



Blue Mountain
Ratepayers'
Association

Online Newsletter

FALL EDITION

OCTOBER, 2013

Editor: Michael P. Seguin

Welcome to this edition of the BMRA News. This newsletter is brought to you by the Communications Team, and is meant to give you the latest news and information affecting the residents of The Blue Mountains. (Point to an Article in Contents and click.)

The articles and/or comments printed in this issue represent the authors' opinions only and are not necessarily endorsed by the BLUE MOUNTAIN RATEPAYERS' ASSOCIATION (BMRA).

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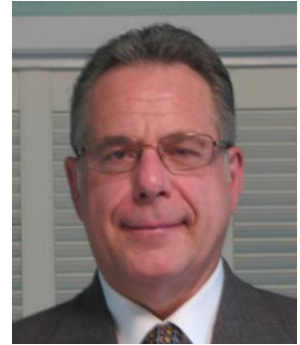
President	Michael Seguin	mpsequin@rogers.com
Secretary	Catherine Sholtz-Seguin	mpsequin@rogers.com
Treasurer	Peter Sharpe	pesharpe@rogers.com
Past President	Dorothy Healey	dihealey@bmts.com
Membership	Kim Posen	bmra.kkp@gmail.com
Director	Dennis Fennessey	djf@rogers.com
Director	John Leckie	john.leckie@rogers.com
Director	Terry Thompson	terencethompson@rogers.com
Website Advisor	Neil Carscadden	ncarsca@prodigy.net

ARTICLE 1 – PRESIDENT’S REPORT

Budget Season Starts

By Michael P. Seguin

The Director of Financial Services announced the beginning of the Budget Season on June 17th, asking Council how much the base budget can be raised for 2014 to support the Town’s current level of services. Ardiel, McKean, McKinlay and Halos voted for the 2013 projection at 5.6%, while Gamble and Martin opposed. That was simple, but that’s not the end – watch out because the police services contract and salary increases in 2014, more planning studies, unknown staff salary and wage increases including cost of living, reduced provincial funding, increased capital spending, etc ., have not been factored in. Oh yes, those enhancements or ‘the wish list’ also needs to be considered.



The budget process takes about 4 months to deliberate usually ending around the end of February of the following year – this time in 2014, an election year. I wonder - will we get the same “don’t debate, don’t discuss and don’t listen” 2013 budget process, where this Council basically ignored the general public concerns and hit us with a 6.31% tax increase over 2012 budget amounts (not actuals)? Be prepared for the same old line, “the actual percentage increase to a Blue Mountains’ residential property owner will be much lower when the Town tax levy is blended (or disguised) with the County and Provincial rate changes.”

The BMRA Budget Review Committee will follow the process very closely and provide you updates on where the Town plans to spend our future tax dollars. The Committee has already identified a ‘FUZZY’ list of items of operational and capital costs that need to be addressed during budget deliberations. Stay tuned!

I’m sure the Budget will be dealt with quickly, especially going into an election year (October 27th, 2014). The incumbents don’t want any controversies that may upset their re-election chances - so they may give the perception of a “lame duck” Council, even though they’re not restricted in serious debate and making decisions until after Nomination Day (September 12th, 2014). We are led to believe that everyone on council, with the exception of Mayor Anderson, is running again for another 4 years (ouch!). This past Council has proven that years of service and experience no longer add up to good leadership, good governance and finding workable solutions. In my opinion and worth repeating, this Council strikes me as a group that is tired, out-dated and out-of touch with the challenging issues before them.

Rumor has it that Duncan McKinlay and Gail Ardiel are already out looking for support (I must be careful not to say campaigning) for a potential run at Mayor and Deputy Mayor, respectively. Could they be acclaimed? I hope not but we need more candidates for a challenge or else it will be the ‘same old, same old’.

We need to find candidates, who are willing to learn more about the policies and procedures that govern meetings, who want to understand the issues and be prepared to provide a strong voice at the council table, who care more about good governance than the money, who can provide more open and transparent leadership and who find more workable and affordable solutions to community needs and business concerns. If that’s you, then you should get to work on your campaign now.

