

## Zorra Township

### **April**

Regular Council Meetings at the Township Municipal Office

April 4, 9:30am April 18, 6:30pm

NOTICES AND ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Zorra Canada 150 Celebration Committee The Celebration Committee has been developed to coordinate, promote, collaborate, implement and evaluate the Township's community celebration of the 150th Anniversary of Canada as well as other notable anniversaries to occur throughout 2017 at varying locations in the Township. The next Committee meeting is April 11 at 10:30am at the Township Office! Everyone Welcome!

UPCOMING CANADA 150 EVENTS April 7, 2017 Spaghetti Dinner & Family Entertainment with Peter Mennie ABRACANADABRA SHOW Contact: Carol Hanlon at hanlon@execulink.com

April 22, 23, 27, 29 Thistle Theatre presents Strangers Among Us (Canadian Play) Visit: www.thistle-theatre.com

Please provide the Township with any upcoming Canada 150 Event information!! Contact Karen Martin at kmartin@zorra.on.ca

Recreation Department Summer Camp Registrations: book early, limited spots! Camp Volunteers: wanted for a variety of hours during summer camp. Must be 13-15 years of age. Pickleball: coming in JUNE! Look for both adult & family nights.

Swimming Registration: Look for forms coming out early May.

For further info contact Stephanie 519-617-7977 or sstarchuck@zorra.on.ca

Tax Department The 2nd instalment of property taxes for 2017 is due on May 31, 2017.

WHY NOT TRY PAYING YOUR TAXES ON-LINE??? Online or telephone banking is available for making monthly, arrears, or regular instalments. All banks accept the Township of Zorra as a client and the account number required is your ROLL NUMBER from your tax bill. We now accept Interac at the office to pay your taxes. Any tax questions or inquiries, please direct them to Kelly Hall at 485-2490 ext 222 or khall@zorra.on.ca.

### **Councillor Ward 2 COUNCIL NEWS from MARIE KEASEY**

May spring truly be here when you read this. I hope everyone has had a chance to buy their chocolate bunnies from the Lions' Club assisted by student volunteers from Thamesford Public School. Recycle Day is coming up on April 22, Earth Day. Bring electronics, batteries (all kinds), metals to the Thamesford Arena and/or the Embro Community Centre.

Reuseapaloozaha - a giant swap meet, is also on at the Embro Centre. See the advertisement in this Village Voice. This event insures that less goes to the landfill & ties into the Future Oxford plan, sustainability plan & moving towards Zero Waste Campaign being spearheaded at the County level & supported by the Township. Please no hazardous waste (ie: paints). April 22 is the annual Thames River Clean Up. Meet in Grace Patterson Park at 9:30am. Gloves & bags are provided and students can get volunteer hours. I hope to see you at one of these important environmental events. The Water & Wheels Committee (WWC) held 2 workshops in March to get input into designs for the proposed skate park & spray pad.

Many children, parents & young adults attended a facilitated session. You will be able to see the results of their contributions at the public Open House on Mon, Apr 10, 5-8pm at the Beaty

Room (Library). Some of the participants will be there, along with the Committee & the Consultants to receive public comments before a final design is completed. Public comments will be provided to Council for evaluation regarding the design & proposed locations: South Lions Park for the Spray Pad & Terry Fox Park (north of the arena) for the Skate Park. The WWC will soon be starting its formal fundraising & outreach to community. Anyone interested in helping in this regard is encouraged to contact Don Weir (Chair) or me. Canada 150 events in Zorra Township will start in April, extending into the fall. Please check the Township's Community Calendar at [www.zorra.on.ca](http://www.zorra.on.ca) & watch your mail for information in Zorra Now. It is a good year to explore our township & visit / experience an area or event that is new to you. The OPP provided their quarterly report to Council & advised that there would be "focussed patrols" in the area, based on statistics & complaints. Information was shared that every platoon would have a traffic car for enforcement & that there was a new property/crime/drug unit with 4 officers being established. Given the number of break ins in Thamesford & area, this unit will be kept busy. A reminder to everyone to be observant in your neighbourhood & report suspicious vehicles or activities to the OPP & lock your vehicles when not occupied. The Inspector also said that they supported the Township & County's request for photo radar in our communities. Council approved the extension of the Draft Subdivision Plan for the Maple Leaf Lands (96.4 acres) to Oct 2, 2019 to allow time to consider options for the development of this property. The Recreation Department presented information to Council about arena/ice usage & Council has approved the closure of both arenas from 8am-4pm on Wed & Thur starting in Sept. At this point, the office will be open. Full Time staff will work all weekends. These changes will reduce the number of part time hours overall & ensure that full time staff are in the facilities when most of the public attend activities & events. It was noted that the Provincial Government may approve a new tonnage rate for the gravel royalties, from 6¢-12¢. This would not be paid out until 2018 & only prorated for that year. The full effect would occur in 2019 & should be at least \$200,000 more for the township. This is equal to about 4% on our tax rates which will help in future years' revenues. Hopefully the province does not put this on a back burner. The 2017 budget was approved but the final tax effect is not known until the County & School Board rates are set. However, the levy requirement is approximately 7.1% above 2016. Almost 40% of this is due to the reduction in the grants from the Ontario Municipal Partnership Funds. Zorra experienced the highest percentage cut in the County. There will be increases to property taxes due to the increased budget requirements but also due to the new assessments.

And, a reminder that we moved to metered water system on Apr 1 & new rates come into effect. For more information please contact the County at 1-800-755-0394 or [www.oxfordcounty.ca](http://www.oxfordcounty.ca).

As April is a month that focuses on the environment & religious renewal, may we also reflect on Canada's contribution & sacrifice in World War 1 at Vimy Ridge. Respectfully submitted,  
Marie Keasey.

