

Mayor's Blog – August 21, 2019

School is back! Buses, bikes, and walkers are on the roads and sidewalks. Harvest is also well underway with tractors moving from field to field. So please keep an eye out for your neighbours!

Council has approved the new 2018-2022 Strategic Plan to achieve progress on the issues that you told us matter most to you, the entire Plan is available on the Township website.

The Township is still working on potential plans for the former Maple Leaf property in Thamesford, and at this stage the Township has entered into a conditional agreement of purchase and sale with Maple Leaf for the Township to acquire the 121-acres. The deal is contingent upon the municipality receiving signed offers of purchase and sale from developer(s) meeting the criteria set out in a Request for Proposal (RFP) issued by the Township. Staff continue to work hard on this and I am cautiously optimistic that we may be able to proceed with something this year.

Council approved our final recommendation to the Ontario Government as to where retail cannabis sales should be prohibited in the Township. This was based on Staff recommendations and public input, and the recommendation includes exclusion zones around parks and recreational facilities. The Township does not have authority to implement this, we only have the authority to recommend to the Province that this is where we think it wouldn't be appropriate in Zorra. It's up to the Province whether they want to listen to any of it.

The crime in Zorra in recent months has been frustrating, and scary. In the short term, we got great response from the OPP: fast, and full. That's good. In the medium term, there was a special meeting of the Zorra Community Policing Committee on August 12th in the Thamesford Library that was well attended. In the longer term, the ZCPC got great questions and input from the meeting and will now do some work to formulate recommendations to Council and the OPP. We need to do something, but we need to do the RIGHT thing. We're trying to protect our community, and the small town feel that makes it special. I can promise you that the Zorra Community Policing Committee, Council, and the OPP are taking this seriously and thinking about how we can do our part. Please join us.

One way we can all do our part to deter, prevent, and help the OPP catch criminal activity is to phone in ANY suspicious activity. It doesn't matter if you don't have license plate numbers or a full vehicle, or personal, description. Reporting the incident will help determine the OPP patrol routes, and ANY description may help the OPP link them to other incidents.

Please call EVERY time you see suspicious activity.

The non-emergency Oxford OPP numbers are:

1-888-310-1122

*OPP

*677

Of course, in an emergency, always dial 911.

As I write this I am on my way back from the Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO) annual conference in Ottawa. Zorra made delegations to the Minister of Natural Resources (gravel pits), the Minister of the Environment (proposed landfill), the Minister of Finance (provincial funding), and the Minister of Education (rural schools). As an Oxford County Councillor I participated in South Central Ontario Region Economic Development delegations to The Minister of Agriculture, Food, and Rural Affairs (housing, broadband, transit), the Minister of Transport (transit), the Ministry of Housing (guess..), and the Ministry of College, Universities, and Trades (the right education for our communities' needs). I planned on attending many educational sessions, but in the end the delegations took up most of my time.

I was elected to the new Executive of the Top Aggregate Producing Municipalities of Ontario (TAPMO) at the Annual General Meeting. TAPMO was created to lobby and work with the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry (the regulating authority) to develop policy changes resulting in less impact on residents living close to gravel pits and fairer financial compensation for municipalities.

We continue to strive to make Zorra better by doing our part. Zorra is progressive, environmentally conscious, economically strong, and prosperous.

Check in on the website, follow the Township on Facebook or Twitter, phone or email Staff or Council: we want to hear from you.

Join us, and add to your community by doing your part!

As always you can contact me on any issues at:

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