

ESTD 1902

JOHNNY'S STORE

NAMAO ALTA

October 24, 2023
Julie-Ann McNeilly
Co-Owner, Johnny's Store

Appeal to Council

- As a condition of using the existing parking lot, which is situated on County land in front of our store in Namao, the County has requested an Off-Site Parking Survey.
- The Survey is to be conducted by a qualified professional (e.g., engineer) outlining size, gradients, elevations, drainage, etc. of this parking lot on County land.
- The cost of retaining a qualified professional to complete the report is approximately \$9000.
- We are a small, family-owned new business, and this cost would be difficult for us to manage along with the other costs of opening a new business.
- Furthermore, we are opening our historical general store at a time when there are higher-for-longer interest rates, and the economic outlook is uncertain.
- **Our ask:** To have this parking survey requirement waived so that we can save this cost and continue working to open our store in a timely manner.



Who We Are

- Our family has been in Alberta for many generations, and we are proud of our contributions to and legacy in this province.
- The Namao store, known as Johnny's Store since 1949, has been the heart of Namao, AB since established in 1902.
- The store has been in the McNeilly family since our Grandfather's brother, "Uncle Red" became the proprietor in 1931.
- Our Grandparents purchased from Uncle Red in 1949.
- Johnny's Store has been operational over the years but fell into disrepair in the last decade. It needs significant upgrades to bring it to its former glory.
- After our Father's passing in 2020, the store and land transferred to Julie-Ann & Brendan McNeilly's ownership in 2021.



Our Goals

Since we acquired ownership of the family store in 2021, we're working to:

- Reopen Johnny's Store for Albertans to once again enjoy a piece of history at this 121-year-old general store.
- Conduct careful restoration work to ensure character and history are preserved.
- Provide a diverse business hub for meaningful community connections and local partnerships.
- Produce a business model that benefits and encourages future growth and expansion within the community.
- Create jobs and revenue for the County.
- Continue the McNeilly family legacy of Johnny's Store, a historical and beloved landmark in Sturgeon County.



Current Situation

- The parking lot in front of Johnny's Store is not just important to Johnny's Store – it's a public asset that is used by residents, businesses, church-goers, students and community groups in the area.
- The parking lot provides an important access point to these groups, who in-turn provide economic, social, educational and other community opportunities to County residents.



Current Situation Cont.

- Johnny's Store has used this shared space without any concerns from residents, business or the County.
- This land has been used by the store for over 120 years – our first customers parked their horse and carriage here when visiting!
- We are seeking approval to continue using this County land for parking at Johnny's Store, without the requirement to complete the Offsite Parking Survey.
- While we do not own it, we have long been responsible stewards of this land and have taken good care of it for decades.



Supporting Considerations

- Understanding that while the County may be interested in having a deeper understanding of the condition of the parking lot, and the submission of our business license application is a good opportunity for the County to ask for it, we are not aware of the purpose of the Survey beyond information for the County.
 - A costly Survey has not historically been required for the use of this public space. All previous tenants/operators of our buildings have never had to apply for any surveys.
 - No changes are being proposed on the land by the County (e.g., for development) or for the purposes of our business.
 - There would be no changes to the use of this land by the community at-large. It would continue to be used for parking.
- Given that we are not the only users of the shared public asset, it is unreasonable for us to assume the full cost of the Survey.
- We would continue to accept the duties and responsibilities of using the land, as we have done for over 100 years.



Questions?



Thank You

