

## Mayor's Blog – January 21, 2020

I'm writing this on the train on my way home from the Rural Ontario Municipal Association conference. Myself, Councillors Davies, Mitchell, and McDonald, and Zorra CAO MacLeod attended.

For us, the conference started with a meeting of TAPMO (Top Aggregate Producing Municipalities of Ontario, I am on the executive representing Zorra) discussing the priorities and work plan for the coming year. Cost recovery from pits for damage to municipal roads is a top priority. The per tonne levy paid to municipalities by producers is set by the Province. The Province is also the largest buyer of aggregate... Another priority is the cumulative impact on residents of traffic, noise, and dust from having many pits in a small area. So far, we have made no progress on these issues with the government, but we cannot stop expressing the real concerns of our residents.

I then participated, as your Oxford County Councillor, in an Oxford County delegation to the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing informing the Minister of our work in housing and needed provincial policy changes to help us further address housing opportunities and challenges. The Minister was very interested in the work Oxford is doing. We need a paradigm shift not only in Oxford, but from the province as well, in how we look at housing problems. The same old solutions are not getting the job done for people.

Myself and Councillor Davies (who represents Zorra on the Oxford Court Security Committee) then participated in an Oxford delegation to the Ontario Solicitor General about fair share of Woodstock Courthouse security costs. The courthouse conducts provincial business, but provincial law says the host municipality pays the security costs. Oxford municipalities have joined to share the cost, but it is increasing and the province's share is not.

As both the Mayor of Zorra and Vice Chair of the Community Schools Alliance I led the delegation to the Minister of Education advocating for the importance of our rural schools, and for policy changes to the Pupil Accommodation Review Guidelines and funding for rural and northern schools. I am proud to say that not only is the CSA the strongest municipal voice for our schools, but has developed a good reputation with MOE staff.

I then made the Oxford delegation to the Ministry of Transportation. This was an easy delegation to make as the South west Transit Plan that the Minister announced last week was very much in line with so much of Oxford's own SouthWestLynx plan. Oxford is very keen to get to work on implementation and increase transit options for people (including hopefully some local busses).

Then there was the twice a year Zorra delegation to the Ministry of Environment Conservation and Parks to discuss the upcoming draft Environmental Assessment application from Walker for the South West Landfill proposed to be in Zorra. The Minister has always been very receptive to our delegations and understanding of our concerns. I am hopeful that we will continue to be able to work on those concerns. On the same day as that delegation I received a letter from Walker Environmental stating that the "Draft EA report will be available in the coming weeks for review and comment by the Peer Review Team". Basically this means that Walker has completed the first phase of their science under the Ministry of Environment's Environment Assessment review and will be submitting it to our Joint Municipal Coordinating Committee (Zorra, Oxford, Ingersoll, and South West Oxford) for our review before they do their formal submission to the Ministry.

This is the expected next step in the process, and is the point at which our scientists are able to review in detail what Walker is proposing.

I think we did our part at the conference. We learned a lot, made excellent connections to learn more, but I think most importantly we advanced some real issues about gravel pits, housing, court security costs, schools, transit, and landfills. There are other issues we asked for delegations on, but you don't get all of them.

As always you can contact me on any issues at:

Marcus Ryan, Mayor  
Township of Zorra  
P. 519.485.2490 or 1.888.699.3868  
M: 1.519.301.1634  
Email: [mryan@zorra.ca](mailto:mryan@zorra.ca)