

**Judy Koziol – Oct 18, 2010**

As an organization, The Corporation of the City of North Bay doesn't always do a great job of communicating with the citizens. The Mayor, and several members of Council have said this and I agree.

Weekly information is published in the North Bay Nugget, inserts are often sent out with regular billing circulars, mandatory notices are sent when required, and staff are encouraged to and do respond to citizen inquiries and concerns quickly.

Personally, I have responded to every email and voicemail I receive. I have a dedicated constituency line which is answered by either Tony or myself. I always take time to speak with people when I am approached.

I don't think it is fair to suggest we should consult when there is controversial issues, I contend we should be open to consultation always, and that is why I have tried very hard to consult regularly and widely.

I think the City can do a better job and could take advantage of new technologies to streamline the communications protocols at City Hall.

Willingness by citizens to engage is key as democracy is a two way street. Citizens need to want to be involved.

We all lead busy lives, between family and work commitments, getting out to a traditional town hall meeting or council meeting is difficult. So I propose to bring the town hall meeting to you. How? Electronically.

Therefore I would like to bring forward another way keep a two-way dialogue going between at least me, your Councillor, and those that want to be engaged.

By maintaining my website as a focal point for people to see what is going on is a first step. To hear my thoughts is a second. To ask for your contact information so I can call upon you to participate in an electronic town hall via a phone service or some chat service is next.

Should it become too big for me to handle then maybe it might time for City Hall to take over.

I don't think most people truly appreciate just how much of what happens in our City is the direct result of decisions made at the provincial and federal levels of government. Decisions taken at higher levels impact on local initiatives in every regard. Having said that, Council is charged with the responsibility of prioritizing citizen needs and wants while keeping growth and costs in check.

Council engages in an exhaustive budgeting process to establish how and where municipal funds will be invested. It would be impossible to satisfy the desire of every citizen so we have tried to ensure the majority are well served in terms of services. Every decision taken in the last seven years has been done with one eye on the budget and one eye on the long term impact each decision has.

I continue to believe building partnerships with the private sector and other levels of government is a positive and proactive way of ensuring reasonable and realistic plans are established and so goals can be met.

My feeling in terms of green space is that the facts, rather than the perceptions, speak for themselves. The fact is we have set aside and preserved more green space than what was inventoried seven years ago and we have undertaken conservation measures that have reduced our carbon footprint.

Is there more that can be done? Indeed, there always is and I look forward to hearing the views of constituents as we make our way through the next four years.