

Chief Administrative Officer Report to Council

Reporting period: September 10 to October 15, 2026

Prepared by Chyenne Shaw, Chief Administrative Officer

Overview

During this reporting period, I coordinated Council business, departmental priorities, and regional initiatives while advancing the 2027 budget, infrastructure planning, emergency preparedness, and internal administrative improvements. This report expands the original CAO update and includes the work being carried out by County departments.

The most immediate priorities are preparing the October Council packages, completing the Finance transition and payroll follow-up, addressing road and bridge requirements, preparing services and equipment for winter, and advancing regional emergency management and collaboration.

Council and administrative coordination

Reviewed agenda packages, Requests for Decision, meeting minutes and supporting correspondence for accuracy, clarity and follow-up. Coordinated preparations for Committee of the Whole, the Organizational meeting and Regular Council, with the October packages targeted for release October 14 and October 16.

Reworked councillor discussion items into proposed motions and supporting review background. Clarified the proposed route for bringing these items to Regular Council and refined the wording to focus on Council policy and governance decisions. Fire bylaws and policies were moved to the November meeting.

Met with directors and managers to review service requirements, outstanding actions, budget needs and operational concerns. Continued follow-up on Council direction and escalated service requests while coordinating work across Administration, Public Works, Finance, Human Resources and other departments.

Priority 1 Regional Collaboration and Modernization

Regional municipal partnerships

Continued regional CAO coordination and preparation for joint municipal discussions. Reviewed correspondence from the County of St. Paul regarding the existing Intermunicipal Collaboration Framework and coordinated related administrative follow-up. Continued work with regional partners on the Regional Recreation Study and consultant discussions.

Advanced Regional FCSS discussions through the Intermunicipal Collaboration Committee working group, including discussions involving Aspen View School Division. Supported coordination of regional service questions and shared municipal priorities.

Coordinated the Joint Municipalities Meeting agenda and confirmed Travel Lakeland's upcoming presentation on destination development. Began coordinating with regional partners for the January RMA meeting to be hosted by Smoky Lake County.

Regional economic development framework

Reviewed the regional economic development framework initiative and the relationship between the presentation to participating municipalities and the published RFP scope. Prepared questions about whether the work was intended as an exploratory planning study or the development of a defined regional service and economic development officer model. Sought clarification of the intended scope and supporting materials so Council could assess the proposal on a common understanding with municipal partners.

Municipal controlled corporation governance

Reviewed the proposed approach to updating the municipal controlled corporation business plan and prepared governance correspondence. The work focused on clarifying the roles of municipal councils, shareholders and corporate directors, and the process for considering changes to the business plan. Contacted Municipal Affairs for clarification before advancing the proposed approach.

Regional commissions and water initiatives

Prepared Highway 28/63 Regional Water Services Commission agenda materials, including a proposed Procurement Policy, Standing Offer Agreements, and Requests for Decision concerning the Finance Manager appointment and grant opportunities. Continued discussions with Associated Engineering regarding reservoir requirements and Water for Life infrastructure opportunities, including potential Métis Crossing and Healing Waters connections.

Continued involvement with Evergreen Regional Waste Management Services Commission business. Reviewed the regional site report, September Treasurer's Report and draft 2027 budget in preparation for the October 15 meeting.

RMA advocacy

Continued agricultural disaster advocacy and municipal resolution follow-up. Confirmed Council's support for merging the County's Aggregate Pit Approvals resolution with the County of Stettler's resolution for the Fall 2026 RMA convention.

Priority 2 Service Delivery and Community Wellbeing

Regional emergency preparedness

Continued developing and coordinating the Regional Emergency Response Plan, including presentations and discussions with the Villages of Vilna and Waskatenau. Worked with Human Resources and Safety on supporting Council materials, emergency management bylaws, policies and terms of reference.

Continued planning for the regional Emergency Management Exercise scheduled for November 18, 2026, at the Complex, beginning at 10:00 a.m. Reviewed emergency management updates and training opportunities, including the AEMA regional newsletter and November Supply Unit Leader training opportunity.

