



ALBERTA

MUNICIPAL AFFAIRS

*Office of the Minister
MLA, Grande Prairie*

AR102978

NC 65 1020

His Worship Barry Crane
Mayor
Town of Turner Valley
PO Box 330
Turner Valley AB T0L 2A0

Her Worship Ruth Goodwin
Mayor
Town of Black Diamond
PO Box 10
Black Diamond AB T0L 0H0

Dear Mayor Crane and Mayor Goodwin,

Thank you for your letter of September 11, 2020, providing notice of the proposed amalgamation between the towns of Black Diamond and Turner Valley, and for meeting with me on September 23, 2020, during the Alberta Urban Municipalities convention to discuss your plans. I am pleased to see your communities moving forward with a commitment to complete the amalgamation process in follow-up to the 2017 amalgamation feasibility study funded through the Alberta Community Partnership program. I appreciate the considerable amount of preparation your towns have completed to get to this point.

As you noted in your letter, pursuant to section 103(4) of the *Municipal Government Act*, a notice of amalgamation must include proposals for consulting with the affected local authorities and the public. Providing information and collecting feedback from the public about the proposed amalgamation is an important step in the process, and I am very pleased to know that your councils are seeking expertise to complete a plan for public engagement during these unprecedented times. I look forward to receiving a comprehensive consultation proposal from you in the near future as part of your notice of amalgamation proceedings.

With respect to the four requests outlined in your letter and further clarified in Mayor Goodwin's email of September 26, 2020, I have given each request careful consideration as well as consulted with other ministries, where appropriate, and I can provide the following response:

Intermunicipal Collaboration Framework (ICF)

I am prepared to grant an extension to the ICFs between each of your communities and Foothills County, and between yourselves, for one year, making the new deadline April 1, 2022. If, prior to that date, I receive formal confirmation of your intention to amalgamate, I will consider the establishment of an adjusted timeline requirement for an ICF between the new municipality formed from your communities and Foothills County, as part of your amalgamation order.

My ministry will follow up in early 2021 with a letter and a ministerial order providing the towns of Black Diamond and Turner Valley the official time extension to April 1, 2022, and will also advise Foothills County of the new timeline.

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Municipal Election Nomination Period

I have given this particular request careful thought, as elections are a critical mechanism for local democracy. I appreciate the desire to minimize unnecessary election costs, but I am also very hesitant to extend election timelines that may disenfranchise local residents. In that light, I am willing to consider a potential deferral of elections in your communities for up to six months, but not longer. As a result, I am prepared to offer the following three scenarios for your consideration:

Scenario 1

- Your municipalities commit to submitting a completed amalgamation proposal to me by April 30, 2021.
- I will defer the nomination period for the October 2021 election to a June 1, 2021, start.
- Upon receipt of an acceptable amalgamation package, by April 30, 2021, I will further defer the nomination period to a January 1, 2022 start.
- Amalgamation will come into effect January 1, 2022.
- Election for the new combined council will occur in April 2022.
- The terms of your current councils will be extended to April 2022, with the two councils being formally combined for the period from January 1, 2022, until the April 2022 election.

Scenario 2

- Your municipalities commit to submitting a completed amalgamation proposal to me by April 30, 2021.
- I will defer the nomination period for the October 2021 election to a June 1, 2021, start.
- If, for some reason, you are unable to submit an acceptable amalgamation package by April 30, 2021, then:
 - The nomination period will commence on June 1, 2021; and
 - Local elections will occur as currently scheduled in October 2021.
- You may continue your amalgamation discussions, and bring forward a proposal at your discretion at a future date if desired.

Scenario 3

- Your municipalities choose to continue with your currently proposed timeline, culminating in amalgamation, if it occurs, in January 2023.
- As I am not prepared to defer elections for such a significant time period, the current dates for local elections, including a January 1, 2021, start of the nomination period and an election date of October 18, 2021, will remain in effect.

In order to take any action on this specific matter, I will require a formal decision from your councils by December 15, 2020, outlining which of the three scenarios above you have agreed to. This is a time sensitive issue as it is important that residents and potential candidates in your communities are aware of the timelines for the election, and your administrations are prepared to begin accepting nominations on January 1, 2021, if necessary.

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Classification: Protected A

Policing Costs

After consultation with the Ministry of Justice and Solicitor General, I can confirm that the Government of Alberta is not prepared to grant your request for a five-year exemption from policing costs. This would create an unacceptable inequity between your newly amalgamated municipality and all other municipalities in Alberta, which is incompatible with the intent of the changes our government has made to the policing funding model over the past year.

Amalgamation Funding Support

Finally, I understand that your administrations are currently working with my staff on the use of remaining funds from grants provided to Black Diamond and Turner Valley in 2012 and 2016, respectively. Further grant funding may be available through the Alberta Community Partnership program and the Municipal Sustainability Initiative. Ministry staff will be in contact with your administrations to explore these opportunities.

My ministry continues to be available to provide advice to support you in moving forward with amalgamation. Please feel free to contact Linda Reynolds, Municipal Viability Advisor, toll-free at 310-0000 then 780-415-4823, or at linda.reynolds@gov.ab.ca.

Congratulations to you and your councils on this major milestone. Your efforts to look for new efficiencies proactively and collaboratively, on behalf of your residents, serve as a powerful example for many other regions in the province.

Thank you for your tremendous leadership.

Sincerely,



Tracy L. Allard
Minister

cc: Honourable Kaycee Madu, QC, Minister of Justice and Solicitor General
Paul Wynnyk, Deputy Minister, Municipal Affairs
Sharlene Brown, Chief Administrative Officer, Town of Black Diamond
Todd Sharpe, Chief Administrative Officer, Town of Turner Valley
Gary Sandberg, Assistant Deputy Minister, Municipal Services Division, Municipal Affairs
Linda Reynolds, Municipal Viability Advisor, Municipal Affairs

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