

September 20, 2023 Blog

At the April 19 meeting, Zorra Council decided to “provide notice of intent to declare a block of land from the Embro Zorra Community Centre property to be surplus to be made available for a potential mix of market rate and affordable housing (80% of market rate rent) in partnership with Oxford County. On June 21, Zorra Council again deferred the decision to get a more detailed report comparing pros and cons, and financial considerations of three options: originally proposed rec centre property, current Embro Public Works property, and the possibility of a location closer to the centre of Embro. At the September 20th meeting, Council considered and chose an exceedingly generous offer of land from Langlois Farms for a parcel located off the unopened road allowance known as McIntosh Street which is on the south side of Commissioner Street just west of Wallace Crescent. This location addresses the many concerns of residents: a location not on the recreation centre property, closer to the village core, and on a sidewalk. It is still in the village growth boundary on land designated for development, and so supports the goal of not extending village boundaries. It also preserves the ability of the Township to choose options for the current Embro Public Works property that will best serve the community. This is a tremendous achievement for all involved and validates the process undertaken by Council in April: the housing goal is achieved while addressing all other concerns raised by residents and keeping options open to further serve needs of the community.

On September 18, in my role as Warden, I reached out to the office of The Honourable Paul Calandra, Ontario’s new Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, to affirm Oxford’s intention to play a key role in addressing the need for affordable housing. I also shared our position on how we can best support this critical work. Local councils are elected by their communities to serve, govern, guide and advocate. Municipal councils and staff know best how governance models, land use policy, and partnerships can be applied to meet the specific needs of their communities. That is why all nine Oxford Councils passed a resolution stating our position that “Strong Mayor” powers represent decisions for the whole of councils to decide, and that we do not require municipal restructuring or strong mayor powers to build homes. We have been making a difference in our communities on this issue. In 2019, Zorra Township bought and sold an unused industrial property conditional on a certain price and type of development. This will deliver over 1,000 residential units, a combination of single-family homes, townhomes, and apartment units. By the end of 2024, the Township will have net profited Zorra residents \$4 million. Yes, we are building over 1,000 homes - a 20% increase for Zorra - and netting a profit that Council can then use to reduce tax pressure, maintain infrastructure, or increase services. We have a vision and a plan to continue. Let’s get back to the work of actually delivering housing instead of “regional facilitators”, “strong mayor powers”, and sprawl.

As always, feel free to contact me on any issue:

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