Resident concerns and enforcement

Addressed resident inquiries and service concerns involving roads, access, drainage, dust control and enforcement. Coordinated follow-up with the responsible departments and prepared information for Council where a policy decision or further direction was required.

Prepared Council correspondence on the dog-at-large complaint, outlining actions taken, the lack of a suitable impoundment facility, and potential next steps requiring legal advice or court processes. The material identified practical enforcement constraints and the need to assess available legal remedies before further action.

Reviewed the response to a complaint about heavy truck activity near a water fill station, including the limits of available County enforcement coverage and referral of applicable traffic and vehicle weight concerns to the RCMP.

Community policy and service reviews

Prepared or coordinated FCSS and Community Capital Grant policy reviews for Committee of the Whole. Continued follow-up on the proposed Bonnie Lake Resorts Golf Cart Bylaw and related Council correspondence.

Supported the annual report redesign toward clear reporting of accomplishments, departmental statistics and service outcomes. Requested Council input on accomplishments and the areas of focus for 2027. Prepared public communication explaining the additional gravel placed in 2026 and the challenges associated with the wet season.

Privacy and access to information

Supported the Privacy Management Program and access to information policy work being led through County Services and Communications. This included coordination of Council materials, policy reviews and administrative processes supporting the County's privacy and access obligations.

Priority 3 Asset Management and Infrastructure Sustainability

Roads drainage and service requests

Worked with Public Works on the 2027 Road Plan, current maintenance needs, service request follow-up and preparation of Road Policy, Road Use Agreement and Dust Control items for Council consideration. Reviewed proposed dust control service levels, resident fees, historical cost information and the need for updated delivery costs before drawing cost-recovery conclusions.

Coordinated review of alternative dust control products and potential equipment retrofits. Supporting material identified the need to establish capital costs, annual operating costs, treatment volumes and the resulting County contribution before an equipment or funding decision.

Continued follow-up on drainage, culvert and beaver issues, road allowance access concerns, gravel placement and oil road patching. Public Works was also preparing for winter operations and addressing overdue or escalated service requests.

Bridge planning and transportation coordination

Worked with Public Works, Finance and Associated Engineering on bridge repair and replacement priorities, capital requirements, financing options and supporting Council documentation. Coordinated the engineering presentation on bridge program priorities and reviewed procurement and bid package material.

Participated in the Special Council meeting with Alberta Transportation and Economic Corridors on regional transportation matters and engineering standards, with follow-up discussions involving engineering consultants. Reviewed regulatory approvals and No Interference Letters for Red Clay Creek culvert and bridge work. Continued coordination relating to Highway 28 upgrades and associated infrastructure interfaces.

Aggregate procurement and pit reclamation

Prepared Council and contractor correspondence relating to the gravel crushing agreement after the contractor did not complete the 2025 and 2026 crushing work. Supported the September 29 Special Council termination process and prepared the 2027–2029 crushing and stockpiling RFP for Alberta Purchasing Connection, with a three-year term and annual review.

Advanced gravel pit reclamation procurement and revised the proposed reclamation motion to identify the required completion timing. Reviewed White Earth South Pit approvals and the activities plan. Clarified Sandstar-related communications and the County procurement process for any future County requirements.

Facilities and water infrastructure

Coordinated outstanding requirements for the County Shop Lighting Retrofit project to maintain funding compliance.

Priorities 4 and 5 Finance and Workforce

Budget development and financial sustainability

Coordinated 2027 operating and capital budget preparation with departmental managers, including Public Works budget discussions and review of anticipated service and infrastructure requirements. Worked with Finance on supporting schedules, salary allocations, budget documentation and the relationship between proposed projects and available funding.

Continued auditor procurement and appointment follow-up. Reviewed tax forfeiture files, tax incentive and tax deferral requests, and Métis Crossing-related Council material. Worked on Whitefish Lake and Sunset Ridge Estates matters involving subdivision processing, development incentives, taxation requests and future planning requirements.

Prepared tax exemption decision material for Council, including the applicant's proposed withdrawal of the assessment appeal if approval were granted, and identified the CAO's concern about approving the requested level of exemption. The material was prepared for Council consideration; it does not record an approval.