### **COUNCIL NEWS from MARCUS RYAN**

At the Mar 21 Council meeting, the 2017 budget was passed with a modified levy dollar figure increase of \$7,344,041. This figure is based on savings from several departments including reduced hours at recreation facilities, deferring some hard top (paved) road maintenance to a subsequent year & other smaller changes. The full tax levy increase will not be known until the Education portion & County portion are known. Approximately 37% of the Township dollar levy increase is due to the Provincial Ontario Municipal Partnership Fund cuts of \$188,700 for this year. You may have been hearing a lot about AEDs or the lack thereof in Thames Valley School Board Schools. You can be assured that all Zorra Schools (AJ Baker, Thamesford &

Zorra Highland Park) have AEDs. Kelly Elliot (Thames Centre Ward 1 Councillor) & I cowrote a motion that both Zorra & Thames Centre passed that requests that the Premier, and Minister of Education, develop a policy that enables all schools in Ontario, including the TVDSB to have an AED in their schools. This motion has now been passed by at least a dozen (& counting!) other municipalities. There has been a lot going on on the issue of rural schools lately. On Mar 7 there was a debate at Queen's Park on a moratorium on rural school closures. The day before the debate the Minister of Education sent a letter to municipalities & organizations concerned about school closures outlining her plans for more "engagement" with rural communities & municipalities on this issue. This is not the progress we were hoping for, but it is definitely progress. I am working with representatives of several different organizations to write a document of policy alternatives for the Ministry of Education to address the concerns of rural education. I was asked to speak at a Town hall meeting in Aylmer Mar 6 on the proposed TVDSB school closures in Elgin County. The communities fighting their rural school's closure wanted some insights from our community's successful fight to "Save AJ", and I spoke as a representative of the Community Schools Alliance. I think some of these communities have a strong fighting chance of keeping their schools. In my opinion there is no good fiscal or educational reason to close any of the 3 schools opposing their closure (Springfield, Sparta, New Sarum). This is a process designed to sacrifice rural schools to adhere to a Ministry of Education (MOE) flawed funding formula, where the MOE is saying rural communities should sacrifice their schools to fund urban schools. At the Mar 7 meeting my motion to create a Zorra School Advisory Committee to develop the required School Retention Plan was unanimously passed. This committee will coordinate efforts between all Zorra schools affected by potential consolidation activities in the TVDSB, and explore the possibility of the Township of Zorra hosting the fall 2017 Rural Education Symposium. If you are interested in being on this committee contact Township Staff (519-485-2490, 1-888-699-3868, admin@zorra.on.ca). There are days doing this job that can be frustrating, not everyone is positive & constructive. But then there are days when you get to work with great people. People who have no ego. People who just want to figure out the problems & overcome them. People who genuinely want to make their little corner of the world a better place. Then it's all good. "Man is by nature a political animal." - Aristotle. As always you can contact me at: Marcus Ryan, Councillor Ward 3, Mobile: 519-301-1634, email: mryan@zorra.on.ca, FB: Marcus Ryan - Zorra, Twitter: @marcusryanzorra, Blog: marcusryanblog.wordpress.com, www.communityschoolsalliance.ca, FB: Community Schools Alliance.

## **Zorra Township**

### **February**

#### **UPCOMING MEETINGS:**

February 6, 2017 at 9:30 a.m. – Special Budget Meeting

February 14, 2016 at 9:30 a.m. – Regular Council Meeting

All meetings held at the Township Municipal Office.

**NOTICES AND ANNOUNCEMENTS:** Tax Department The 2017 Interim Tax Bills were mailed the last week of January 2017. They are calculated on half of the taxes that were billed on your property in 2017; the bills will be due February 28 and May 31, 2017.

**WHY NOT TRY PAYING YOUR TAXES ON-LINE?** Online or telephone banking is available for making monthly, arrears, or regular instalments. All banks accept the Township of Zorra as a client and the account number required is your ROLL NUMBER from your tax bill. We now

accept INTERAC at the Township Office.

**COMMERCIAL & INDUSTRIAL PROPERTY OWNERS ONLY! VACANCY REBATE PROGRAM** If your commercial or industrial property was vacant for a period of up to three months in 2016, you are eligible for a vacancy rebate. Applications are found on our website or picked up at the Township Office. **HYPERLINK** "<http://www.zorra.on.ca>" [www.zorra.on.ca](http://www.zorra.on.ca) The deadline for filing is February 28, 2017. Any tax questions or inquiries, please direct them to Kelly Hall at 485-2490 ext. 222 or [khall@zorra.on.ca](mailto:khall@zorra.on.ca)

**By-law Enforcement WINTER PARKING** Please be advised that the winter parking restrictions will be enforced until March 31, 2016. For snow removal purposes, parking is not permitted on any road or street from 1a.m. to 8a.m. 7 days a week. If you have any questions please contact the By-law Enforcement Officer at 519-485-2490 ext. 230

**Recreation Department PICKLEBALL** Embro, Wednesday nights, 6:30-8pm at Zorra Highland Park Thamesford, Thursday nights, 6:30-8pm in the Hall at Thamesford Arena. \*NEW LOCATION\* Fee: \$2  
**PUBLIC SKATING** 2:00-3:00pm, Tuesday to Friday, March Break (Mar 14-17) at both arenas. The Friday will be extra special with a St. Patrick's Day theme – wear green & come to search for a pot of gold! Fee: \$2.00 kids, \$2.50 adults  
If you have any questions please contact Stephanie Starchuck at 519-617-7977 or [sstarchuck@zorra.on.ca](mailto:sstarchuck@zorra.on.ca)  
Township of Zorra 274620 27th Line, P.O. Box 306 Ingersoll, ON N5C 3K5 519-485-2490 or Toll Free 1-888-699-3868 Website: [www.zorra.on.ca](http://www.zorra.on.ca) Email: [zorra@zorra.on.ca](mailto:zorra@zorra.on.ca) LIKE us on FACEBOOK and follow us on Twitter @ZorraTwp

## **January**

**Council Meetings** at the Township Municipal Office 2017

January 16, 7:00 p.m.

\*Budget Presentation January 17, 9:30 a.m.

### **NOTICES AND ANNOUNCEMENTS:**

**By-law Enforcement WINTER PARKING** Please be advised that the winter parking restrictions will be enforced starting November 15, 2016 until March 31, 2017. For snow removal purposes, parking is not permitted on any road or street from 1:00 a.m. to 8:00 a.m. 7 days a week during this period. If you have any questions please contact the By-law Enforcement Officer at 519-485-2490 ext. 230

### **Recreation Department**

Embro & Thamesford Arenas Public Skating January 3, 4 & 5 2017 from 2pm-3pm Adults \$2.50, Kids \$2.00

### **Pickleball**

Zorra Highland Park Public School Wednesdays 6:30pm-8pm from Jan 11th to Feb 22nd  
Thamesford District Recreation Centre Hall Thursdays 6:30pm to 8:00pm from Jan 12th to Feb 23rd

### **Tax Department**

Interim 2017 Tax bills will be mailed the 1st week of Feb, they will be based on half of the 2016 taxes billed. They are equally due Feb 28 & May 31, 2017.

