



Council News & Notes

From Tuesday, April 23, 2024

Upcoming Meetings

Council Meeting
May 7 2024

9:00 AM

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Mayors' Message

I like to begin today's meeting by congratulating Trevor Prevost on the letter of thanks we received for your going above and beyond the call of duty. The residents were grateful for the assistance you provided with their water issue. I would also like to extend Council's deep appreciation to CAO Gloria Raybone for her concerted effort in the preparation of our application for the Ontario Housing Enabling Water Systems Fund. The application was gruelling. I also want to thank you for coordinating the letters of support for this initiative. If we are not successful it will certainly not be due to the quality of our application. Well done Gloria. Council would also like to thank Dan Charland our By-Law for his commitment to the Municipality of Tweed. Dan has moved on and we wish him much success.

On April 10th I attended the Hastings County Community & Human Services Committee meeting. That afternoon I was joined by all members of Council for a Committee of the Whole. We thank Gary Scott and Tim Rashotte for their comments on our zoning by-law. We also thank Mike Labbe for joining us via Zoom to talk about affordable home ownership opportunities. On the 11th we feasted on the wonderful fish fry hosted by the Curling Club.

On the 12th Jack Richardson from CTV accepted my request for an interview to highlight some of the issues facing small rural municipalities and the lack of support from both the federal and provincial governments. Joining me were Warden Mullin, Mayor Wallace, Typhany Choinard and Council members from the Municipalities of Tweed and Centre Hastings. After the interview I walked Jack around town talking about the empty storefronts and the impossible feat of trying to get landlords to rent their spaces. I also referenced our request of Parliamentary Assistant Byers for the permission to introduce a vacancy tax that was immediately shot down. That news clip aired on April 16th.

Following the CTV interview, Rachelle Hardesty and I convened our first meeting of the Tweed Memorial Park Redesign Committee. We thank Jim Pedersen, Elizabeth Churcher and Maya Navrot for sharing their creative ideas. I will leave it to Rachelle to share the ideas that we would like Council to consider. Again, this would be a phased in approach supported by grants or community fund raising.

On Saturday the 17th I had a 20 minute interview with Andrew Pinsent, CFRA Ottawa, re the same points raised in the CTV interview. Later that morning I made my way to Queensborough to take in their MacFest Event. It was nice to sit with the organizers and talk about how successful that event has become with kayakers coming from 100's of kms away.

On April 15th Deputy Mayor DeMarsh and I attended the Joint Fire Services Board meeting. Later that morning Rachelle Hardesty and I made our way to Riverside Campground for a tour of their recreational property. On the 16th I chaired the County Planning & Development Committee. I then joined fellow County Councillors for the Finance, Personnel and Property Committee.

That afternoon I dawned my Past President Kiwanis persona and toured Kiwanis Governor John Chave around our municipality highlighting some of the initiatives in which Kiwanis has been involved. Governor Chave had the nicest things to say about our community noting how beautiful it was, how much it had to offer to young and old alike and that it is a place that he could see calling home. I say this only because we can be our own worst critics. We can be so critical of the place we call home that often it takes outsiders to open our eyes to how beautiful our community really is. This Council is grateful to call the Municipality of Tweed home. Although there will always be room for improvement we cannot lose sight of all that our residents, community groups, volunteers, businesses and staff have contributed to make this municipality a wonderful place to live, work and play.

These are exciting times for the municipality. We have a great deal of development that is currently underway or will be coming on stream shortly. We are also seeing an uptick in renovations. Please note that as exciting as all this activity is, interested parties need to ensure that they are following the building code. This Council is very supportive of our Building Inspection Officials. We are pleased with their efforts to come up with creative solutions to contested development, and to do so by working within the confines of the building code. It is also important to remember, that although this Council is pro development, we cannot influence nor over rule the decision of our Building Inspectors. Thank you Richard to you and to your Team for bringing forward creative solutions while keeping us all safe.

I haven't had the chance to review the entire federal budget to ascertain if there are any nuggets for small rural Ontario. I do know that Minister Fraser is prepared to deal directly with municipalities if the province won't agree to some of the housing/zoning conditions imposed by the federal government in order to receive funding. I have no problem in dealing directly with Minister Fraser since the province gives us diddly squat anyway. We have nothing to lose. Conditions include allowing more duplexes, triplexes, townhouses and multi-unit buildings, and imposing a three-year freeze on development charges for cities with more than 300,000 people. We can meet all the conditions. We are prepared to go even further with our tiny homes zoning bylaw amendments. I will be contacting Minister Fraser directly.

In the information section of our agenda package you will notice a letter from Minister Thompson, Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA). The item noted therein does not pertain to any actions taken by this Council. However the Minister does note how municipalities must work closely with, and support, our agriculture industry and to be aware of the decisions we make and their impact on this vital industry. I am afraid this government has multiple personalities and takes on that persona that best addresses the issue at hand. For example, municipalities should support the agriculture industry and be aware of the impacts of our decisions. Not surprisingly the province is considering charging a fee for rural home owners and farmers to test their water. They also turn a deaf ear to our request for critical bridge infrastructure funding. Our bridges are vital connectors and play a pivotal role in the seamless flow of farm equipment. When you have 52 bridges and live in a farming community you have to ensure that farmers can get from one field to the next. Furthermore, today's farming equipment is a lot larger than days gone by. They continue to make

proclamations and not once have they sat down with us to talk about the importance of agriculture and the challenges we are facing.

The Ontario government has also been celebrating all the economic investments they have been making across this great province from 2018-2023. When looking at the map and it really is quite impressive. When you zoom in on the map you then see how pathetic those investments are in small rural Ontario, and in particular Eastern Ontario. I have included the maps in my posted Mayor's comments.

Thank you to Council and our Team for all that you do to make this Municipality a great place to live. It is an honour to serve with you.