

Mayor's Report- Thursday February 25, 2021

It has been 4 weeks since our last regular meeting. I hope that Council members have been able to get out and enjoy some of the beautiful sunny weather we have seen in these last weeks.

All of the meetings I have attended this month have been virtual, on Zoom and Microsoft Teams.

The County of Renfrew budget was presented and passed at a very long February 1st meeting. The Director of Finance, Mr. Jeff Foss walked us through the Budget Workshop presentation (155 pages) to explain all aspects of the 2021 Budget.

The following is an excerpt from the February 3rd **News Release** entitled **County of Renfrew Approves 2021 Budget**:

The Warden and Chair commended Elected Officials and County staff on the delivery of the 2021 budget which meets all of the targets set by Council for 2021. At Monday's meeting County Council approved the 2021 Annual Budget.

The principles adopted in the Long-term Financial Plan continue to guide the annual budget discussions, ensuring that the County of Renfrew remains focused on today and on the future. In doing so, the County of Renfrew will have the resources necessary to operate all of its programs and services as well as fund the \$281 million asset renewal program over the next 10-year planning horizon.

At the September 2020 session, County Council gave clear direction to the CAO and staff on how they would like the first draft of the budget prepared in order to minimize the financial impact on Renfrew County residents. Council has passed a budget that will include investments in projects for social housing, long-term care, more efficient service delivery at the County administration building, as well as rehabilitation and construction of roads, bridges and culverts.

The 2021 approved levy, adjusted for growth, equates to a residential property tax impact of \$9.07 increase per \$100,000 value of their home. Given the median residential property value of \$203,000 in Renfrew County, a typical homeowner would see an impact of \$18.41 for 2021. That means that for a very modest tax rate increase of 2.5%, the County of Renfrew can continue to deliver high quality services to our community such as two Long-Term Care Homes, Paramedic Services, and Social Services.

The Budget Workshop meeting was recorded and as all of our COR meetings, it can be viewed on YouTube at any time if you are interested. I would also be glad to share the COR Budget Power Point presentation.

On February 9th I attended an Update with Ontario Mayors on COVID-19 Vaccine Distribution with the Task Force that includes: retired General Hillier, MMAH Minister Steve Clark, MOH Christine Elliott and SG Sylvia Jones. As we all know the vaccine shortage has changed the anticipated rollout considerably since that meeting. All answers are dependent on the current availability of the vaccine which is now ramping up. We are approaching Phase 2 where additional vulnerable populations (age 80 and up) and essential workers will be served at expanded vaccination sites. Updates are available at www.rcdhu.com

On February 10th the Health Committee began with 2 presentations, the first from Re/Fact Consulting concerning the Senior Housing Strategy in Renfrew County draft report and the second from the Petawawa Centennial Family Centre (PCFHC). Dr. Jonathon Fitzsimon, the Medical Lead on RC VTAC

introduced the concept of the Renfrew County Virtual Family Health Team or the VFHT. Dr. Fitzsimon presented an innovative solution where the PC FHC could employ 2.0 FTE new physicians using existing budget where unattached patients would be able to access primary care. This model would create a multi-disciplinary team using virtual technology, community paramedics, local hospitals and existing community health services.

The Renfrew County Housing Corporation reported that the eligible applicant numbers are moving up as are the rental arrears. The Community Services Committee report showed that Ontario Works 2020 statistics are showing a downward trend from 2019. The Child Care and Early Years Division was pleased to report the additional support of \$367,000 for operating expenses from the province.

Yesterday's, COR regular monthly (8 hour!) Zoom meeting began with three presentations: the first to Mr. Del O'Brien for his induction into the Ontario Agriculture Hall of Fame; second was the final draft of the Senior Housing Strategy and finally, an update on MTO activities in Renfrew County. This was a very interesting hour and a half that I would recommend Council watch on YouTube, especially the video of the future Calabogie Road interchange on Highway 17.

The OPA 31 draft policy changes continue to be a work in progress. A number of contentious issues have been dealt with but there are still some outstanding. Horton Township has hired a consultant to assist them the agricultural designations. KHR objects to the deer yard designation in 80% of their municipality. The OPA mapping is the issue with many municipalities.

The Economic Development staff continues to work on developing a County broadband Strategy – the goal is to ensure the County is positioned to optimize broadband service delivery across the County as rapidly and cost effectively as possible. Mayor Jennifer Murphy (Bonnechere Valley) received support to run for a directorship on the Board of the Eastern Ontario Rural Network (EORN). The election to be held next month.

Upcoming for tomorrow is another Vaccine Update call with Premier Ford, Ministers Elliott and Clark, Solicitor General Jones and retired General Hillier. I will keep you posted!

Mayor Debbi Grills