



## A Mayor's Legacy: Vision, Consensus, Trust Arnprior's David Reid sticking to two-term promise

By: Jennifer Layman  
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When David Reid ran for the mayor's chair in 2010, he said he would only stay two terms. Now, in 2018, that second term is up, and despite some encouragement to change his mind, he's sticking to his word.

"I think sometimes people hang in a little longer than they should," he says.

When David Reid challenged incumbent Terry Gibeau for mayor in Arnprior in 2010, timing was everything. Reid was working on an exit strategy for his business that was heavily into real estate holdings. Reid thought he would sell a property or two a year until he was eventually retired, but as often happens, a buyer had another idea. He wanted all the properties, all at once, and all at that moment. Reid made the deal.

When he looked at what to do next, the opportunity to run for council happened to be an option, so he submitted his nomination papers. It took an extra day due to challenges with electronic voting, but at the end of it all, he



was successful in his first run.

"I'm a civil engineer and I thought council would be a good fit for me," says Reid.

Running on the platform of making Arnprior more "business-like," Reid was respectful of the work of past councils and wanted to combine carrying out the good work of his predecessors with some new ideas. He is grateful to have had a council that bought into the philosophy of a more fiscally efficient municipality.

A part of that philosophy was managing municipal finances. Always a hot topic for a newly

elected official, Reid and his council introduced a change that would start with them, and come to fruition likely when none of them were left on council to get the credit. They all agreed.

Council's philosophy on finances was to get their municipal debt under control, while beefing up their reserves to use for borrowing. Their plan is that by 2028, the Town will have paid off its debt, all while making other improvements that residents expect of their municipality. Paying off debt isn't a sexy issue to hang your hat on, but Reid said it was necessary.

"You do the right thing for the long-term, whether you'll be there to see it or not," he says. "Our council was on board with that. Some politicians make politically-motivated decisions, but you pay the price in the long-run for that."

Reid said it wasn't just council that was on board with the new philosophy, it was also the staff and the public. Queen's University provided three sessions to the municipality about the philosophy for the town and the results were, what Reid calls, "well-aligned." Reid credits the municipal staff for making the Town work as well as it has, and believe the hiring of Chief Administrative Officer, Michael Wildman, was the best move council made in seven years.

Leadership, at staff and council levels, is something that Reid speaks to often. As mayor, he says, you are chair of the meetings and you should look for consensus - a point to which everyone could agree so that they could, as a council, move together in the same direction.

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# A Mayor's Legacy, Continued

## Reid encourages candidates "for the right reasons"

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They didn't always agree around the council table, but "most times," he says there was a recommendation they could all agree with.

"We're there to provide a vision for the Town and to communicate with the ratepayers," he says. "We are not there to run the Town. That's why the senior management team is critical to the success of any municipality. The philosophies must be aligned."

Communicating with ratepayers was a big issue when it came to their Downtown Revitalization plan. They engaged with the merchants and asked them how they wanted their council to proceed. Initially there was a five phase plan, but the merchants opted to do it all at once, ripping up their main street from one end through to the other to replace 100+ year old infrastructure.

"We asked them if they wanted us to rip the band-aid off slowly or quickly," says Reid. "They said quickly. And, it probably saved us a million dollars being able to do it like that."

If it sounds too good to be true in Arnprior, wait til you hear what's next.

Reid once referred to Beauman Waste Management as part of

Arnprior's "extended community." When asked what he meant by that, he talked about the relationship with McNab Braeside, their neighbour, and a place he says he has lived as long as he has lived in Arnprior.

"We each have our own councils, but together we are one," he says. "We go to school together, we work together and we play together. We are a collective community of rural and urban interests."

Imagine, communities working together for the benefit of all residents. It can happen and in the eastern end of Renfrew County, it does happen. Reid thinks it could be taken further.

"We need to revisit our jurisdictions," he says, "and other levels of government need to stay out of our business. We should be defining our roles. There is a lot of overlap with the county and the province and we could be more efficient if we looked at that."

As he makes his exit this December, Reid's only hope is that he has left the Town of Arnprior a little better than how he inherited it. He hopes the next council will continue the work of the current council, and further the same philosophies.

"I would really encourage anybody to run for council if it is

something they might like to do, and that they would do it for the right reasons," he says. "Council has an important function in the community."

Reid recommends that candidates really know their role as a member of council. "Staff are the experts," he says, "you're not there to micromanage them. You take away the accountability of staff when you do that." He also recommends that you search for common ground around the council table and find a way to always be paddling in the same direction.

As for his future direction, David Reid plans to remain connected to the community. He says he is always someone who brings things home, or worries about things more than he should, so he looks forward to being able to leave some of that to the next contingent of elected officials. He says the unexpected loss of his brother last year was something that has reinforced the message to live life to the fullest, and he plans to do a little more of that.

David Reid isn't going to be one of those politicians who hung around longer than he should have. But he might be the politician that the community wishes would hang around a little longer.

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