



PUBLIC INFORMATION PAPER

BLACK DIAMOND & TURNER VALLEY AMALGAMATION

June 21, 2021



HOW THIS PAPER WORKS:

The Public Information Paper provides a comprehensive and real time overview/update of:

- amalgamation background,
- process and timeframe,
- public engagement opportunities,
- links to stakeholder input,
- the technical data and information collected to make decisions on highlighted topics, and
- the decisions that are made by the Joint Friendship Agreement Committee (JFAC).

This paper will be updated throughout the entirety of the amalgamation process. When the paper is updated with new information, notification will be posted on the website as well as circulated through the most appropriate, timely communication tool available (town signage, social media, newsletter and/or utility mailouts). All new material will be highlighted in the 'New Material' Section once inserted. **New material added to the Public Information Paper are in green font at the time of addition and are black in future versions.**

Please check back regularly to ensure you have the most up to date information. Residents may wish to review all material posted on the websites by visiting the Town of Black Diamond at www.Town.blackdiamond.ab.ca or the Town of Turner Valley at www.turnervalley.ca. Residents can also call the towns to ask questions, request written copies of the information, or provide feedback by contacting either Turner Valley at 403-933-4944 or the Black Diamond Office at 403-933-4348.

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NEW MATERIAL:

- JFAC decisions made on March 10, 2021 (p. 12)
- JFAC decisions made on May 12, 2021 (p. 12)
- Updated Engagement Activities (June 15, 2021)

PROJECT BACKGROUND:

The prospect of amalgamation between Black Diamond and Turner Valley has been a matter of considerable discussion for many years, and was explored in 1988, 1991, 2005 and most recently in 2017. Amalgamation related discussion has required extensive time, energy, and resources over the years from both Towns.

In 2012, the Towns created the Friendship Agreement, with the goal of promoting collaborative relationships and shared services. In early 2020, a decision to formalize the relationship with the creation of the Joint Friendship Agreement Committee (JFAC) and a deliberate move towards amalgamation was pursued. After much discussion, in September of 2020, the Towns of Black Diamond and Turner Valley presented a letter to Alberta Municipal Affairs to formally notify that the two existing municipalities will be commencing negotiations with the intent to amalgamate.

As established in the most recent [2017 Amalgamation Feasibility Study](#) developed by both the Towns, and as outlined in the [recent letter to Municipal Affairs](#), the guiding principles of the amalgamation process have been defined as:

- Balancing service levels with long-term cost,
- Joint decision making that is effective, adaptive, and based on honesty and integrity, and;
- Developing and implementing policies that are fact based, action focused, and achievable within a realistic and feasible timeframe.

The shared objectives are:

- Diversified and Resilient Economy: shared investment in strengthening the local economy;
- Integrated Policy Framework: aligning policies with shared growth objectives;
- Sustainable Service Delivery: more effective and efficient delivery of municipal services;
- Expanding Community Capacity: shared commitment to ongoing engagement with citizens, and;
- Responsive Local Governance: long-term and prioritized land and infrastructure planning.

The JFAC is intent on amalgamating, however, a final decision will not be made until all related topics have been reviewed thoroughly by the JFAC. If at any point it does not seem prudent to proceed, the amalgamation negotiations will conclude.

A third party, ***Maven Strategy***, was retained by the Towns in September of 2020 to manage the amalgamation process and facilitate negotiations.

AMALGAMATION PROCESS/TIMELINE:

Amalgamation is the process where two (or more) municipalities merge to become one. Reasons or rationale to do so are unique to each process. The amalgamation is negotiated between the communities. Under current legislation, the authority to amalgamate is provided under Division 5 of the Municipal Government Act (MGA).

The topics to be negotiated are listed below. For further description on what each topic entails, follow [here](#).

Mandatory Negotiation Topics:

1. Municipal Name
2. Municipal Boundaries
3. Municipal Status
4. Electoral Wards
5. Council Representation
6. Location of the Municipal Office
7. Proposed Incorporation Date
8. Annexation of Land to Achieve Contiguous Boundary
9. Other Matters

Transitional Matters:

These items range in anticipated timeframe for required action. Some topics will need to be decided prior to final application to Municipal Affairs and some items will be deferred to Council after the amalgamation completion.

