

November 25, 2024

Good evening,

I'm aware that my delegations to council in the past have failed to be deemed informative or of instructional value.

Therefore, I was going to give you all a break tonight, and just relate a whimsical tale. A simple, fictional tale to entertain. I will pass that intended script along to Kaitlyn for inclusion in the official minutes for this meeting. It will also be on my website, www.thisiswilmot.ca under the 'Bacon Scrapins' drop-down as of tomorrow.

However, I changed my mind and decided to go in a different direction, by maintaining my course as a citizen.

In 1954 the citizens of Germany were asking themselves, "*How did we let it get to this?*" In 2029, I'm guessing, the citizens of the U.S. will be asking themselves the same thing.

On July 5th, 2021 after the previous council had perfunctorily heard delegations, and then immediately ignored the input of 80% of the citizens, and had the hubris to read from prepared scripts to rationalize their actions, I asked myself the same question, "*How did it come to this? How does this corporation make decisions?*"

I started looking for possible answers by seeking information. I wanted to work within the system to be able to be an advocate for the Township and conclude, positively, that the decision of July 5th was an unfortunate exception in the democratic process of decision-making in Wilmot.

I reviewed council meeting minutes and reports starting back in 2016 when the Township signed a contract with Createscape. I asked for the documents produced by the Township to fulfill its requirement to provide an educational program acceptable to the public. Request denied. **Either documents did not exist, or their quality was embarrassing, or it was a secret.**

I wondered how the organization was structured, who was responsible for what, who reported to whom, what are the structural checks-and-balances for accountability? Thus, I requested the consultant's report of

recommendations for Wilmot's "*Organizational Structure Review and People Plan*". This report that had been received and approved by council. It became a public document. It was referred to by a CAO in reports to Council and in an annual budget document. Request denied.

Staff presented a report recently advising us of the need to spend \$1Million to renovate this Castle to add exactly 11 more employees. I asked my ward councillor for a copy of the report. He said he had to ask permission. *What? A grown adult man, a councillor for the Township has to go to daddy for permission? Are you kidding me? Nope*, he had to ask permission to provide me with the information, which would be the logical rationale for adding exactly 11 more employees, and for telling citizens they needed to contribute another million dollars. Report denied. *It's a secret.*

In fact, my ward councillor does not have the "people plan" which is presently being used to plan for additional staff and renovations. Council doesn't have the information being presently used by management to hire staff and renovate capital assets at public expense. *I'm not kidding, This, is straight out of "The Wizard of Oz".*

I wondered how the corporation communicates. A consultant was hired to produce, what was advertised at council as, a "*Corporate Communications and Community Engagement Strategy*". I asked for a copy of the report telling us how the corporation plans to communicate and engage its citizens. You guessed it. Request denied.

Management refused to tell me how they were going to talk to me, and engage us all. Is it only me who sees the irony in that? Management refuses to tell me how they're going to talk to me. I got a copy in other ways. The part about community engagement was gone. Council and the public had been told that a consultant would advise about communication AND community engagement, but the part describing "*how does the Township engage the public in the decision-making process*" was omitted. No engagement plan. Maybe that was the intention all along?

At a council meeting a councillor advised that it is the CAO who hires the clerk. My information from the OMA was that the clerk is a mandatory role in a municipality and the CAO is optional. It is council that approves all hiring from the director level on up, thus council technically approves the hiring of the clerk. Unless, there is legislation, regulation, by-law or personal contract

clause that allows it. I asked for all of the above. Yup. Request denied. No proof that a Wilmot CAO is legally authorized to hire a clerk.

At the March 25th council meeting there was a CAO report about the consultation process for the PMP project. All 3 management recommendations were to *“maintain the current direction”*.

A councillor observed, *“...council is unable to then further determine sort of what future engagement process would look like post-forming of that working group. Is that accurate?”*

The manger’s response was, *“I think the consultant could actually work with the working group and council to develop a mandate for the working group and really set out what council is tasking that working group to do.”*

When the authorizing report, for council approval to hire a consultant, was presented, none of that commitment for a participatory role by council was included. Council had to battle hard to get *“all other options”* and the right to review and approve terms of reference written into the policy direction.