As for my own intentions, I need to ask myself “am I now qualified and am I ready to spend 4 years dealing with Town bureaucracy?” As President of the BMRA, I have already spent the last 7 years (or the last two Council periods) debating Council decisions and bringing awareness and opinion to the community concerns through the BMRA newsletters, BMRA website blasts, deputations to Council, writing position papers, heading up special committees, representing the BMRA on the Blue Mountain Watershed Trust Foundation (as Secretary-Treasurer) and on the Community Policing Committee. I guess that qualifies me but can I be as effective in dealing with bureaucracy - that’s what scares me. Whatever my decision, I will need your support.

In other news, Council has decided to have another STA Licensing By-law workshop on October 28th, 2013, signaling another delay in what should be a firm commitment to move forward with licensing STA businesses in low density single family residential areas – however, this is just another example of their lack of good leadership. Plan to attend this meeting and show your support for the residents of this community. Be an informed voter in 2014.

Council has decided to maintain the current level of policing services and have opted for the expensive \$2.7 million OPP Contract for years 2013-2017. The details are outlined in the following BMRA Budget Review Committee article. However, the BMRA and the Community Policing Committee (CPC) agree that a business plan is required to evaluate our Policing needs and affordability over the next 4 years. This means an effective “integrated service delivery strategy” involving Town By-Law Enforcement and the Fire Department (through an STA Licensing Program), the Police and of course, through the “eyes and ears” of the residential community (Community Watch Programs). The need for a business plan will be presented to the Police Services Board on October 2, 2013.

If you have any comments regarding my statements in this report and throughout the newsletter, please do not hesitate to contact me through the web site (info@bluemountainratepayers.ca) or send me a message via the Association’s mailing address.

As I have always said and will continue to say: “You are the heart and soul of the Association and we value your opinion”.

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ARTICLE 2 – OPP CONTRACT DECISION

OPP Contracting – The Decision

Budget Review Committee Members: Ritchie Baird, George Czerny, Janet Finlay, Al Fraser, John Leckie, Boyd Marshall, Michael Seguin, Terry Thompson

The Blue Mountains Town Council has voted to renew a five-year contract for policing services with the Ontario Provincial Police. Approved in principle on August 26th, the signing of a five-year contract has the support of the BMRA, provided Council is prepared to trigger the one-year cancellation clause, if costs go significantly out of line with economic realities. The Province will now draft a contract for our Town Council to authorize.

The BMRA was very satisfied with the detail provided by OPP representatives John Trude and Charlie Watts, and the Town’s Chief Administrative Officer, Troy Speck. A number of policing options were assembled into a format that could be easily reviewed.

Town Council voted for the most expensive police service option (Option 1). This option allows The Blue Mountains to retain its preventive crime staff position, and to obtain the best possible safety coverage. This year the option will cost the Town an estimated additional \$400,000 (including the upcoming 8.5% salary increase), yet (as Councillor Michael Martin noted) there was no discussion about how these additional funds would be found in the budget.

Before it signs the contract, Council should address how it plans to pay for the known, and unknown, policing costs over the next five years. Just passing them on to the ordinary taxpayers is unacceptable.

BMRA decided to support a clearly defined 5-year contract because it was the best way to address crime prevention. According to OPP Inspector Trude, spending money on crime prevention will save money going forward.

One of the best preventive crime initiatives is the proposed licensing of Short Term Accommodation (STAs) in The Blue Mountains. OMB rulings have not yet been legislated into sound licensing and by-law arrangements as practiced at Whistler and Mont Tremblant. The biggest disturbance by far in TBM is NOISE and outright rowdiness and that is related to the fact we are a Recreation region. By moving into

residential neighborhoods with no buffering, high occupancy loads, and no oversight, some STA businesses have had a negative and destructive impact on the quality of life of the families who live here.