1. Interim Council
2. Interim Chief Administrative Officer
3. First Election
4. 2021 General Municipal Election
5. Appointment of Returning Officer(s)
6. Ward Boundaries Review
7. Compensation to other Municipal Authorities
8. Financial Transition
9. Interim Tax Treatment
10. Tax Treatment (for previously annexed properties that have different tax considerations)
11. Authority to Impose Additional Tax (to service pre-amalgamation debt)
12. Assessment Matters
13. Employees and Labour Agreements
14. Bylaws and Resolutions of Existing Municipalities
15. Continuation of Emergency Services
16. Library Services
17. ICF Extension (specific to the Turner Valley/Black Diamond amalgamation)
18. Utilities (specific to the Turner Valley/Black Diamond amalgamation)
19. Westend Regional Sewage Services Commission (specific to the Turner Valley/Black Diamond amalgamation)

A preliminary timeline has been established for Black Diamond and Turner Valley to negotiate the mandatory items, as well as some of the transitional items which are required.

The Timeline is as Follows:

- **September 15, 2020:** Notification to the Minister of Municipal Affairs
- **September 2020 to August 2021:** Negotiation of the mandatory and transitional matters overviewed in the Municipal Government Act (MGA)
- Anticipated submission of the amalgamation report and application, if proceeding, to the Minister of Municipal Affairs: **September 2021**
- Anticipated Order in Council: **June 2022**
- Anticipated Incorporation date: **January 1, 2023**

Process Approach:

To ensure that all topics are reviewed thoroughly, four subcommittees have been established consisting of equal Council representation by both Towns and related administrative support from both Towns:

1. Finance Subcommittee
2. Public/Stakeholder Consultation Subcommittee:
3. Emergency Services Subcommittee
4. Procedure Subcommittee

Each subcommittee is responsible for reviewing all necessary information and making recommendations for their topics. Recommendations with supporting material will be brought forward from the subcommittees to JFAC for final decision-making.

Approximate Subcommittee Timeline (subject to change):

Committee	Approximate Timeline
Finance & Emergency Services Subcommittees	December 2020 – May 2021 Work plan generally includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • December: Confirmed scope • January – February: Compile information needed • March: Assess options • April – May: Provide information to public on options • May: Final recommendations determined with presentation of recommendations to the JFAC in June
Procedure Subcommittee	December 2020 – April 2021 Work plan generally includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • December: Confirmed scope • February: Final recommendations determined on topics not requiring significant information compiled - presentation of recommendations to JFAC in March • January – March: Compile information needed for specific topics • March – April: Provide information to public on options • April: Assess options, and make final recommendations - presentation of recommendations to the JFAC in May
Public/Stakeholder Consultation Subcommittee	December 2020 – June 2021 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Details provided on page 8

WHY CONSIDER AMALGAMATION?

Both Councils believe that success in one community is a success for the whole. As a result, Black Diamond and Turner Valley Councils feel it makes more sense to come together than to stay apart for many more specific reasons:

- There is a strong history of collaboration between the two Towns that has produced positive results. These positive results take a significant amount of intermunicipal coordination, dialogue, and in some cases duplication of effort. Now is the time to remove obstacles, streamline processes, achieve faster results, and strive to be as efficient and effective as possible in reaching shared goals.
- Provincial and Federal grants and funding will be reduced significantly in upcoming years. Through amalgamation and with a combined tax base, Black Diamond and Turner Valley will be able to maximize access to funding support and ultimately do more with the money received.
- Through amalgamation, there is an intent to continue to strengthen the area's economic development initiatives. A seamless approach will bolster local economic development with less duplication and direct competition. Both Councils want the communities to thrive in the short and long-term. Working together to ensure a healthy and diverse economy is key to making this a reality.
- Attracting the development industry is also important to the community's long-term sustainability. A united municipality will allow for comprehensive long-term and prioritized land and infrastructure planning.
- One municipality will provide efficiencies in roles and responsibilities, requiring only one CAO and one Council. This streamlines decision making, expedites timelines and provides a focused central approach.
- Until now, amalgamating would have created significantly more costs to policing. With the recent changes to the provincial funding model, this is no longer the case. Additional policing cost are now being downloaded to both municipalities regardless of amalgamation, but a population increase to over 5,000 would trigger a grant opportunity to offset any additional costs.
- A united municipality will create a single, larger entity providing a greater presence in representing the entire regional community, and a stronger unified voice in discussions with the provincial government, industry, and neighbouring municipalities.
- Where possible and where it makes sense economically, a more effective and efficient delivery of municipal services will be explored to ensure the level of service meets the expectations of the residents.

PAST COLLABORATION:

There is a strong history of collaboration between the two Towns that has produced positive results over the years. Black Diamond and Turner Valley are intricately linked in their day-to-day municipal dealings. Below are examples of how the communities currently operate in partnership:

- **Family and Community Support Services (FCSS) Committees**

In 2020, the Towns of Black Diamond and Turner Valley recognized that both municipalities were competing for much of the same FCSS work. Recognizing that the needs of both communities were very similar, the FCSS committee from each Town has taken steps to merge their respective committees, thereby reducing the overlap of administration, streamlining and clarifying the application processes for residents in need, and lessening the work required from its volunteer base.

- **Economic Development**

In May 2019, the Towns of Black Diamond and Turner Valley passed bylaws to establish an Intermunicipal Economic Development Committee (IEDC), comprised of two councillors from each Town and six members at large. The volunteers were recruited based on their expertise in the following areas:

- a strong business acumen and a keen desire to contribute to the economic enhancement of both communities;
- relevant experience as either a business owner or operator, and;
- solid understanding of tourism and its benefit to economic development.

The committee is currently implementing a joint marketing strategy for the region.

- **Regional Solid Waste Collection**

During the second half of 2020, the Towns of Black Diamond and Turner Valley partnered with the Town of Okotoks to regionalize garbage collection. The pilot project ended in January 2021 and was determined to be very successful. The three Towns have agreed to extend the program for an additional two years.

- **Fire**

Fire Service have reciprocal and mutual aid agreements that support working collaboratively together, including joint designation of Safety Codes powers. Currently, the Towns work together on fire responses when required depending on scale, complexity, and apparatus manpower requirements. When opportunities arise, the Towns also purchase equipment together. The Towns have similar bylaws and standards.

- **Emergency Management**

Both Towns are currently part of a regional mutual aid agreement that covers much of Southern Alberta. In addition, the Towns have similar bylaws, similar plans that address emergency management during a disaster and although typically the two departments don't interact unless called upon during an event, most events affect both communities so there is a large intent to support one another when able.

- **Water and Sewer Treatment**

Since 2013, Black Diamond and Turner Valley collaborate and equally cost share on the water treatment facility providing potable water to each Town. Each individual Town currently looks after its own distribution network.

Since 1994, the Towns collaborate and equally cost share on the wastewater treatment facility. Each municipality looks after its own collection network.

- **Facilities**

There are several facilities and services that the communities share because separately, the population may not warrant a single facility in each community. Together, the Towns have a reciprocal agreement that allows residents of both Towns to use the recreation facilities such as the pool in Turner Valley, the ice rink in Black Diamond, the library and recycling centre, just to name a few.

AMALGAMATION RISKS:

Although Councils see strong benefit to amalgamating, they are also aware that there is likely some risk. As such, there is commitment to a thorough review of all related amalgamation topics with the intent to clearly identify the benefits for the Towns, as well as any potential issues or risks. The information attached to the review process, as well as all decisions made by Councils, will be made transparent to the public and stakeholders.