Pre-Authorized Payment Plan Why not start paying your taxes over 10 or 12 months starting 2017. By taking your total taxes over 10 or 12 months, it is withdrawn from your bank account the last working day of each month, starting in January until October or January until December. Visit our website [HYPERLINK "http://www.zorra.on.ca"](http://www.zorra.on.ca) www.zorra.on.ca to get your authorization form for 2017. If you are currently enrolled in the pre-authorized payment plan, you do not have to re-apply each year, only if there is a change with the account. We accept INTERAC at the Township Office. Kelly Hall, Tax Collector/Deputy Treasurer [HYPERLINK "mailto:khall@zorrra.on.ca"](mailto:khall@zorrra.on.ca) khall@zorrra.on.ca 519-485-2490 x 222

History Books For Sale The following are available for purchase at the Township Office: Embro-West Zorra History Book set \$75 - Special! North Oxford History Book \$75 (regular price)!

**The Council & Staff of Zorra Township wish you a Happy New Year.**

Township of Zorra 274620 27th Line, P .O. Box 306 Ingersoll, ON N5C 3K5 519-485-2490 or Toll Free 1-888-699-3868 Website: [www.zorra.on.ca](http://www.zorra.on.ca) Email: [zorrra@zorrra.on.ca](mailto:zorrra@zorrra.on.ca)

## **WARD 2 COUNCIL NEWS from MARIE KEASEY February**

For those of you who read my January Column and wondered "what the heck is she talking about?" it was actually the column from January 2016. The 2017 column is to be posted on the Village Voice website as part of the digital copy. 2017 will be an exciting year with many celebrations & lots of work to recognize Canada's 150th Anniversary. Your Canada 150 Committee has been confirmed & Thamesford is well represented by: Beth O'Bright, Gerard Hamoen, Linda Collier, Terry Layland, Tony Redix, Heather Forbes & me. There are 4 others on the Committee from Embro & Harrington. The Committee will share events & communicate with groups about how we can work together to make this a memorable year. Groups are encouraged to contact Karen Martin, Clerk of the Township to complete the calendar form so they can be included on a calendar hosted by Oxford Tourism. The Committee will also have some funds that can be awarded to groups who are doing something special & specifically related to Canada/Ontario 150. Requests should be forwarded to Karen Martin. The Township's Committee will have met again Jan 26 & there will be more information in March's Village Voice or check the Township's website. Council approved Ron Koudys Landscape Architects (RKLA) to shepherd through to completion, the spray pad & skate park, including \$150,000 over a 2 year period for this project. Many thanks to the Lions Club for committing \$50,000 over a 2 year period to create this legacy project. The Committee will be working hard to raise funds, get public input about the project, select a site & move forward with construction. The 1st budget meeting for Council was Nov 29 with an overview & discussion about the capital budget & the grant applications received by the deadline date of Oct 31. A public input meeting for the 2017 Budget was held Jan 16. Unfortunately, the weather did not cooperate but I appreciate those who braved weather to attend, asked questions & entered into discussions. I hope that the public input meeting will be held earlier for the 2018 budget, dates will be set & promoted once the 2017 budget is confirmed. Council has scheduled a special 2017 budget meeting on Mon, Feb 6, 9:30am. The regular February meeting will be Feb 14, 9:30am. Watch the website for agenda items, if you are interested & can attend the meeting. Thanks hardy Lions for picking up the Christmas Trees on Jan 7. This is a great community service. Council received staff responses to all the public schools' delegations including those made by Zorra Highland Public School Students who presented in the Council

Chambers Dec 6. All of the presentations were well thought out & involved the broader community good. Staff & the Mayor or designate will be meeting with the students to talk about the responses & outcomes. One idea to be developed in cooperation with Upper Thames River Conservation Authority (UCTRA) will be the establishment of multiple way stations in Zorra Township for monarch butterflies. County Council approved the amendments to the Official Plan regarding Aggregate Operations. Any new applications will have to be considered with these new requirements. As operators & staff work with the new policies, assessment of the effectiveness of these changes will occur. Township Staff also reviewed the Compliance Assessment Reports which are to be submitted by each licensed site annually. The Township received 42 reports with 1 operator not filing as of Jan 13. Failure to file can lead to a suspension of their licence by the Province. Deficiencies noted will be compared to the 2017 reports. 2016 will have set a baseline.

As many of you know, the Township is working with a new contractor for sidewalk snow removal in Thamesford & Kintore (more than 20km of sidewalk). Much time has been spent in administering this contract. When the tender was posted, only 1 company responded. Staff is preparing a cost benefit analysis of purchasing equipment that could be shared by Public Works & Recreation for winter & summer maintenance, and work to be performed by Township staff. Meanwhile please drive slowly, shovel carefully & be aware of surroundings as visibility can be restricted for many reasons.

The January Council Meeting agenda was a very interesting one & I would encourage you to check out the ReusapaloozAHA presentation & mark Apr 22 (Earth Day) for the giant recycle, reuse event in Embro & Thamesford; also the Harrington Dam & Mill Pond Update which included information about low impact dredging - which if accepted, could benefit other areas of the Township. All Departments provided their annual reports, so if you are interested in numbers, these provide them. For example, 15% of all fire calls are false alarms & 25% are for motor vehicle collisions, medical calls 30%. The Building Department had a \$29,143.89 surplus in 2016 which was transferred to the Building Reserve Account (required by the Building Code Act). The Township is projecting a 2016 surplus (\$169,299.72, can change after audit) to be transferred to the Tax Stabilization Reserve - which can be used to reduce any increased tax rates once the budget is set. While still winter, summer recreation plans move ahead, with sports registrations, pool repairs etc. Check out the various electronic signs in the village for details, as well as the township's website. Once again, there are many sports & social events in February, including a Trivia Night at Westminster United Church, Literacy Event at the Library, Lions Family Day (150 Theme) at the Thamesford Rec. Centre. Hope to see you there. While the next Municipal Elections are not until Oct 22, 2018, decisions have been made to continue the mail in ballot with staff using tabulation equipment for the count. There have been many changes to the Municipal Election Act, including a shorter nomination period (May 1/18-July 27/18) & a requirement that candidates obtain 25 endorsement signatures from eligible electors. The Clerk will be developing policies to bring back to Council, but it is not too early to think about whether elected office is in your future. Respectfully submitted, Marie Keasey, ward2@zorra.on.ca.

