



***“A Perfect Place to Live, Work, and Play”***

# **Strategic Plan**

***December, 2019***

*To the Whitestone community.....*

*Early in its term, your current Council decided to review and update the Municipality's Strategic Plan originally established in 2015 as a framework for municipal policy decisions and priorities. We therefore set aside time at several Council meetings this past spring to review the plan's guiding principles, objectives, and key action items, as well as progress to date on achieving the original plan elements. During the summer and early fall we circulated a revised draft to the community for their review and comment.*

*This document is the product of our collective efforts. The vision, mission, and core values for our Municipality remain essentially the same, but some of the high-level objectives have been updated to reflect work completed during the last term of Council, and changing priorities. More changes have taken place in the detailed action items at the lower levels of the plan, which are not included here, but are being tracked and monitored by Council and staff.*

*Plans are well underway to advance several of the action items identified in our Strategic Plan; in fact, some tasks have been completed already. Watch for progress reports on implementation of the plan in our Newsletters and on the Municipality's website.*

*The Strategic Plan is intended to be a living document, and as such will continue to be updated as changing circumstances and priorities dictate. Your comments and suggestions are always welcome. Please direct them to our CAO / Clerk Michelle Hendry or to any member of Council.*

*Thank you for your important contributions to the Municipality of Whitestone's strategic planning process.*

*Sincerely,*

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "G Comrie", is written on a light yellow rectangular background.

*Mayor George Comrie*

*December 2019*



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## **Vision**

***Under the leadership of Council, and working together in a spirit of collaboration, our community is engaged in making Whitestone one of the best places in Ontario to live, work, and play, so that:***

- The services the community wants and needs are delivered efficiently and effectively.***
- Whitestone’s unique character, beauty, and quality of life are preserved and enhanced.***
- Its resources are managed prudently for the benefit of present and future generations.***

## **Mission**

***Our mission is to achieve and maintain a municipality that is sound financially, supportive of appropriate opportunities, protective of the natural environment, and that preserves the unique heritage of the area.***

***We challenge ourselves to diversify and create a more vibrant local economy through collaborative partnerships with existing businesses, service groups, and adjacent municipalities, as well as through proactive efforts to attract new businesses and services.***

***We will create initiatives to include all residents, both permanent and seasonal, in contributing to the betterment of our community.***

## **Core Values**

***We will govern our actions according to the following core values:***

- Accountability*** . ***Openness and transparency***
- Respect for others*** . ***Respect for nature and the environment***
- Honesty and integrity*** . ***Efficiency and cost effectiveness***



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## **Strategic Objectives**

### **1. Communication**

***To review and improve the Municipality’s communication with all stakeholders in the community with a view to openness and transparency***

### **2. Fiscal Responsibility and Accountability**

***To be financially responsible and accountable in delivering municipal services efficiently and cost effectively within the community’s economic framework***

### **3. Management Systems**

***To develop management systems that support the goals and objectives of Council and staff***

### **4. Environmental Stewardship**

***To preserve and enhance the natural environment of our community with its small, rural, and waterfront character, and maximize the quality of life for present and future generations***

### **5. Maintenance of our Infrastructure**

***To maintain and preserve the Municipality’s infrastructure to established standards within our financial capability***

### **6. Economic Development**

***To investigate opportunities for economic development consistent with the character of the community and the Official Plan, in collaboration with businesses in the Community and the West Parry Sound region.***

### **7. Building Community**

***To encourage and enhance community involvement, pride, and spirit in the Municipality, including its visual image***



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# Action Plan Priorities to Achieve Strategic Objectives

## 1. Communication

### 1.1 Review and renew communication policy

Whitestone has in place various policies governing communication: what is to be communicated, when, how, and by whom. These policies will be reviewed and amended where appropriate to reflect Council's priority for effective communication and the needs of our various stakeholders, and to take advantage of modern communication technologies.

### 1.2 Improve two-way communication with ratepayers

The Municipality's most important stakeholder group is its ratepayers. Council has expressed its desire to enhance its communication with ratepayers, in both directions; i.e., to provide them with better information on the issues facing the municipality and how Council and Municipal staff are addressing them, and to provide them with opportunities to provide input and feedback.

Council is committed to modernizing and updating the Municipal web site and Facebook pages, allowing for easy access to Municipal news, events and services. In addition, we are committed to ensuring that the audio and recording options for Council meetings are enhanced.

### 1.3 Develop a communication strategy

Council has committed to developing a comprehensive communication strategy and a communication planning framework, with the assistance of a consultant. Various communication media will be considered as vehicles for delivering key messages and for obtaining ratepayer input and feedback. These will include printed newsletters, the Municipal website, social media, surveys, and meetings (Council meetings, special meetings, “town hall” meetings, and meetings with various community groups).