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT APPROACH:

For public consultations, the MGA provides very simple requirements that must be completed as part of the amalgamation process. A plebiscite is not required; however, whatever methods of consultation are used must be documented. The amalgamation application must include: a description of the public consultation processes involved in the amalgamation negotiations, and a summary of the views expressed during the public consultation processes (regardless of whether they are positive/support, negative/oppose, or other).

Engagement Objectives:

Throughout the amalgamation process, communication will be concise, clear and transparent. Engagement/communication outreach will inform all stakeholders in a timely and proactive manner, with a focus on:

- The amalgamation process (what is happening, why, when and how),
- Topics stakeholders will have input on, and;
- How that input will/did influence associated decisions.

The process will be highly educative on the amalgamation topics being negotiated. Related information, in an easy-to-understand format, will be made available to the public.

Communication messaging and timing will be consistent between the two towns through the entirety of the amalgamation process.

General Engagement Approach:

Due to current circumstances with COVID-19, most engagement efforts will be online. If and when an in-person event can be accommodated, feasibility and purpose will be assessed at that time. With many unknowns and situations changing daily, it will be challenging to plan for in-person events. However, if an in-person event was to occur, it would most likely be in the final stages of the project -- possibly an in-person wrap up engagement event.

As part of the International Association of [Public Participation \(IAP2\) Engagement Spectrum](#), the amalgamation engagement will largely be at the “*Inform*” level (to provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the topic, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions). Comprehensive information will be distributed as part of a stakeholder education campaign as early as it is available – educating the public on the process, content and decisions in real time.

There will also be select engagement points with stakeholders at both the “*Consult*” (to obtain public feedback on analysis and/or decisions) and “*Involve*” levels (to work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered).

Stakeholders:

The Municipal Affairs public consultation requirements for amalgamation state that Black Diamond and Turner Valley will jointly provide notice to all local authorities having jurisdiction to operate or provide services in our area. Additional stakeholders have been identified to meet the Towns’ objectives of transparent engagement. The stakeholders have been organized into the following categories:

- Black Diamond and Turner Valley Community/Residents
- Adjacent and/or Nearby Municipalities
- Third Party Utilities/Services
- Community Groups
- Local Businesses
- Regional Services

Public and Stakeholder Input Opportunities:

Throughout the entirety of the process, residents (and all impacted stakeholders) will have on-line access to project information (*Inform*) and the opportunity to provide feedback and ask questions on all topics.

Additionally, there will be:

- *Activities*: Two specific engagement activities with the intent to seek input (*Involve/Consult*), and
- *Events*: Two public events (planned to be on-line unless timing for final event permits in-person). One event will be held early in the process, while the other will be a final stage event.

Stakeholder groups, other than the public, will receive a letter informing them of the intent to amalgamate, including a fact sheet that provides an overview of the process, opportunity to provide input and timeline with a link to the municipal website amalgamation pages, and a request to provide their specific feedback/questions within 30 days.

The two topics that the public will have direct input on the outcome are:

- the Municipality's new name, and;
- whether a ward or general election system is appropriate.

Communication Tools:

The best communication tool(s) will be chosen specifically for each individual engagement but may include:

- Regular website updates, a dedicated amalgamation page that contains updates after each JFAC meeting
- Q&A section on website
- Public Information Paper (this document that provides stakeholders with all relevant information on amalgamation process, content and decisions, updated regularly)
- Bold (street-side) and electric signs
- Social media (Facebook)
- Electronic community newsletter
- Posters in key community locations
- Utility bill mailouts
- Local media including radio and print

Approximate Engagement Timeline (subject to change):

Activity/Event	Approximate Timeline
Kick-off engagement	Mid February, 2021
Letters to stakeholders	March, 2021
Public on-line event #1	March 30 & April 1, 2021
Activity #1 (electoral wards or general)	June, 2021
Activity #2 (name)	June, 2021
Public On-line event #2	July, 2021

Engagement Reporting:

Reporting is a critical component for the amalgamation process and will be included in the final report to Municipal Affairs. All comments, regardless of the activity and tool, will be collected and summarized in the *What We Heard Reports* (WWHRs).

