



# Council News & Notes

From Tuesday, February 13, 2024

## Upcoming Meetings

**Council Meeting**  
February 27

6 pm

Regular  
Council Meeting

**Council Meeting**  
March 12, 2024

9 am

Regular Council  
Meeting

[View Calendar >>](#)

## Mayors' Message

It is with great sadness that we say good-bye to one of our municipality's biggest champions, Daryl Kramp. Daryl passed away on February 8<sup>th</sup>. He served this community for over 20 years as MP and MPP. I remember my first dealings with Daryl. Soon after we had moved to the community I became a Library Board Trustee and assumed the role of Fundraising Chair for our new library. One morning I cornered Daryl at the Northway Restaurant and introduced myself and talked about this exciting initiative. We had a wonderful exchange and he asked that I send him more information. From that point on Daryl and I worked well together. One day he called and said: "Don you got your money". Recently I meet with Daryl and shared our budgetary concerns. He was on his way to Toronto to meet with the Government and noted he would lobby on our behalf for some assistance. A great man indeed. The Municipality of Tweed extends its heartfelt sympathies to Carol Ann, MP Shelby Kramp-Neuman, Kari, Taryl and family.

This Council would also like to extend their deepest appreciation to the Festival of Trees for touching the lives of our children in so many different and wonderful ways. In your 19<sup>th</sup> year having raised \$25000 for a grand total of \$298,000. Absolutely unbelievable...absolutely spectacular. Congratulations to all who give of their time to bring this wonderful event and its rewards to our community. Bravo!

On February 1<sup>st</sup> our community celebrated Black History Month with a flag raising at the Old Jail House. Unfortunately I could not attend. Thank you Deputy Mayor DeMarsh and Councillors Flieler and Valiquette for being there. Every February, people in Canada are invited to participate in Black History Month festivities and events that honour the legacy of Black Canadians and their communities.

And now for a bitter sweet moment. This Council and staff bid a fond farewell to our Public Works Manager Allan Broek who officially retires tomorrow. Allan started with the Township of Hungerford and then joined the Municipality of Tweed at the time of amalgamation. Allan has served this community for 35 years. Allan we are so grateful for all that you have done for this municipality during those blistery winter days keeping our roads clear and safe. For all the help you and your Team provided to our residents during our devastating floods and the 2022 tornado. Managing 52 bridges and over 800 lane kms of road is no small feat. Your commitment to Council and your team are greatly appreciated. You will be missed. Wishing you much happiness as you begin this next chapter.

And welcome Ryan Reid to the Municipality of tweed team as you take on the role of Public Works Manager. Those on your interview board have sang your praises as did those who provided references. We look forward to seeing what the future brings. Rest assured this Council stands with you.

We also want to extend our appreciation and thanks once again to Trevor Prevost who stepped up to the plate during this period of transition. Trevor you did an amazing job keeping our Public Works Department running smoothly and effectively. We appreciated your Council briefings and your pleasant demeanor. We are lucky to have you on the team.

My opening remarks are rather lengthy today because there is much to share.

On January 25<sup>th</sup> I attended a Hastings County Council meeting. That afternoon I met with Mayo Hawco, Executive Director Gateway Community Health Centre, to discuss doctor recruitment and other health issues facing our community. I also attended a Belleville General Hospital Foundation Board meeting that afternoon.

On the 26<sup>th</sup> Rachel Hardesty and I met with Bill Summers re-the pavilion accessible ramp redesign followed by a meeting with a local home builder to discuss our housing development zoning by-law. Later Rachele and I made our way to Desi restaurant where I was able to connect with the owner to find out if there is anything we can do to help. She indicated that she appreciated the support from the municipality and Council and that they felt valued in this community. The reason for leaving was that their rent more than doubled. It was too much to bare. They love Tweed and look forward to returning one day.

On Sunday the 28<sup>th</sup> I was interviewed by the Bancroft News on our ROMA delegation experience. On February 5<sup>th</sup> I attended a special County Council meeting. On February 12<sup>th</sup> I attended a meeting at Moira Place that was arranged by Michael O'Keeffe. It was an opportunity to meet with Ray Barlow an AON VP and to have a preliminary discussion on any potential development plans. It was also an opportunity to meet with Cheryl Kerr, Founder & Managing Partner of Medex Health Services. Her organization recently purchased a home in Tweed to house 6 PSWs to work at Moira Place. This is a wonderful solution to help them address the turnover in agency staff.

