

Community Gathering West Plat & Sunshine Gardens



January 28, 2017

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-John MacDermid, Ward 10 City Councillor



1. Summary

Political Representatives Present:

David Coon, MLA Fredericton South

John MacDermid – City Councillor for Ward 10

On January 28, 2017, David Coon hosted a community gathering with John MacDermid in the West Plat and Sunshine Gardens area of Fredericton South. David started with a report of his work in the Legislature, and John followed with a report of his work at City Council.

After a few short Questions and Answers the meeting proceeded to a World Cafe forum with participants discussing two questions at their separate tables:

1. What is your top priority issue for the province?
2. What is your top priority for the city?

Top themes were then presented to the larger group.

2. David's Report from the Legislature

1. Interns at David's Legislative office have been working on videos to inform the public on various issues and topics, such as Emergency Room wait times, mental health in New Brunswick Affordable Housing. One series of videos on how the Legislature works would be good for use in schools.
2. There is a new mandate for a Seniors Advocate, added to the existing Child and Youth Advocate.
3. The government's budget will be introduced soon.
4. The Council on Aging Report has been released.
5. The Select Committee on Climate Change was an example of effective collaboration between MLAs and parties. There was wide consultation and expert hearings. The committee made recommendations, many of which were adopted in the government's Climate Change Plan. I expect the government will begin rolling out programs including incentive for energy efficiency and for electric vehicles. The mechanism for carrying out the government's climate change plan remains to be seen.
6. The next phase of money for the Chalmers Hospital expansion is back on track. There will be an addition to the back of Chalmers to increase room for Labour and Delivery, and the ICU.
7. The problem with long emergency room wait times is clear and has become an issue of patient safety. We can look to Moncton as an example. Emergency Room doctors want to expand the definition of emergency to call in extra help. I've been pushing on this issue in the Legislature but the Minister dismisses it. I will keep on pushing this issue.
8. David has a bi-weekly opinion column in the Daily Gleaner.

3. John's Report from City Hall

1. The city's budget will include an upgrade of Officer's Square, which now belongs to the city.
2. We've been conducting a downtown parking study, which includes an online survey and open house.
3. There will be an Imagine Fredericton Open House Feb. 9, 2017 from 5pm-9pm as we are renewing the Municipal Plan and setting the vision for Fredericton for the next 20-30 years.
4. We are using a consultant for how to improve Fredericton's waste management
5. We are exploring energy opportunities
6. I have been working as part of the Homelessness Task Force. You can expect a report on this coming in March or April.

4. Q & A

1. Q: Will the Downtown Secondary Plan be at risk when the new Municipal Plan comes into play?

John: Elements of the Secondary Plan will be in the Municipal Plan. But don't know. Believe the Secondary Plan won't be jettisoned.

2. Q: Will mental health be considered in the City's Homelessness Task Force?

John: Mental health is not a city responsibility. But the city can zone to incentivize facilities for homelessness and mental health.

David: The mental health system is starved for funding. See interview with Linda Hoyt, <http://davidcoonmla.ca/in-our-community-mental-health-crisis/>. Some progress for youth with Integrated Service Delivery (ISD) program in schools.

3. Q: How are we building the relationship in the planning process with First Nations communities?

John: The city has a good relationship with its First Nations community, they are a key stakeholder in the planning conversations.

David: At the provincial level the relationship is not good with First Nations. They are not moving forward with the Truth and Reconciliation recommendations. David will ask why.

5. Top Themes

Health

- We need to remove restrictions and allow access to reproductive care.
- We need to increase the number of facilities and healthcare professionals across the system.
- We need more non-profit, long-term care organization for seniors.
- Long emergency room wait times are a concern.

Education

- Changing the French immersion entry point causes problems and instability for the education system.
- Education changes should be up to teachers and experts, not elected officials.
- We need more funding to keep arts, physical education, and trades in school.

Wealth and Employment Opportunities

- The city should be involved in wealth and job creation.
- There are opportunities in clean energy and public transit.
- We need more non-government jobs.
- We need more support for local food sector.
- We need more protection for workers.

Travelling around Town

- We need Sunday transit service, better access for seniors, and a grid-based route.
- Sidewalk corners should be walkable and safe during winter.
- We need dedicated bike lanes.
- We could use more downtown parking.

Environment

- We need better education on climate change.
- We should ban glyphosate.
- We need a compost program.
- We need greater involvement by NB Power and the city in energy efficiency.

