

2017 Council Review

January 2018



Message from the Mayor

We are in the home stretch of our Council term. We've moved the Town forward in preparation for growth and prosperity and it looks like it's going to be another banner year with the creation of new recreational spaces, increased recreational programming and three new residential developments ready to move forward. To our delight, 55 new home residential permits were issued in 2017 and Expedia declared Wiarton the 3rd Happiest Place in Canada! We've tackled some very unique and difficult issues and we're proud of the progress we've made. We have work to do in this final year to complete the mandate we set and our sleeves are rolled up!

South Bruce Peninsula is a wonderful place but it's the people that make it so special and we want to hear from you! This Council made a commitment to communicate with you at every opportunity. In addition to this newsletter, we've held several public meetings and we're finally branching into social media with the creation of a Town Facebook page. Please feel free to contact us anytime with your questions, comments or concerns. It's your Town and we want to know what's important to you! Here's an update on what we accomplished in 2017.

Property Taxes, Finances and Staffing

We have now completed the 4th and final Budget of our term and we settled on a 3.9% levy increase. We're proud to report that the total combined 4 year tax increase is 9.7%. That's by far the lowest 4 year Council term total in the history of South Bruce Peninsula and it was done in the face of increasing costs such as utilities, insurance and wages that are very much outside of Council control. Our budget this year focused on maintaining services and undertaking much needed capital investment while socking money away for future capital needs. We contributed \$530,000.00 more to reserves than last year's budget as we must contribute to our future. As of this report, Collins Barrow has audited us 3 times and has consistently announced we are a very healthy Town financially. As of the December 31, 2016 audited financial statements, we increased our annual surplus to \$5.9 million, increased our assets to \$12.5 million and we reduced our debt to \$1.3 million. That debt is mostly from property tax arrears which we will recover. We have increased our net financial assets by just over \$2.5 million since this Council stepped in. We have achieved this by maintaining service levels yet keeping the municipal tax increase to a total of just 9.7% over four years. We are moving forward with the opening this summer of the Skateboard Park in Wiarton, the Visitor Centre in Hepworth, the Town Square in Sauble Beach, the new Beach Park in Howdenvale and improvements to the Colpoys Pier next fall. Towns our size cannot build significant assets like community centres or arenas without debenturing the cost. The last town debenture was used for the arena upgrades. After all grants were factored in, the total cost to the town to redesign and upgrade Bluewater Park and the Arena was 1.16 million. Approximately 40% of that money was taken from surplus and taxation while 60% was debentured and paid off in 2015. The ten yr. debenture for the Town Square will cost approx. \$5.75 per year per \$100,000.00 MPAC assessment on your property. We want to build our community assets for generations to enjoy and I hope you'll take time to attend the entertainment, art and cultural offerings the Town Square will provide. On the staffing side...we're thrilled to announce we recently hired a new Chief Administrative Officer to lead our team towards the future growth and expansion on our horizon. Brad McRoberts isn't new to SBP; he was our Public Works Manager a decade ago but most recently spent 2.5 years as the CAO at Mapleton Township.

Service Contracts

We have reviewed and rewritten many of our Town contracts during our term. In addition to eliminating the \$145,000 annual operating cost and all future liabilities at the airport, we discovered in some cases we were actually providing services at a loss, so we set out to renegotiate those agreements. We improved our fire services contract with Georgian Bluffs and we will soon sign new and improved water contracts with them. We hammered out a new deal with Bruce County regarding our 2 Libraries in addition to a new and beneficial contract with the Senior Sandpipers Group for their use of the Sauble Community Centre. We also made changes in the Coal Shed building in Bluewater Park resulting in increased revenue for the Town. We also saved over \$350,000 on our Insurance Policy when we tendered our contract.

