

Editorial

That was the easy part

For those who were elected to serve on their municipal councils in Central Lambton Monday night, congratulations. That was the easy part.

After over 70 days of campaigning, candidates learned their fate Monday and may have felt relief when they attained the goal of being a member of council.

And we can understand that. But it is only the beginning.

First, there will be a time of training, understanding what their role is under the Municipal Act and their local council's code of conduct. For those who ran because they wanted to serve but really had not been actively following municipal politics, they'll have to start learning the issues.

They also have to understand the protocols of council meetings, what they can and can't do as councillors and how to read a budget book, because that's coming up faster than a train at a country cross road.

While they're trying to learn as much of this as they can, they can't just take everything at face value; they have to consider the source and whether they can back up with legislation or proof of what they're saying.

And while they're figuring all that out, it's likely a few friends will bend their ear about what should be done by council on any particular issue. They may even get stopped in the grocery store for a discussion.

All that before they've even been sworn into office or sat in the comfy chairs around the council table.

But even when they get there, full of knowledge and hope to do well for the people they serve, it is bound to be an uphill battle. Canada and indeed the world, are looking down the barrel of a recession, families are having a hard time making ends meet and making choices about whether to pay the hydro bill or buy food. And of course, the governments still have to deal with the thorny issue of reassessing homes to current market value and what affect that will have on people's pocket books.

Like we said, getting elected was the easy part.

All the best to those about to serve; may the hill be not as steep as we're predicting it to be.

Letters to the Editor

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Our Story



DAVE BURWELL POSTCARD COLLECTION

This Pesha photo postcard is of the St. Clair River in Sombra. The writer said the view was beautiful. The large building in the foreground is a lumber mill.

Councillors take a cue from hockey bad-boy Brad Marchand

Even if you're not a hockey fan, you may have heard of Brad Marchand.

The diminutive defenseman from Boston is quick and feisty and well, gross. In 2018, after years of annoying his opponents however possible, Marchand found a new way to get attention. He licked them. A full-on, stick-out-the-tongue, act-like-a-dog slurp. He did this not just once but twice, exacting a collective "Eeewww" around the world.

But here's the thing about Brad Marchand; hockey players, even those on the other end of his tongue lashings both verbal and slimy, know he's good at what he does.

A poll placed him at the top of an usual list of the hockey player you hate to play but would love to have on your team.

Marchand is unique, not afraid to stand out and good at what he does.

And I think municipal councillors should be like him - minus the licking part of course.

I've been a journalist for 34 years and I've covered more council meetings than I care to count all over Ontario.

Over the years, something happened to the unique individuals who put their

names on the ballot, win a seat and serve their community. Those characters who use to test the limits of the phrase 'there's no such thing as a stupid question' stopped asking questions.

Instead, they became part of a team. Being part of a team is a good thing most of the time. But it is unfortunate that in today's political world, that becomes a threat; you must be part of the team by showing loyalty to the mayor and council, by not asking questions staff may not want to answer, by declaring everything is great news in Small Town, Ontario. Anyone who thinks otherwise isn't part of the team.

That's where the Brad Marchands of the world throw a wrench in things. Marchand marches to the beat of his own weird drum - embarrassingly so sometimes - but his teammates know he's doing it for the good of the team. And they love him for it. Those on the other end of his tongue have a grudging respect for him and wish he was on their side.

I've seen politicians like Marchand. When they raise their hand to make a point, you can almost hear the room groan. They may take a while to get to it, but they have a point, and what they say does make a difference. It expands

the thought process and encourages discussion. And that is a good thing.

Municipal councillors are not there to rubber stamp what administrators want or what the mayor believes is a good idea.

The people we have just elected are there to speak on behalf of their constituents, to ask the questions they would ask, to pose solutions to problems from a different perspective than one of a bureaucrat. The Municipal Act says they're there to shape the policies of the community. They can't do that if they rubber stamp everything without probing the why of the issue. And the taxpayers need to hear that discussion to know politicians are doing their job.

So, soon to be councillors, you can be a team working for the best in your community, but don't be afraid to stick out your tongue once and while.



Heather Wright

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Legal risk

We often decry the decisions of municipal councils on this page and we are tempted to do the same with Plympton-Wyoming's decision to re-hire a company it had a poor experience with just last summer.

The town is planning to complete the second phase of a street reconstruction in Wyoming. Last year, a construction company hired to rebuild Front Street caused headaches for local businesses which couldn't get into their buildings in the area for days on end.

The construction also took far longer than expected and only got moving when the town and its engineering firm started going on site and prodding the contractor along.