Reviewed natural gas arrears and supporting material concerning potential transfer of unpaid amounts to the tax roll. Continued grant-related review, including ACP collaboration opportunities and Water for Life infrastructure work.

Finance transition and payroll administration

Coordinated the transition from the interim Finance contractor to Nicole Cherniwchan, including payroll completion, financial reporting processes, budget spreadsheet documentation, handover materials and system access requirements. Supported the transfer of ongoing responsibilities to internal staff.

Worked with Finance and Human Resources on payroll corrections, benefits deductions, leave administration and timesheet questions. Continued review of the online timesheet transition and internal workflows, including the Administrative Clerk role and Finance and Planning backup requirements.

Organizational development and human resources

Supported onboarding and changes to the County's director structure, departmental reporting relationships, recruitment and performance management. Continued confidential employee relations work with external Human Resources support, including leave and return-to-work planning.

Supported Human Resources policy work, organizational chart and pay grid reviews, job description updates, safety training and collective bargaining preparation.

Organizational meeting preparation

Prepared supporting decision material for the annual Organizational meeting, including the day, hour and place of Regular Council meetings, confirmation of signing authorities, appointment of municipal solicitors, and the proposed December 28, 2026, to January 1, 2027, office closure. These items remained subject to Council consideration.

Departmental Updates Community and Corporate Services

Community Services Agriculture and Parks

The Agricultural Services Department continued weed control and herbicide application, with the October 13 notes indicating the program was expected to finish that week. Staff worked on the regional weed and pest appeal committee bylaw and memorandum of understanding, recreational lease and parks contract reviews, and the Emergency Infrastructure Protection Bylaw and protocols.

Other work included excess water issues with provincial follow-up, public area inspections, seasonal mowing and recreation operations planning, heritage and address sign installation, Pumpkin Fair support and discussions with local groups about CFEP opportunities. The latest notes also identified environmental DNA sampling discussions with LICA and the Province, seasonal scheduling changes and Environmental Farm Plan training.

County Services Planning and Development

Planning and Development continued processing development permits, preparing development agreements and subdivision comments, and preparing for Municipal Planning Commission. Work included subdivision discussions for Sunset Ridge Estates and a Land Use Bylaw amendment to consider reclassifying certain discretionary uses as permitted uses.

County Services also worked on the Joint Use Planning Agreement with regional municipalities and Aspen View, website modernization and Planning and Development webpage updates, the Privacy Management Program, fire job description review, and ACP municipal intern application preparation.

Communications

The Communications Officer prepared and posted Grapevine editions, Council highlights, public meeting notices, redacted agenda packages, tax reminders, recycling information, workshop advertising, road closure notices and winter landfill hours. Communications also supported community printing, heritage materials, job advertisements and the publication of the Peace Officer report.

Privacy and access work included policy Requests for Decision, compiling Personal Information Banks into a master document, and coordination with County Services on privacy procedures. Advertising budgets were being consolidated across departments.

Legislative Services

Legislative Services prepared agendas, minutes and supporting records for Regular, Special, Joint, Committee of the Whole and Organizational meetings. Work included formatting Council reports, reviewing Requests for Decision, updating the action list, preparing documents for signature, filing signed bylaws and minutes, and reviewing committee terms of reference.

Legislative Services also prepared the October calendar, supported Highway 28/63 Commission minute review and administrative cross-training, and finalized centennial farm plaques following resident approval.

Departmental Updates Infrastructure Utilities and Enforcement

Public Works Roads and Shop

Public Works continued divisional graveling as weather permitted, patching, ditchline trenching, culvert and drainage work, sign repairs, brushing and service request entries in municipal tracking systems. Specific work included bridge issues on Range Road 163, beaver dams near the Range Road 171 bridge, intersection widening at Range Road 125 and Township Road 584, and investigation of water backup near the rehabilitation centre.

Managers continued bridge repair pricing and contractor discussions, aggregate and reclamation coordination, 2027 road planning and budget work. The October 13 notes identified cold mix coordination with Thorhild County, additional brushing and patching, bridge repair planning and chainsaw training.

