

Mayor's Blog – December 19, 2018

December has already been a busy month for the new Zorra Council.

There was a well attended inaugural Council meeting on December 3rd in the Beaty Room of the Thamesford Library (it moves around the Township for each inauguration, in 2014 it was in the Embro West Zorra Community Centre). I have to tell you the Chain of Office is heavy; both physically, and metaphorically. I honestly feel the weight of responsibility it carries.

Excellent orientation and education packages were provided by Staff to get the new Council up to speed and working effectively as quickly as possible. The first working meeting of the new Council was on December 4th and it went smoothly. The big issues of reviewing and revising the Strategic Plan and developing the 2019 Budget will start in January.

On Tuesday December 11th at 7pm at the Oxford County Council Chambers in Woodstock the new Oxford County Council was sworn in, including myself as the representative for Zorra. Norwich Mayor Larry Martin was chosen as Warden, and Woodstock City/County Councillor Sandra Talbot was chosen as Deputy Warden. As with all Council meetings, County Council meetings are open to the public, so feel free to join us any time. A few people have asked questions about the structure of Oxford County Council. Oxford County is made up of the 8 local municipalities and the Mayors of each sit as Councillors at Oxford County Council (with two extra City/County Councillors from Woodstock to reflect its relatively large population).

On Tuesday December 12th the new Oxford County Council began work hearing delegations from groups requesting grants from the County. On December 13th we met again to receive and question the first edition of the 2019 Draft Budget. On Monday December 17th we met yet again to begin debate and Motions to modify the 2019 Draft Budget.

Part of the budget deliberation for both Zorra and Oxford is consideration of the most recent Budget Survey. An online survey was launched in June 2018 through a Speak Up, Oxford! engagement campaign for the 2019 Business Plan and Budget process.

On December 1st the Embro Firefighters brought Santa to the parkette in "downtown" Embro to turn on the Christmas lights. What a great time! Hot drinks, cookies, and great company. Santa seemed to know the name of EVERY child?!

At the December 18th Zorra Council meeting Council unanimously "opted in" to allow cannabis retail stores in Zorra. Staff will now begin preparing a Municipal Cannabis Retail Policy and by opting in at this time there is funding available from the Provincial government to develop and regulate the policy.

At the January 9th Oxford County Council meeting a report "to designate a school zone with a reduced rate of speed (60km/hr), during specified times, on Oxford Rd 6 at Zorra Highland School" will be presented. This is a result of much work on the part of the Zorra Highland Park parents, the Zorra Community Policing Committee, and repeated

Motions of support from Zorra Council. I am optimistic that it will be passed, but will be prepared to argue strongly for it.

High Speed Rail news direct from the new Minister of Transportation Jeff Yurek: "I have instructed the ministry to add alternatives, in addition to HSR, to the EA." This is not only progress on this issue, but the right way to make progress on an issue. Consider alternatives and make decisions. There is still work to be done on this issue, and by the time you read this I will have met with Minister Yurek again.

I plan to continue writing these blogs for you as Mayor and Oxford County Councillor representing Zorra. I hope you will find them informative.

I hope to see everyone at the Thamesford Santa Claus Parade on December 23rd at 6pm!

Have a safe, Merry Christmas, happy new year, and happy holidays!

Marcus Ryan
Mayor, Zorra Township