At our last Council meeting I noted I would report back on our ROMA delegations. I have since been writing thank you letters to those who hosted our five delegations. Three by the Conservative party and one each with the leaders of the NDP and Liberal parties. The genuine concern, interest and provoking questions related to our financial situation and looming infrastructure costs/deficit by both the NDP and the Liberals left us feeling that we were heard. This was in stark contrast to our reception by Minister Surma, Minister for Infrastructure, where the lack of empathy and understanding was absolutely unbelievable. Parliamentary Assistant Byer representing the Minister of Finance was no different. I do not think that the Municipality of Tweed has ever experienced such indifference. The only exception from the governing party was Parliamentary Assistant Smith from the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport re our request for an increase in library funding.

Our first delegation was with Minister Surma re our insurmountable infrastructure costs as well as our municipal revenue situation. Minister Surma basically thanked us for taking control of our financial dilemma and supported what we are doing to get our finances under control. But alas, when it comes to our five "asks" and providing some assistance, the answer was an unequivocal "NO".

Our five asks included:

1. A one-time \$2 million infrastructure grant to help build up our reserves.

We had to borrow \$4.1 million in 2023 to cover our infrastructure investments. We were hoping that since there were no provincial financial supports in place for 2023, and since our tax payers had to borrow to cover the costs, that the provincial government would consider helping us by topping up our reserves so that we would be ready for the next infrastructure project. We did not undertake any infrastructure projects in 2024 due to insufficient funds in our reserves.

2. A \$3 million grant to address the George and James St. rehabilitation so that we can proceed with building a 25 unit (or more) mixed rental apartment building.

Minister Surma encouraged us to apply for the *Housing-Enabling Water Systems Fund (HEWSF)* that was announced that day. One of the key criteria noted in Minister Surma's January 22nd ROMA presentation, and a huge caveat for the Municipality of Tweed, was that the project had to "be in the process of, or have completed, the design and planning phases". Her letter of January 29th noted the same condition.

Unfortunately, many small rural communities lack the funding to undertake such studies. Furthermore, even if they do, they cannot commit scarce dollars in the hopes that such a program may eventually happen; especially in light of so many competing demands and failed funding announcements.

In the Eastern Ontario Wardens Caucus (EWOC) latest report, which was tabled at Hastings County Council on January 25th, addresses the many issues facing small rural communities. On page 13 the report notes:

*“Unfortunately, the HEWSF will not work in the majority of rural areas because municipalities are required to have the design work finished and evaluated on ‘the price per house’ (how many housing units getting built, divided by the total cost). This formula will not be as effective for small and rural communities as they will not be able to meet the criteria. These municipalities will not have come as far on infrastructure planning and cannot expect growth to pay for this. In conclusion, small and rural municipalities will not be able to compete with urban cities based on the current funding framework. Moving ahead, rural municipalities must not be left behind.”*

Alas, small rural municipalities are forgotten yet again and Minister Surma’s reference to our project during our delegation, the one crumb thrown our way, was a non-starter from the get go.

3. A return to 1/3 funding programs by both the provincial and federal government.

Minister Surma noted that the provincial government wanted to resurrect the 1/3 1/3 1/3 funding program. However, the federal government was not interested. Our take on the situation is “give us a third and we will cover 2/3s because as it stand we are paying a 100% of all costs.” Sounds like a cop out to us.

4. A comprehensive provincial review of long-term infrastructure costs threatening the financial viability of small rural municipalities.

Minister Surma didn’t acknowledge this request. We believe that the province would rather not know the state of the looming infrastructure deficit all municipalities have on the horizon.

Municipalities are required to update asset management plans on a regular basis. They are specifically designed to show us what future capital expenses are on the horizon. Small rural municipalities do not have the large residential/commercial tax base of larger urban centers. For example, we have 52 bridges which is more than our neighbor Belleville with almost as many lane kms of road. Tweed over 800 kms and Belleville 900 kms.

According to our Asset Management Plan, the Municipality of Tweed will be required to invest \$11.5 million per year over the next 15-20 years to fund future capital expenses. This is absolutely out of the realm of possibility. Even if our tax rates where at the level where they should be and even if our reserves were properly funded; there is no possible scenario where our tax base could fund both future infrastructure projects and municipal operations.

There is a looming infrastructure deficit facing all municipalities. However, small rural municipalities do not have the financial capacity to deal with the infrastructure tsunamis at our door. We are the proverbial “canary in the coal mine”. We are vulnerable, we are scared, we are a harbinger of the disaster to come. We have identified the problems with all of their complexities. We now need the Ontario government to recognize that the time to act is today before a critical infrastructure failure event results in the loss of life.