## **WARD 2 COUNCIL NEWS from MARIE KEASEY January**

Happy 2017 everyone! I hope you had a good holiday season & that 2017 is a healthy, happy & prosperous year for you.

As many of you have noticed, there is a median on Middleton St. This is placed for a trial period, to see if it slows traffic. So far there has been some data that would indicate that fewer

vehicles are speeding, however the assessment will be done in 1 year. The median will be removed at the discretion of Public Works if there are any snow removal issues. If removed, it will be reinstalled in the spring & data will continue to be collected.

Council is supporting Oxford County's Public Health initiative for healthy snacks & foods in its recreational facilities. As a result, you may see changes in the canteen & vending machine offerings. If you & your family want more candy, you may have to bring it with you, as the variety that was available, may not be there.

The fire hall move will likely happen this month. Watch for details for an official opening.

Congratulations to all the new recruits for the 3 Township's Fire Stations. You are joining an amazing group of volunteers firefighters.

Council received a comprehensive presentation requesting support for a splash pad & skate park in Thamesford. This project has been referred to budget discussions which will begin in January. Many thanks to everyone who came out to show their support & speak about the benefits of a combined splash pad/skate park in Thamesford.

If you are a fan of Calithumpian Weekend, please consider being a volunteer & taking on an executive committee role. The Committee is making one last plea for replacements on Jan 6 at 7pm at the Arena. Hopefully there will be support to continue -it is very close to being the 100th year. Happy New Year! Marie Keasey

### **Ward 3 COUNCIL NEWS from MARCUS RYAN – February**

Zorra Council is still working on the 2017 Budget. Township staff held a budget presentation Jan 16 to inform residents of the budget so far. I was disappointed. There was feedback last year that budget deliberations were not accessible in daytime Council meetings, people said evening Public Meetings would be more accessible. Based on that, I brought a motion, to have evening Public meetings as part of this year's Budget process. Five people came. At the Dec 20 Council Meeting the Thamesford Water & Wheels Committee presented requesting capital support of \$150,000 from the Township as an expression of support with the intention to raise a further \$250,000 through donations for the Spray Pad & Skate Park. They have done a lot of research & justification and this was enthusiastically passed by Council! Oxford County Planning completed the Aggregate Policy Review Update & presented it to County Council Jan 11 & Mayor Lupton spoke strongly & eloquently on behalf of the Aggregate Policy Review initiated by Zorra Township & it passed. As Mayor Lupton said at County Council: "this is not an end, it's a beginning". This is significant progress in pushing the limits of regulating aggregate extraction, but Zorra will continue to push for a better balance in regulation. It has also meant that Oxford County Planning has been able to give informed, substantiated, input into the current review of the Aggregate Resources Act, and thereby continue to push for more regulation possibilities for Top Aggregate Producing Municipalities in Ontario. Related to this, Township staff are now going to keep a running tally of pit compliance, and check in the following year that appropriate remedial action has been taken. This is the MNR's job, Township staff should not have to do this. But if this will help enforce compliance, it will be done (per the Strategic Plan!). The Harrington & Embro Dam Environmental Assessments are ongoing & the Harrington community has presented their proposal to Council & UTRCA staff. Their alternative proposal is an attempt to keep something similar to the existing pond & keep the potential for the historic Mill to function. By the time you read this myself & other members of Council will have attended the Rural Ontario Municipal Assoc Conference. There are seminars to learn about Municipal Government issues & it's the best opportunity to meet face to face with rural council members facing common issues. This year I will be a member of the Community Schools Alliance Delegation with the Minister of Education (Mitzie Hunter), and Ontario PC party Leader (& Education Critic) Patrick Brown & Ernie Hardeman (Critic,

Municipal Affairs & Housing), and Peggy Sattler (NDP London West Education Critic). Kintore Optimists Soccer registration is open now & on Facebook! See elsewhere in the Village Voice for details. There are some new enthusiastic faces as Kintore Optimists Soccer and I think we can expect some exciting changes there! As I have just passed the halfway point of my term on council I was reviewing the reasons I ran & what I have done, and still have to do. At the time of the election, the issues I identified were the proposed landfill & Zorra schools and how do we address these things given that they are not within the direct control of the Township. I proposed being proactive on external issues from the Province, School Boards & corporations: let's decide what we want our future to be & then try to control it rather than leave it to others to push their agenda on us. I identified proactive transparency: reaching out to the people of Zorra & involving them. Asking for, and expecting, involvement from residents in making our Township what we want it to be. On the landfill, it is slow & difficult. It is very difficult to engage in the Environmental Assessment process on a personal level, but Township & County staff, as well as many EXTREMELY engaged residents are doing their best. With respect to our schools it is similarly slow & difficult, but I have more knowledge of this, and through my position in the Community Schools Alliance I think we are making progress. On Township transparency it has been a mixed bag, in many ways it is better, but I feel there are many ways it can still be improved. Our residents are our biggest asset in all of these things. I will continue to engage you, I will continue to challenge you to get informed & involved. I am always impressed with how much of their personal time people are willing to give to make their community a better place. Contact me at: Marcus Ryan, Councillor Ward 3, 519-301-1634, mryan@zorra.on.ca, FB: Marcus Ryan - Zorra, Twitter: @marcusryanzorra, Blog: marcusryanblog.wordpress.com, communityschoolsalliance.ca, FB: Community Schools Alliance.

### **Ward 3 COUNCIL NEWS from MARCUS RYAN - January**

Happy New Year!

As I write this I am fresh from my "Town Hall style" Ward 3 meeting in Chalmers Church, Kintore. It went better than I could have hoped with about a dozen people showing up for a really rich discussion of everything from 2017 budget & MPAC assessment to aggregates and... of course schools. Thanks again to Chalmers for making the night possible.

