



# Township of McKellar

701 Hwy #124, P.O. Box 69, McKellar, Ontario POG 1C0

Phone: (705) 389-2842

Fax: (705) 389-1244

## COUNCIL'S 2020 ANNUAL REPORT TO THE MCKELLAR COMMUNITY

Tuesday, January 12, 2021

"There is always a better way of doing something as long as you are looking for one"

### Introduction:

What a difference a year makes! In our 2019 Annual Report, Council was proud of what had been accomplished in their first year. In the February 2020 electronic newsletter, they were excited about completing the many priorities in our Action Plan which would enhance the quality of our community life. Due to the onset of COVID 19, we declared a State of Emergency in McKellar on March 12, closing our facilities and cancelling many programs, community groups, meetings and special events. It was hard to imagine McKellar without card games, fish derbies, the annual Fall Fair and the closing of our excellent camps - Manitou and Kodiak. Our new priority was how we keep everyone safe and follow strict COVID 19 protocols.

At the same time, we had numerous staff departures and had to recruit some excellent temporary replacements – acting CAO and Clerk, Treasurer, Fire Chief and realign Administrative services. They took the lead and kept us afloat. With their help, we managed to maintain our services, committees and operations. A very special thank you to Michelle Hendry, Barb Cribbett, Ron Harrison, Mary Smith and our remaining office staff, Ina Watkinson, Greg Gostick and Chris Bordeleau for helping us through this period. We engaged a recruiting firm to find a new CAO and Treasurer and this process is on-going. We also conducted an Efficiency study to review other staffing scenarios and departmental efficiencies, to be implemented when our new staff are on board. Council believes in continuous improvement while being open and transparent.

On the downside, it was not business as usual. With all events, facilities and programs closed, we had to learn how to adapt to this new reality and new technologies with new staff on board. We tried to keep lines of communication open with mixed success. We sent out an electronic newsletter just before COVID hit; created a new McKellar Facebook page; mailed our new Business and Township Directory to everyone; sent out many press releases; recorded Council meetings; made many attempts at remote connections for meetings; provided a Council update in August, as well as, updates and public meetings from various committees. Our intentions were always honourable and in your best interest.

We "Zoomed" on some meetings and others just did not happen. With new technologies pending, we hope to improve our remote meeting format which will also include accessibility formats and protocols.

Our September 20, 2020 our interim Council report summarized what had been accomplished and what was planned for the future. We will continue to strive to keep McKellar safe, informed and involved as we move into year 3 of our Action Plan. We were recently under a provincial lockdown for 14 days starting December 26, 2020. On December 31, 2020 we ended our State of Emergency,

but the Municipal Office, public library and Community Centre still remain closed to the public. Stay tuned and stay with us as we work on your behalf to continue to maintain a safe community. Be patient. This will take some time. We urge everyone to adhere to the strict COVID 19 protocols – physical distancing, facemasks, sanitizers etc. and keep yourself, friends and family safe and COVID free.

We would like to sincerely thank all our frontline and support workers for their commitment and hard work. We would also like to thank all of you for your understanding and support through this difficult time.

## **2020 HIGHLIGHTS AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS:**

### **Budget and Finance:**

We had a good audit for 2019, ended in the black and managed to raise taxes only 0.49% for 2020. We decided to give our ratepayers a break during COVID 19 and not charge any late fees on unpaid taxes during our state of emergency. We also contributed to the Rotary and Foodbanks during the state of emergency. We still managed to improve roads, improve community services, enhance our environment, as well as complete some aspects of our Action Plan while planning for the future.

### **Council:**

Council introduced a new salary - based remuneration system for Councillors, moved to one Council meeting per month – (the second Tuesday of the month) with special meetings at the call of the chair. We introduced, for the first time, an acknowledgement statement to our First Nations at the start of each Council meeting and experimented with a variety of types of remote meetings to allow community input with limited success. We awarded an RFP for a new website but put the work on hold due to COVID and staffing issues. Our Emergency Management Committee (EMC) of the Mayor, Clerk/Administrator, Fire Chief, Superintendent of Public Works and support staff was formed immediately when COVID 19 became known to us and has met every Tuesday morning since March to deal with the COVID 19 issues and to consider ways to keep McKellar a safe community with proper protocols. A new integrated phone system was implemented to improve customer service. Council has acquired various parcels of land for future development.

