

Located at:

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Email: rm460@sasktel.net
Website: rmbirchhills460.ca

Office Hours

Monday to Friday
9:00 – 12:00 & 1:00 – 4:00

Council

Reeve: Alan Evans

Division 1: Chris Hovdebo
Division 2: Kyle Jensen
Division 3: Steven Adams
Division 4: Greg Cochet
Division 5: Dean Manson
Division 6: Gerald Olsen

Administrator:
Shirley Pratchler

EMAIL DATABASE

The RM would like to build a database of email addresses. Please send an email to rm460@sasktel.net if you would like to share yours.

Website Development

The RM website is now up and running. Please take a minute to view the website @ <http://rmbirchhills460.ca> it contains council minutes, bylaws, history, links to websites and much more.

Reeve's Message:

Summer in Saskatchewan ... is there anything better? As I write this, the sun is shining and crops are improving. Although the RM continues to experience rain and flooding, we must count ourselves lucky to have been spared the excessive rain and flooding experienced by our neighbouring RMs and province.

To date, the RM has not had to declare a disaster to access the Provincial Disaster Assistance Program (PDAP). That being said, the RM roads need time and attention to return to "normal" conditions. The water table and slough levels remain high which cause frost boils and erosion on the sides of the road. The focus remains on regular maintenance as well as culvert and frost boil repairs and the summer graveling program.

To facilitate the rehabilitation of the aging infrastructure and plan for future road projects and equipment replacement, the mill rate was increased for 2014. Property revaluation in 2013 increased the value of residential properties in the RM by an average of 87% versus agricultural land value increase of 50%. In order to mitigate an excessive tax increase, a mill rate factor was introduced to reduce the effective mill rate on residential properties. That mill rate factor was increased to 0.90 in 2014 from 0.80 in 2013. At the end of the four year cycle of revaluation, it is Council's intention to have the agricultural and residential mill rates equal.

Council is also challenged by increases in the fixed costs of the municipality. Gravel and fuel costs continue to rise. The RM's contribution for RCMP has increased another 8% this year to over \$40.00 per person. The Wapiti Library requisition is \$12.14 per person, the SAMA requisition (Saskatchewan Assessment Management Agency) is over \$16.00 per person. The RM owns 50% of the Birch Hills Volunteer Fire Department so is responsible for 50% of the costs. The RM also pays 911 dispatch fees, STARS Air Ambulance and contributes to the Birch Hills & District Recreation Board. Council and Administration reviewed the budget and needs of the municipality in great detail and does not take the raising of taxes lightly, increasing your taxes also increases theirs.

A PDAP funded project to stabilize the road traveling through Macs Creek west of Birch Hills has begun and will be completed this summer. Another PDAP project on the slumping east bank of Macs Creek has been re-inspected and a report should be filed with PDAP officials shortly.

Council appreciates and takes seriously any issues brought forward. Please contact the RM Office by telephone, write a letter or send an email with your questions or concerns. We ensure a response will be sent to all inquiries. Any resident is welcome to attend RM meetings as they are open to the public. To address Council, an appointment is required. If interested, please contact the RM office to make arrangements.

Alan Evans

Staffing: Gaylen Torgunrud and Todd Devenis continue to work full time as equipment operators for the RM. Pat Lepine has returned seasonally and Gerald Holmgren will be assisting with road maintenance on a casual basis. Victor Doderai will be maintaining our ditches for the summer season. Shirley Pratchler continues to be the Administrator and Cherie Opseth continues to work part-time as the Office Assistant.

Financial Statements: The audited financial statements for the year ending December 31, 2013 are available at the RM office and also on the RM website.

Pest Control

Please contact the RM office if you find evidence of a rat infestation and the information will be passed onto the PCO. Rat and mice bait is available from the RM office free of charge to RM ratepayers.

Waste Disposal

A reminder that a \$150 one-time payment per site is available to ratepayers who have set up their own waste disposal site – contact the RM office for further details.

Weed Control

Barry Swanson is serving as the Weed Inspector for the RM. Please contact the RM office if you are having issues with prohibited, noxious or nuisance weeds.

Control Burn

Phone # 1-866-404-4911

Wild Boar

Have you seen evidence of wild boar in or around your property? If so, assistance is available from SARM.

ELECTION OCTOBER 22, 2014:

A call for nominations for Councillors for Divisions 2, 4 & 6 will begin September 2, 2014 and will end September 17, 2014 at 4:00 pm. If you are interested in running for RM Council, please contact the municipal office or visit:

<http://municipal.gov.sk.ca/Elections/Voting-In-Rural-Municipalities>

Saskatchewan Assessment Management Agency (SAMA):

SAMA created a website which you can access to verify your property assessment information, compare your assessment to similar or neighboring properties, and get a general idea of assessed values in your municipality. SAMAView can be accessed by going to SAMA's website (www.sama.sk.ca) and clicking on the SAMAView link.

Coxby Road:

The four party land exchange agreement regarding Coxby Road is awaiting signature from Federal government officials. In the interim, an agreement has been made between the RM and Muskoday First Nation for the installation of a culvert to restore the natural flow and equalize the water levels.

Rail Line:

Northern Lights Rail Ltd. raised \$1,000,000 from the share subscription offering and is waiting for the final papers to be signed with CN Rail for the purchase of the rail line from Birch Hills to Melfort.

Beaver Control/Channel Clearing:

The RM participates in programs to assist ratepayers with beaver control and channel clearing. If you have paid to have a beaver dam removed or **cleaned** a channel – silt, grass or debris removal, not ditching – contact the RM office for information on the cost sharing program. There are a number of authorized individuals that can remove problem beaver, please contact the municipal office if you would like to be added to the authorized individual list or you would like to contact someone to assist you.

Fire Protection:

The RM jointly owns the Birch Hills Volunteer Fire Department with the Town of Birch Hills. This only provides for the costs associated with having the Fire Department trained and equipped to respond to call 24/7. **RM residents are responsible for the charges associated with the Fire Department responding to a call and are encouraged to carry firefighting insurance.**

Receipts:

Due to increased postage costs, please indicate if you require your receipt mailed to you when you make payment to the RM. The receipt can be emailed or faxed if you need a copy for your files.

Please direct your inquiries, questions & concerns to the RM Office or your Division Councillor.