5. A small rural developer infrastructure grant program funded by the federal and provincial governments.

There was no reference to this request and that may be because we approached our 15 minute warning. We have other ideas that would help rural developers. The federal government is throwing 100’s of millions of dollars at the housing crisis across the country. Would they entertain interest free loans to small rural developers to cover their infrastructure costs and have the loan paid back as houses are sold? This municipality is ready to do our share to help address the housing crisis but all the money is going to large urban centers.

Currently the feds aren’t getting anything back on their investment. We have an alternative solution to getting houses built in small communities and our developers are ready to build. We are also prepared to review our zoning bylaws to promote housing densification along with affordable housing development. We will entertain tiny homes (400-600 sq. ft.) and smaller homes (900-1200 sq. ft.).

Needless to say were extremely upset, frustrated and angry with the provincial government’s response. They treat us as a minor irritant. Our delegation with the Ministry of Finance and PA Byers was just as infuriating. We were seeking permission to introduce a commercial vacancy tax for storefronts left vacant for more than 6 months when there were renters in the wings ready to rent. Much along the lines of what has been approved for Toronto. No sooner had we finished our delegation and PA Byers said: “NO. We are not in the habit of raising taxes we lower them.” To which I responded: “Every time you lower taxes I have to raise mine.” If you recall, on January

9<sup>th</sup> Councillor Flieler tabled a motion to reinstate the vehicle license registration fee that was rescinded by the province. Why? If that fee was still in place there would be enough to provide each of the 440 municipalities in this great province with \$2.25 million annually. And yet today there isn't a penny to help the Municipality of Tweed nor our neighbours across Hastings County.

Our communities are home to many elderly and young families. They need vibrant commercial enterprises where they live, work and play. Travelling long distances is not an option for many. They want to shop local. Furthermore an exciting downtown entices others to move into the community. Our small rural developers have subdivisions ready to be built. Our way of helping address the housing crisis.

We still struggle with why the provincial government cannot contemplate helping small rural communities especially in light of how they helped Toronto. They repatriated the Don Valley Parkway and the Gardner Expressway, and allocated \$500 million/year for the next three years to help with Toronto's operating deficit. That is your money they are handing out. But not a dime for the Municipality of Tweed.

The federal government is not blameless either with their doling out \$100's of millions of housing dollars to large urban centers with "nada" to small rural municipalities.

Maybe they're all thinking: "Look the other way and that these small irritants will go away". Well this small irritant is going to be a huge pain in your....! We hope that the opposition parties will help us bring light to this injustice. We are prepared to go to Queen's Park. In fact Councillor Flieler and now Mayor Jan O'Neill are talking about taking a stand at Queen's Park. I am on board and I believe this Council is as well. And after Queen's Park it is on to Parliament Hill.

We took on the Ontario Government before when they denied us 2022 tornado relief funding. Many months later the Municipality of Tweed secured \$5.5 million in aid of which we received \$1.2 million. We not only fight for ourselves but for our fellow municipalities as well. We may be small but we are mighty and there are many of us.

And as infuriating as this has been, I have to thank MPP Ric Bresee for all that he does to get our issues heard and the support that he provides along the way. He truly understands what we are facing. This guy gets it but he can only do so much. Thank you Ric.

Again thank you to each and every one of you sitting at this table and to our staff for your commitment to getting this Municipality's finances back on track knowing how hard it was for you to approve the 2024 budget. I also appreciate your support and assistance as we take on both the provincial and federal governments. And we do not stand alone...we have friends.

### [Mayo Hawco Gateway Community Health Centre](#)

Mayo Hawco, Executive Director of Gateway Community Health Centre, and Dianne Spencer, Board Chair, attended the Council Meeting at Council's invitation to present the 2022-2023 Annual Report and to provide a presentation outlining the Mission Statement, Vision Statement and Value Statement of Gateway Community Health Centre. Ms. Hawco provided a synopsis of their Strategic Directions for 2022-2025 including the impacts of Community Health and a review of the many programs and services provided by the Health Centre by their team. She outlined the challenges the Health Centre faces with regard to staffing and funding to be able to provide the best care possible to the community.

Council expressed their appreciation for the presentation and assured the Delegation that they had Council's support moving forward with community engagement, housing, and advocacy for funding.

### [By-law to Regulate Traffic & Parking](#)

Council passed By-law 2024-12, A By-law to regulate traffic and parking in the Municipality of Tweed. [You can access the By-law here.](#)

### [Power Boat Races June 7 to 9 2024](#)

Council approved the request from William Hunter to use the Tweed Memorial Park for the Tweed Powerboat Races from June 7 to 9, 2024.

