

Responses from Andrew Tanner

Bridgewater Town Council Candidates Forum
hosted by South Shore Public Libraries
September 30, 2020

Questions submitted by the public; 6 drawn randomly for use during the recorded forum, all to be made available for comment to interested candidates for inclusion alongside forum video.

- How do you plan to involve residents in the decision-making process in our town?

Our Talk Bridgewater initiative where we go out into public spaces quarterly has been quite successful and I would like to see that continue. Obviously interaction through personal social accounts and the Town's social account is good. Nothing beats grabbing a coffee/drink and speaking to residents one on one. We have been successful in encouraging public consultations on bigger projects and more controversial issues.

- If you could change one thing in our zoning code, what would it be and why?

Currently we have a bonus policy in place to encourage developers to include affordable housing as part of a new development. It has not had much uptake, so I have been looking at other variations like the HRM model of a fund developers pay into, which also seems to have some issues. Related to this would be the recent increase in applications to allow for an in-law suite, or family apt within a single unit residential zone. I would like to explore that further with staff to see if there is adaptive and smoother policy we might define.

- Do you think housing affordability is an issue in our city? If yes, what do you plan on doing to improve housing affordability?

It's an issue in every area of the Province and it is a Provincial issue that Municipalities must continue to work on with the Province. The recent Federal announcement on Sept. 21 with a commitment to invest \$1B in affordable housing is encouraging. As I noted above, adapting policy to encourage and support affordable housing development needs some further work. I would also add that job growth in our area to ensure people have employment opportunities that pay well, will also assist in this process. The Energize Bridgewater initiative to move people out of energy poverty, is another excellent tool to help with this problem.

- If you are not elected, what would you do to try to help work on ideas or issues that are important to you?

As I noted in the forum, the first 1 – 2 years of Council is a real learning curve, so I would make myself available to support new Councillors who might want a resource to bounce ideas off of,

or may need help understanding a process or policy. Given my history on various Boards and Committees (LCLC, MJSB, PSC etc.), I would be more than happy to continue serving on those, or supporting them from an information transfer perspective.

- What's the one major issue you plan to address?

Wastewater infrastructure is at a critical point right now. There are several major issues that are intertwined together. We must invest heavily in fixing our wastewater infrastructure, or very soon growth will only be allowed in specific areas of town. If we start fixing wastewater, we can support growth (think Exit 12A with 500 acres available and much more development Northeast of Glen Allan), when we support growth, we increase employment opportunities, we gain more tax revenue, when we gain more tax revenue we can pay down our debt, offer enhanced services and do more for our residents. I was a clear advocate on gradually inching up our sewer rates to ensure that we are covering costs and future generations are not finding themselves in this similar situation of underfunded aging infrastructure.

- How have you already been volunteering or serving in the city?

I am currently Deputy Mayor and have been on Town Council for the past 8 years, so I haven't had much time to offer up to volunteer organizations. The time commitment of Town Council, combined with the various Committees and Boards that I serve on as a result, have both day and evening meeting schedules. I also run several businesses and still have a relatively young family that needs my involvement. I have volunteered for the Soapbox races in Mahone Bay and the Dory Races in Mahone Bay/Bridgewater, which I would like to see expanded. Prior to this I was an avid volunteer through minor hockey, Bridgewater Barracudas, Bridgewater Tennis Club, Outdoor Ice Rink, YMCA, etc...

- What do you think it going well right now in Bridgewater?

The continued conversion of Bridgewater into a critical urban hub of the Province. Our Town has all of the amenities anyone would want, while being a very short drive to HRM. The development at Exit 12A is going to be a phenomenal opportunity for the Town. I've had several conversations already with developers wanting to invest in that area and we have seen the optimism of new development in the Downtown core. Now we need to ensure we are inclusive and welcoming to all.

- Are you a member of a political party? If yes, what benefit or impact does your membership of a political party have for the local community?

I am currently not a member of a political party. Our relationship with our current MLA and MP have not been based along political lines and have been extremely positive for the Town I look

forward to continuing to enhance those relationships, ensuring the we have a strong partnership and someone working for the Town at the Provincial and Federal level.

- How would you encourage employment and economic development in our area?

As a business owner in Bridgewater, I understand the current business climate and speak regularly with other business owners. Our hiring of an Economic Development Officer in the coming weeks, will support our move towards an established relationship with the business community. Being available and open to meet with developers expressing an interest in Bridgewater, working with them to enable projects that benefit Bridgewater is critical. As well, marketing our Town as the place to live and raise a family, which even includes our new highway signage, works to build the brand of 'Bridgewater is the place to be, the place to live and work'.

- What do you see as the most pressing needs for infrastructure or capital projects in Bridgewater?

As I noted earlier, wastewater infrastructure is the single most important item, that throttles growth.

- If you received a \$1 million grant to use for the town any way you wanted, what would you do with it and why?

I would leverage this to get matching funds from our Provincial and Federal partners to then spend \$3M on wastewater infrastructure.

- How do you feel about the bus service and what do you feel needs to be change or improve?

The bus service was a bold move for Bridgewater and we were lucky enough to get a massive amount of funding to launch it, including two used busses from HRM. We have just purchased a new bus, which is extremely exciting and usage continues to grow. It has allowed numerous people to move about Town, who might not otherwise do so.

- What do you think of the idea to change the name of Cornwallis Street here in Bridgewater? Do you feel it is erasing part of our history or adding to the story of our history?

You cannot erase history. We can, however, make changes that honour people who have made positive changes in our community. This change has been initiated by Council and is already underway.