### **Beautification:**

With the assistance of our Public Works staff, we installed two sets of signs at key intersections: Green destination signs and white tourist businesses signs, as well as, safe boating signs at our Boat launches.

### **Special Events:**

Jan Gibson, Market Manager cautiously opened the McKellar Market this summer under strict safety protocols. It was very successful, including an outdoor Thanksgiving event - Please see her annual report on our website.

The MLCA initiated a tree purchase program that was well received by the community.

A drive by Halloween Hunt was enjoyed by many. In December, a successful "Light Up McKellar" Christmas light event, along with a "Meet and Greet Santa" while physical distancing at the Library commenced all thanks to the Recreation Committee, Library and Santa

We celebrated our Provincial Senior Volunteer of the Year award with Michael Corson and two high school bursaries were awarded to Jaime Herr and Jenn Gunn.

We held a modified Remembrance Day ceremony on Nov 11 to honour our fallen comrades. The office area and Library were redesigned in order to be safe when we re-open to the public. Our Environmental committee held a "Clean Up Our Lakes" event in August and encouraged everyone to complete the GBB Climate Change - Carbon Calculator study to reduce CO2 levels in McKellar. If you completed the study, the first 300 will receive a new pine tree courtesy of West Wind Forest. Still time to complete it: [gbb.ca/carbon-calculator](http://gbb.ca/carbon-calculator)

Environmental surprises: We had three "spills" reported in the Township which were responded to quickly by our Public Works Staff, the MNRF, the Health Unit, the MOE and Adams brothers. The Ridge at Manitou's spill was non-toxic and a clay run off from a drainage pipe. The Blue Green Algae was deemed non-toxic and a rare occasion in our lakes. The current oil tank spill is still under clean up and investigation by the MOE but poses no problem for Lake Manitouwabing as it was contained very quickly.

### **Committee Work:**

All three Ad Hoc committees are at various stages in their investigations, holding public consultations and making final reports to Council. The Roads Advisory Committee completed its report to modernize road policies. Council has approved the new Roads Policy and By-law which will resolve some long-standing issues, improve safety and provide avenues to allow Road Associations to look at options for upgrading their roads or having their roads assumed.

The Business, Economic and Tourism Committee is working on ways to improve the development of new businesses in McKellar.

The Environmental and Stewardship committee is in the process of finalizing their report this winter. After a public meeting this coming summer, the committee will make recommendations to Council. The committee has looked at 10 key issues, listened to many experts, sought examples from other municipalities, promoted special events and CO2 studies and made numerous recommendations to Council such as "A McKellar Vision", Lake studies, many educational tips on how to improve the quality of our lakes and the beauty of our environment.

The Library has spent a lot of time with their new Board to revise all their policies and procedures while coping with servicing the community during the pandemic.

A big thank you to all those who were involved with these initiatives.

### **Fire Department:**

The voluntary Fire Fighters are currently re-doing their processes and remuneration system while enjoying their two new trucks purchased in 2020. They were successful in being re-certified for their Tanker Shuttle program, which will allow ratepayers to reduce their home insurance. Look up Tanker Accreditation in our website.

### **Bottle Collection Plan:**

At the start of 2020, we had four community groups who agreed to collect bottles from the transfer station to raise money for their organizations. This program was cancelled in March due to COVID-19 and is on hold until further notice. We closed the collection of bottles until it is safe to reopen.

### **Planning, Grants and Special projects:**

We have developed a long-term plan for special projects while trying to find matching grants. Connectivity is our #1 priority to find high speed solutions for McKellar and our neighbours. Other projects being considered include a new fitness trail, technical improvements in the Community Centre and completing the historical walking bridge.

### **Transfer Station:**

We extended the hours of operation this year and added summer students to help with the traffic flow. Everyone was encouraged to recycle, re - use and reduce waste and plastic. Unfortunately, our Re-Use Tent and bottle collection had to be closed due to COVID19.

### **Public Works Projects:**

The Public Works Department managed to improve Balsam Rd., Burnett's Rd., Broadbent Rd., and the Baileys Rd. Subdivision, as well as ensuring maintenance services continued.

