



Town of Athabasca

Gateway to the Great New North

February 2026 Town News and Views Volume 21, Issue 1

The Town of Athabasca respectfully acknowledges that we are meeting on Treaty 6 and Treaty 8 territory, home to the First People living on Turtle Island, and we honour all of the First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples who have lived, traveled, and gathered on these lands for thousands of years. We commit to sharing a path forward of respect, learning, and opportunity.

Final Issue of Town Newsletter

In early December, Gerry T. Bulmer, writer/editor for the Town newsletter for the past 20 years, gave notice that the February 2026 edition would be his last, that it was time for him to retire. “Working with the Town on this project has truly been a highlight of my writing career,” said Gerry.

After receiving word of this, Town Council decided it would be a good time to break away from a “traditional” newsletter format and, instead, place greater emphasis on other forms of communication, for example, the [Town website](#), local media, the [Alertable](#) app, [Facebook](#), and other means. *The February 2026 edition of the Town newsletter will be the last in this format.*

The Town thanks Gerry for his 20 years of dedication as our newsletter writing contractor and wishes him well in retirement.

Snow Removal Heroes

Many thanks to those who were patient while Town crews expended near super-human effort to clear streets and walkways following the record dumps of snow we had this winter. Although the Town strives for excellence in providing services to our community, we are still subject to the whims of nature, budgetary constraints, and limitations of human and mechanical endurance.

Gratitude and sincere appreciation go out to staff from Public Works, Utilities, and local contractors for their snow removal efforts through December and January. A crew of less than 10 staff members worked in shifts from about 3:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., sometimes going as many as 17 hours a day or more! They followed a route plan focusing on areas of town section by section, moving as quickly and efficiently as the conditions allowed. This, on top of their regular duties! Amazing effort by an amazing team. Thank you so very much to each of you.

Residents can help: Property owners must keep the public walk adjacent to their property cleared (do not shovel it onto the street), and keep the space around any fire hydrants in front of their property clear of snow and other obstructions (two meters on each side and in front of the hydrant, and one meter at the back). To read the info on fire hydrants, see Town [Utility Bylaw 001-2019](#).

Did You Know? CBC News featured Athabasca recently!

YouTube: [Warm fuzzy turkey feeling in northern Alberta town](#)

YouTube: [Inside the Get Lit Romance Book Club](#)

Your New Town Council Team!

When the results were confirmed following the 2025 Municipal Election this past October, the six candidates in the running for Town Council were acclaimed, including two new candidates who joined the Council team, replacing two former councillors who chose not to run in this election.

Robert Balay successfully won the Mayor’s seat, returning for his second term as Mayor.

Also returning to Council for another term are Councillors Ida Edwards, David (Dave) Pacholok, Darlene Reimer, and Edith (Edie) Yuill.

Newly welcomed to Council for this term are Councillors David Neufeld and Colleen Powell. Colleen is coming out of retirement after having served terms in both the mayor and councillor positions in past years.

Brief profiles of each councillor are included in this edition of the Town newsletter and will be posted on the [Town website](#). Read on to get to know your new Town Council a little better . . .



Mayor Robert Balay

Robert ran for Council in 2017, serving his first term as a Town Councillor. He successfully campaigned for the Mayor’s position in 2021, and then again in 2025.

Coming from a farming background, Robert is a lifelong resident of the Athabasca region. He and his family moved into the Town of Athabasca in 1999.

Robert has over 34 years experience in public service working for the Town. He served as Public Works and Utilities Foreman, Superintendent of Public Works and Utilities, and as Manager and CAO of the Athabasca Regional Multiplex Society. During those years, he served under 13 different Town and County Councils.

Having attained a vast amount of valuable experience in those positions, and with this unique combination of experience and proven community leadership, he will continue to serve the town well as Mayor. His goal is to help make Athabasca a great place to live, raise a family, own a business or retire!

Contact Robert at mayorbalay@athabasca.ca

Councillor Biographies continued on Page 2 . . .



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Councillor Ida Edwards: Athabasca born and raised, Ida appreciates and enjoys life in a small town along with the pleasure of exploring the region's communities, boreal forest, and lakes. With two consecutive terms on Town Council completed, she is now serving her third term with a firm belief in the potential of the town to grow and thrive.

Through her work on municipal and regional committees, Ida shares strong skills in governance, communication, collaboration, and long-term planning to help foster sustainability in rural communities.

Committed to lifelong learning, she participates in Toastmasters International leadership training programs, called *Pathways*, which inform her committee work and the decision-making process.

