

Subject: **AUC Rule 007 Amendment**
 Meeting Date: Tuesday, July 23, 2024
 Prepared By: Ushba Khalid, Municipal Intern and Mike Haugen, CAO
 Presented By: Ushba Khalid, Municipal Intern

STRATEGIC PLAN ALIGNMENT: (Check all that apply)

	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
High Quality Infrastructure		Economic Resilience		Quality of Life		Effective Leadership		Level of Service	

RELEVANT LEGISLATION:

Provincial (cite)- Alberta Utilities Commission Rule 007

Council Bylaw/Policy (cite)- Bylaw 1889, Section 4. (2)

BACKGROUND/PROPOSAL:

At the request of the Government of Alberta, the Alberta Utilities Commission paused approval on all new renewable energy power plants proposals. This 7-month pause on project approvals was lifted in February 2024. This was followed by the introduction of new interim requirements (see attached AUC Bulletin 2023-05) alongside Rule 007 of the AUC. Rule 007 relates to Applications for Power Plants, Substations, Transmission Lines, Industrial System Designations, Hydro Developments and Gas Utility Pipelines.

The AUC has established a written process to gather input and feedback on the following topics:

- Methodology for visual impact assessments.
- Draft municipal engagement form.
- Appropriate value for field of view in glare assessment for solar power plant applications.

The AUC's review is not limited to the topics above. The AUC will accept feedback on and consider other aspects of Rule 007 as part of this review, including comments on any ambiguities, requested clarifications, or opportunities for increased efficiency.

Alberta's power grid includes around 26,000 kilometers of transmission lines and connects to 426 quality generating units. There has been a push to integrate renewable energy systems into electric grids but there are several challenges. Challenges that the AUC acknowledges and is now attempting to mitigate with these amendments. The interim information requirements emphasize five key sections, agricultural land, municipal land use, viewscape protection, reclamation security and municipal involvement.



DISCUSSION/OPTIONS/BENEFITS/DISADVANTAGES/OTHER CONSIDERATIONS:

The implications for Kneehill County are multifaceted and significant.

Additional restrictions may pose challenges for the development of wind and solar projects by limiting their locations, particularly on lands that are considered prime for agriculture. While this may be the case, Kneehill County is concerned that our views and interests are not represented in the current process and feels additional municipal involvement is needed. This is a move to ensure that the County's agricultural interests and picturesque rural views are preserved.

Increased municipal involvement means that the approval process for such projects will now be more transparent, allowing for greater municipal insight and participation. This change underscores the County's commitment to maintaining open communication channels and fostering trust within the community.

To ensure that the written submission accurately reflects Council's concerns, Administration is asking Council to identify its concerns. To assist Council with this task, Administration suggests that the following be considered:

- That municipal planning documents be given more weight and consideration in AUC decision-making.
- How the development will contribute to the stability of Alberta's electricity grid with the goal being assurance that energy can be provided at anytime?
- What is the threshold that needs to be met for renewable energy to "co-exist" with agricultural activities?
- How would meaningful co-location be quantified? What would measuring agricultural activities within renewable energy powerplants look like?
- That reclamation security discussions with the developers of power plants be done with the Province instead of the County.
- That the Municipal Engagement Form be mandatory, and the proponent be responsible for filling it out as they are the ones that are looking to place their project in the county.
- That the County be contacted after the Form has been submitted to the AUC to verify form contents and address any concerns they may have not listed in the form.
- That the Municipal Engagement Form also include how the project complies with the County's Strategic Plan.
- To endorse consideration of environmental factors such as all material impacts to soil quality, soil quantity, and hydrology.
- To include end-of-life considerations within the Municipal Engagement Form. This would outline the plan for decommissioning and recycling of equipment as well as ensuring responsible disposal of materials.
- To assess the viability of using a field of view of 25 degrees for local roads, including range roads and township roads and 50 degrees for highways, railways, and flightpaths regarding solar glare assessments.

FINANCIAL & STAFFING IMPLICATIONS:

There are no financial implications associated with the recommended motion.

Time spent preparing the submission can be incorporated into existing work plans.

RECOMMENDED ENGAGEMENT:



Directive Decision (Information Sharing, One-Way Communication)			
Tools:	Individual Notification	Other:	

ATTACHMENTS:

AUC Rule 007

AUC Bulletin 2023-05

Municipal Referral Letter

COUNCIL OPTIONS:

1. Provide Administration with concerns related to AUC Rule 007.
2. Decline to participate in the written submission related to AUC Rule 007.

RECOMMENDED MOTION:

That Council directs Administration to draft a written submission as part of the AUC Rule 007 Review incorporating the following concerns:

- That municipal planning documents be given more weight and consideration in AUC decision-making.
- How the development will contribute to the stability of Alberta's electricity grid with the goal being assurance that energy can be provided at anytime.
- What is the threshold that needs to be met for renewable energy to "co-exist" with agricultural activities.
- How would meaningful co-location be quantified? What would measuring agricultural activities within renewable energy powerplants look like?
- That reclamation security discussions with the developers of power plants be done with Provincial involvement and oversight.
- That the Municipal Engagement Form be mandatory, and the proponent be responsible for filling it out as they are the ones that are looking to place their project in the County.
- That the Municipal Engagement Form demonstrate that consultation with the municipality was meaningful.

FOLLOW-UP ACTIONS:

The Administration will generate a written submission for Council's approval.

APPROVAL(S):

Mike Haugen, Chief Administrative Officer

Approved- 