### **Area Developments:**

We are involved with the West Parry Sound Wellness and Pool Committee and making our position on affordability known. As well, we are trying to find a way to be better represented on DSSAB and EMS committees in the future on a fair and rotational basis. Our representative to Belvedere - Councillor Carmichael, has assisted in setting up a process to bring Belvedere, Lakelands and the Hospital together to provide more comprehensive, coordinated and cost-effective care for our elderly that will see a significant reduction in the municipal levy over the next two years.

As well, we are working to improve the WPS CiiNo Regional Economic Development Organization to broaden its horizons into a one stop shopping Hub and Innovation Centre.

### **More Positives:**

The Ridge at Manitou received their license and had an excellent year of golf under new management by Golf North. Real estate is booming; lots of sold signs around our community. Local businesses, especially the trades, were very busy.

### **2021 – 2022 FUTURE PLANS AND PROJECTS:**

The key item for everyone, is to re-open our facilities, office, programs, special events and local businesses as soon as it is safe to do so.

## As well, we would like to:

- i. Consider the establishment of a committee to discuss and think through Rental property issues
- ii. Establish a community committee to begin planning for our 150th sesqui – centennial in 2023
- iii. Have a public meeting with the WPS Wellness and Pool Committee – scheduled early in 2021
- iv. Circulate the results of a Professional Engineering review on the costs associated with moving the Public Works facilities in order to redevelop commercial space across from Minerva Park
- v. Do an RFI on possible commercial uses of the former public works yard if moved
- vi. Develop a plan with our neighbours to improve Connectivity in McKellar
- vii. Will welcome our new staff: CAO/Clerk and Treasurer in the near future while making other staff adjustments to improve our customer service as outlined in our Efficiency report.
- viii. Hold a public meeting this summer on the Environmental and Lake Stewardship ad hoc committee report and make recommendations to Council
- ix. Finally approve our revised Official Plan and Zoning By - Law
- x. Build an Asset Management Plan – by July 1, 2021 to meet legislative requirements
- xi. Introduce our new website
- xii. Establish an electronic Mailing list
- xiii. Develop a supportive land use planning process to enable interested entrepreneurs to realize their dreams
- xiv. Fully implement our new Roads Policy and By-Law
- xv. Plan to complete renovations on two historic churches and install special plaques in the Township
- xvi. Explore all grants that align with our five-year capital projects plan
- xvii. Continue to study the water quality and capacity of our lakes while setting targets to reduce CO2 emissions in McKellar and provide educational and action steps to follow
- xviii. Bring back our bottle collection program plan and reopen our Re-Use centre at the Transfer Station
- xix. Continue to have our annual “Clean up McKellar” day in the spring and a “Clean up our Lakes” event in August
- xx. Introduce quarterly and Annual reports from our key staff- CAO, Treasurer, Road Superintendent and Fire Chief
- xxi. Finalize our 2021 budget in May and begin planning for 2022 in the fall of the year
- xxii. Celebrate our community volunteers and create a new “Youth of the Year” award
- xxiii. Prepare an updated - “Welcome to McKellar”- package
- xxiv. Continue to move forward new projects like technical upgrades to the CC, and discuss a public potable water outlet and pay as you go electrical outlets and other priorities in our Action Plan
- xxv. Finalize a community safety zone in McKellar and signage along #124
- xxvi. Meet with our MP- Scott Aitcheson and MP – Norm Miller early in 2021- to discuss key issues
- xxvii. Install a new boat launch on Lakeshore
- xxviii. Reorganize various aspects of our Fire Department and recruit for a new Fire Chief
- xxix. Consider a second electronic newsletter with our August tax bill

## **SUMMARY:**

It has been a challenging year for Council and the community. We have learned a lot during this pandemic. Council and our staff have worked very hard to keep the agenda moving forward while keeping everyone informed and safe.

We hope to be back to a new normal with open meetings, open facilities, open programs, open services, and open local businesses in a safer environment as soon as possible. We encourage you to keep involved by attending meetings, volunteering on committees, enjoying our many programs and activities, sharing your ideas and helping those in need. Thank you for being involved with your community and Council. We are a healthier and better municipality with your participation.

On behalf of our staff, and Council; Councillors' Morley Haskim, Mike Kekkonen, Don Carmichael and Marco Ancinelli and Mayor Peter Hopkins, we wish you a safe, happy and prosperous New Year. We are always open to your questions, ideas, issues and concerns.

Respectfully,

Peter Hopkins, Mayor  
705 389 2228  
peterhopkins1942@gmail.com