

Mayor's Blog - February 2016

February 1

Tomorrow your Council begins budget deliberations. This is not always a happy experience as so many ideas and projects are not possible because of financial limitations. People often comment that they would not worry about a tax increase to cover their particular project - but forget that many others are telling us the same thing. This is a very open meeting and I encourage you to attend. Your ideas and suggestions will be very helpful and appreciated.

February 3

Work continues on the Township Budget. I think of this as the most difficult, discouraging time of the year as there is so much that needs to be done but so many financial restraints. I was at a meeting recently where someone commented that the group was not as lucky as governments who could just cover expenses by "raising taxes". I can tell you it is most definitely not that easy and members of Zorra Council struggle with the decisions each year.

In the evening I attended the meeting at Beachville regarding planning issues. I was very impressed with the way the County Planning Department presented their information. They made a very real effort to present the information clearly and concisely and made a real effort to answer all questions raised.

February 6

I attended the fundraiser for Camp Tanner. It was a great opportunity for people from all over Oxford County to support financially a project that does so much good for the youth in our community.

February 9

Zorra Council - One issue of interest was the discussion regarding Grant Requests. It appears that the Treasurer spends a great deal of time chasing down groups who have received grants in the past. I think this has to end. If groups are in need of financial support - and I am sure there are many - in future they will have to make it their business to get their applications and supporting documentation submitted on time. There will be a cut-off date and only those received will be considered. The schedule for the implementation of the Strategic Plan was discussed and several tentative dates suggested. Work continued on the budget for 2016.

Bryan Smith spoke to us about the upcoming TrashapalooZaha to be held at the EZCC on April 6. This is really a giant free swap meet. Bring whatever reusable items you wish to dispose of, and if you wish - take home someone else's items you can use....all at no cost to anyone. As well a truck will be on the grounds to pick up any electronic items you wish to get rid of. They will be taken to Thamesford to the Lion's Collection event that last year collected tons of material that they sold to businesses who dismantle the items and save reusable parts. This is yet another win/win event for our community.

There were many other items of interest on the agenda: Fire Chief's request for permission to purchase budget items now while prices are at their best; dust suppressant and gravel tenders; Thamesford Pool Lifeguard Training reimbursement; Strategic Plan Implementation schedule;

etc. Council has been working on the 2016 budget so grant requests were reviewed. You might check the minutes when they are published for more details about these and other issues. As always your input is encouraged.

The next day County Council met. I learned that the new Fire Communications System is ready for use except for the work needed on the communications tower in Drumbo. I have been assured that this work will be tendered shortly and is expected to be completed in April. Also an electric charging station for cars is to be installed in Thamesford on the Library property. I am encouraging the committee to include Embro on the next list. Stratford continues to advertise County Road 6 as the direct route to the city from the 401 - from either the east or the west and the tourist traffic through the village is especially heavy for the six months that the Shakespearean Festival is active. I believe there will be many people wanting to make use of this service. There is also the hope that if people stop in Thamesford or Embro to charge their vehicles they may visit some of the businesses in the area.

February 15

Just a little bit of information first. Since the beginning of the new Waste Management contract I have been asked many times about "plastic film" which is now recyclable. Usually I was not sure if the item asked about was recyclable so had to contact the Department for clarification. Last week I happened to be talking with a Staff member who made it all very simple for me. "If it will stretch it is plastic film and can go with recycling." Just remember you cannot add the materials loosely in the container as they will easily fly out of the truck. Bag them together in a plastic film bag - grocery bags work fine. When it is full, tie it shut and put into the recycling box. I have found I have much less garbage now that this material is collectable and I urge you to begin collecting it.

I told you previously about the Sustainability Expo in Woodstock. One of the goals was to make it a Zero Waste event. This was quite successful. Those with displays took home whatever they brought. People were very interested in the results from the food booth. I believe it was run by Terry's Dogs - but don't be fooled by the name - much more served than hot dogs - in fact one of the best menus I have seen at an event like this. The people took this initiative to heart and were quite successful. Dishes used were washed and reused and the food waste was all collected and sent for composting. Congratulations to this business. Think about asking them to provide the same service at your next event.

On two consecutive Saturdays I attended fundraising dinners and auctions at the EZCC. One was in support of the Embro Skating Club and the other for Camp Tanner. I think both were wonderful opportunities to be able to support groups doing such fine work which benefits the youth of our community.

February 17

I attended a very interesting training session at the County regarding LED lighting. I was very impressed. The bulbs are expensive - \$10 and up - but will pay for themselves in a year - are guaranteed for 5 years and seem to have a life of 10 to 20 years and beyond. I have purchased about a dozen bulbs and have replaced bulbs that are in the most use. They are very different from the "curly" bulbs suggested a few years ago. These are very bright. I replaced 60 watt

bulbs with what was labelled “40” and they are much brighter but use only 6 watts. Also they come on immediately with no pause as there was for the previously recommended energy saving bulbs. The other thing stressed was that “latent” energy i.e. energy used by appliances on standby e.g. clocks on appliances etc. amounts to about 10% of household consumption each year. We were advised to put microwaves, computers and televisions on power bars that are left up and visible and to turn off these appliances when not in use. I am now doing this as well and will be interested to see if my consumption of power is reduced.

February 19

A proposal is being developed by Oxford Mayors to ask if it would be possible to change our Emergency Management Plans, that are now done separately by each municipality, to one overall plan that would cover the County as a whole. We decided to move forward by consulting with the Minister responsible for permission to investigate this idea. I can report as I write this that the idea received favourable attention and we are now going to work with the Fire Marshal’s office to see what can be done.

February 21-24

I attended the RO MA/OGRA conference in Toronto. I learned much at the many breakout sessions I attended and I think the delegations to Provincial Ministers were positive and encouraging.

February 24

I arrived home from Toronto to pouring rain and an iced covered car at the train station but managed to attend County Council that evening. It was a brief meeting with a great deal of time being spent with the issue of picking up garbage and recycling on private urban properties. Unfortunately we cannot do this anymore than we can drive in every rural property lane for pickup. I personally am just very glad to have service at the road and have no problem loading material into the back of the car in order to get it there.

February 28

For the first time I attended the Embro and Zorra Agricultural Society Dinner Theatre for the Sunday Brunch - another opportunity to financially support youth - this time 4-H - in our community - as well as the Fair Board. It was a very enjoyable afternoon.

February 29

I had a more unique experience of going to CambroCourt to deliver a 90th birthday certificate to a Leap Year baby and spent an hour or two visiting there. In the afternoon I travelled to Innerkip for the Library Board meeting. Discussions continue on the proposal to move the Embro Library to the Community Centre. A Public Meeting will be held about this on April 28 at 7 p.m. at the Embro Community Centre. I hope many people plan to attend.