



**Village of Rycroft  
Request for Decision**

**Council Meeting Date: August 2, 2023**

**TOPIC:** Central Peace Signal Newspaper Subscriptions

**CAO RECOMMENDATION:** That Council receive the report on the Central Peace Newspaper subscriptions for information.

**BACKGROUND:** At the July 18, 2023 Regular Meeting of Council, Council approved a motion to request the Central Peace Signal newspaper representative to appear as a delegation so that Council can review the product and service level the residents are receiving from the weekly publication.

In contacting the newspaper representative, he advised that he was unavailable to attend the meeting. However, he did share some information that he would like Council to be aware of. He noted that he does take an economic loss on the service delivery to the Village, and all of the G5 circulation area. He added that if Council would like to cancel the subscription agreement, he is fine with that because his expenses do outweigh his revenue. He continues to follow the model that was set up by the previous owner when he bought the company in 2018, and says *“Newspaper-subscription agreements, such as the one The Signal has in place with the Village, are not meant to make money. Newspapers do not make money selling subscriptions. Subscription agreements are meant to grow a subscriber base, and, with that, create potential advertising opportunities.”* He added that he keeps the current model as because the newspapers are addressed, it does provide proof of the papers’ circulation numbers, and allows him to retain membership in the Alberta Weekly Newspaper Association, which enables him to attract more advertising dollars. He stated that if the subscription agreement is ended, then the Village will save money, and he will save more.

Why we should keep our newspaper subscription:

- We have a free weekly half page that is a quality communication tool with which we can effectively reach ratepayers with any message we send.
- Every resident gets the paper delivered for free to remain updated on what is happening in the region
- With this tool, as long as we advertise, no one can say they did not know about any event that was happening in the Region
- We use it for our advertising our events, development permits, tax notice deadlines, and any other notices we are required to advertise through legislation, as part of the subscription cost
- ~+90% of the papers delivered to Rycroft mailboxes do leave the post office (Canada Post advises).

Implications of cancelling the subscription:

- If we cancel our subscription support, any interested residents will have to purchase their own paper, which would be a reduction in resident services. Currently the newspaper editor states that usually between 10-15 newspapers are sold at the Co-op Grocery Store each week - but most people have a free paper in their post office box
- If we cancel our subscription, and other G5 communities do also, there is a risk of losing this regional communication tool. If the owner cannot sell and stops the service, will the service be gone for an extended period, or forever?
- Legislative implications as below: Council would have to pass a new advertising bylaw. All of our key advertising for anything of interest or required through legislation would now be delivered through the Village Facebook page and the Village Webpage. Those that do not have those 2 options would have to come check the Village office bulletin board for important updates
- Council may have to answer to some public members as to their reasoning for 1. Not supplying the free paper as they always have, and 2. Why they would eliminate this service from the Village and potentially the region.

## IMPLICATION OF DECISION

**FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:** The cost to print 248 copies for Rycroft (2022 number) and distribute each one as an addressed mail for 52 weeks (plus we bought some promotional support ads) for 2023 was \$7,889 to the Village. The cost of our half page weekly ad to say anything we want is included in this cost.

If we did not have this option, a half page ad costs \$461/week. As we do now, we would have to plan to advertise whatever we wanted, and a half page ad every week for 52 weeks would cost us \$23,972. If we bought an ad every other week, it would cost \$11,986. Right now, it costs \$7,889, and everyone gets a free paper.

The cost to mail monthly addressed utility bills in the Village is ~\$230 just for postage.

The cost to do a general one page unaddressed mailout to every mailbox (~470) in the Village is ~\$80.

### **POLICY AND/OR LEGISLATIVE IMPLICATIONS:**

#### ***Municipal Government Act***

##### *Requirements for advertising*

*606(1) The requirements of this section apply when this or another enactment requires a bylaw, resolution, meeting, public hearing or something else to be advertised by a municipality, unless this or another enactment specifies otherwise.*

*(2) Notice of the bylaw, resolution, meeting, public hearing or other thing must be*

*(a) published at least once a week for 2 consecutive weeks in at least one newspaper or other publication circulating in the area to which the proposed bylaw, resolution or other thing relates, or in which the meeting or hearing is to be held,*

*(b) mailed or delivered to every residence in the area to which the proposed bylaw, resolution or other thing relates, or in which the meeting or hearing is to be held, or*

(c) given by a method provided for in a bylaw under section 606.1.

*Advertisement bylaw*

606.1(1) A council may by bylaw provide for one or more methods, which may include electronic means, for advertising proposed bylaws, resolutions, meetings, public hearings and other things referred to in section 606.

(2) Before making a bylaw under subsection (1), council must be satisfied that the method the bylaw would provide for is likely to bring proposed bylaws, resolutions, meetings, public hearings and other things advertised by that method to the attention of substantially all residents in the area to which the bylaw, resolution or other thing relates or in which the meeting or hearing is to be held.

(3) Council must conduct a public hearing before making a bylaw under subsection (1).

**ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS:**

- Council could cancel the newspaper subscription immediately
- Council could cancel the newspaper subscription at the end of 2023
- Council could motion to postpone the discussion to the next meeting to give Council members time to review the service with the community prior to deciding

**ATTACHMENTS:** None

Peter Thomas

Chief Administrative Officer

July 27, 2023

Date