



TOWN OF GIBSONS

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TALK OF THE TOWN – FEBRUARY 2019

by Mayor Bill Beamish

During the lead-up to the municipal election last October, I had occasion to speak with many voters and special interest groups about their view of local government, and how we might improve our approach.

I'm happy to report that most comments were quite positive. However, I also consistently heard an appeal for increased transparency, both in the day-to-day activities of the Town and in how important decisions are made.

This heightened desire for more “open government” is not unique to Gibsons. In 2011, the *Open Government Partnership* was launched to provide an international platform for citizens committed to making their governments more open, accountable and responsive. Closer to home, BC's provincial government just announced it was going to extend standard transparency protocols, such as Freedom of Information rules and whistleblower protection, to the legislature.

We're making changes in Gibsons too. One way we've done that is by adding links to all correspondence received by Council within each Council agenda. This enables readers to readily see which municipal issues are of top concern for their neighbours – and perhaps add their voice to the discussion.

We've also created a new web page which lists all the Development Permits issued in 2018 (or that are in the process of being issued), along with supporting documents and related staff reports. This opens up our day-to-day processes and increases transparency, so that interested parties may better understand how and why development decisions are made.

Of course, there will always be considerations that prevent total transparency. One of those is the legislated privacy rights of our citizens. Additionally, in-camera (i.e. closed) Council discussions protect employee relations or conversations that, in the words of the Community Charter “might harm the interests of the municipality if held in public.”

Where possible though, Gibsons' council is strongly committed to opening up local government and I invite you to email me directly at mayor@gibsons.ca if you have any ideas about how we can move closer to that goal.

We're also working to expand and encourage community engagement, so residents have more opportunity to share their ideas about key projects. Tune in next month to learn more about that initiative.

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“Nature is our most valuable asset”

