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#### 1. Upcoming Meetings/Events

Oct. 25, 2011     SATA Monthly Meeting

SATA monthly meetings are held at 7:30 pm at the St. Albert Community League Hall, 17 Perron Street.

#### 2. City Hall Shakeup

Residents were surprised by City Council's unexpected October 4<sup>th</sup> news release announcing the termination of City Manager, Bill Holtby. Mr. Holtby served in this position since 2001. According to Mayor Crouse there was no single reason for Mr. Holtby's dismissal, and that the change was made to bring in new leadership.

Council should be commended for making what must have been a difficult decision, and for their bold and decisive action.

Viewed by many as the real policy driver and the person in charge of setting direction for the City, Mr. Holtby's dismissal was long overdue. Some have suggested that the decision represents the first major success in Council's drive for efficiency improvements at City Hall.

While some may remember Bill Holtby for more laudable achievements, St. Albert taxpayers will undoubtedly remember the former city manager as the person most responsible for the rapid growth in City Hall staff levels, dramatic growth in city spending, and unsustainable increases in residential property taxes. Recognizing that previous councils must also assume responsibility for the rapid rise in city spending, it should be

noted that municipal spending and property taxes rose more rapidly over the last 10 years, than they had at any other time prior to the appointment of the former city manager.

Council now faces the difficult task of finding a new city manager however SATA believes that this represents an opportunity for Council to correct some of the longstanding problems at City Hall.

Among other announced changes, Council reiterated its commitment to growing St. Albert's light industrial and commercial sectors by announcing the creation of a new city hall department focused on business development, marketing, and economic development.

We believe Council's decisions will bring renewed optimism to the City, and give St. Albert taxpayers hope of more manageable property tax increases in the future.

#### 3. Price of Residential Development

In the September 22, 2011 edition of the Edmonton Journal, David Thompson, Director of Sustainable Communities for Sustainable Prosperity, a research institute at the University of Ottawa, wrote about how much urban sprawl can cost residential taxpayers. Thompson cited a report done by the City of Edmonton on the costs of urban sprawl, and pointed out that new residential neighbourhoods risk costing Edmonton far more to provide the necessary services, than they pay back in tax revenues. Industrial and commercial developments, on the other hand, pay more in taxes than they cost to service.

It is for this reason that in a September 24<sup>th</sup> editorial, the St. Albert Gazette emphasized the need to make St. Albert more business friendly and do "whatever it takes" to attract business. The editorial pointed out that without additional economic development, St. Albert won't be able to generate new taxes to sustain itself.

The City's former director of business and strategic services, Jennifer Jennax, said that she wanted to see 20,000 new jobs in St. Albert by 2024. That's a

commendable goal, but how will we achieve it without a lot more industrial and commercial development? Hopefully, the new economic development division at City Hall will help us reach that goal and ease the tax burden City residents now face.

#### **4. DARP is Moving Forward**

During its September 26<sup>th</sup> meeting, St. Albert City Council took the first steps towards implementing the Downtown Area Redevelopment Plan (DARP). Administration presented, and Council approved terms of reference identifying how the amendments to both the Municipal Development Plan (MDP) and Land Use Bylaw (LUB) will be prepared, the need to review potential options for downtown design review, and the public consultation process proposed to ensure that stakeholder feedback has been considered.

DARP was opposed by SATA and many St. Albert residents during the 2010 DARP Public Consultation process. More recently, in a June editorial the St. Albert Gazette wrote that "The \$135.8-million downtown area redevelopment plan (DARP) is a vague, overly-expansive document that needs to be trashed so city hall can start working on an affordable, focused plan that aims to accomplish what this one does not - getting people downtown."

It is not known how much the City has set aside in its 2012 Operating Budget to address all statutory and regulatory amendments to the MDP and LUB. According to the 2012 - 2014 Municipal and Utility Capital Budgets unveiled on September 19<sup>th</sup>, DARP capital projects are currently unfunded and include \$5.4, \$16.5 and \$51.6 million of forecast spending in 2012, 2013 and 2014 respectively. The unfunded projects planned for 2014 include \$38.7 million for a new civic building.

#### **5. City Hall Seeks Public Input**

Also on September 26<sup>th</sup>, Council passed motions setting the stage for the City hosting public town hall meetings to enhance public engagement and communication. For residents wishing to share their views or voice concerns, the town hall, round-table format will provide a more informal setting to share their thoughts and ideas on various issues

with members of City Council.

Plans call for town hall meetings to be held a minimum of three times a year. The meetings may deal with specific issues or be completely open, as determined by Council. Meeting notes will be taken but they will not be published as minutes.

Upcoming opportunities for residents to provide input on the City's direction include the following:

Nov. 1, 2011	Recreation Master Plan Open House
Nov. 2, 2011	Culture Master Plan Open House
Nov. 7, 2011	Business Plan and 2012-2014 Budget Town Hall Meeting

Information pertaining to the recreation and culture master plans can be found at <http://www.stalbert.ca/recreationmasterplan> and <http://www.stalbert.ca/culturemasterplan>.

As the name suggests, the master plans will lay the foundation for St. Albert's long term future direction in the areas of recreation and culture. The November 7<sup>th</sup> Town Hall Meeting is being held to provide residents the opportunity to comment on the city's business plan and the proposed budget.

We encourage all residents to attend as many of these events as they can, to help shape our city's future direction and provide input to the budget process.

#### **6. Membership Renewal Reminder**

For those of you that have not yet done so, we would like to remind current SATA members to renew their memberships. We would also like to extend invitations and encourage our friends to join SATA by purchasing a membership.

We are encouraged by increasing membership in the Association, and we hope you will continue to support our efforts. We also welcome donations.

You can renew your membership in person during any upcoming general meeting. Or, if you would prefer, you can renew by mail, or on-line using PayPal. For details please visit our website at <http://www.stalberttaxpayers.org/membership.htm>.