construction has decreased marginally, there has been a slight increase in other property classes.

Transportation Services

The municipality was able to realize an increase in user fees and service charges by a change in policy which allows for private individuals and businesses to rent municipal equipment with operator to grade and sand their roads and parking lots. This service is given only on an as time allows basis in order that municipal roadways are not neglected. Costing for municipal transportation services fluctuate from year to year depending upon the amount of funds invested in roadway upgrading and equipment replacement.

The municipality is preparing for major equipment purchases by placing monies into reserves for that purpose. By practicing this, money is set aside each budget year to offset these large purchases.

Barriers to Further Improvement:

- The costs of replacing aging transportation equipment are continually increasing. As equipment ages, breakdowns can be expected so Council members and staff must constantly analyze the best approach to take, whether to invest in expensive repairs or consider replacement.
- The amount a municipality must invest in winter control hinges upon the weather patterns in a given year.

Environmental Services

The municipality has experienced a reduction in the operating costs for both waste collection and disposal costs per household. An increase in the amount of recyclable materials diverted from the waste sites has continually been increased by the encouragement of recycling practices and the expansion of educational programs to the public. By diverting more materials from the landfill site, it is hoped that their lifespan will be extended. The municipality has began a landfill expansion plan for the

primary waste disposal site in the hopes of ensuring that ratepayers and residents have a local place to dispose of their refuse. The use of specially marked garbage bags continues to keep the residents aware that they must pay for what they dispose and encourages more recycling within the municipality.

Barriers to Further Improvement:

- Rigorous regulations set in place by the Provincial government as it relates to landfill site operation are driving costs for this service upward.
- Increased monitoring and reporting requirements necessitate the expertise of individuals outside of the municipality.
- The lack of a recycling market for certain materials is a determining factor in the implementing of the introduction of expanding the recycling program.
- The increasing costs of removing and marketing of the recycling materials collected.

Recreation and Cultural Services

A new position responsible for coordinating the Parks and Recreation department of the municipality has proven to be effective. In the past the different duties associated with this department were performed by a number of persons. At times the general public was unaware of who they should be contacting to get information regarding recreational programming and services. At times this area of the municipality was not receiving the attention it required. With one person whose sole responsibility was to administer this department, the service improved and the municipality was able to offer expanded and improved programming to meet the needs of its residents.

Barriers to Further Improvement:

- The lack of funds to introduce new recreational and social programming.
- The lack of volunteers and manpower to assist with programming and functions put on by this department.
- Being located in a remote and rural area, sometimes trying a new venture can prove risky and costly.

Planning and Development

The municipality has adopted an Official Plan that governs the development of lands within its boundaries. Since the amalgamation of three different municipalities, the Planning department was dealing with different rules for different areas of the municipality. With one uniform plan every property class within the municipality is dealt with similarly decreasing the possibilities of errors.

Although it has taken a number of years, the municipality is in the process of developing a new zoning by-law for the whole municipality. As with the Official Plan there are different rules of for different properties depending upon where it is located within the township. With public input it is hoped that this document will promote uniform development that will address everyone's concerns and needs into the future.

Barriers to Further Improvement:

- The costs to continually train and upgrade the staff to interpret these documents and the implications of all amendments to them.

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