

Understanding the Role of Elected Officials in Asset Management 2021 AMO Virtual Conference

Host

Christina Benty, Strategic Leadership Solutions

Panel

Mayor Nancy Peckford, Municipality of North Grenville

Mayor Cheryl Fort, Township of Hornepayne

Mayor Brad Loosley, Town of Petrolia

Summary

Host, Christina Benty led a panel discussion focused on what the role of Elected Officials (E.O.) is in asset management. Christina outlines some key asset management principals that E.O. should be familiarizing themselves and their councilmen with:

1. What services does your municipality provide to the community?
2. What assets provide these services? Where are they?
3. Why does your municipality provide these services?
4. What condition are those assets in?
5. What remaining life do each of those assets have? Included in this is knowing what the cost of repair is, as well as the cost for not investing in the assets.
6. Can your municipality afford to maintain the current service levels?

Higher expectations from community members for level of service has impacted communities' ability to properly invest in existing assets. Changing legislation has also increased the cost of good asset management practices over the decades. Despite these hurdles, E.O. should be focusing on how they can leverage best practices in asset management to better manage their assets as well as ensure they are leaving assets in good condition for future generations. Christina emphasized the need for E.O. to think about how they can be a better ancestor for the future leaders of their community by leveraging strong asset management principles.

Question One [11:30]

Tell us about your municipality and how asset management is important when it comes to service delivery in your community.

- **Mayor Cheryl Fort**

"We did a service delivery review of our entire municipality of everything we offer it was extensive we got over 100 recommendations for change, right from looking at infrastructure to looking at organizational structure so it was a great place to start. And the one part that I wanted to mention

about inheritance. What you inherited and the way I look at it when thinking about generations ahead is I want to leave a better inheritance for the next council. I'm not always going to be Mayor and I always wanted to leave it better than what I received and I think that's an imperative point when we're talking about changing the way we look at it is although we may only be here for a 4-year term or maybe you'll do consecutive terms you always want to remember that what you're doing is going to be carried onto the future for the future generations of your residents"

- **Mayor Brad Loosley**

"Asset management is really about service management in the short-term or proper management of those assets and long-term replacement of all deteriorated assets. Asset management to me, is about being proactive or approve the long-term planning rather than reactive."

- **Mayor Nancy Peckford**

"I see asset management really as a tool for creating our community cohesion... We had an extremely frustrated community who felt that there was a kind of fragmentation that was happening through growth that was not bringing people together. As a consequence, there had been some good asset management foundation being built prior to our election so it had already gone down the path. Our municipality was on the way to be able to describe to Council what were the trade-offs; if we spend money here, where couldn't we spend it somewhere else? That's been the process in which we've been engaged. I would be remiss to not mention that as we've managed the asset management landscape, we've reduced taxes each and every year."

Question Two [22:12]

We've talked about some of the investments that you're making right now in your existing assets. What are some of the other successes that you've had using an asset management, long-term thinking lens?

Question Three [37:49]

All three of you have talked about building a relationship with your staff, building staff capacity, building the organizational culture that allows you to have difficult conversations with some challenging information. How do you cultivate an organizational culture that ensures E.O. are having the right conversations and asking the right questions with their staff regarding asset management?

Question Four [47:44]

I want to close off with a couple words from each of you around what it means to be a good ancestor. What would you like to impart on those who are listening to this conversation today in terms of using meaningful, long-term decision making to ensure that the services we enjoy today are enjoyed by future generations?