

Introductory Remarks for Inauguration
Of Southwest Middlesex Council, November 16, 2022

I wish to welcome all those in attendance from our community today. Sharing the formalities of council taking their oath of office is even more special by your presence. I give my congratulations to not only those who have attained the privilege of holding office for the next 4 years but for those who were short on public support as well. They have all participated in the fundamentals of democracy, and some have left accomplishments behind them.

I would like to thank the administration and staff who have participated in arranging this inaugural event, and for the refreshments that await us shortly.

It is my privilege to say a few words prior to refreshments and food! My message is the importance of municipal government as seen through the eyes of your mayor.

Through The Eyes of a Mayor ...
Written by Al Mayhew - Mayor of Southwest Middlesex.

*Your local Municipal Government, administration, and staff - affect people's lives, and your life, more than any other level of government, - on any given day.

- We are responsible for the water you drink, the roads and sidewalks you use on a daily basis, your sanitary storm water systems, sanitary sewer systems, and your fire departments.
- We maintain the municipal facilities that you own, the playgrounds you take your children to and the garbage you put by the roadside weekly.
- We attend to drainage matters in rural regions and help facilitates agreements in engineering that will result in a more productive crop yield and see that those costs are apportioned fairly.
- Rural roads are brined to control dust, this too is our responsibility.
- When individuals bunker down during blizzards - our employees are providing you a safe passage.
- Our Volunteer Fire Fighters are on the ready to save you, your children, and your property should harm come your way, and your Council funds the equipment that they require to get the job done and keep them safe.
- We advocate for recreational activities and social events.
- We run and co-ordinate emergency measures in times of crisis, when everyone else is directed to run in the other direction.
- Not only are we subjected to public scrutiny daily - but so to can our families. You may also become fodder for some social media enthusiasts.
- Soon after you get sworn in – you may get sworn at!

- That being said, Social Media platforms are the immediate tool in conveying information today. Community events, emergency alerts, and congratulatory remarks prosper in this environment.
- As a source for accurate information on deeper subjects - it may have its shortcomings.
- Social media can often become a forum of complaint and not an avenue for resolve and restoration of disappointment.
- Just as a handshake is more meaningful than a smile, or a greeting is more meaningful than waving a hand; - personal conversation is more potent than Facebook chatter. Be cautious of becoming a “keyboard critic”.
- I have never found evidence in commercial business, or investment, where negativity has fostered success. Complaints and criticism does not improve any atmosphere - financially, physically, or visually. If you object to an issue – give the Chair your reasons and your suggestion for remediating your concern.
- Solving a problem is not found by just identifying the shortcoming. Solutions and vision - not complaint and sarcasm, are what solve difficult situations.
- Let’s all look up occasionally from our keyboard and use dialogue and engagement to achieve correction and advancement of today’s issues.
- We deal Provincial and Federal Governments that move at “glacial speed” and we knock on their doors to get our constituents millions of dollars of grant money. This improves the Municipality, keeps our taxes down, and enhances our level of service. Your administration and our staff lead the charge on this. They watch and pursue the funding initiatives that your Federal, Provincial and County Governments offer, and lobby on your behalf for grants in governance that will benefit you.
- We are the largest contributor to charitable and not for profit organizations in your region.
- We monitor our infrastructure of roads, water and sanitary capacity to ensure we can supply new housing, new employment, and protect existing users of our systems.
- We build libraries, childcare centres, transfer stations, bring you high speed fiber and better internet connectivity, dog parks, arboretum’s, playgrounds, and parks. We foster economic improvement with more attractive core areas, industrial ready sites; we dispose of unwanted or underutilized lands and assets. We spend significant dollars – yet we are often reminded that the electorate want more. Remember – service levels to the public are proportionally related to your tax rate. The more people get – the more taxes are required. Grants and Growth are what stabilize taxation and advance our municipality of SWM.
- We promote development to provide growth that will raise assessment, and keep your schools, places of faith, businesses, and service organizations - viable and open.
- And during a Pandemic-, we monitor every statement from our local health unit, - reminding you of the precautionary steps you can take to prevent infection, and advocate for local vaccination to protect yourself and those who chose not to receive a vaccine.

- Climate abnormalities now effect our governance, and public health alerts regarding new viruses, variants, and mutations may continue to affect the health and safety of our community.

I have given you the short list, of our responsibilities; - they will go far beyond this. Mayors and Councilors are on call 7 days a week, 24 hour a day, AND we hold these responsibilities for 1,460 days of our life each term. With the advancement of technology and smart phones – we are never off the job.

We do this to make our communities stronger, safer, more sustainable, and well positioned for future generations. Staff work effectively and diligently to provide council with sound recommendations on a variety of subjects. With their recommendations in hand - we make the decision as to how we proceed.

Do we always agree with those around the horseshoe; certainly not. There are times that we may be puzzled by the opinions and attitudes of our colleagues, administration, and staff - but we all strive to attempt to “mend fences” and to make SWM a better place.

Why do we do this? - Because we love our Municipality and its people. Lower tier government have sky- high responsibilities, and the adjective “lower” is somewhat inappropriate at times. No other level of governance will impact you more than your municipal government.

According to the United Nations in October of 2021 – good government is measured by 8 factors and these United Nations standards can be applied to a municipality as well.

1. The Rule Of law
2. Transparency
3. Consensus Oriented
4. Equity and
5. Inclusiveness
6. Effectiveness
7. Efficiency
8. Accountability

These principals can be used in any form of governance and should be.

In my own personal life, business, and decision-making - I have a ½ dozen question that I often ask myself.

* Mayhew's 6 Elements Of Decision Making

1. Does it advance or maintain our level of service
2. What is the effect on our bottom line or tax rate
3. Is it fair and equitable towards our client base
4. Are the goals in relation to our strategic plan

5. Does it improve our efficiencies
6. Will it maintain our reputation and trust

Do not let any of my word dissuade you from enjoying what is ahead of you. I enjoy my responsibility as Mayor and CEO of this municipality, and Head of Council. I look forward to the relationships that I build and the positive contributions that have and will be made. The next four years will see an abundance of challenges, changes, and considerations. Fasten your seatbelt – it's going to be a ride

It is important that I give compliment to my partner and best friend for 50 years – Linda. This woman who at times registers over 17,000 steps per day. Not only does she have my unconditional respect, - she will have my admiration forever.

In closing – to be in municipal government, - one must have the strength of Samson, the wisdom of Solomon, and the patience of Job.

Thank you – I look forward working with this council, administration, and staff, to make Southwest Middlesex – all it can be.

Al Mayhew
Mayor of Southwest Middlesex.