Just last month, a Wyoming businessman tore a strip off the town for allowing the problems to percolate for so long saying it cost him money in extra gas and the time of his workers to deal with the issue.

The town took its lumps, agreeing the contractor had done a poor job.

Fast forward a month and town council is now looking at the same name as the lowest bidder for the next phase of the reconstruction on Plympton Street. And it is a lot cheaper than everyone else.

Staff could find no legal reason to turn down the tender - so, the contractor will be back this summer. There will be a few more rules and more oversight but time will tell if that will help.

The town is not walking into this contract with blinders on seeing only the cash to be saved. In this case, as in many others, municipalities have to walk a fine line between getting the best deal for taxpayers and making sure they don't reject a bidder on false grounds and risk being sued.

It's a ridiculous situation. If a contractor did a poor job on your driveway, you'd never invite them back and that would be the end of it. But municipalities have different rules to follow and have to be aware that there are companies which would pounce if they didn't get in on a contract without what they figure is just cause.

Could Plympton-Wyoming have made a case to take the next bidder in a court of law; we think so. But it could have cost thousands of dollars to do it. And that's a risk councillors were not willing to take.

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Our Story

Thousands of People....

HAVE annually visited this spot to enjoy the excellent fishing and boating facilities afforded, but until recently only indifferent hotel accommodations were to be had. Realizing this state of affairs and also that visitors could be attracted with proper and sufficient hotel resources, Messrs. BEDARD & SONS erected a fine brick hotel, now known as the **Hotel Bedard**, and fitted it with all modern improvements and conveniences, the sanitary arrangements being unexcelled. It is elegantly furnished throughout and directly fronts and overlooks the beautiful St. Clair river. It invites the attention of the whole country, including the travelling public, business men, pleasure seekers, and all who wish to seek rest and healthful recreation amid the cool summer breezes, pure bracing air, glide o'er the placid St. Clair, or take the unsuspecting member of the finny tribe from the clear blue depths of this delightful strait.

FISH SUPPERS

One of the features of this hotel are its famous Fish Suppers—so toothsome after a day's fishing, boating or driving, facilities for which here are so abundant.

RATES BY THE WEEK IN SUMMER ARE VERY MODERATE AND ACCORDING TO LOCATION OF ROOMS. BY THE DAY \$1.50 SPECIAL RATES TO THE C. W. R.

Distances between Courtright and Barons and Port Huron, 12 miles; Petrolia, 20 miles; Chatham, 44 miles; Windsor, 53 miles; St. Thomas, 66 miles; London, 68 miles; Toronto, 200 miles; Buffalo, 200 miles; Detroit, 53 miles. Courtright is accessible by M. C. R. and E. & H., or by boats. For further particulars apply to

A. A. BEDARD, Courtright, Ont.

FROM THE FILES OF LAMBTON HISTORY ROCKS VIA FACEBOOK

This ad is from Hotel Bedford which once graced the St. Clair River in Courtright. The hotel "served thousands of people" according to the ad over the years. In the 1970s and 1980s it was known as the Courtright Tavern and was eventually taken down in 2001 when the turret on the south side of the building could not be repaired. Today the site is empty.

A lesson in ridicule and audacity from the Fosbury Flop

I hated high jump as a kid. I once faked an injury so I didn't have to compete in it, although I'm quite sure my Grade 6 teacher saw right through my very poor acting.

I really didn't pay much attention to the sport until Corunna's Derek Drouin came on the scene and leaped to a gold medal at the 2016 Olympics.

That's when I first hear of the Fosbury Flop. My husband, Barry, mentioned it in passing. I laughed thinking it sounded funny but not knowing that Fosbury was Dick Fosbury, the man who revolutionized high jumping.

In the 1960's, Fosbury was a teen and doing high jump at his high school in Oregon. He figured out he had to change his body position to jump higher than anyone else had using the scissor kick which was popular at the time.

But as he played with the idea at

track meets, he was ridiculed. Even the local paper made fun of his back-first jump. *The Medford Mail Tribune* wrote Fosbury looked like a fish flopping in a boat. The headline read Fosbury Flops Over the Bar.

Fosbury liked it saying "It's poetic. It's alliterative. It's a conflict."

The criticism didn't end at high school. While he was at the 1968 Mexico Olympic games, one journalist wrote the technique would lead to "a rash of broken necks" and he wrote Fosbury should stop doing the jump "for the good of young Americans."

