



## Questions for 2022 Municipal Council Candidates



Vicki Mink

Councillor Ward 2

The Port Hope and District Chamber of Commerce is the recognized voice of business in the Municipality of Port Hope. We support all businesses, not just our close to 200 members, and play a key role in advocating on their behalf regarding decisions made by levels of government that may impact them.

These questions are being asked as background research to form individual question(s) for our meet the candidate events and to keep the business community informed of your outlooks with regard to the future of the Municipality of Port Hope. Please be advised that your responses will be shared in full or in part with the community through our membership, community publications and Social Media networks.

### **1. What is your plan for the Municipality over the next 4 years?**

My top priorities include Rural and Agricultural Economic Development; Housing and Land Use Planning; Accessibility and Pedestrian Safety; Fair Budget and Tax Levy; Asset Management, including rural roads and roadside management; Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation; Communications; and Heritage Preservation, both natural and cultural.

## **2. What do you believe is the biggest issue facing the business sector in the Municipality and how do you plan to address it?**

Process Barriers and lack of communication and transparency. Over and over again, I get complaints that business owners are given roadblocks and obstacles that could have been avoided if they set up their business in another municipality. This is disheartening feedback. Our by-laws are not easily accessible online and they are not translated into simple terms. Customer Service is also a barrier as I continue to get feedback that business owners are told, “you cannot do that,” rather than, “let’s find a way to make it work.”

This past year, the municipality has hired new staff in the Planning Department. The staff is a mix of very experienced to fairly new graduates. That department needs to continue to grow so that they have the abilities to help businesses and property owners with their matters quickly and efficiently. They need more customer service training, process improvement, data analysis and professional training. At least one staff member should be provided with professional training in Rural and Agricultural Economic Development.

## **3. Explain your understanding of economic development and describe the significance to our community**

Economic Development is an inclusive process whereby community growth is driven by a healthy local economy. Businesses want to invest into the community; and, likewise, people want to live there. The community benefits both financially as well as socially.

Economic Development is important to all communities as it balances capital and financial initiatives with social programs and quality of life. One without the other is a stagnant community with no growth and little opportunity for change or improvement.

## **4. The downtown core is an integral part of the business community, however there are businesses throughout the municipality including, but not limited to, home based and agri-businesses. What do you believe the municipality can do to support the businesses throughout the entire community and not just in the downtown core?**

- Help farmers connect with funding opportunities from all tiers of government and agencies across the sector
- Emphasize and support diversified farming opportunities
- Process permits and applications quickly, provide more transparency and reduce bureaucratic barriers
- Protect agricultural land from urban development
- Support farmers from the global rising costs of farming with property assessment and fair taxation
- Develop a strategy for community and regional food planning
- Acknowledge the agricultural and rural community as a distinctly different culture and develop a separate set of communication and consultation strategies

**5. The municipality has been restructuring and reconsidering their approach to economic development, building and planning. What do you think the best thing the municipality can do in the short, mid and long term to better support growth and development in a fair, timely and financially sound way?**

Port Hope has a vibrant historical downtown and busy commercial areas. The business parks at either end of town are growing annually with new occupants. This is great news, and now we must focus more on economic development in the rural and agricultural community. Global pressures are driving up the cost of agricultural production and overall operations. For the benefit of our entire community, more must be done to help our farmers and rural business owners transition through the changing global economy.

Port Hope also has more opportunity to develop the tourism sector. Port Hope is blessed with being in a prime location on the busiest highway in the country. It is blessed with many natural, historical and cultural features. So much more can be done to enhance tourism and make it a prime Ontario hotspot for vacationers and day-trippers. With more visitors on a continuous basis, all businesses will thrive.

**6. Agriculture and rural businesses are a key piece of the economic viability of this community. What do you think the Municipality should be doing to better support this sector?**

See Question #4