

Erin Carr Responses

Candidate for Bridgewater Town Council 2020

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

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

Currently, I am holding “meet me at the mall” sessions 3 times a week so that I can meet and talk with residents here in town. If elected I would continue those sessions in various places in town on a monthly basis, to ensure that I am available and accessible to talk in person in addition to phone, email, or social media. Community engagement is important for communication between residents, councillors and staff. A councillor’s job is to be informed about the wants and needs of our community members, and to keep those wants and needs in mind as we go through the decision-making process.

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

Access to affordable housing and rental housing is a problem in Bridgewater. Much of the town is zoned for single unit residential homes. If I could change one thing, it would be to enable homeowners to modify their homes to create living spaces such as basement apartments that they could then rent out, or use for their young adult children or their aging parents. Right now, making that change is quite a long process, and allowing that flexibility with quicker and easier changes to zoning would open up a variety of housing options.

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

Housing is certainly an issue in our town. There are few available rentals, and many of those are not affordable for many people. The Town can add a rural point of view to the conversations happening on a provincial level to encourage an increase in the incentives offered by the province to developers. The Town could implement a clause that states that developers must offer some affordable units or give preference to developers who indicate that they will offer affordable housing.

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

If not elected, I’d continue to attend council meetings, as I’ve done for 2 years now, to ensure that I continue to be informed on the issues our town faces. I’d like to become a member of the Anti-Racism Task Force to help the town become more inclusive and welcoming to all people. I’m interested in being a part of the Downtown Planning Advisory Committee, as I believe there is a lot of potential in our downtown, and I want to see that potential realized in exciting ways that result in strong community

and economic development. I will continue with my place on the Museum Commission. The museum is doing great work with supplementing the Town's recreation and cultural programming, but I think there are ways we can play a bigger role in offering that type of programming to our residents.

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

There are a number of important topics I could discuss in this answer, such as affordable housing and the wastewater infrastructure. However, I'd like to work with council and staff to rethink our recreation programming. The recent recreation survey has hopefully resulted in direction from residents regarding the type of programming they would like to have access too. I think there are opportunities to have a look at other municipalities who have successful recreation programs and reimagine those concepts in ways that will work for Bridgewater. I'd also like to make our existing facilities and parks become destinations by offering passive programming, such as geocaching or built-in games like horseshoes.

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

I am currently on two Committees of the Town; the Canada Day Committee and the Museum Commission. I also sit on the Board of Directors for SHAID Tree Animal Shelter.

What do you think is going well right now in Bridgewater?

I believe Bridgewater is moving in a positive direction. The town is growing in all ways, and the momentum seems to be picking up. I think we're building a sense of pride in our community, and Bridgewater is becoming a place where people want to be. I can't wait to build on that momentum!

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

I am not currently associated with any particular political party. The great thing about municipal government is that there is no party structure, which allows me to truly represent the interests of my community.

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

Our downtown has grown significantly, but I want to ensure we continue to actively market the Town to developers who will create spaces for local business owners. I want to be sure we're working with entrepreneurs and the Chamber of Commerce to give local businesses the support they need to succeed so that we have a variety of services that will appeal to young families and professionals.

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

Our wastewater infrastructure is nearing capacity, which limits our growth potential, and impacts the health of our river. Updating that infrastructure will allow our community to grow, particularly when it

comes to developing high density housing. The upgrades will be a significant capital investment, and we will need to work with other levels of government to access financial support.

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

I'd invest in our recreation programming and facilities. Having strong recreation programming and updated facilities would make our town more attractive to more people, including young families and professionals, like doctors. I'd like to see Bridgewater create a comprehensive recreation framework that includes activities for all ages, including children, teens, adults, and seniors. I'd love to see an accessible playground in our community as well.

While I agree that it's important to consider applying this million dollars to our infrastructure, I think it's important that we remember to offer services that make our town a fun place to live, where people can participate in their hobbies and interests, maybe learn a new skill, and have new hands on experiences.

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

The bus was a much-needed service in Bridgewater, and the ridership numbers prove that. With our two new buses arriving soon, I think it would be worth having a look at the feasibility of expanding the route within town. I would like to continue discussions with our municipal neighbours as they work to set up their transit networks so we can work together to create a regional transit network, with hubs at municipal boundaries to allow residents to travel back and forth.

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

I think it's really important that council listen to the recommendation of the Heritage Advisory Committee, the Anti-Racism Task Force, and members of the Mi'kmaq community. We all need to participate in these conversations and learn from them. I think it's time that Indigenous communities have a voice in writing their own history so that going forward making changes like these will help future generations hear the stories from all sides.