Community Safety

Through Parachute Canada, a Safe Communities Committee was created which encompasses members of all emergency services, myself and community service groups. The mandate of the committee is to find ways to improve

our Town's safety. In addition to installing new AED's in Bluewater Park and at Sauble Beach (thanks to the generosity of the Sauble and Wiarton Lions Clubs) we are working on ways to improve the safety of Highway 6 after the multiple tragedies we've suffered in the last few years. The OPP has agreed to provide air enforced radar next summer and other safety measures will be implemented. The Town and MTO conducted a car count in July 2016 where we discovered 45,000 cars travelled through Wiarton and up Hwy 6 in a one week period. We ran another count in July 2017 and found that number almost doubled to 87,000 cars in just one week! Our Peninsula is fast becoming a tourist mecca and safety is a huge concern which we are committed to tackling.

West Road and the Wind Turbines

After much public and municipal persuasion, it appears the County has now resolved to repaving the West Road instead of reconstructing it which would have seen it widened to 100' leaving us vulnerable to wind farms. Developers need a 100' road width to transport the turbines onto our Peninsula and house transmission lines. Through our combined efforts, the county seems to be shifting the work to repaving only, which is what we wanted all along.

Howdenvale News

Through the incredible generosity of the Johnson Family, wonderful donations from the Howdenvale Community and topped with a contribution from our Parkland Dedication Reserves, the private property surrounding the Howdenvale Beach was purchased by the Town. This will increase our roster of beach parks and allow us to expand the sandy beach area and add amenities. This was a fantastic collaboration between the Town and the amazing Howdenvale Community. We can't wait to open our newest beach park this summer!

Hepworth News

We are very excited about the grand opening this spring of the new Visitor Centre at the lights in Hepworth. It will be located in the old Anglican Church which has been an underutilized Community Centre. With the increase in tourists coming to town, it only made sense to put the Visitor Centre at the crossroads of SBP. In addition to helping our visitors heading to Sauble, we want to capture those who are travelling to Tobermory and give them a reason to stop and spend their money in our town. Hepworth will also get new light post banners on Queen St. W. this spring.

Mallory Beach News

The Colpoys Pier will face a major repair in the fall of 2018. We are also in the process of engaging the senior Architectural Design students of Fanshawe College who have offered (free of charge) to create a wonderful new design for the Pier. It will likely be in line with the stunning Rimouski Pier Project creating amazing recreational and relaxation space for all to enjoy.

Sauble Beach News

The portable washrooms at the beach have now been wrapped with interesting designs. They no longer look like big white boxes! The Town took over the fireworks display last summer and it was a smashing success so we will host them again this year. The repaving of Lakeshore Blvd will continue this summer. Phase 3 will see new drainage and paving from Eleventh St. N. to the boat launch. The beach was rehabilitated and although we had to engage heavy machinery, we now have our beach back! The Sauble Town Square will be built this summer however we're a bit behind schedule and won't likely see it open until mid August. Finally - Sauble welcomed 6 new businesses in 2017!

Warton News

The new Joanne Lancaster Skateboard Park will open this summer and three new housing developments will soon begin construction. *Vista View* on the waterfront across from Gateway Haven will see 45 new homes and the 24 home Ridge Rock senior's development at George & McNaughton has cleared all the hurdles plus, we expect to see movement at the *Warton Meadows* development at the south end of Town in 2018. The first phase of 150 new homes will begin with eight homes called *Warton Gateway* which will serve as model homes for *The Warton Meadows*. In addition to these much needed developments, Wiarton ushered in 10 new businesses in 2017!

Our Town has a strong group at the table and with the addition of our new CAO Brad McRoberts, our staff has focused leadership. We've spent the last 3 years preparing for our future and it seems our 4th and final year will begin to see the fruits of our labour. These are exciting times for South Bruce Peninsula as interesting growth and progress is on its way. Our future couldn't be brighter!

Please remember to contact any of us at any time if you have a question, comment or concern.

From our Town family to yours..... Happy New Year!!!

Mayor Janice Jackson majorjanicejackson@gmail.com
Councillor Ana Vukovic vanamark@eastlink.ca

Deputy Mayor Jay Kirkland 519-422-1449
Councillor Matt Jackson councillormatt@gmail.com