- WWHRs will document in detail:
 - Q&As (from the Towns' websites and from the amalgamation events)
 - Amalgamation event and activity input/comments (verbal and written)
 - Additional comments collected by project team/committee members/administration (verbal and written), if appropriate

WWHRs will be compiled after each activity/event and will include all other stakeholder input to date (website, etc.). A final WWHR containing all stakeholder input will be produced once engagement is complete.

This report will also include a What We Did (WWD) section that overviews how stakeholder input impacted JFAC decisions that were/are being made. WWHRs are made public and will be posted on the website on a regular basis.

After each event, links to these reports will be found here:

- [What We Heard Report](#)

NEGOTIATION TOPIC INFORMATION UPDATES:

As information is generated by Town administrations, each subcommittee (finance, public/stakeholder consultation, emergency services, procedures) will provide updates on the negotiation topics. These overviews of data and material will be made available to the public through this section.

Check here for updates throughout the amalgamation process.

- *Information to be added*

DECISIONS MADE:

The JFAC has negotiated the following topics and formal motions were made to include them in the potential amalgamation application to the Minister. Moving forward, as decisions are made, they will be updated here.

Decisions made on November 19, 2020:

1. Municipal Status: the new municipality will be a Town. This is consistent with the Municipal Government Act's definition for Town.
2. Incorporation Date: the new municipality will be incorporated on January 1, 2023.
3. Elected Officials Representation: the new municipality will be represented by seven (7) elected officials. Most municipalities, especially Towns, have seven (7) elected officials.
4. Municipal Boundaries: the current boundaries of both Towns will form the proposed municipal boundaries.
5. Contiguous Border: there currently is a contiguous border and so no further changes are required.
6. Municipal Office: all current municipal buildings in both Towns will remain active, but the main municipal office will be in Black Diamond at: 301 Centre Avenue West.

Decisions made on March 10, 2021:

7. Bylaws and Resolutions of Existing Municipalities:
 - a) The municipalities will defer updating the bylaws and resolutions until the post-amalgamation timeframe.
 - b) JFAC agreed to direct administration to inventory bylaws and resolutions to determine priorities for alignment in the pre-amalgamation timeframe and further the timeline for this task will be dependent on administration capacity but is expected to be complete by September 2021.
8. First Election: the first election for the amalgamated municipality would occur in Q4 of 2022.
9. Interim Council: If the first election is held in Q4 2022, no interim council will be required.
10. Intermunicipal Collaboration Framework (ICF) Extension: the application will include confirmation that the ICF deadline has been previously extended until April 1, 2022, and if the amalgamation application is submitted, the Towns will request an adjusted deadline for an ICF between the new municipality and Foothills County.

Decisions made on May 12, 2021:

11. Emergency Services Level of Services: JFAC agreed to include in the amalgamation application report that the level of service will be maintained for three branches of Emergency Services which includes Fire, Emergency Management and Community Peace Officers in both Black Diamond and Turner Valley until incorporation date and maintain service levels until such time as the new CAO and the new Council determines the service levels and organizational structure.
12. Returning Officer: JFAC agreed to recommend in the amalgamation application report that the current Returning Officer of Black Diamond, Verna Staples will act as the Returning Officer for the Q4 2022 election of council for the newly amalgamated municipality.
13. Staffing: JFAC agreed to include in the amalgamation application report that all employees at the time of amalgamation will become employees of the new municipality to ensure uninterrupted service delivery until such time as the CAO, in conjunction with the Council elected in 2022, have determined service levels and organizational structure.
14. First Election: JFAC agreed to request the Procedure Subcommittee consider a date of the 2022 election to be recommended in the amalgamation application report.

SUMMARY:

This paper serves as an overview of the entire amalgamation process and acts as one point of reference for information as it evolves and becomes available. Please check back regularly for updates.

Contact Information:

Residents may review all material posted on the websites by visiting the Town of Black Diamond at www.Town.blackdiamond.ab.ca or the Town of Turner Valley at www.turnervalley.ca.

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