### 1.4 Enhance internal communication

Special emphasis will be placed on communication with and between Municipal staff. Council believes it is important that all staff understand Municipal goals, priorities and directions, and how they can contribute to advancing them. Enhancing internal communication will contribute positively to workplace harmony, collaboration, and employee satisfaction.

## **2. Fiscal Responsibility and Accountability**

### **2.1 Maintain an open and transparent budgeting process**

We will continue to enhance our fiscal planning and budgeting process, taking into consideration:

- Inflation and interest rates, increases in cost of living and of key commodities
- Changes to external levies, grants, costing models, and regulations.
- Staffing requirements and results of collective bargaining
- Requirements for asset management and new initiatives



### **2.2 Create a robust asset management plan**

Whitestone will have in place a comprehensive inventory of Municipal assets. Municipal budgets will include reasonable reserves for major capital expenditures required to replace and renew key municipal assets, as well as for contingencies. Such expenditures may to be financed through effective borrowing. Reserves will be used to cushion tax increases.

### **2.3 Collaborate with neighbouring municipalities and external agencies**

Opportunities may exist for sharing procurements and/or services with neighbouring municipalities and other agencies in the District of Parry Sound. The Municipality of Whitestone will explore such opportunities as a means of obtaining efficiencies and controlling costs.

### **2.4 Engage in responsible collective bargaining**

Council will engage in responsible collective bargaining with a view to balancing the need for fiscal responsibility and accountability to ratepayers with the need to maintain a productive workforce and good labour relations.

### **2.5 Capitalize on external sources of funding / grants**

Council will attempt to take advantage of all available sources of external funding for contingencies, major capital projects, and community enhancements.



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## **3. Management Systems**

### **3.1 Clarify roles and responsibilities**

With a small staff and tight budgets, the Municipality of Whitestone must place a high priority on effective organization and staffing. Council will continue to take steps to clarify staff roles, responsibilities, and authorities, and to ensure that all staff are trained and equipped to perform their duties.

### **3.2 Enhance performance appraisals**

Performance appraisals, evaluations and mentoring of staff will be undertaken to ensure staff are measured against key objectives for their positions. This will provide meaningful feedback and identify strengths as well as development opportunities.

### **3.3 Measure results against objectives**

As part of this strategic plan, Council intends to define specific performance objectives with associated timelines and costs, and measure achievement of those objectives on an ongoing basis. This management discipline will ensure that efforts are focused on the most important outcomes, and will enable resources to be adjusted as required to maximize their achievement.

### **3.4 Plan for management development and succession**

The Municipality’s staffing needs will be reviewed on a regular basis with a view to identifying potential skills gaps and opportunities for staff development and succession.

### **3.5 Manage Council’s business more effectively**

Council will review its operations and procedures to identify opportunities to make Council meetings more productive.

### **3.6 Review policies, procedures, and processes**

Council will review established policies, procedures, and processes to bring them up-to-date and to ensure their consistency with this Strategic Plan, the Whitestone Official plan and best municipal practices.





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## **4. Environmental Stewardship**

### **4.1 Outreach to conservation associations**

Council will increase communication and collaboration with the conservation and lake associations that exist within the bounds of the Municipality as a means of focusing our collective efforts on environmental stewardship.

### **4.2 Enhance lake and watershed planning and management**

The Municipality of Whitestone will participate in and encourage lake planning and management efforts at the watershed level to ensure that the interests of our lakes and their residents / users are recognized appropriately in regional planning and operations, including the minimization and mitigation of spring flooding.



### **4.3 Monitor and promote water quality**

The Municipality of Whitestone will encourage and support programs to maintain and enhance water quality in the lakes, rivers, and aquifers within its bounds.

### **4.4 Educate about recycling and hazardous waste**

A significant amount of recyclable waste is being discarded in the Municipality's landfill sites as regular garbage, instead of being segregated and deposited in the containers provided for recycling. This environmentally unfriendly practice shortens the useful life of the landfill sites. Ratepayers need to be clear as to what can and can't be recycled, what materials are considered hazardous waste, and how to dispose of them. Council will develop programs to educate our community on the importance of responsible waste management practices and to encourage waste reduction and recycling wherever possible.

### **4.5 Plan for the future of landfill sites**

The Municipality's two existing waste management facilities (on York Street and Auld's Road) have limited capacity for future expansion and could be nearing their end-of-life. Given the lengthy and difficult approval processes associated with such facilities, it is important to plan for Whitestone's future waste management needs well in advance of their reaching capacity. Council will consider options for extending the life of our waste management facilities, including other operating models such as transfer stations.

