



# TOWN OF GIBSONS

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## **MAYOR'S INAUGURAL ADDRESS**

The campaign is over, the election is over and starting today, starting now we are committed to focussing on doing the things that we said we would do - affordable housing; protection of the Gibsons aquifer and recharge areas; mitigating and adapting to the effect of climate change; reviewing and updating bylaws like the Official Community Plan, Zoning and the Affordable Housing and Amenities bylaws; initiating community dialogues; and, building on our relationship with the Regional District on issues like regional planning, water, garbage and transportation.

I look forward to working with this council and with staff on these and other matters and I hope that we will work cooperatively on issues and at the same time challenge each other with a view to finding the best solutions with and for our community. I believe that we can do that in a respectful non-contentious way.

During the coming months, this council will become more familiar with our role and responsibilities as set out in the Community Charter, which describes a municipality as “a corporation of the residents of its area” and mandates a council, like a board of directors, to work on the broad areas of responsibility that include:

- (a) good governance,
- (b) services, laws and other matters for community benefit,
- (c) stewardship of the public assets, and
- (d) fostering the economic, social and environmental well-being of the community.

Since the election, I have had the opportunity to meet with each of the councillors and to discuss with them their priorities and interests. This information has helped us to formulate a plan for the first few months of our tenure, which includes council training and orientation, strategic planning, and restructuring of our committees while we work

with staff on budget planning and committed projects like extending the aquifer water to Zone 3 and moving forward with plans for the RCMP site on School Road.

**Our priorities include:**

1. **Reaffirming** our commitment to protect the Gibsons aquifer and recharge area by working with the SCRD and the province to minimize activity on Mount Elphinstone and by ensuring that existing and new development within the Town strictly adheres to all applicable bylaws and provisions of development permits. We will also encourage developers and staff to identify, and where applicable implement, water-saving strategies including rainwater collection, water reuse, cisterns, tree retention and other actions to reduce municipal water use during periods of drought.
2. **Reviewing** the council procedure bylaw with a view to providing additional opportunities for the public to have input into council decision-making. We are united in our commitment to consult and inform and to do this we will implement additional inquiry opportunities at council and committee meetings, we will convene community forums and dialogues on issues of general community interest, or of interest to specific neighbourhoods or areas of the community that will be impacted by a council decision, and, we will use technology to post both audio and video of council meetings on the town website for those who are unable to get to meetings.
3. **Updating** the committee structure by adding two new committees, Planning & Community Development, and Natural Environment & Sustainability. Community members will be invited to sit on these committees with members of council to provide us with the benefit of their experience and expertise on issues.
4. **Reviewing** the existing committee and liaison appointments to ensure that they are relevant and meet current needs. Appointments will be announced at our next council meeting on November.
5. **This past week** I met with students and staff at Elphinstone School to discuss a proposal to provide an opportunity for a student to sit on council and to attend and participate at council meetings, while earning volunteer credits for school, as well as building an education fund for post-graduation plans. We plan to have this initiative in place in January.
6. **Appointing** a committee to work with council and the RCMP to consider the options and costs of policing our community once we reach the magical 5000 population

threshold, which may happen before the next census in 2021. We will also ask this committee to suggest ways to improve the current levels of policing in our community.

7. **Continuing** to work with the Affordable Housing Society and with BC Housing to complete currently planned affordable housing projects and to identify new opportunities for affordable rental housing in the community and shelter beds. This is a priority because as soon as new construction projects get started workers will begin arriving for jobs and will be looking for housing. We must look after our community first, before vulnerable groups like seniors on fixed incomes, youth, single parents and young families are forced out of the market with few options.

This priority area also involves updating the Town's Affordable Housing and Amenities Bylaw to ensure that developers contribute a realistic and fair share to affordable housing.

8. **Initiating** a series of community dialogues with the goal of creating a revised community vision, mission and guiding principles that will enable us to develop and implement an integrated strategic plan. From a sustainability perspective, we might also benefit from a Visioning exercise to help define the next decade of planning work. Perhaps a **Gibsons Sustainability Charter** or one developed in concert with the Regional District.

9. **In terms of climate change** policy, we need to develop a mitigation and adaptation strategy that reaffirms a commitment to carbon neutrality in our operations and for new developments, and identifies opportunities to reduce community energy use and emissions by 33% below 2007 levels by 2030. As an example, a building retrofit program is considered a good opportunity and is likely to feature in the upcoming climate change charter. The climate change plan will also include other mitigation and adaptation approaches to increase community resilience, such as the approach used in our leading and award-winning natural asset management program.

10. **Working** with the Regional District on priority issues that include solid waste planning, water, transportation, economic development, emergency planning and consideration of a regional growth strategy.

11. **Applying** for funding from the Union of BC Municipalities to host a 'Community to Community' Forum with the Squamish Nation in 2019. This would help us to build on the good relationship that exists between our communities and look for opportunities to support each others' plans and goals for development and environmental protection.

12. **And finally**, we recognize that with development and growth comes opportunity for economic development and expansion within our business and commercial sectors. Our council will work with the Chamber of Commerce, the Sunshine Coast Regional Economic Development Organization and others to ensure that existing businesses are supported and to welcome new business investment in the community. We must together find ways to support local businesses that today are finding it difficult to recruit workers and to be successful in a changing economy.

*(I was concerned recently to learn that with the cleaning of this jacket last week I was one of the final customers at the dry cleaners located in the Sunnycrest Mall which, after many years of providing service to Gibsons, closed its doors for the last time 1 week ago.)*

We recognize that we cannot do these things alone, without broad support from our residents whom we represent. Good governance must be a partnership between Council and the community and we encourage you to become engaged, come to meetings, get informed by reading agendas and minutes, ask questions early in a project so that you understand the outcomes, and by all means challenge but please be respectful...we are only human. As we begin our terms we have the best of intentions but we recognize that we can and will make mistakes, which will help us to learn and modify our approach as we gain experience.

Thank you for your support and for the confidence that you have shown in us through this election. **Now, let's get to work.**

**Bill Beamish**

**Town of Gibsons Mayor**

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**TOWN OF GIBSONS**

*"Nature is our most valuable asset"*