Our rising police and by-law enforcement costs will not be contained until a fair but enforceable licencing regime backed up with by-laws is implemented that encourages STA operators to take full responsibility for managing all aspects of their business, including pro-actively monitoring the activities taking place in their properties before problems arise. As taxpayers, we have spent a significant amount of money and resources dealing with this issue. An effective self-funded STA Licensing program will go a long way in reducing these costs; this type of program will also help distribute policing costs in a more equitable way and will build greater trust in our residential neighbourhoods.

Responding to these concerns, the Town has asked that the new police contract specifically address the need for the OPP to enforce all by-laws related to restrictions placed upon, and the licensing of, Short Term Accommodations. This is good news, as Council and staff seem to agree with the BMRA, that the OPP contract needs to be explicit about how OPP costs and the STA issue are “joined at the hip”.

BMRA has also taken the position that the Town’s three-person Police Services Board should be reconstituted. The role of the Police Services Board is to oversee the provision of police services in the municipality, in areas of general management and policy. In other municipalities, such as Collingwood, the Board has five members. BMRA would like to see the TBM Police Services Board increased to five members, with at least one representative from the Resort area. That new Board needs to figure out how STA licensing and by-laws would work in a practical “boots on the ground” way that would, over time, reduce noise and save money. The Board should also look at OPP priorities and possibly assign better coverage in STA neighbourhoods.

In summary, the Blue Mountain Ratepayers’ Association:

- approves of the signing of a five-year OPP contract, provided Council is prepared to trigger the one-year cancellation clause, if costs go significantly out of line with economic realities
- recommends that before it signs the contract, Council address how it plans to pay for the known, and unknown, policing costs over the next five years
- supports the proposed licensing and by-laws of Short Term Accommodation (STAs)
- recommends that the three-person Police Services Board be reconstituted with five members including appropriate representation from the Resort area

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ARTICLE 3 – STA LICENCING BY-LAW

‘Grandfathering’ and the need for an STA Licensing By-law

By Michael P. Seguin

The BMRA-STA Committee thought it might be helpful to our members and their neighbours to try to clarify what rights ‘grandfathered’ properties and businesses retain in Ontario when a municipality implements a change in zoning, as the Town of the Blue Mountains did to address the Short Term Accommodation (STA) problem in Feb 2008. The formal/legal name for ‘grandfathered’ is ‘legal non-conforming use’. Note: This outline is just a layperson’s interpretation of the municipal law covering ‘grandfathering’ and not a legal one.

1. A change in zoning is an important mechanism municipalities can use to control ‘land use’ going forward in the future BUT, a ‘use’ that **was lawful** at the time the by-law was enacted cannot be prevented from continuing - as long as it continues to be used for that purpose. Once that use is abandoned or discontinued for a reasonable length of time (usually 6-12 months) or is used in lawful way (i.e. in the case of an STA, used by the owner as an ‘owner occupied’ dwelling or rented for periods longer than 30 days (i.e. seasonal or annual rental period), the ‘grandfathered’ use status cannot be reclaimed.

2. A property that qualifies as a 'grandfathered use' is still subject to all reasonable regulations that the province and municipality have re: fire code, property standards, and parking regulations, etc.
3. A LICENCING by-law has no similar grandfathering requirement! ALL businesses must obey the rules and regulations of a licensing by-law. That is why all towns and cities with universities/colleges chose to implement licensing by-laws as well when they changed their zoning by-laws to limit the proliferation of more student housing in residential areas and the number of students in each student home (to control overcrowding). ***The only way to control grandfathered STAs and level the playing field for all STA operators is to implement a comprehensive licensing program.*** Otherwise, it is just business as usual!

The courts are very careful to preserve an individual's property rights so a municipality must build a very strong case before taking the matter to court. There is a fine line between private interest and public interest. If a use becomes a proven nuisance that is seriously impacting a neighbourhood, it can be shut down/stopped but there are no exact standards of proof set out in law so how a judge is going to rule is unpredictable – even on appeal.

