

Cheryl Fougere Response

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.

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

Council engages our residents with quarterly sessions called “Talk Bridgewater”. Each councillor has a scheduled time at public space to listen and respond to citizen’s concerns. This has been very successful, and I would like to see it continue. Social media is another great way as the public. I encourage residents to reach out to me at anytime with their concerns. Also, I attend public events as much as possible.

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

I would like to see more incentives to entice developers, to offer affordable housing units. The town has seen a growth in new apartment buildings over the last couple years. I believe we can work together with all levels of government and our local stakeholders (South Shore Housing Coalition and Canadian Mortgage Housing Corporation) to ensure this is made a priority.

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

Yes, is a major issue here and we are not alone. Housing affordability is a significant issue right across our country. I am optimistic with the federal government’s recent financial announcement for affordable housing is welcoming news. As indicated in my previous answer, all three governments and local stakeholders must collaborate to address the issue and look at a feasible action plan.

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

I would make myself available to support new councillors if they expressed interest. It can be overwhelming at times, with the committee work and understanding the role of governance. If there is a vacancy position for a citizen representative on any town committees, I would be

delighted to volunteer to serve as a member. I would also be happy to volunteer at any town events.

#5. What is the one major issue you plan to address?

As indicated in my response to question #3, I feel more work needs be done with affordable housing. It is critical that we work with our provincial government to ensure what issues we have in Bridgewater for housing.

#6. How have you already been volunteering or serving in the city?

Yes, I have been an active volunteer in the community for several years. A good portion of my time is allocated to committee work for Town Council. I am also a part time student through UBC working towards my realtor appraiser designation. Currently, I am an active member with the Bridgewater Barracudas Board. I have volunteered for other committees in the past – School Advisory Council, School Travel Committee and Whimsical Children’s Store.

#7. What do you think it going well right now in Bridgewater?

The excitement on the Smart Cities win last spring was a great energy boost to staff. Reducing energy poverty in the town and adapting this template to other cities is being watched by many. Bridgewater has shown great leadership in sustainability and have been recognized provincially and at the national level.

#8. 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?

No, I am currently not a member of a political party. I believe it is important for municipal government to establish good working relationships with both the provincial MLA and federal MP for our area. Town Council have demonstrated this and I am hopeful this continues regardless of the political party that is in government at the time.

#9. How would you encourage employment and economic development in our area?

In this year’s budget, it was a priority of Council to create a staff position for an Economic Development Officer. The key role for this employee is to focus on business growth and retention in the town of Bridgewater. The Smart Cities project

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

In order to continuing growing as a town our wastewater system needs replacing in the foreseeable future. This aging infrastructure will limit new development and growth opportunities if not addressed. Bridgewater is thriving in many aspects and we want to continue growing.

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

Based on the town's financial commitment for \$4 million (1 million for the next 4 years) for the new interchange at exit 12A on the 103, I feel paying down the town's long term debt would make the most sense. We need to be fiscally responsible, although there are many places one would like to spend this grant money.

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

Public transit has been a great success in Bridgewater. After a two-year pilot project, ridership numbers surpassed staff's expectations. Council made the decision to make it a permanent service a year ago. We are all excited and awaiting the arrival on two new buses which will happen soon. I feel there is an interest and opportunity to expand public transit outside the town limits. This is dependent on other municipal partners working together to provide a regional service.

#13. 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?

It is by no means an easy task to determine whether Cornwallis Street should be renamed. Council has provided direction to the Heritage Advisory Committee to do the necessary work. As committee chair, Heritage Advisory Committee met in September for the initial discussion of this topic. Future meetings and work are required by HAC to determine a recommendation back to Council.