He didn't. He won gold at those Olympics. By the next summer games, 28 of 40 jumpers were using Fosbury's technique. The last time a traditional jumper won an Olympic high jump medal was in 1976. Now, people would be ridiculed for kick'n it old school in the high jump pit.

Fosbury's recent death led me to look up his story and it's been inspirational.

How often do we face people who think what we're doing is nutty?

How often do we face criticism and crumble under the weight of it?

How often do we keep our ideas to ourselves for fear of being called silly or far worse?

What if Dick Fosbury had done that? Things would have looked a lot different in the sport of high jumping.

We shouldn't let others' opinions stop us from our own Fosbury Flop.



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Fire funding wake up call

It really should not have been a surprise when Enniskillen Township councillors said no to a new \$1.4 million pumper/tanker truck. But it was.

The chief of the Petrolia/North Enniskillen department went to Petrolia council with the plan for the \$1.4 million vehicle in mid-August and made the case that by purchasing the combination vehicle, the department would be able to provide more efficient services - particularly in the rural areas - and would save money in the long run since the dual purpose vehicle would replace two aging units.

Town councillors hopped on board, giving the department approval to order the vehicle knowing the nearly \$900,000 Petrolia owes won't be due until 2026.

And, perhaps to some politicians in Petrolia, it seemed like a done deal.

But they had clearly underestimated the concerns voiced for a couple of months by Enniskillen councillors.

Deputy Mayor Judy Krall did some number crunching during budget in March and found while Enniskillen pays 40 per cent of all costs at the department, it only generated between 23 and 32 per cent of the fire calls in each the last eight years.

Enniskillen wanted to talk about it with Petrolia and, indeed, they met to talk about it. But apparently, the acting mayor didn't think it was huge issue - certainly not big enough that Enniskillen would actually turn down the pumper/tanker.

Perhaps no one did the math. Assuming Krall's projections are correct, if the township could negotiate a better cost sharing agreement with Petrolia, it would stand to save between \$15,000 and \$32,000 per year just on operating costs. The big savings come on the capital costs. On this fire truck alone, if a new revenue sharing agreement was drafted based on Krall's numbers, Enniskillen's nearly \$600,000 bill for the pumper/tanker between \$112,000 and \$238,000 less.

That's a lot of cash for a small municipality so it is really no wonder Enniskillen councillors turned down the \$1.4 million truck.

And perhaps, in the back of a few Enniskillen councillors' minds, there is the thought that this might be just the wake up call Petrolia needs to revisit the funding arrangement.

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Our Story



SHETLAND AND AREA HISTORICAL GROUP

As we get ready for back to school, a photo of Shetland SS#1 from the 1900s courtesy of the Shetland and Area Historical Group.

Remembering Zach - a good salesman, a better man

Zach Junkin made an impression on me even before we met.

I was looking for a salesperson and scanning resumes. In a sea of people who simply listed their experience and education, Zach stood out. His resume started "A few days ago, I was listening to one of Brian Tracy's audiobooks, and I realized I could be doing more with my free time: I could be helping a Sales Manager hit their targets so they can finally go on that once-in-a-lifetime vacation they've been planning. Or finally purchase that property they've been dreaming of."

"This guy is either full of baloney or a really good salesman" I thought to myself.

So, I scheduled an interview and met him at a coffee shop. What should have been maybe a half-hour interview turned into an hour-and-a-half. I got to know him a bit and he learned a little about my aspirations. We talked about the newspaper business, his former

hometown of Pelham, his family - particularly his dad's political life - and his own run for mayor. He was engaging and a thoughtful listener.

We agreed to a part-time arrangement so he could fit sales into his life. Zach was very excited about it - turns out he'd really wanted to be in sales.

The first couple of months was a bit frustrating on the sales front but that was okay - everyone needs time to develop their skills.

And besides it was a time to get to know Zach and his life; about his wife, Brooke, whom he cared for while she was desperately ill with their second child; about his little girl whom he was crazy about and about his eventual frenzied move to Port Lambton.

Through it all he was always smiling and thoughtful.

We all looked forward to Zach coming into the office. And then Aug. 18, he didn't come through the doors. We didn't really think much of

it - sometimes he spent his time in the field making sales calls.

But by Tuesday, we learned Zach had died suddenly of natural causes in his home. He was 34. Even though my staff had the funeral announcement, their email to me while I was on vacation asked "Is this true?" I still

ask that question. Zach - our colleague - was a husband and father first but was so much more than we knew - MMA fighter, a tree-hugger in the very best way, an adventurer - and as it turns out Zach was a good salesman. But even better, Zach was a really good man. And he will be missed.



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