

Mayor and council look ahead to challenges in 2017

By Bill Rea

The year that has just begun is going to bring a number of challenges to Caledon's mayor and councillors, but they are expressing optimism that 2017 will be a good one.

Mayor Allan Thompson pointed out they have one year to get the Community Work Plan done, and he said that can be accomplished if council works together.

"We have a good cross section of opinions, which is healthy," the Mayor remarked. "I'm really optimistic that we're going to have a really successful and productive year."

Many of the complications over the last year dealt with the Town's relationship with Peel Region, particularly when it comes to the Bolton Residential Expansion Study (BRES). The town had selected its favoured option, but Regional staff backed another one, and councillors still another. The Town is taking its case to the Ontario Municipal Board (OMB).

"Political posturing has been taken out of the play," Thompson remarked, adding he's optimistic the people at the Region can work together. "Let's hope we can keep child play out of the good governance that the Region needs to do."

Thompson has just completed his second year as mayor.

"I haven't regretted a day," he remarked. "It's been rewarding."

He admitted there have been some little "hiccups" at council along the way, but "we've been able to accomplish what we want to do."

Councillor Barb Shaughnessy said she would like to see something done about the "red tape," commenting it "obstructs as far as councillors go."

The last year also saw a lot of staff changes at the Town, meaning councillors had to get used to new people in new roles. She's hoping the coming year will bring better communications between councillors and staff.

"I enjoy building relationships," she said.

Shaughnessy also said she's hoping for better communications between the Town and residents.

"I'm an advocate for my residents," she declared, adding the voice of residents sometimes seems to get lost.

Shaughnessy is another who's completing just her second year in office.

"It's not what you thought it was," she said. "It takes a very strong back and very broad shoulders."

Councillor Rob Mezzapelli reflected on the challenges of the last year.

"It's been challenging, both at the local level and Regional level," he said.

He observed the Town has made progress on its work plan, and expressed the hope of improving relationships at the Regional level.

He also expressed confidence that the Town's position on BRES.

Mezzapelli is also hoping to see progress when it comes to the GTA-West Corridor.

"Caledon needs to know what the Province's intentions are," he commented, adding if the talked about highway doesn't materialize, then thought needs to be given to further extending Highway 427 beyond Major Mackenzie Drive. "That will be a benefit for the Town."

"It was an interesting year with some challenges," Councillor Annette Groves observed. "We had to make some pretty tough decisions."

"I hope that council will be able to work a little bit better together in the next couple of years," she said, adding there's a lot to be done, both in the community and wards.

Councillor Gord McClure had similar thoughts.

"I'm hopeful that councillors can get along better," he said. "Hopefully, good times are ahead and the worst is behind us. We have a really good council and things are going to flow better."

"The year that's ended has been a very interesting year," Councillor Nick deBoer remarked.

He added that council achieved a lot in the last year. With the Town's position on BRES going to OMB, he said he's optimistic.

"I look forward to ensuring that becomes a reality," he said.

Looking back on 2016, Councillor Johanna Downey called it "a complete whirl wind!"

It was her second year in office and she called it "a building year," and a time to dig into initiatives and projects in the community.

"The part of this role that I enjoy the most is connecting and supporting resident groups that work toward bettering our community," she said, adding 2016 was full of such opportunities.

"My resolution for 2017 is to focus on community driven partnerships and projects from sports and recreation to health and humans

services," she said. "I am looking forward to a 2017 full of possibilities for Caledon and all of us who live and love it."
"I am very proud of the work of council in 2016, as I believe that we laid the groundwork for many improvements to the communities that I represent in Ward 3 and 4," Councillor Jennifer Innis stated.

The progress she's looking forward to in 2017 include the opening of the new paramedic station and splash pad in Caledon East; the Highway 50 improvements through Palgrave and developing a sound plan for the future of the Town Hall Campus, which includes the Caledon East Park and the third phase of the Caledon Community Complex.

"As a Board Member for the TRCA, I am also excited about the great work ahead at the Bolton Camp and the implementation of the Albion Hills Conservation Area Master Plan," she added.