The best option for our municipality to mitigate and/or solve the 'conflict of use' between STA businesses and the surrounding residential areas is to implement a comprehensive Licensing by-law, ***with teeth***. The rules have to be clearly outlined in this Licensing by-law (without the need to refer to other by-laws, which may be subject to interpretation) and it must be enforceable. If there is any wiggle room, this will be exploited. A poorly written and unenforceable licensing by-law would be a disaster for this community. The proponents will be trying to minimize any and all regulations as a matter of principal. Their goal is 'profit', whereas our goal is the long-term sustainability of our community, protection and safety of visitors/tourists, and support of the 'public good'.

Please ask you friends and neighbours to take the time to read and become knowledgeable about this issue. We need their support to help residents who are being impacted by this uncontrolled business use on their streets, even if your neighbourhood is not directly affected at the moment. Without licensing, there could be a STA pop up and start operating on your street next. Right now it takes time to investigate and shut these places down through the courts (if they don't voluntarily agree to do so). At least with licensing, this same STA operator can be fined for every day that he operates illegally without a license and payment of this fine can be added to the property taxes, if it isn't paid.

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ARTICLE 4 – MEMBERSHIP

Membership Drive is Now On!

By Kim Posen

Summer is over, it's time to get serious about recruiting new members! We are in the process of printing an updated brochure, to help get the message out. We currently have 280 family memberships, and 10 multi-residential (condo) memberships. Any new members that join now will be covered for the rest of 2013 and 2014. Can't beat that deal!

An area that we have yet to explore is small business, and clubs, in the area. As an example, for the same price as a family membership (\$25), a store in Thornbury, or an accountant in Craighleith, could join and forward the BMRA emails to their staff. Or a ski club could join and reach members that own property in TBM. Every potential voter needs to be informed!

A great way for people to learn more about the BMRA is to read a recent newsletter. We distribute a number of printed newsletters throughout the community, and you can forward your emailed newsletter to anyone that may be interested. Word of mouth is our best resource.

It's not too early to renew your own membership for 2014. There's a Membership Form at the end of this newsletter, as well as the links on the website. The online Membership Form with PayPal has been popular. Simply visit <http://www.bluemountainratepayersassociation.com/JoinBMRA.jsp> to review all of the membership options

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ARTICLE 5 – OPINION

OPINION

Is the BMRA Anti-Business and is there a Need to Tone Down?

By Michael P. Seguin

Recently, I have been advised that there is a perception in our community that the BMRA is 'anti-business'. I can assure you that the BMRA is not anti-business nor is it pro-business. As President of the Association, for the last 6 years, my first concern, has and will always be, seeking and maintaining a high quality of life as well as protecting the health and the safety of our community. We do this predominantly by bringing awareness to issues that affect, threaten and/or burden the 'unaware' taxpayer and/or their property. We also speak sometimes to issues in advocating for a better deal for the ratepayers – a deal that makes sense and is 'the right thing to do'.

It appears that some people believe that seeking a better quality of life and asking for a better deal is 'anti-business'.

People who consider the BMRA as 'anti-business' have no idea who we are and should spend more time learning about us rather than make unqualified statements about us. Chances are that they have never experienced any threats against their property, home and family life.

The BMRA has many long-standing members who are well-educated, have extensive corporate backgrounds and lots of financial experience. Never have they voiced their displeasure to me that the Association is 'anti-business'. So I question the motives and/or attitude of anyone who complains about the meaningful direction of our Association.

While I have your attention, I continue to hear voices telling me "to tone my comments down". I have sat through many Council and Committee meetings over the years and have heard many depositions, and I can honestly tell you that toned-down presentations seldom work. While there are times to be polite or "toned-down", I'm a believer that if you don't say what you really mean, then you're not serious enough about your convictions. Hoping that the other side will listen to your problems or concerns and agree with you, no matter how strong your case, is just wishful thinking, especially in politics at any level.

