



Subject: **Managing Renewable Energy Applications**
 Meeting Date: Tuesday, November 12, 2024
 Prepared By: Barb Hazelton, Manager of Planning & Development
 Presented By: Barb Hazelton

STRATEGIC PLAN ALIGNMENT: (Check all that apply)

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

RELEVANT LEGISLATION:

Provincial (cite)- Municipal Government Act, Renewable Electricity Act, Alberta Utilities Commission Act
Council Bylaw/Policy (cite)- Bylaw 1829 Municipal Development Plan, Bylaw 1808 Land Use Bylaw

BACKGROUND/PROPOSAL:

Over the last couple of years there have been numerous conversations with Council regarding renewable energy projects, specifically relating to those that are proposed to be located within Kneehill County. During the May 30, 2023, Council meeting a motion was made “that Council determine on a case-by-case basis, the level of participation with the AUC for any applications for renewable energy developments within Kneehill County”. In order to expedite our response to sometimes very tight timelines, Administration is looking to create a policy which will help define the level of participation required and will provide consistency in dealing with these projects. It should also help streamline and reduce the amount of Administration time invested in each project.

DISCUSSION/OPTIONS/BENEFITS/DISADVANTAGES/OTHER CONSIDERATIONS:

January 1, 2020, saw the adoption of the *Renewable Electricity Act*. This provincial legislation establishes a target “that at least 30% of the electric energy produced in Alberta, measured on an annual basis, will be produced from renewable energy sources.” “The Minister shall ensure that the target established is met by the end of 2030.” In this act, a renewable energy resource means “an energy resource that occurs naturally and that can be replenished or renewed within a human lifespan, including, but not limited to, moving water, wind, heat from the earth, sunlight and sustainable biomass.”

At the Federal level, Bill C-312 which received first reading on February 1, 2023 creates a National Renewable Energy Strategy which notes: “The Minister must, in consultation with the provincial government representatives responsible for energy matters and with Indigenous governing bodies, develop and implement a national strategy to provide that, by December 31, 2030, 100% of electricity generated in Canada must be from renewable energy sources.” As a result of these targets, significant funding from both the federal and provincial governments have been designated towards these efforts. While this Bill has not been adopted yet, and several provincial governments are requesting changes to the Bill and timelines, it does reveal a heavily pursued agenda.

As per the Alberta Electric System Operator information, in 2022, wind supplied approximately 12 per cent of Alberta’s net-to-grid generation and solar supplied approximately two per cent of Alberta’s net-to-grid generation. These numbers are significantly below both of these target levels. From August 3, 2023,



to the end of February 2024 the province announced a moratorium on renewable power approvals. The 2023 numbers by percentage are not available.

On a municipal level, we are managing applications where provincial legislation has removed the majority of the oversight from municipalities. While we are now considered to have “standing” on applications that fall within our jurisdictional borders, we have not been given the ability to deny these projects. We have recently amended our Land Use Bylaw specifically regarding the sections relating to commercial solar and wind projects, however, as defined in the legislation there are more renewable type projects to be considered. Typically, hydro projects fall under the jurisdiction of the NRCB, however the process that some of the other renewable options will take is still unknown.

Administration has several questions for Council consideration that will help provide direction in the development of a policy if Council is in favour of this option.

1. As a Council, do you want Administration to participate in every project that comes forward with an AUC approval? If not, what would be the trigger for participation? Type? Size?
2. Would this include any projects that are not wind or solar renewables? What level of participation would be warranted? We are proposing to create 4 potential levels of participation. It would be helpful for Council to help define the trigger points for each level of participation prior to drafting a policy.
 - a. Level 1 no participation required, (i.e. this could apply to the generator applications for bitcoin, and some of the accessory uses for large projects.)
 - b. Level 2 would be written submission,
 - c. Level 3 would be written submission and participation in the hearing,
 - d. Level 4 would be legal and expert representation.
3. What specific relevant considerations should be outlined in a policy for Administration to raise for AUC consideration?
4. What should fall within the municipal interest for oversight?
5. At what point does it go beyond the participation of Administration and experts and/or legal representatives are hired to represent the municipal interest?

The following are some lists Administration has created to provide some ideas for relevant factors to be considered. Some of these are reflected in the changes made to the Land Use Bylaw.

Relevant factors that Administration would recommend should be raised for AUC consideration.

- Soil type and the protection of high-quality Ag lands (What site-specific information would be required for an applicant to change this designation? Who approves this change?)
- Proximity to an Environmentally Significant Area
- Historical Designations
- Fragmentation of natural habitat
- Protection of native grassland
- Protection of wetlands
- Species at risk/protected species
- Limit to contiguous size
- Request the AUC to clearly outline the issues they considered, and which ones are deferred for municipal consideration

Factors that have a municipal interest and may or may not be considered by the AUC

- Soil erosion and overall site management during construction
- Storm water management to prevent offsite impacts
- Road impacts/haul routes during construction
- Site and emergency access requirements



REQUEST FOR DECISION

- Setbacks from property lines
- Screening of the site to reduce impacts to adjacent residents
- Weed and vegetation management (beyond those defined as prohibited or noxious)
- Fire management
- Emergency response plans

FINANCIAL & STAFFING IMPLICATIONS:

Depending on the level of participation required, it has the potential to impact both staff capacity and budgeted resources.

RECOMMENDED ENGAGEMENT:

Directive Decision (Information Sharing, One-Way Communication)

Tools:	Individual Notification	Other:	
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ATTACHMENTS:

N/A

COUNCIL OPTIONS:

1. That Council provide direction to Administration for a draft policy.
2. That Council move to request applications be brought forward on a case-by-case basis to determine the level of participation.
3. That Council requests Administration to bring forward this information to the next Committee of the Whole meeting for further discussion
4. That Council move to accept as information.

RECOMMENDED MOTION:

That Council provide direction to Administration so a draft policy can be created.

FOLLOW-UP ACTIONS:

Administration will follow the direction of Council.

APPROVAL(S):

Mike Haugen, Chief Administrative Officer

Approved-