Last month I told you that you would have to wait until this month for the news on how Ontario's first Rural Education Symposium ([www.ontruraleducation.com](http://www.ontruraleducation.com)) went, it was great! We had dozens of people from all over Ontario attend to discuss the importance of & issues facing, rural education & single school communities in Ontario. I continue to work as a member of the Executive of the Community Schools Alliance ([www.communityschoolsalliance.ca](http://www.communityschoolsalliance.ca)) to fund the research necessary to develop & put forward concrete proposals to the Ministry of Education to effectively address the issues in a fiscally responsible way.

I posted a new blog last month of my speech at the Rural Education Symposium on Ontario's rural & single school communities titled "Rural Ontario needs it's schools" (<https://marcusryanblog.wordpress.com>). It was also picked up by the Rural Ontario Institute! ([www.ruralontarioinstitute.ca/blog/guest-blog--schools-as-anchors-for-rural-community-vitality](http://www.ruralontarioinstitute.ca/blog/guest-blog--schools-as-anchors-for-rural-community-vitality)).

Council is still working on the 2017 Budget, but it is in the final stages now.

A good place to start to understand this process is the agenda for the Special Nov 29 Council meeting on the budget:

Oxford County Planning has almost completed the Zorra Aggregate Policy Review Update & it

is excellent. We all knew there would be frustration with conflicts with the Aggregate Resources Act. We also knew there were a lot of people in Zorra with a list of issues needing to be addressed with respect to aggregate extraction. I think Planning has done an excellent job of integrating all possible inputs & they still have a "to do" list for items that could not be fit in in time for the Interim Control By-Law to expire. I encourage you to look through it and see the NUMBER of highlighted changes based on community input, it clearly shows the changes based on inputs. [www.zorra.on.ca /.../2.../16-12-06%20Agenda%20Compiled.pdf](http://www.zorra.on.ca/.../2.../16-12-06%20Agenda%20Compiled.pdf).

At the time of writing this there have been some significant snow clearing issues in Kintore & Thamesford. Public Works has been meeting regularly with the (new) contractor responsible for the sidewalk clearing & will continue to do so to get the clearing to the standard required. Please do not hesitate to contact me with issues.

The Harrington & Embro Dam Environmental Assessments are nearing completion but the Harrington community in particular is organizing to try to develop some alternative proposals in an attempt to keep something similar to the existing pond & keep the potential for the historic mill to function. Shortly after you read this in the Village Voice myself & several other members of Council will be attending the Rural Ontario Municipal Assoc Conference (<http://roma.on.ca/Events/2017.aspx>). This conference is invaluable to me: there are seminars to learn about municipal government issues & how to best address them, the best opportunity of the year to meet face to face with rural council members from around the province on common issues. I won't be able to give you an update on the conference until the March Village Voice as it takes place after the VV deadline... or you can check out my social media feeds (see below), as I will be posting from the ROMA conference.

The Dec 14 Christmas Concert at AJ Baker PS was great as usual, but I am exceptionally biased, even in extremely bad weather the gym was COMPLETELY FULL of parents for an all grades concert. Time & again I am reminded by events like this of things that would be lost to communities through school consolidations. And afterwards there was a great festive carol singing at Brunny's with Chalmers Church of Kintore! As I walked up through the blowing snow & opened the door the sound of carols came out. It was like a scene from a Christmas show.

We're at the half way point of this term of Council now, and I have to say I am impressed with what has been accomplished, with more to come. A large part of the credit for the organized progress on issues should go to Township Staff (& CAO Don MacLeod in particular) for their hard work in developing the Township's Strategic Plan & working at the items on it.

Frequently Strategic Plans are aspirational "wish lists" that end up not really being used, but in this case it is the "to do list" for this term of Council, and it's working.

As always you can contact me at: Marcus Ryan, Councillor Ward 3, Mobile: 519-301-1634, email: [mryan@zorra.on.ca](mailto:mryan@zorra.on.ca), FB: Marcus Ryan - Zorra Twitter: [@marcusryanzorra](https://twitter.com/marcusryanzorra), Blog: [marcusryanblog.wordpress.com](http://marcusryanblog.wordpress.com) [www.communityschoolsalliance.ca](http://www.communityschoolsalliance.ca), FB: Community Schools Alliance.

## **WARD 2 COUNCIL NEWS from MARIE KEASEY -December**

The news that Maple Leaf Foods is closing the plant in Thamesford in the next 18 months was & still is a shock. My heart goes out to the employees, their families, the affected businesses & community. The Township Council & staff are working with various government departments & Maple Leaf to support the many changes that will be upcoming.

Council had its Nov 1 meeting at AJ Baker Public School and received delegations from the students requesting support for Monarch Butterfly way stations in Zorra Township & to encourage people to plant milkweed for the butterflies to feed on. Council & staff will be reporting back to the students early 2017. It seems that the Township parks could be good

locations for such way stations. The students made very good presentations to Council. This is the 2nd year that Council has had meetings at the public schools & other municipalities are now interested in doing this too. We will definitely be back to the schools in the fall of 2017. The new tanker fire truck will soon be in service at the Thamesford Fire Station. This is a great addition to replace an aging truck.

Council approved & appointed a Water & Wheels Committee to move forward with the proposed splash pad & skate park in Thamesford. The Committee has met & is requesting proposals from landscape architects. Progress is being made on this project. Watch for further developments. Once there is a design(s) & proposed location(s), there will be a public information meeting. All Committee documentation and information is available on the Township's website.

Council also set up a Canada 150 Committee & is still looking for volunteers. If you are interested, please let me or the Township office know. I expect that we will start meeting early Jan 2017, if not before.

Discussion around the current electoral boundaries & number of members on Council took place and Council decided that the status quo would remain, as there hasn't been a significant change in the number of constituents, there has not been a huge number of people expressing an interest in running for office (4 of 5 positions were acclaimed in the 2014 election), and any additional costs for additional positions did not seem warranted. This can be revisited by the next Council which will be elected in 2018.

A draft traffic calming policy will be coming to the Dec 6 Council meeting. There will be opportunity for input at that time or following. There will be a draft of the changes to the Official Plan regarding Resource Extraction Policies at the same meeting. These changes are to go to County Council in Jan 2017 as the interim control bylaw expires in January.

