

Hastings Highlands: year in review

2016 was a good year for Hastings Highlands.

We held several very well attended and interesting workshops and events. Following up on our business retention and expansion grant and the work done on it in the past year, many people came together to do the final reports, assist in compiling all information into action plans for this and many years to come. Thanks to the efforts of the Maynooth and Hastings Highlands Business Association and the many volunteers who helped compile surveys, visit the businesses of our area, they compiled a list of 185 known businesses, picked one in three to survey and had a resounding 87 per cent response rate.

Some recommendations of the working group have already begun to be implemented, with many more on the list to do in the multi-year plan presented. We hosted a wonderful Teeny Tiny II Summit attended by many from several counties, with three ministries also involved as well as the business association and other partners. In conjunction with MNRF, their summer ranger program workers and volunteers, we had a wonderful stewardship day event featuring fun and learning and take-away info for adults and children and just awesome displays and hands on learning.

Hastings Highlands also held several special events this year, one to recognize our volunteer firefighters, our unseen heroes, who were presented with years of service pins and certificates in a special evening of honour.

We also held staff recognition for milestones with the municipality. Third, was a volunteer recognition ceremony where council presented certificates of thanks to many valued local people who make our community a better place through their giving of time and expertise. No one can ever put a true value on the hours and dollar worth of these wonderful people.

Youth recognition happened in the form of one local teen, Lexus Scott being able to attend at the invitation of MPP Jeff Leal, a youth summit held in August. Mayor Bloom attended along with Lexus and it was an amazing day. Our youth are so involved in life and politics, they brought forward an awesome array of ideas and information on what they see as needs and opportunities in today's world. Lexus also has accepted an invitation to sit on MP Mike Bossio's youth committee as well and is a regular participant in his youth symposium meetings. Well done Lexus, Hastings Highlands thanks you for your awesome participation!

Kudos to Hastings Highlands Public Library for receiving their accreditation in 2016, a lot of hard work by Staff and Library Board. As well, at the year end, we received word that our library had been short-listed for the Angus Mowat Service for Excellence Award. Stay tuned in February when the library super-conference will announce the winners! We have so many wonderful people involved in helping our library to be the happening and thriving place it is. Our staff and board work to enhance our services, volunteers help with many programs, it is a welcoming place for people of all ages to meet, play Scrabble, join our weekly quilt club, children's activities and special occasion events. Visit our tech centre for your business needs as well! One group of seniors put on two fundraising dances in aid of our programming this summer, we had an awesome murder mystery fundraiser in November thanks to the Fitzgerald and Friends group who had the room in stitches and raised a great deal of money, and thanks also to the ANAF for the use of facilities!

Mayor Bloom was invited to the Federation of Ontario Cottage Associations as a municipal panellist to speak on how municipalities and communities can work together with local associations as all contribute to make Hastings Highlands what it is. We are all one successful community when everyone works together.

Finally on the municipal side, work commenced this past summer on portions of former Hwy 62, despite lack of government help, several sections of road were upgraded to much safer conditions. This coming summer, we hope not to inconvenience too many, as we start to do some streetscaping and work from the intersection of 127 eastward through the hamlet main street. Safety is a big priority and we will be doing sidewalk, parking and street renovations to enhance this.

A very successful and well attended event this fall was our own hazardous waste day held in Maynooth at the Loggers Field. Great participation and huge amounts of toxic or prohibited items disposed of in a safe manner. As always, your municipality is working for you and with you and we do welcome your responses. On behalf of council, staff and all ratepayers we wish one and all a very safe, prosperous and happy New Year from the Municipality of Hastings Highlands and welcome you to visit us. Come wander, stay, shop, visit our lakes and beaches and you will be welcomed and pleasantly surprised! Hopefully you will return again, perhaps to stay in nature's near-northern playground.

Submitted by Mayor Vivian Bloom