

April 21, 2024 Blog

With thanks to The Inn & Old St. Paul's in Woodstock for their tremendous leadership, Oxford County funded the expansion at The Inn in Woodstock, offering 25 additional emergency overnight beds, along with meal, clothing, shower and washroom access between the hours of 4pm and 8am. The expansion doubles the number of people who can be sheltered at The Inn. Last year, they hosted an average of 24 guests each night, with 237 individuals overall using the service in 2023. Oxford's community partners are working together to address the roots of homelessness.

Did you know that at [211ontario.ca](http://211ontario.ca) you can find community and social services? If you type in your location in the top left, and click on the resource you want, it will give you services available in your area. Yes, even small rural "locations" like mine. I tested it. Homelessness, mental health, addictions, employment, etc., all at: [211ontario.ca](http://211ontario.ca)

Oxford County is considering changes to curbside collection. At present, curbside collection for Oxford County residents is made up of garbage, recycling, and large item. We will be considering changes, such as:

- how often garbage is collected;
- curbside pick-up on statutory holidays;
- waste collection in urban versus rural areas; and,
- the start of a "green bin" program to collect residential source separated organics.

The Provincial government's new Bill 185, the "Cutting Red Tape to Build More Homes Act." does some good things and some bad things. It restores some of a municipalities' ability to use development charges to fund growth. This means I don't have to tax you for a developer's growth. It also exempts affordable units from development charges, which Oxford and Zorra already do. I'm glad they could learn from that. So both good. However... Even Ontario Realtors made it clear they were not convinced this bill will actually get more homes built. But my biggest issue with the bill is that it restores the right of a DEVELOPER to appeal a municipality's decision to NOT expand a growth boundary. In other words, if a municipality decides to NOT expand a boundary, a DEVELOPER can appeal that decision. If a municipality decides it WILL expand a boundary, a resident CANNOT appeal THAT decision. Not good.

At the April 3 Zorra Council meeting there was an application for an Official Plan Amendment OP21-14-5 that "proposes to designate lands within the Village of Thamesford identified as a 'Special Policy Area Requiring Secondary Planning' for residential use and to expand the current Village boundary for similar purposes. Specifically, the lands are proposed to be designated 'Low Density Residential' and 'Medium Density Residential' to facilitate a range of housing types in Thamesford." The proposal "to expand the current Village boundary" is for an "additional developable area comprising approximately 4.4 ha (10.87 ac) that is outside of limits of the Village of Thamesford". The expansion is for a piece of land that would end up

between the proposed development (which is otherwise entirely within the existing boundary) and an existing drain. I think the proposed “rounding out” is reasonable as the land would essentially be landlocked for either agricultural or residential purposes.

However... Zorra Council has always been adamant in preserving agricultural lands. So, even if the proposed “rounding out” makes sense, we should get all the units we can in the entire development. Every unit we get delays future pressure for sprawl. As a result, Zorra Council passed the following resolution:

“THAT Council recommend that Oxford County Council defer application OP21-14-5 and ask the applicant to work with staff for the purpose of achieving increased density and explore affordable housing opportunities.”

Agenda item 6b Report CP 2024-105 Application for Official Plan Amendment OP21-14-5:

Lastly, a good news story. This year Pride flags will be raised at EVERY municipality in Oxford County for the first time! Join us on Friday May 31 starting at the Oxford County Administration building at 8am!

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

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