I recently opened a fortune cookie and it said "a man cannot be comfortable without his own approval". Well I can honestly say that I'm comfortable with my tone these days, but do you approve?

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ARTICLE 6 – LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



Letters to the Editor

Grey County Taxes

The final tax bill in the Town of The Blue Mountains for 2013 shows 40% of our tax dollars go to County. If you read the information folder included with the tax bill you will see that 22% of taxes go to Education, 38% to the Town and 40% to County.

One of the little known facts is that with only 7,000 full time residents we contribute more tax dollars to Grey County than Owen Sound with a population of 22,000. We are the largest single contributor to the County. We pay \$13 million while Owen Sound pays only \$8 million. Does that make sense?

Back in 2003 the TBM paid \$8M to County and Owen Sound paid \$6M. The TBM had a population of 5,000 and Owen Sound had 17,000. You can see we have been paying high taxes to Grey for quite some time. The politicians will tell you it's because of our high assessments. That's only part of the story.

Owen Sound opted out of Grey County from 1920 until 2002. Why and what kind of deal did Grey give them to get back in?

Is it time our County representatives give answers as to why we should be paying 40% of our taxes to County? What have they done to make sure we are not subsidizing other municipalities in Grey?

At least that's the way I see it.

Paul Mitchell, Thornbury, ON

Hwy 26 Improvements

MTO is initiating the Preliminary Design and Class Environmental Assessment (EA) for the rehabilitation of 13.2 km on Highway 26 from the east limits of the Town of Thornbury (County Road 2) and the west limits of the Town of Collingwood (County Road 21). The project will include pavement rehabilitation, drainage improvements, structural culvert rehabilitation and extensions, entrance modifications/closures and operational improvements, such as additional lanes. MTO, through its consultants McCormick Rankin, is looking for your comments and is interested in your concerns. One of our BMRA members has weighed in and copied Mayor Anderson and MPP Jim Wilson.

Thank you for offering the opportunity to comment on the proposed upgrades to Hwy. 26 between the easterly limits of (the former town of) Thornbury and the westerly limits of Collingwood. This project is of considerable personal interest to me as I identify it as an ideal opportunity to eliminate a dangerous situation which was created in October, 2011 when the Ontario Ministry of Transportation (MTO) removed and trashed eight resident-owned bridges which were used regularly by myself and several neighbours to traverse the MTO ditch in order to access the Georgian Trail. The MTO-removed access bridges were located in the (significant) ditch located between Grey Rd. 19 and the easterly end of Lakeshore Rd. E. The October, 2011 action by the MTO has required that effected residents subsequently "sneak-in" modest wooden bridge-planks (and risk a fine of up to \$5,000.) or alternatively, undertake the risky process of walking along the 80km/h passing zone of Hwy. 26 to access the Georgian Trail at either Grey Rd. 19 or somewhere near the easterly end of Lakeshore Rd. E. (In fairness to the MTO, I need to reveal the fact that their London Regional office was willing to allow the Georgian Trail to apply for a permit to legally install some bridges/culverts to enable residents to traverse the ditch, however the Georgian Trail, and the Town of The Blue Mountains declined the MTO offer as both of those identities were apparently willing to accept the risk of allowing residents, including children, to walk along the 80 km/h highway and "find their own way" to and from the Georgian Trail.)

When the effected residents --- including myself --- installed their home-made bridges --- at various times during about a 20-year period prior to Oct. 2011--- they did so because the bridges were in fact needed; not because they decided to waste their time and money. (In fact, one of the MTO-trashed bridges

included wood material valued at almost \$700.00. and a newly-built bridge installed by the Edgewater Condominium Corp. had only been in place for a few weeks before it was trashed by the MTO.) It is an indisputable fact that these bridges/culverts were/are required (an ultimate example was when I once personally witnessed a woman's unsuccessful attempt to navigate a child-laden stroller through the ditch) and I cannot comprehend why the MTO, the Georgian Trail and Town of The Blue Mountains cannot understand that bridges or covered culverts are necessary along this unique stretch where the trail and highway are located immediately adjacent to each other. (Culverts would not need to be identified as "official" crossing points but just "be there" to allow the ditch to carry its water and residents could simply use them as natural/informal cross-overs.)