6. Follow-Up Actions

David Coon:

1. I will speak to Bruce McCormack from Downtown Fredericton about the efforts to get signage for Fredericton on the TCH and then follow-up with the Minister of Department of Transportation to resolve the problem.
2. Regarding the navigability of sidewalks, I will press the provincial government to provide funding for municipalities to increase their attention to sidewalk clearing and salting under the auspices of their commitment to support age-friendly communities.
3. I will pursue the need for better energy efficiency programs to help people insulate their homes and upgrade their heating systems in the Legislature through Question Period.
4. In order to ensure that the health care system is promoting good health, not just supporting illness, I will advocate for the responsibilities for wellness to be transferred from the Department of Social Development to the Department of Health, along with the responsibilities for seniors.
5. I will look at how the development and delivery of health and wellness programs and services might be better served through a different institutional infrastructure that is currently subject to routine change whenever the government changes.
6. I am convinced that a Basic Income Guarantee is essential to helping people achieve food security and escape poverty, so I will champion this in the Legislative Assembly.
7. I will ask why the province is not moving forward w/ Truth and Reconciliation recommendations

John MacDermid:

This latest community gathering was the third of its type co-hosted by David Coon and me and was, from my perspective, a great conversation. The members of the community present brought a wide range of issues and concerns, but more importantly they brought with them ideas as solutions to their concerns, and open minds ripe for conversation around the table. By the end of the 2 hour session many issues had been raised and discussed and I would like to share with you some of the action items I will be working on as well as some of the actions that are already being worked on by the city.

1. Transportation

Transportation is always a hot topic of conversation. Of primary concern is the city's transit

system and active transportation network. In 2017 Fredericton Transit will be conducting a study of the city's transportation system with a recognition that the transit system is an integral component of the city's active transportation network. This includes identifying opportunities for bringing greater accessibility to the city's transit system (in 2016 Fredericton Transit started this process in collaboration with Ability NB.) The city was able to tap into Federal funding to purchase 4 low floor buses, fund the transit study, and allocate money for capital upgrades to bus stops to allow accessibility. This is a work in progress and hopefully by the fall a full report will be presented to council on options. I will be speaking with the chair of the Transportation Committee to bring the above issues to his awareness as well as having a conversation on looking at rolling out Sunday transit service. To me, Sunday service, as a priority, is the single most important upgrade to the city's transit system if it is to become a viable alternative to automobile ownership and for ensuring social inclusion for those who cannot afford to own an automobile.

2. Affordable Housing and Homelessness

In November of 2016 Mayor Mike struck the Mayor's Task Force on Homelessness. With a 4 month mandate its aim is to examine what systems are in place in the city to address chronic and episodic homelessness, who is involved in addressing the issue, and what can be done to find efficiencies in the system to better utilize resources. Many of the specific issues surrounding homelessness that were raised at the community gathering - improved communication between the three levels of government, avoiding duplication of resources, etc. - are being directly addressed by any one of the 4 working groups, of which I am chair of the finance group. As importantly, one of the purposes for the task force is to identify ways the city can serve as a more active partner in addressing homelessness in our community. A report will likely be produced and presented to the community in mid to late spring. More information on the Mayor's Task Force on Homelessness can be found at www.roadhomefredericton.com/mayors-task-force.html

3. Waste Management and Energy Opportunities

The city is currently coming to the end of a study of its waste management practices. An outside consultant was hired in 2016 to examine the city's waste management system, waste stream, and opportunities for improved service. That consulting firm is GHD and they will be reporting to the Public Safety and Environment committee in March with their recommendations for services improvements. As I have in the past I will be pushing for expansion of the city's recycling program to include apartment buildings and for the examination of a curb-side composting/organics program. This latter point, that of organics, leads to my next point, that of energy opportunities.

The City of Fredericton, last year, engaged in a partnership with the MCW group of engineering companies to look examine what opportunities there were for the city in terms of energy consumption and production. Within the next two months MCW will be bringing recommendations to council on where the city can best direct its focus in terms of energy efficiencies and energy production. Without trying to guess what will be in the final report,

early indications are that aside from finding ways to use less energy in the city's buildings and facilities, there is an opportunity for producing energy either through a solid-waste biomass facility or through a bio-gas facility. Either facility offers opportunities and incentives for rolling out curb-side organic household waste pickup. Suffice to say, this is an area that I have been quite outspoken on, will continue to speak on, and feel confident that in the near future the City of Fredericton will embark on a renewable energy project. As a city we are in a great position to serve as leaders in this area.