The County Shop prepared plow trucks, sanders and equipment for winter, alongside servicing, brake, electrical, hydraulic and battery work. September inspections of the scissor lift, forklift and truck-mounted crane passed; the floor hoist inspection identified work requiring attention. Shop heating and Public Works boiler requirements were also being reviewed.

Environment Water and Waste

This team continued routine plant checks, hydrant flushing, seasonal sampling, lagoon and air valve vault checks, truck fill troubleshooting and winter preparations. Staff worked with Associated Engineering and service providers on the severed Vilna SCADA communication cable, remaining cable installations and battery backup needs.

The latest notes identified the Egremont East line pump as under repair, with the system operating on one pump and an estimated six-month repair period. Associated Engineering was assisting with a backup plan. Waste work included recycling coordination, fall cleanup, furnace readiness at transfer sites, site inspections and fire drills. A new landfill operator had been hired by the October 13 update.

Utilities and Natural Gas

The Natural Gas team continued meter installations and upgrades, gas and water meter reading and invoicing, pipeline installations, crossing agreements and Highway 28 utility coordination. Work included the Vilna reservoir gas connection, assistance arrangements with Thorhild County and planned assistance to the Town with three gas services.

The Tap 4 pipeline replacement was scheduled to begin October 20. Other work included odorant operations and training coordination, spill response course development, Transport Canada TDG registration renewal, formal inspections, Public Works boiler quotations and the 2027 budget.

Enforcement Services

Council reporting and CAO follow-up covered resident complaints, dog control and service limitations. The supplied weekly manager notes contain no additional narrative update from Enforcement Services; the previously prepared Peace Officer quarterly report remained the separate source for enforcement activity statistics.

Departmental Updates Finance Safety Fire and Technology

Finance

Finance staff worked on the contractor handover, access to CRA and banking accounts, departmental budget reviews, bridge financing material and insurance renewals. Tax payment activity was increasing ahead of the October deadline. Staff also worked on payroll corrections and process manuals to support cross-training. Council material included accounts receivable policy updates, property tax forfeiture, employee benefits and a tax incentive application.

Human Resources and Safety

Human Resources and Safety coordinated recruitment and employment documentation for landfill, administrative, truck driver and water and wastewater positions, together with job description updates, evaluations and employee benefits administration. Work included payroll support, LAPP revisions, ROE processing and system access, 2027 salary allocations and preparation for November collective bargaining sessions.

Safety work included COR audit coordination, road construction signage research, mandatory training policy preparation, chainsaw and mental health training arrangements, and emergency plan support. Confidential employee relations files continued through the appropriate processes.

Fire Services

The Team successfully reported that it submitted the 2027 Fire Training Grant application. Fire Services continued annual hose testing and inventory, pump testing, radio work, AED software updates, equipment checks, budget review, paid-on-call payroll corrections and a draft payroll operating policy. Rescue 429 and Rehab Unit 488 were reported back in service by October 13.

The department continued cooperation with RCMP and provincial wildfire investigators, hydrant repair monitoring, ambulance staffing motion follow-up and regional advisory committee scheduling. Training and recruitment work included chainsaw, advanced pumping, hazardous materials, Fire Officer and instructor development, and processing paid-on-call firefighter applications.

GIS and Information Technology

GIS continued departmental base map automation, road grid layers, grader beat updates, land ownership map revisions and user permission changes for the new organizational structure. Flood modelling was being compared with HARP flood damage information to validate results. QGIS training was progressing toward use of County data.

IT continued CentralSquare and Diamond support, PaperCut printing rollout, VEEAM renewal and backup work, workstation setup, HRISmyWay implementation, network monitoring and cybersecurity work under NIST CSF 2.0. IT also assisted with SCADA issues and system access requirements.

Immediate administrative focus

The next steps are to complete budget and bridge financing decisions, follow up on gravel procurement and reclamation, maintain winter readiness and utility reliability, complete Finance and payroll transition work, and continue preparations for the November 18 emergency management exercise.