There’s a pattern here. A lot of talk about, *“transparency, timely respectful inclusive communication with our stakeholders, consistent collaborative community participation, public engagement, public affirmation of our ‘marching orders’, trust building”*, but no follow through.

Trust is not something you **take** like a shiny ornament and get to keep it forever. It is something that is **given**, based on each and every statement, every written word, every action. And every one of those things, every single incident, every day, for always has to be confirmation that a person given a role can be trusted. Every action must be evidence of *“transparency, clarity, forthrightness, fulsomeness of accurate information, all possible options have been presented, and honesty”*. Only then may a person be granted trust to continue in the role. Trust must be confirmed with every action.

Whoever controls information, controls knowledge. Whoever controls knowledge controls power. After 3 years of trying to get the answer to my question, *“How did it come to this?”* I have reached some conclusions about who controls the information, who controls the knowledge, and who controls the power in decision-making in this corporation.

1. Per the OMA, the CAO role is responsible for, “*exercising general control and management of the affairs of the municipality*”.
2. Administration’s role is to, “*implement council’s decisions and establish administrative practices and procedures to carry out council’s decisions.*”
3. A mayor’s role is to, “*provide leadership to council*”.
4. Council’s role is to, “*ensure the accountability and transparency of the operations of the municipality, including the activities of the senior management of the municipality*”.
5. The CAO supervises all hired staff and must be aware of all activities, of all service areas as they are executed every day, of every month, and be able to provide direction and re-direction as needed to hired staff. He or she or they must have a comprehensive knowledge of what has happened, what is happening and what will be happening in the known future. Long-term planning to provide 30 years risk management planning also occurs in effective corporations.
6. Therefore, because council supervises the CAO, it too must have all of the same information about every service area, for every week and every month. It must have knowledge of what happened before they took office and will impact their decision-making. It must know what events are upcoming, when, for what reason, and for what projected cost. A CAO must provide that data to council when they first get elected to office and must continue to provide it regularly and upon request of council. No excuses! Did this council get it?
7. The facts say that council does not have all the information required for it to fulfill its legislated requirement to provide supervision of the CAO role, and to “*ensure the accountability and transparency of the operations of the municipality*”.

(See the *Corporate Communications Strategy Report*.

This policy proposal is in direct opposition to the report’s conclusions of the previous and present councils, non-management staff, stakeholder groups, the research, findings, best practice, future trends, and analysis. This management report is an outlier. Outlier means “*a person or thing situated away or detached from the main body or system.*”

See page 7, Key Themes, item 10: “*Belief that elected officials should be able to get information from all levels of staff, not just the department director, to save time and ensure efficient use of staff resources.*”

See also page 8, items 6 & 7 from staff.

See also page 9, item 6 from stakeholder groups.

See also page 11, item 7, common theme.

See also page 15, Challenges, item 2, “Council would like this work to move forward more quickly. They would also like to be better informed about upcoming staff reports and project status across departments.”

See also page 17, item 3 > “Improve alignment with Council”, page 18, item 6 > “Enhance public engagement efforts”.

Action? See #8 below.

8. Council has not provided adequate, specific direction to management staff that results in acquiring the **complete information** needed to provide adequate supervision and to make knowledgeable decisions.

9. There is a long standing “*management cultural history*” of assuming powers and authorities that are beyond its mandate.

The *Corporate Communications Strategy* report, on page 9, states, “The Township does not have a reputation for being helpful. A **positive culture shift is needed.**”

On page 16, a list of risk analysis items, the report states “*Long history of negative reputation (“Wilnot”)*”. I have included a few examples of senior management replying with a “We **will not** provide that information.”

It has been exacerbated by passive, unfocussed, possibly lazy councils in the past. Being a councillor is hard work that if done properly results in public respect and trust. This power vacuum created by previous councils has been filled over time by assertive managers. (In passing, is there still a crying room here in the Castle where distraught staff would retreat after a brow-beating by a senior manager, or has it too been painted over to hide the past?)

