

MEDICINE HAT NEWS

HOMETOWN NEWS

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City's new CAO forced to hit ground running

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Ann Mitchell takes on the new city manager role just as City Hall begins what is billed as one of the busiest years in recent memory to reset its agenda.

Economic development, a two-headed hydrogen and carbon-capture industrial attraction strategy, coupled with a workforce retention and attraction strategy.

A two-year exercise in prioritizing "smart growth" via a collaboration with the Strong Towns municipal advocacy group began the day after she took over on Feb. 6.

She'll attend just her second city council meeting tonight where council is expected to green-light a study on creating a regional water commission.

That's on top of leading administration on several other reviews, and implementing council strategic priorities targeting communications with citizens and improving morale at city hall.

"There does seem to be a disconnect between the community and city hall, and I really want to look to change that," she told the *News*.

"There's a lot that's happened in the last few years: financially fit (budget process), accelerated financially fit, the pandemic, and I do believe that's affected our staff and we need to make a better space internally (at the city).

"We can interact and act with community groups in a more collaborative way. That sounds very fluffy and what not, but I'm strong on regional collaboration and building relationships, and that's one of the reasons, I believe, I'm here."

Mitchell has worked in municipal government for 27 years, spending the past 18 as a CAO, following in the footsteps of her father and grandfather, who were both municipal officials.

"It's the family business, I guess," she said.

Mitchell started her career with the City of Sault Ste. Marie after growing up in Northern Ontario, then as manager of several rural municipalities before arriving in Alberta. She also co-hosts a podcast for civic officials titled the "Local Government Cafe."

Mitchell, 57, moved the city in early 2023 from Lethbridge County, after she was hired as the permanent replacement.

She said she's getting acquainted with the city, checking out the physical and social landscape, and feels the city is in good position, but with room to improve.

"The biggest priority is economic development, critically," she said. "Everyone in this city knows, Invest Medicine Hat is in a holding pattern right now. I've been working on that, and hopefully we'll get things sorted out in the next month.

"I've spent some time exploring that with stakehold-



NEWS PHOTO
COLLIN GALLANT

Ann Mitchell, the City of Medicine Hat's new chief administrative officer, attends the annual State of the City luncheon on Jan. 24. The recent manager of Lethbridge County officially began her position with the city on Feb. 6.

ers," she said, also citing council strategic priorities, set in mid-2022.

"There's work to do on that as well, but also, making sure that as a bureaucracy, that we are working in a way that's effective for the community."

Mitchell takes over from interim manager Glen Feltham, who held the position for most of 2022 after former CAO Bob Nicolay retired early.

That left 13 months between permanent city managers, and there is a backlog of projects, and in some cases, work already midstream.

One item is the Strong Towns two-year pilot project, which was unveiled this month, but has raised ques-

tions about its purpose.

"There's a lot of confusion and we've talked about that internally," said Mitchell, stating the public may see the group as a consultant that will produce a report with recommendations about "sustainable" finance and operations.

"It's a bit of a mind shift to look at things in a more innovative way," she said.

"It's a mentorship, they're not coming in telling us what to do. We're saying, 'Let's look at applying some of these (cost-benefit) principles to see how we can improve our city.'"

In 2023, the city will also produce an environmental roadmap, continue in the first year of the Strong Towns pilot

described as a study in "sustainability," and an update to transportation masterplan. This week council will consider studying the potential of a regional water commission.

A new iteration of the parks and recreation masterplan, involving facilities, will be back before committee soon.

This week, council is expected to green-light a study toward regionalizing water and sewer delivery with Redcliff and Cypress County.

In 2020, the three neighbouring municipalities signed onto a joint "intermunicipal co-operation" framework to discuss areas of common interest, but little has come forward from the regular meetings of a joint committee.

Artists, creators invited to apply for The Sugar Mama series

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An upcoming documentary series is offering artists from across Alberta the chance of a lifetime, says Medicine Hat-born consulting producer Andrew Jenkins, ahead of the Feb. 28 casting deadline.

Set to film in Alberta this spring, The Sugar Mama series will follow 12 artists from a variety of disciplines as they embark on a two-week creative retreat financed by an anonymous, art-loving donor known only as 'The Sugar Mama.'

While The Sugar Mama will gift one lucky participant \$100,000 at the end of the retreat to put toward their given creative pursuit, Jenkins says the series' primary focus is giving, gratitude and growth, rather than competition.

"We hope that it's a journey of personal and professional growth and development," Jenkins told the *News*. "These 12 creatives will gain profile and exposure, they will receive mentorship and, sharing this experience together (within) a network of support, they will

get the opportunity to develop a community between them.

"Our hope is some of them can even overcome struggles and adversity that they're all in, and develop resilience and possibly even transformation."

