

Mayor's Blog - March 2016

March 1

Zorra Council This was a fairly long meeting as we received reports from OPP - Year End Analytical Report and McFarlan Rowlands Insurance proposal. A request for free ice time for an A.J. Baker fundraiser was approved. Discussions continue with improvements to the Oxford Road 2 and 35th Line intersection. Pre-budget approval was given for replacement of a Road 74 culvert.

March 3

CAO Don MacLeod and I attended a meeting at Carmeuse regarding a review of restoration work done last year.

March 5

A real highlight for Zorra - ribbon cutting at our new Fire Hall in Thamesford. There was a huge turnout by the public which shows their support. We ran out of cake even though I wasn't very generous in the serving portions!! I think the department would be glad to host organizations wanting to tour as part of a meeting programme but consult with them first.

March 15 - Zorra Council meeting

Budget deliberations continue. Over the last 5 years Zorra has lost about \$1 million dollars in government grants. Policing costs have increased by \$450,000 and tax write offs amounted to \$650,000. If you do the math that adds up to a loss of over \$2 million. Absorbing this and trying to maintain services for residents is a very difficult task. People wonder why we cannot adopt and support financially many of their suggestions - great as they may be. They tell us they won't mind the 1% or 2% tax increase it will take to fund their specific project but will they be happy to see it added to the 10% increase it takes just to maintain the services we have and the projects that are ongoing? We have reserves but they have specific purposes and digging into them will leave us with a serious shortfall in the future when the project has to be done without the reserve which was established to lessen the effect on that particular year's taxation.

Public Works is thinking about extending the idea of "living snow fences". Residents in specific areas would be paid to leave 6 or 8 rows of corn near roads in areas of heavy drifting. This has worked well previously with farmers affected being paid well and then can still get most of the crops the following spring. This is completely voluntary. I think it is an idea well worth discussing and experimenting with.

Be sure to check out the variety of blue boxes and lids now available at the Office. People are always amazed at the low prices.

March 18

All other events paled with the announcement today that the Province had approved the Terms of Reference for the proposed Landfill. Please remember this is not the approval of the project - only the approval of the testing procedures, etc. the proponent needs to do as they try to prove this project can go forward safely. Some of the things suggested by those in opposition were included in the new document but it is taking time for us to find out just which were included and which were not. I believe our energies right now should go to trying to persuade the proponent to voluntarily include these in their work plans. I encourage you to do your part and participate in the process. I know some people think their ideas are the only ones that our valid

but I believe there are many ways to participate in the process and none are wrong. Get involved.

March 21

Oxford County Library Board met in Otterville. Plans for a public meeting April 27 at 7 p.m. at the Embro and Zorra Community Centre regarding an idea to move the Library there were discussed. So far the having a little temporary book site one evening a week in the Arena lobby has been very successful. Come and share your thoughts. Nothing has been decided. We want to hear from you.

March 24

This was a very stormy day with freezing rain, fog, snowstorms, etc. I drove to Ingersoll for the ERTH Board meeting. I still find most the information presented to be very new to me but continue to learn about this business.

We are tentatively planning to hire a university student over the summer holidays. There is a partial wage grant available and certainly there are lots of jobs that could be done for us. Also I think it gives young people an idea of jobs in Public Service and may develop into a career choice.

March 26

I attended the 90th birthday party for long time Zorra resident Mary Walton. Unfortunately just after arriving I received a phone call and had to leave. Mary has been a significant influence on my life with her wit, practicality and common sense.

March 28

ZRAC meeting was held at the Beaty Room at the Thamesford Library. Two topics were the main part of discussions for the evening. Council applied for, and received, a grant to build a full size soccer pitch at the Embro Community Centre. Work will begin this spring with the installation of proper tiling (which may go beyond the boundaries of the new pitch) and work will continue through the summer. It is expected the field will be ready for the 2017 season and will be a part of the Canada 150th anniversary celebration. A report was received from the committee hoping to see a water park and/or skate park constructed in Thamesford. This group has done an amazing amount of leg work and a resolution asking for financial support will go from ZRAC to the next Council meeting.