10. The report before you is superfluous. It does not clarify the roles and responsibilities, and the relationship of a council and its hired staff. The OMA defines that relationship. This report is a management attempt to legitimize the upending of the authority structure of the OMA by redefining roles with fancy labels and trying to convert their perception of authority into reality.

The OMA defines the role of mayor as “*leader*”. The OMA provides for and defines a “*Municipal Administration*”. Wilmot staff describe themselves as the “*Corporate Leadership Team*”.

The OMA describes the role of “administration” to “*implement council’s decisions*”.

The OMA says a Municipality *may* appoint a Chief Administration Officer – it's an optional role.

In Wilmot, it has become practice for the CAO to act as a “*Corporate Leadership Team Leader*”. This is a management role, not a corporation leadership role.

The 2023 budget presented by administration states the objectives of council are “*to support staff*”, and it says so 5 times.

This policy proposal prescribes that council must first seek staff approval to get information – which may be denied at the whim of a manager.

This policy proposal prescribes that council ask permission and get an authorized/sanitized answer from management before responding to the questions or concerns of resident citizens – which may be denied at the whim of a manager.

This policy proposal codifies that it is the role of a CAO to run the corporation, and council is a supplicant for information and thus can be kept ignorant of the knowledge required to perform its duties, if a manager chooses. It is the role of a CAO which has the power, and anyone on into the future who sits in that chair, to wield that authority almost omnipotently.

An analogy would be when a teacher is presenting a lesson and the student takes the position that “You didn't consult with me before choosing and teaching that lesson!” (or before council *develops and evaluates a policy or program*, as is its legislated role, it has to consult with staff). A teacher may choose to consult with students about how the curriculum is addressed – or not. It is not something a teacher “should do”. There is no dictate that the teacher should consult and then maybe be advised by a student what they can or cannot teach. The same applies for council. It can act as it sees fit per its duties in the OMA.

A teacher is accountable for the supervision and accountability of the work by their students. Council has a legislated duty to ensure the accountability and transparency of the operations of the municipality, including senior management of the municipality – here in Wilmot that includes the CAO AND ALL senior management which includes all Directors, heads of departments or service areas.

A teacher does not consult with a student before providing supervision, requiring ongoing proof that work is completed and evaluating that ongoing work. If a teacher asks for a student to complete an assignment, supervises as that work is being done,

receives proof of its completion, and then evaluates it, there is no role for the student to be consulted and give their opinion on what will happen in the process. By law, the same exists in the relationship between council and its senior management. Council leads, management follows directions.

There is a long history of “Wilnot” and “A positive culture shift is needed.” Step one, council can turn this around by asserting its legislated authorities, providing direction and supervision – no asking permission. Step two, management stops whinging and tossing council under the bus by publicly putting blame onto council and ducking out of its accountability in the “cultural management history”.

11. This report appears superficially descriptive, but it is in direct contradiction to the conclusions and recommendations contained in the Township’s *Corporate Communications Strategy*.

This report creates a foundation and sets the basis for any and all present and future holders of the CAO role to release or withhold or interpret information and knowledge at their sole discretion – and council can do very little about it.

Council is restricted by procedure. It has to give its directions in a public meeting. Any future redirections or ‘reprimands’ might prove publicly embarrassing to any holder of the CAO office or management staff, and embarrassing to a council which allowed itself to be in a position of ignorance and thus being forced to wash its laundry in public. Council would make itself a victim to that social pressure. Maintain your authority now, before problems occur, by defeating this policy proposal.

12. **This report which defines staff’s position about how it thinks council should execute its legislated duties should be defeated.**
13. Council, instead, should direct its staff to provide the Gantt chart (or similar) used by a CAO which details the calendar of all of the activities, of all of the directors, of all of the service areas in the corporation. This document is essential to a competent CAO for effective “*general control and management of the affairs of the municipality*”.
14. Council should use all of these Gantt chart items for its own “to-do” calendar, so that council can provide knowledgeable supervision and direction to its management staff, by anticipating which “*operations of the municipality*” are upcoming and it can be prepared to “*develop and evaluate the policies and programs of the municipality*” as the OMA prescribes. Council leads! Administration manages. It’s in the OMA!

