

Mayor reflects on 2016 and the year ahead

By Mayor Ken Bennington

I would like to wish every resident of Shelburne, a safe and prosperous New Year. May you be blessed with good health and full hearts.

Please join me as we continue to build this great Town of Shelburne, that we all call home.

As I reflect on 2016, and all the initiatives that Council continues to work towards, I was asked these questions regarding being your Mayor in 2016.

As I'm sure you would agree, these are not easy answers, but here goes:

- What was the single best thing that happened this past year?

Council renamed one of our parks after Natasha Paterson, and renamed our premier ball diamond after Lisa McKechnie, fitting tributes to two fine young girls who were taken from us way too young.

One of my favourite projects was the Hometown Heroes initiative in November, when we added the faces of our wartime heroes to our downtown flagpoles. I look forward to many more banners in 2017.

The Town installed a new pedestrian crosswalk at Main Street and William, and although we've certainly experienced some growing pains along with that, I'm confident that this new pedestrian crosswalk is a lot safer than the old one. Improvements will continue on that intersection through 2017.

- What was the single most challenging thing that happened?

Certainly, the meetings and discussions surrounding the Shelburne Police Services accommodations caused me to lose the most sleep. The discussions surrounding the fate of our local police force was the single most challenging item in my entire political career, not just 2016.

Members of Town staff and Town Council met at MTO Headquarters in Toronto on Bay Street back in August to pitch our rural transit reports. We didn't receive the answer we were looking for, but we'll continue knocking on the door until someone finally answers.

- What was an unexpected joy this past year?

A proud moment for Shelburne in 2016 materialized when a local lady, Kelly McDowell, approached Town Council looking for a motion of support from the Town, to combat changes that the Ontario government had proposed to autism funding in the province. The Town of Shelburne was the first municipality in Ontario to support her motion. Along with the support of legions of other Ontario municipalities, the Ontario government reversed those plans, and offered the parents different treatment options for

their children.

Lives have been changed as a result, the futures of these kids are bright, and it all started right here in the Town of Shelburne.

- What was an unexpected obstacle?

The Town of Shelburne was blasted in March 2016 with a feverous ice storm. I'm sure you'll recall that many, many trees and homes were damaged and many of us were without power for quite some time, many people were without power for several days. This is certainly not one of my favourite ?Mayor? memories, but I was very proud of the way our residents responded to that emergency.

Neighbours helping neighbours, whether it was trimming branches or running an extension cord to your neighbour's house. I was very pleased with our sense of community during that period.

- Pick three words to describe 2016

Building our foundation - Council and staff spent long hours preparing our Official Plan Amendments 34-36, those amendments will chart the course for Shelburne's growth over the next 10+ years.

- What are you looking forward to in 2017?

I expect to see the start of significant development in both our residential and commercial markets. I'm really excited about the commercial possibilities in Shelburne that will be realized in the near future.

I'd be remiss if I didn't mention that my favourite memory of 2016 occurred when Ms. Stephanie Batchelor, said ?Yes? and agreed to marry me.

We'll be tying the knot in late July 2017.

Happy New Year Shelburne!

Shelburne Proud!