Bringing a unique combination of creative problem-solving, analytical thinking, and operational management to public service, Ida is committed to listening to residents, identifying community needs, and working collaboratively to build a resilient and inclusive future for Athabasca.

Contact Ida at councilloredwards@athabasca.ca



Councillor David Neufeld: David is a dedicated and community-driven individual, with a deep connection to the region and a strong passion for local governance. He has spent many years actively involved in various community initiatives. His background includes business experience, volunteer work and pastoral leadership at Aspen Ridge Christian Fellowship. David's approach to leadership emphasizes serving, collaboration, transparency, and long-term sustainable growth, ensuring that all voices are heard in decision-making processes.

Throughout his career, David has demonstrated a clear commitment to enhancing public services, fostering economic development, and supporting local businesses, always aiming to balance the needs of residents with responsible fiscal management. As a council member, he is eager to champion projects that create lasting benefits for the community. David's goal is to work alongside fellow councillors and residents to build a future where Athabasca remains a great place to live, work, and raise a family.

Contact David councillorneufeld@athabasca.ca



Councillor David (Dave) Pacholok: Returning as a third-term councillor, Dave is pleased to be a member of the 2025-2029 Town Council team.

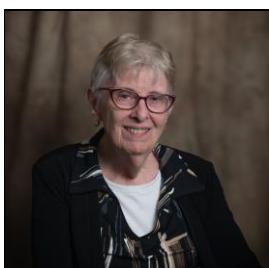
With the benefit of the experience gained in his prior eight years on Council, he looks forward to having some of the previous Council initiatives come to fruition.

A lifelong resident of Athabasca, he has developed a sincere appreciation for the many features and qualities that the town and the region have to offer to both residents and visitors.

Bringing to Council an extensive background in private business and community volunteering, Dave believes that Athabasca is a community with much potential and plans to work diligently to achieve positive results for all businesses and residents.

A combination of enthusiasm, along with valuable insight and knowledge from his past two terms on Council, well-equip Dave to pursue his commitment to Athabasca Town Council.

Contact Dave at councillorpacholok@athabasca.ca



Councillor Colleen Powell: Colleen was first elected to Council in 1998, serving four terms as a councillor and two as mayor. She has retired twice and plans to retire again after this term. During her time, the Riverfront Park and the Multiplex were built and a number of new businesses were welcomed to Town.

Colleen was born and raised in Calgary. After earning a teaching degree, she joined CUSO, volunteered in Ghana and returned to Canada to do a masters degree in political science. Here she met Rick and they married in 1973.

They moved to Athabasca County in 1985, and into town in 1992. Colleen worked as a tutor at Athabasca University for a few years and later taught at EPC. In 1997 she became the executive director of the Athabasca University Faculty Association, and retired in 2015. Sadly, Rick passed away in 2023.

Colleen plans to advocate for more resources to help maintain the Town's ability to offer a high level of services and create a place where everyone can thrive.

Contact Colleen at councillorpowell@athabasca.ca



Councillor Darlene Reimer: Darlene joined Council in Feb. 2023 after a by-election and returned to Council after the 2025 Municipal Election. She is grateful for the chance to serve the community she has called home since 2010. Athabasca has given her friendship, belonging, and a place to grow. Her Council role is an opportunity to give back.

With 35 years of experience in banking and financial services – from four provinces and two territories – Darlene brings practical skills & strong conflict-resolution abilities to her work on Council. She stays involved in the

community through the Rotary Club, has worked with the Chamber of Commerce and the Magnificent River Rats Festival Society, and has served as a mentor for several years with the Athabasca Mentorship Program. She also contributes her experience by serving on various local and regional boards, as appointed by Council.

Darlene is passionate about helping build Athabasca where families thrive, neighbours feel connected, and people feel proud to call home.

Contact Darlene at councillorreimer@athabasca.ca



Councillor Edith (Edie) Yuill: Edie moved to Athabasca in 2013 to finish a 40-year career with Alberta Transportation; she retired on June 30, 2021.

Over the course of her career, she received prestigious awards such as two *Premiers Awards of Excellence* plus an *Above and Beyond the Call of Duty* award and many other awards of excellence. Additionally, she has a certificate in Business Administration and various other certificates for training achievements.

Prior to this past term on Athabasca Town Council, she

served two terms on Barrhead Town Council and gained valuable experience serving on a variety of groups and organizations in that community and provincially.

Before moving to Athabasca, Edie passed through the community many times and became enamoured with the scenery, the wildlife and the people she met.

Edie looks forward to once again working with Mayor Balay and fellow councillors to create a cohesive team and serve the community to the best of her ability.

Contact Edie at councilloryuill@athabasca.ca