Thus, it can anticipate receiving, or require the production, of reports in a timely fashion. I suggest that 10 days is not a timely fashion for adequate supervision of a \$22 million corporation. Council must know in October for example, which regular RFPs will be issued in January, for delivery of known goods or services in March or April. Efficient, effective decision-making requires knowledge and long-term planning. It also requires trust from its taxpayer citizens, which must be earned every event, every day, every month of every year.

15. Citizens have high regard for most service levels in Wilmot: fire protection, parks, recreation, public facilities, most roads, for examples.

16. Citizens are too often treated with suspicion, condescension and disdain, and refused essential information to guide their decision-making and potential participation.

The relationship between the citizens and the corporation regarding its decision-making process, especially on topics of high interest and emotional concern, demonstrates a significant level of distrust, opposition, and lack of involvement in the Township's affairs because of citizens' experiences. The confirmation proof is recorded in the draft Strategic Plan, page 7.

17. Defeat this policy proposal. #1 Council and the community do not need it. #2 It does not align with the conclusions and recommendations in the Township's *Corporate Communications Strategy*. In fact, it is an example, I conclude, of unacceptable practice when weighed against the benchmark standards described in the Redbrick report.

What the community needs is:

- a. For Council to direct that Brett O'Reilly participate in meetings and be seated at this council table, at the end, near to the press box.
- b. For Council to direct that all management reports be first vetted through the office of the communications specialist as it is she who will provide the 'check-and-balance' within the corporation from a tactical and strategic perspective, ensuring that no longer will any reports be written by, reviewed by, and presented by only one individual.
- c. For council to direct that all senior management roles participate in a 'professional development' training regarding best practice communications, and development of a check-list of best practices against which all communications must be evaluated, just as all reports must align with the Strategic Plan. Council will undertake

the same professional development training. These should be led by Redbrick Communications in cooperation with Brett O'Reilly. This would be a present investment that will pay astronomical future dividends.

- d. For council to produce its own directive policy to ensure that it has the foundational information described above,
- e. For council to produce its own council meetings' agendas of items compliant with an efficient and effective planning calendar, and which address the interests and needs of its citizens,
- f. For council to answer questions and concerns from citizens, based on their own judgements as elected officials, without necessarily seeking prior sanitized message approval from management staff,
- g. For citizens to be given information in the public domain upon request,
- h. For Council to hire an additional dedicated communications staff, now. This person would have responsibilities that include making the website user friendly and Google search engine compatible. This includes an emphasis on SEO page identifiers, including 'Focus key phrases', 'SEO titles', 'Slugs', and especially 'Meta descriptions' that would, additionally, enable viewers to identify items which form 'the history' of the Township in the form of 'previous documents that have *expired*' and have been replaced with more current documents. The historic record is essential to maintain to provide instruction to the present, but needs to be identified as such when landing on that page. An example is a search for the strategic plan. There are multiple versions of the strategic plan that can be found. The most recent one is not there because the consultant has not yet reported back to council in public session his statistical data analysis of the demographic makeup of the public questionnaires' source data as he promised council. He commented in public session that he had the data, had reviewed the data, and found it very interesting. On that basis council requested that he provide it. He committed to providing it in a staff report. The public has yet to see and review it. A final draft of the S.P. is available, but the 'published' version awaits the consultant's reporting of demographic analysis to council and the public.
- i. No more, "*We need to do better – (starting later).*" Start now!
- j. For all members of this corporation to recognize that the smartest people are not necessarily in the council chamber room, but rather

are also on the other side of the barrier behind me - in the community – all 22,000+ of them. “Together – we are all better.”

This revised script will be submitted to the clerk, along with my originally intended “Bacon Scrapin” story script (a parable to entertain), for inclusion in this meetings’ official minutes.

Be well, all.

Sincerely submitted,

Barry Wolfe,
Baden

DRAFT