

Subject: **Ratepayer Newsletters**
 Meeting Date: Tuesday, April 14, 2026
 Prepared By: Christine Anderson, Communications Coordinator
 Presented By: Christine Anderson, Communications Coordinator

STRATEGIC PLAN ALIGNMENT: (Check all that apply)

	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>		<input 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)- MGA Section 606
Council Bylaw/Policy (cite)- Bylaw 1772- Advertising Bylaw

According to legislation, there are no requirements to produce a Ratepayer Newsletter, but public notices must continue to be advertised in the Three Hills Capital and the Kneehill County Website.

BACKGROUND/PROPOSAL:

Kneehill County currently produces a printed Ratepayer Newsletter four times per year, which is mailed to all registered ratepayers.

The newsletter is designed to:

- Provide updates on County initiatives and decisions
- Communicate service information and community programs
- Maintain transparency and awareness regarding County activities

The newsletter is currently the **only communications tool that guarantees direct physical delivery to all ratepayers**, including:

- Residents without reliable internet access
- Seniors who rely on print communications
- Agricultural producers
- Non-resident ratepayers who live outside the County

Each edition is approximately 12 pages and is mailed to roughly 2,400 ratepayers. The average cost per edition is approximately **\$7,300**, including printing and mailing. Annual cost for four editions is approximately **\$ 29,200, or \$12/ratepayer per year.**

DISCUSSION/OPTIONS/BENEFITS/DISADVANTAGES/OTHER CONSIDERATIONS:

Role of the Ratepayer Newsletter

The newsletter functions as the County’s **universal direct-delivery communication channel**. Unlike digital platforms or social media, it does not require residents to subscribe, follow, or actively seek information.



This ensures information is distributed equitably across the County's geographically dispersed population. While the County uses a variety of communication tools (website, social media, email newsletters, and newspaper advertising), none provide guaranteed delivery to all ratepayers.

Cost Reduction Options

Several options are available should Council wish to reduce communications expenditures associated with the Ratepayer Newsletter.

Option A – Reduce One Newsletter Edition

Reduce the number of printed newsletters from **four per year to three**.

Estimated impact:

- Maintains physical delivery to ratepayers
- Reduces production and mailing costs

Estimated annual savings: **approximately \$7,000**

Option B – Reduce Page Count

Reduce the newsletter from **12 pages to approximately 8 pages** while maintaining four editions per year.

Estimated impact:

- Focus content on key information and priority updates
- Maintain delivery to all ratepayers

Estimated annual savings: **approximately \$6,000**

Option C – Introduce Voluntary Digital Delivery

Maintain printed newsletters as the default, but allow residents and ratepayers to **opt into digital delivery by email**.

Under this option:

- Printed newsletters would continue to be mailed to all ratepayers who do not opt in to digital delivery
- Ratepayers could register through the County website or a form included in the newsletter
- Email delivery would use the County's existing newsletter system

Estimated impact:

- Gradual reduction in printing and mailing costs
- Maintains equitable access for residents who rely on print

Estimated savings:

- Approximately **\$12 per year per ratepayer** who opts into digital delivery
- A **20–30% opt-in rate** could result in annual savings of approximately **\$5,700–\$8,600**

This option would modernize communications while maintaining accessibility for residents who prefer printed information.

Risk Considerations

Reducing printed communications may impact seniors, rural residents with limited internet access, and non-resident ratepayers who rely on mailed information

Over-reducing communications may increase the risk that residents feel uninformed about County decisions and initiatives. Maintaining some level of printed communication helps ensure equitable access to information across the community.



FINANCIAL & STAFFING IMPLICATIONS:

The Ratepayer Newsletter currently costs approximately **\$29,200 annually**.

Potential savings depend on Council's preferred approach:

Option	Estimated Annual Savings
Reduce one edition	~\$7,000
Reduce page count	~\$6,000
Digital opt-in delivery	~\$5,700–\$8,600 depending on participation

Savings from multiple options could potentially be combined.

RECOMMENDED ENGAGEMENT:

Directive Decision (Information Sharing, One-Way Communication)

Tools:	Individual Notification	Other:	
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ATTACHMENTS:

COUNCIL OPTIONS:

1. Maintain the current newsletter structure of 4 mailings per year to all Kneehill County Ratepayers
2. Reduce the newsletters by ____ editions
3. Direct administration to bring back other options.

RECOMMENDED MOTION OR ACKNOWLEDGEMENT:

That Council provide direction regarding the frequency, format, and delivery method of the Kneehill County Ratepayer Newsletter.

FOLLOW-UP ACTIONS:

Administration will implement Council's direction regarding the frequency, format, or delivery method of the Ratepayer Newsletter and update communications planning and budgeting accordingly.

APPROVAL(S):

Theresa Cochran, Interim Chief Administrative Officer

Approved-

