

Mayor's Blog – May 7, 2020

I am so proud of the residents of Zorra Township and their conduct during the COVID19 State of Emergency. You have been kind, calm, and safe. As a result, the COVID19 case numbers for Zorra have been low. Many of you have found creative ways to make the isolation less difficult and lift the spirits of your community. You have gone out of your way to help your family friends and neighbours. And Zorra's businesses, especially restaurants, have been creative and adaptable in serving us. In short, you have all done MORE THAN your part in this difficult time. On behalf of the entire Township, thank you!

Zorra's Senior Management Team, the Mayors and CAOs of all Oxford municipalities, and Southwestern Public Health are meeting regularly to review the latest COVID19 cases in our region, the latest medical advice, and plan our operations to continue to provide the municipal services you depend on.

Zorra is posting updates on our website and social media, and so is Oxford County. The local authority on COVID19 is Southwestern Public Health and I encourage you to look to them for the latest information and advice. swpublichealth.ca Zorra Staff have been amazing during this time, they have been continuously adaptable and creative in finding new ways to be both effective and safe, and the services Zorra is responsible for have continued to be delivered. As a result, at the time of writing this I have still not decided to declare a Municipal State of Emergency as it would not change our response so far. If it will help us to respond better, I will declare.

Council is working to understand the medium and long term impacts of COVID19 on our community as a whole. As with many of you, and many businesses, there will be financial impacts. Municipalities do not have the ability to take on debt to cover operating costs. We are required by law to run balanced budgets. So every dollar deferred in taxes or fees now will mean increased taxes or decreased services later. The focus is on preserving cash flow to ensure the continuing delivery of municipal services. Zorra Council passed a resolution to waive interest charges on property tax arrears for April and May, 2020 to assist residents financially impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. At Oxford County Council, my Motion passed for Staff to report on the options, implications and process for which Council could authorize the waiver of late fees for interim tax revenue payments from area municipalities; and the waiver of late fees for water/wastewater payments. MPAC has announced that the 2020 Property Assessment has been postponed. There are many supports that have been created by the Federal, Provincial, and Municipal levels of government and there are links to them on the Zorra homepage.

The new Oxford County waste collection contractor is started this week and there were obviously some problems. I have had extensive discussion with Staff about it and they are working hard to resolve the issues. Please visit wasteline.ca for details on waste collection and for contacts with problems.

Walker Environmental Group is continuing with their Environmental Assessment (EA) for the Southwestern Landfill proposal. The Joint Municipal Coordinating Committee's (JMCC - Zorra, Ingersoll, South West Oxford, and Oxford County) own independent peer review team is reviewing Walker's work. The independent peer review team will provide all of us with objective, science-based information on the Walker EA studies and whether they adequately and correctly assess the potential impacts of the proposed landfill. I encourage all residents to learn what you can about the Southwestern Landfill Proposal.

Please visit www.oxfordreviewteam.ca for more information. To ensure your questions, comments, and input are formally recorded as part of the review please visit www.walkerea.com . The JMCC's suggestion to Walker that in light of the COVID19 situation they extend the current public consultation period was accepted and the public input has been delayed indefinitely.

Please be kind, be calm, and be safe.

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

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