Jenkins says the theme was inspired by The Sugar Mama's own life. While the The Sugar Mama, whose identity may be revealed throughout the series, is described as being a 'successful Métis business owner' and 'matron of the arts,' she has faced adversity, having once been nearly \$500,000 in debt following a divorce.

"After overcoming hardship, my life took a wonderful turn," The Sugar Mama said in a statement. "I absolutely love working with the next generations of creatives who have helped me regain my spirit. I'm excited to see who will join us on this journey."

Casting is open until Feb. 28, with applications found online at sugarmama.tv/casting.

Applicants must be 18 years or older, must reside in Alberta and must be a Canadian citizen or permanent resident.

All interested creatives are



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Alberta's creators are invited to apply to become part of the cast of an upcoming documentary series titled The Sugar Mama.

encouraged to apply, including those belonging to underrepresented communities, like the 2SLGBTQ+ and/or BIPOC communities.

While there's no guarantee creatives from Medicine Hat or the southeast region will be included in the final cast, Jenkins says, regardless, he is glad to be involved in a series which showcases and celebrates talented individuals who reside in his home province.

"I'm really excited to have

the opportunity to participate in this," said Jenkins, who was born in Medicine Hat and raised on a farm near Bow Island. "There's a lot of really talented people in Alberta, doing some really remarkable things ... So, I'm excited to share this with my friends and family and the locals in Medicine Hat."

A time frame has not yet been set for the series' release, but updates can be found on The Sugar Mama's Instagram, TikTok or LinkedIn accounts.

Shrove Tuesday: It's more than just a pancake dinner

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Rev. Dave Pollard is a simple man when it comes to his pancakes — a little bit of butter, pour on some Canadian maple syrup and he's as happy as can be. That's what his go-to will be for tonight during Fifth Avenue Memorial United Church and Westminster United Church's joint pancake dinner.

The dinner gets underway at 5 p.m. at Westminster and is free with donation.

Shrove Tuesday, or Pancake Tuesday as it's also known, is celebrated in many countries around the world with schools cooking up flapjacks for kids and restaurants offering deals

on the breakfast delight. But there is more to the day than choosing which topping works best.

The Christian festival of Shrove Tuesday falls on the Tuesday before the beginning of Lent, a period of around six weeks leading up to Easter. Pollard says the day originates from the feast of Passover when Jews were in slavery in Egypt and Moses led them out into the wilderness. They had this experience of what they called Passover. Before leaving Egypt, they were commanded by God and Exodus to eat a meal of roasted lamb, and unleavened bread.

He says the idea was to get rid of all of their goods before the long journey with the

feast. That has now become the final day before Lent for people to enjoy all their luxuries before adapting and giving something up.

"It's kind of one last blow-out before the asceticism of Lent," Pollard said. "It harkens back a little bit to Jewish traditions as well as Christian traditions. Whether it's Mardi Gras, fat Tuesday, New Orleans, the parade, that sort of thing, it's that penultimate thing we do before we give things up for Lent."

Giving things up for Lent generally revolves around pleasures like sweets, going on social media or that last bowl of ice cream before bed — always giving something up.

While Pollard says he hasn't

decided what he will be doing for Lent, he encourages people consider doing something for less, instead of, say, just giving up watching hockey.

"Add a time of spiritual practice to take 10 minutes in the day to meditate, maybe add a good deed you can do like pay it forward in the drive-thru, that sort of thing," Pollard said. "It's almost like subtraction by addition, if you take that time to nurture your fate, if you deliberately every day take 10 minutes to sit, and if you go through the drive-thru, buy a coffee for someone else, extended random acts of kindness out in the community, we also encourage those kinds of practices, too."

PHOTO RADAR

For Thursday, February 21
..... MH Christian School
..... Ross Glen Drive
..... Parkview Drive

WASTE REMOVAL

TODAY'S GARBAGE PICKUP
WILL BE IN
..... Zone 5

JACKPOT

Friday's Pick 3..... 104
Saturday's Pick 3..... 397
Sunday's Pick 3..... 423
Monday's Pick 3..... N/A

Friday's LottoMax numbers were

..10, 12, 23, 26, 39, 41 and 45
Bonus number..... 42
Extra: 5105001

Friday's Western LottoMax numbers were

....7, 10, 12, 19, 33, 35 and 44
Bonus number..... 30

Saturday's Lotto 6-49 numbers were

.....3, 5, 7, 10, 26 and 39
Bonus number..... 22
Extra: 1621853

Saturday's Western Lotto 6-49 numbers were

.....2, 6, 20, 33, 42 and 44
Bonus number..... 38

Online Poll

TODAY'S QUESTION
Did you do anything Monday in recognition of Family Day?

- Yes
- No

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YESTERDAY'S RESULTS
Are you surprised at the results of the Emergencies Act review, which says its invocation was justified?

Yes 24%
No 76%