There will be many holiday related activities this month, including an open house at the Beachville & District Museum on Dec 4, the Santa Claus parade Dec 18 in the evening, events sponsored by the Thamesford Public Library Advisory Committee, special Church events, schools, etc. I hope that you and your family will be able to take part in a shared special time during the month.

May everyone have a safe holiday & find peace in the days ahead.

With respect, Marie Keasey

## November's

Thank you to everyone who attended the Volunteer Appreciation Breakfast held at the Community Centre. And many thanks to all of you who volunteer but were not able to attend. Our community would be a very different place without all your work. We hope that this event will grow each year. Remember to turn your clocks back 1 hour Nov 6 & check your smoke & CO detectors.

I had the opportunity to attend the Fire Safety program at the Thamesford Public School and would like to thank the fire fighters who presented. One thing that I learned was not to charge your cell phone, ipad, tablet, etc in bed with it under your pillow. Recently, there was a fire in Toronto that was started from a cell phone being charged while under a pillow. A suggestion was made to have a charging table where all devices are left to charge overnight. Safety first! Council has been on the road with a meeting at Zorra Highland Park, which was unfortunately, a fog day & buses were cancelled. The students will be presenting to Council at a later date. We also had a meeting at Thamesford Public School and 3 delegations were made to Council as well as each Councillor & the Mayor had a student shadow them during

the meeting. All of the students & teachers did a great job. It is such a pleasure to have these meetings in the schools. The delegations were follow ups to last year and included one for the skate park/splash pad proposal for Thamesford, another around PA days' activities at the community centre, along with installing a mural on one of the walls; and one on how to prevent the contamination of the recycling bins in the parks & at the Community Centre. All suggestions will be tracked & reported back to the students early in 2017. Oxford County Warden David Mayberry attended to observe your Township's Council in action during Local Government Week at TPS.

Council directed staff to prepare a resolution for the next Council Meeting to set up a Township Committee for the Water & Wheels Project with at least 5 members of the Community and 1-2 Councillors & a staff person. Council approved up to \$10,000 to work with a landscape architect who specializes in these kinds of projects. Watch & listen for opportunities to get involved. Council will also be establishing a Canada 150 Committee & is looking for volunteers. This committee will be short term as its work will be finished by the end of 2017. Please let me know if you are interested in serving on this committee. The committee will be looking at how to disperse any grant monies received from the Provincial or Federal Government, help groups to publicize their events & help co-ordinate dates so that there are many opportunities for residents & visitors to participate in Canada's 150th Anniversary. Council has passed an amendment to the Animal Care & Control By-Law which now restricts the number of domestic pets (cats & dogs) to two (2) in a multi-residential building. The change is grandfathered (if you have more than 2 at the moment, you will be able to keep those, but if one dies or moves, it cannot be replaced until the number is under 2).

The Zorra Community Policing Committee (ZCPC) is looking for more Committee members. This Committee meets about 4 times a year and includes an OPP officer, Township Staff, Councillor Doug Matheson & other resources as needed. Please let the Township Office know if you are interested. While snow has not started, the tender for sidewalk removal has been awarded. This year, response to the request to tender was not good. The tender was awarded for \$85 per hour after Council asked staff to review the submission & provide information to Council about performing this work by the Township itself. After reviewing the costs of hiring staff & purchasing equipment, it was decided to accept the tender submitted.

By the time you read this, many of you will have had the new water meters installed. The flat rate billing will not change until all of the Townships have been completed. It is expected that the billing changes will be for April 2017. In the mean time though, you will be able to get a sense of your own usage by looking at the meter and keeping track your self. I was also asked if the installation will affect the seasonal water restrictions and the County has indicated that no change in water restrictions will be made. The seasonal restrictions will still be in place for 2017.

I would like to remind dog owners that running off leash EXCEPT at the Dog Park on Allen St is prohibited by Township Bylaw. Please keep your dog on leash when not on your property and "stoop & scoop". Thanks.

Nov 6 is an opportunity to participate in Remembrance Day services: at 10:30am at the Thamesford Community Centre for a combined church service & also at 2pm at the Township Office on Hwy #19 for a service by the Ingersoll Legion. Beachville always has a service at the Legion on Nov 11.

Anyone interested in starting or participating in a seniors' programming team meeting, please join us on Wed, Nov 16 at 1pm in the Beaty Room at the Library. Respectfully submitted, Marie Keasey.

MARIE KEASEY Councillor Ward 2 Corporation of the Township of Zorra 274620 27th Line

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## **October**

Fall is always a busy season & this one is no exception. It is a time to celebrate Thanksgiving. It is time for the Township to say thanks to all the volunteers who make the community what it is. If you volunteer or have volunteered, in any capacity anywhere in the Township: service clubs, minor sports, arts groups, churches, schools, driving people to appointments - the list is endless, you are invited to a breakfast on October 21, from 8am-10am at the Thamesford District Recreation Centre (TDRC). There will be a buffet breakfast but also a "To Go" option. Please stop by so that your Mayor & Councillors can say thank you for your contribution to the community - all of the Township. If possible, please advise the Township Office 485-2490 or [admin@zorrra.on.ca](mailto:admin@zorrra.on.ca) if you can attend (we want to make sure there is enough food!). October will see the return of indoor short mat (lawn bowling) at the TDRC on Wednesdays, first one Oct 12 at 10am. A nominal fee is charged & all are welcome. Stick devices are available for those not able to bend all the time. Free instruction is provided. This month also honours Local Government Week and your Council will be "on the road". Council meetings will be held in the public schools during the day. School classes will make delegations to Council & be able to observe how Council Meetings work. Consider attending one of the meetings with the students at: Zorra Highland Park Oct 4, 9:30am or Thamesford Public School Oct 18, 9:30am or AJ Baker Nov 1, 9:30am. The meetings at the schools last year were lively & informative. The Minister of Education has been invited to attend the meetings - stay tuned. Council has set its meeting dates for 2017 starting with the January meeting on Jan 17, 9:30am. There will only be one meeting in Feb (14th) & in Mar, back to the regular 1st Tuesday of the month being a day meeting and the 3rd Tuesday being an evening meeting. Please check the website for details [www.zorra.on.ca](http://www.zorra.on.ca). Council directed staff to work with the Planner to prepare an amendment to the Zoning Bylaw for residential (R), to set a reasonable requirement for recreational vehicles on private property during the summer season. The proposal will be back to Council on Nov 15, which is an evening meeting. This will likely be a timed item which will be on the agenda when it is posted the week before. Next year is Canada's 150th birthday & various levels of government are recognizing that there will be a year long celebration. Many communities are establishing a Canada 150 Committee to coordinate events & assist with publicity & work on ideas for events. I know that some community groups are working on ideas & I think it would be helpful to ensure that they are well publicized. Please send me any ideas or developments that your group(s) may be working on, including dates & watch for some exciting ways to get to know your Township in 2017. Hallowe'en is on a Monday, the nights are starting to get dark early. Please be careful. Submitted with gratitude, Marie Keasey.