### **4.6 Enhance forest fire protection**

Large forested areas that are difficult for firefighters to access, together with increased variability in weather, make Whitestone increasingly vulnerable to forest fires. The Municipality will consider ways to increase protection of its residents and recreation areas from fire through enhanced permitting, surveillance, and cooperation with the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry.



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## 5. Maintenance of our Infrastructure

### 5.1 Review and update 5-year road and bridge plan annually

In order to plan and budget for capital works, and to focus opportunities for provincial and federal funding, the Municipality must have an up-to-date road and bridge management plan with priorities for major improvements beyond routine annual maintenance. To this end, all municipal roads will be assessed annually as to their condition and need for capital improvement, and the 5-year road plan will be updated accordingly. Bridges will be assessed biennially as required by legislation.



### 5.2 Support the private road grant protocol

The Municipality will continue to support the existing Private Road Grant Protocol that assists users of shared private (unassumed) roads with a portion of their costs of maintaining those roads privately.

### 5.3 Improve information and regulatory signage

Council intends to identify and respond to opportunities to improve signage within the Municipality for the benefit of visitors to the community and for public safety.

### 5.4 Develop a Public Land Strategy

Council will develop a strategy for the use of existing Municipal property and potentially available public lands that may be used to further some of the objectives in this strategic plan. We will also assess the potential for the disposal of surplus land currently owned by the Municipality.



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## **6. Economic Development**

### **6.1 Identify opportunities for and obstacles to economic activity**

Council will work with the community partners, Community Investment in Northern Ontario (CIINO), and the West Parry Sound Economic Development Officer to identify and address opportunities to enhance Whitestone’s existing businesses and to develop new ones. We will also support opportunities for improved broadband service in the Municipality.

### **6.2 Encourage home-based businesses**

The municipality will consider means of attracting new businesses that do not need to be located in major centres and that do not require extensive physical facilities, such as those that can be home-based, and those that provide services to seniors.

### **6.3 Attract tourism through events**

In collaboration with local businesses and associations, the Municipality will seek opportunities to promote tourism through special events.

### **6.4 Collaborate with existing businesses**

The Municipality will seek strategies that assist existing businesses to grow and prosper.

### **6.5 Consider shared economic development resources**

The Municipality will consider partnering with neighbouring municipalities to share economic development resources.

### **6.6 Promote our commercial tax rate**

The Municipality will promote its favourable commercial tax rate, which is the same as its residential tax rate.



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## 7. Building Community

### 7.1 Promote community assets

Some of Whitestone’s assets and facilities are not well known and may be underutilized. The Municipality will promote these assets and their use to both residents and visitors.

### 7.2 Support the future of Whitestone Lake Public School

The existence of a public elementary school in the Municipality is a significant factor in making Whitestone a place where families with young children will choose to live, and in preserving the character of the community for the future. Council will use its influence to support the continued existence of the school and the expansion of its programs and facilities.

### 7.3 Encourage and enhance community involvement

The vitality of a community depends in large measure on the commitment and engagement of its ratepayers. The Municipality of Whitestone will seek opportunities to promote involvement in the community and its affairs on the part of all residents, both permanent and seasonal. This will be supported by a strong communications strategy and implementation plan.



### 7.4 Support the Whitestone Hagerman Memorial Public Library

The Whitestone Hagerman Memorial Public Library has become an important hub for advancing personal growth, life-long learning, and recreational interests of the community, and has out grown its existing facilities. Council is committed to work with the Library Board, staff and the community at large to move forward with an expansion of the Library to support the Library’s services and programs.

### 7.5 Investigate community improvement programs

Throughout Canada, communities similar in size and character to Whitestone face the same challenges of maintaining their unique character, spirit and attractiveness. Opportunities exist to learn from and emulate the best community improvement practices of other communities. The Municipality of Whitestone will consider participating in community improvement programs that offer expertise and standardized approaches to community improvement.



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## **7.6 Promote tidiness**

Tidiness and attractiveness are important contributors to residents’ pride in their community and to its appeal to visitors. The Municipality of Whitestone will promote tidiness and beautification of the community through measures such as community clean-up days and special days for disposal of yard waste and other unsightly materials.

## **7.7 Enhance recruitment and appreciation of volunteers**

Whitestone depends on its dedicated volunteer base for many important community activities and services. We will implement measures to attract and retain volunteers, and will encourage their recognition and appreciation, both within the community and externally, as a means of building community.

## **7.8 Recognize milestones**

The Municipality will recognize milestones both in the history of the community, and in the lives of its residents, as a means of building community.

## **7.9 Promote health and safety**

Health and safety are important factors in the quality of life of Whitestone residents. Council will continue to support health and safety related services and programs within the Municipality such as the Volunteer Fire and Rescue Service, the Nursing Station, and fitness programs.