## **September**

As summer moves into fall & all of its busy activities & the return to school, I hope that everyone keeps in mind road safety. Do you always allow for 1 metre away from cyclists? Do you always move over /stop for emergency vehicles, including tow trucks & volunteer fire fighters with a green flashing light? It is the law and can cost in fines & demerit points. Some of you will have noticed that the speed cushions have been installed on Banner Rd and their effectiveness will be evaluated as the year goes by. Please forward comments to me or to the

Director of Public Works (Aden Corcoran). The most consistent complaints I receive are related to speeding & unfortunately, when the police patrol and hand out tickets, many of these drivers live in the Ward (Thamesford). The Police cannot sit on every road, nor can the Township—your tax dollars, afford this level of service. The Police Committee would welcome low cost suggestions to educate drivers of the dangers of speeding & how to reduce the incidence of same. The County did 2 counts on Dundas St over the summer & for the most part, vehicles are going the speed limit, but on a large truck, that can seem higher than 50kmh. Since we have had some consistent rainfall, the burn restriction as been lifted. Please note though, that water restrictions remain in effect until Sept 30. The new 2016-17 Waste Calendars have been mailed. They are also available on the County's website. Zorra will continue to have its garbage pick up on Mondays, even on holidays (except if Dec 25 was a Monday). Tax notices were mailed in August. If you did not receive it, please contact the Township Office. Work on the Environmental Assessment (EA) for the Landfill Proposal continues and there is an open house on Thurs, Sept 1, 3-8pm at the Colombo Club in Beachville. I would encourage you to drop in to this event to stay current on the process & the information available. Next year, Canada & Ontario will be 150 years old and there will be many opportunities to celebrate, with grants available for groups to access to present events & celebrations over the year. The Township is applying for a Celebration Grant which can be used by the Township and shared with groups. Groups can also apply directly to the Federal & Provincial Governments. I am hoping that a Canada 150 Committee can be set up in the Township to try to promote, enhance & support community events. Stay safe. Respectfully submitted, Marie Keasey

## **WARD 3 COUNCIL NEWS from MARCUS RYAN**

### **December**

I will be holding a "Town Hall" style Ward 3 meeting on Tues, Dec 13 at 7pm in the basement of Chalmer's Church in Kintore. I will prepare some material, but mostly I'm hoping that you will ask questions & tell me what you are concerned with in Ward 3, and in the Township. Let me know in advance & I'll do some homework to try & have answers for the meeting. Let me know what you want to talk about!

The news of the closure Cold Springs / Maple Leaf in 2018 has hit Zorra, and obviously Thamesford in particular, hard. Over 400 people will lose their jobs, local businesses will lose customers & finally the Township will lose a lot of Property Tax revenue. The entire Township Staff and Councillors along with the Rural Oxford Economic Development Corporation are researching, reaching out to other levels of government, and exploring options with people in Zorra. What can you do to help? If you own a business, do you need experienced, skilled employees? If you're a resident, go visit a local business: have lunch at Tokyo Joe's, get a beer at Brunny's, shop at local businesses owned by your neighbours.

By the time you read this Ontario's first Rural Education Symposium will have happened... I guess you'll have to wait to read about it here next month (or check [www.ontruraleducation.com](http://www.ontruraleducation.com) or social media).

There was another Public Information Centre for the Harrington Dam Environmental Assessment after my last column. It was extremely well attended & I think it got people thinking. Look for some things to come from the Harrington community on this.

I posted a new blog last month on Surplus Farmhouse Severances (<https://marcusryanblog.wordpress.com>), I encourage you to read it, I think this is an important issue for us to consider as a Township and as a County and I'm going to keep exploring it.

The Nov 1 Council meeting was at AJ Baker P.S. & was great! Council was educated by the AJ Baker Grade 4/5 class about the plight of monarch's & their need for milkweed "way stations" on their migration routes. They asked for Council to consider possible locations for Milkweed Way Stations in the Township. Council directed staff to explore possible locations owned by the Township & to have talks with TVDSB & UTRCA as well and report back at the next Council meeting.

Also at the meeting I voted for (and Council unanimously passed) an application for zone change to establish a group home for 10 residents on an existing undersized agricultural property. The applicant intends to provide individual suites for seniors with shared dining & recreation facilities. Planning Staff were of the opinion that the proposal did not meet the intent of the Provincial Policy Statement, or satisfy the criteria of the Official Plan, Planning staff recommended Township Council not approve the request for zone change. I think that while there will almost certainly be challenges & difficulties with this development it may provide a great opportunity for Zorra residents to retire & stay in their community. Senior's are often forced to "move into town" and out of their home community at exactly the time of their life when they could be helping to look after their grandchildren, and when they could be getting care & help from their children late in their own life. I think there is opportunity here to address that.

Council also established a Zorra Water & Wheels Committee and they got straight to work: they have written, got approval from Council, and sent out an Architect Scope of Work Proposal to get a location, plans & costs established. There have been several public meetings by Oxford Planning presenting the outcome of Zorra's Interim Control ByLaw with respect to Aggregate Policy Review at a Public Meeting. I am very happy with the work Planning did on this, but frustrated by how limiting the Provincial Aggregate Resources Act is. By the time you read this I expect the recommendations will be on their way through approval by both the Township & Council.

On Nov 5 Chalmers Church in Kintore held an old fashioned Bazaar and it was awesome! Well attended & some incredible local, hand made finds. The star of the show for me was Kintore Coffee Co! On Nov 7 Mrs. Hodgkinson's Grade 4/5 class from AJ Baker walked over to Chalmers Church and were taught how to knit by the Knitting & More group as part of learning around Remembrance Day. What an event. This is the kind of one-on-one, personal, in-their-community learning you can't get in a classroom & certainly couldn't get IF THE SCHOOL WAS CLOSED! Congratulations and thanks to all those involved. At the Nov 15 Council meeting I spoke to the proposed annexation of some Zorra land by Ingersoll. In Zorra we protect farmland. We have said no to solar projects on Prime Agricultural Land. We protect 2 acres at a time from our own residents, even though there are far fewer houses per 1,000 acres than there used to be. Every time we say "no" to a family home we damage our tax base, we lose residents, we lose students for our schools, we lose population density to justify Emergency Rooms, we lose vibrant contributing members of our community. But now we're asked to give away 200 acres at a time?! The Provincial Policy Statement & the County Official Plan say the deal is that rural areas protect Prime Agricultural Land & the urban areas densify. This annexation proposal is wrong. This is sprawl. The current Township Strategic Plan says that Zorra is a prosperous, vibrant, environmental community. This proposal goes against all of those goals. Annexation is not in the best interests of residents or the Corporation of the Township. Council unanimously voted not to consider it.

Reminder: "Town Hall" style Ward 3 meeting on Tues, Dec 13 at 7pm in the basement of Chalmer's Church in Kintore. As always you can contact me at: Marcus Ryan, Councillor Ward 3, Mobile: 519-301-1634, [mryan@zorra.on.ca](mailto:mryan@zorra.on.ca), FB: Marcus Ryan - Zorra, Twitter: @marcusryanzorra, Blog: [marcusryanblog.wordpress.com](http://marcusryanblog.wordpress.com), [www.communityschoolsalliance.ca](http://www.communityschoolsalliance.ca), FB: Community Schools Alliance

## November

This month started on a bittersweet note for me as several more rural "single school community" schools have been targeted for closure by the TVDSB. Obviously bitter to see others begin the stressful journey our community went through, but sweet in that we have so much experience, knowledge & connections to share with them. They have a tough journey ahead of them, but are well on their way to mounting a strong defense. On that note I am extremely excited to tell you about Ontario's first Rural Education Symposium "Growing Innovation... Learn Local" Sat, Nov 26 hosted at the North Middlesex Community Centre in Parkhill (225 McLeod St, Parkhill). The focus for the symposium is to foster a shared vision for rural schools in Ontario, facilitate dialogue locally & provincially related to small & rural schools, and promote the strengths of rural community schools. The keynote speaker is Doug Reycraft the Chair of the Community Schools Alliance and there will be a panel discussion including myself, Tracy Grant (former TVDSB Trustee), and Daniel West (community schools advocate and loooong time TVDSB meeting attendee). Best of all, it is open to the public with free registration ([eventbrite.ca/ontario-rural-education-symposium-tickets](http://eventbrite.ca/ontario-rural-education-symposium-tickets))! Our Oct 18 Council meeting in Thamesford Public School was extremely well attended! I had Grade 5 TPS student Allison Wright "shadow" me for the Council meeting, and grade 5 student Graden Vandevenne had lunch with me and then stayed for the rest of the Council meeting! They were both really well behaved & asked great questions: watch for them to get involved in their community! Council heard a delegation from the "Water & Wheels Committee" asking for up to \$10,000 to hire a professional to develop 2 alternate plans for a Splash Pad & Skate Park. I spoke to this saying that it is completely consistent with the current Township Strategic Plan and could be completed in parallel with the Recreation Master Plan. It's time that the Township "take advantage" of these community groups' enthusiasm & support this and move forward in the 2017 budget. Council then passed a motion to establish a Township Committee (and terms of reference) to control funds. Uniondale Deputy District Chief Ron King was recently elected the President of The Ontario Fire Fighters Association. As many of you may know Ron has been very active with the association for many years and this is a great honour and achievement for him. Both the Embro and Harrington Environmental Assessments had their 3rd Public Information Centre meetings & in each case the recommended option based on the Provincially mandated Environmental Assessment was removal of the dam. This is not the final decision, but will form a major part of any approval process for any possible decision. All details are available on the UTRCA website (<http://thamesriver.on.ca/watermanagement/recreational-dams/classes-harrington-embro-dams/>).

The 2nd annual Zorra Volunteer Breakfast was held October 21 and was even better attended than the first one last year! I love this event: it is all that is good in our community.

The people that attend are "the doers", the ones that step up & give their time and energy to make their part of their community better. They cannot be thanked enough: what would it cost to pay people to deliver these services to our community? Incalculable.

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@marcusryanzorra.

## October

There was yet another record breaking Uniondale Firefighters chicken BBQ held on Sept 8. I love this event. You get a great meal, that's for sure, but it really strikes me that when people complain about all that's wrong with the world today, this community feast provided by the firefighters is a great living example of all that's right with the world. Maybe that's why more & more people come every year! This year's Embro Fair was held Sept 16-18 and the weather didn't cooperate. Similar to the Uniondale BBQ, this event is the kind of thing I think a lot of people miss from their childhood. We need to get more of our kids out to this event next year. It's an event they can directly participate in & build great community memories. Thanks to Kintore resident Kate Henderson for raising (collectively through residents), \$8,120.01 for cancer in this year's Terry Fox Run! This year's Zorra Volunteer Breakfast is October 21, 8-10am at the Thamesford District Recreation Centre. If you volunteer in Zorra IN ANY WAY, this is for you! Coach or help with a team? That's you. Help at school? That's you. Help some seniors out? That's you. Cemetery Board? Help at the fair? Cali? You.You.You. Please come out & grab breakfast and let us thank you. I am thrilled to report that as part of this year's Local Government Week Zorra Township Council will be going "on the road" again as a follow up to last year's wildly successful outings! As with ALL Council meetings these are open to the public: these are YOUR meetings, we are doing YOUR business for YOU. Show the kids you care by coming to a meeting at a school. Zorra Highland Park P.S. Oct 4, Thamesford P.S. Oct 18, AJ Baker P.S. Nov 1. Now that school is back, please drive safe & watch for stopping buses & our community's future.

As always there are many ways to follow/contact me:

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