Hopefully, anyone responsible for the improvements planned for Hwy. 26 will recognize the need for some form of bridges/culverts and insure they are installed before someone is injured or killed while being inappropriately forced to walk long distances along the passing-zone of this 80km/h highway.

If it is decided that this on-going ditch-traversing problem will not be solved during the proposed improvements to the highway, I would appreciate being advised of that decision prior to commencement of the construction process.

Robert (Bob) Woodcock, Blue Mountains, ON

(If you have concerns as well, then you can write to Dan Green, Consultant Project Manager, McCormick Rankin, 72 Victoria Street South, Suite 100, Kitchener, ON, N2G 4Y9. For political reasons (remember the election is near), make sure you copy the Warden Deputy Mayor Duncan McKinlay at dmckinlay@thebluemountains.ca)

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ARTICLE 7 – EASY PICKINGS

“Easy Pickings” Warning**

Community Watch – Community Policing Committee

August 2013: It was a beautiful August afternoon in an upscale quiet Blue Mountains neighbourhood. Several strollers were enjoying a leisurely walk around the neighbourhood – but one was not a casual stroller. He was a thief!!

One of the residents, the husband, said goodbye to his wife as he drove out of his driveway on his way to a brief visit to a Thornbury shop. And his wife retired to their backyard to continue her gardening. The thief noticed -- and assumed that the front door was open – it was! In moments, perhaps less than 5 minutes, cash and valuable jewelry were lost. And the thief had vanished, unnoticed by the residents and their neighbours. “Easy Pickings” – eh!!

The Blue Mountains is a relatively crime free community – but not immune from thieves and vandals. Do not assume that you are immune! Shut and lock your front door when you leave home – even for short periods of time. Join with your neighbours to join your local Neighbourhood Watch program and help raise your neighborhood's awareness of “easy pickings”.

Visit your Community Watch's website to learn more www.bluemountainscommunitywatch.ca

*** adapted from an actual incident in the Blue Mountains – August 2013!*

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Experiencing ROWDYISM or Suspicious Behaviour?

To Call or Not to Call – There's No Question

YOU should call!

1-888-310-1122

You're not alone if you feel reluctant about calling the police.

Most people would prefer not to get involved, fearing retaliation, even when the incident might be truly annoying (rowdyism) or causing damage to property belonging to their neighbours, friends, even their family. It's a lot easier to just turn away and pretend you didn't see or hear anything.

After all, what did you really see or hear? It was dark and all you got was a quick glimpse of someone yelling, running or a vehicle passing by. You can't even be sure the person or vehicle was actually involved in anything that needs to be reported to the police.

Next day, you feel a little - or a lot - guilty when you learn that someone close by has been disturbed like you or even robbed. They've lost some valuable items, maybe some serious damage was done to their home and property.

Police officers wish we'd all get over this fear of calling them to report rowdyism and/or suspicious behaviour. That's one reason the Ontario Provincial Police have their non-emergency number:

Calls to 310-1122 won't trigger an emergency response. The number is set aside for the public - you! - to report non-emergencies.

How do you know what is or isn't an emergency? The question to ask yourself is, "has someone been injured or is there imminent danger to life or property?" If the answer is yes, you should not hesitate to call the 9-1-1 emergency line. Your action could prevent the crime or at least limit the damage. It might even save a life.

However, if the threat is no longer present and the perpetrators seem to have left the scene, the emergency is over, you can use the 1-888-310-1122 number to report the matter. You can also use this number to inform police about constant rowdyism and suspicious behavior, especially as it relates to Short Term Accommodations (STAs). No one will be upset if your suspicions are wrong.

You never know. The little piece of information you report, even after the fact, might be just enough to give the police an idea about who could be committing break-ins, thefts, vandalism or rowdyism. In the case of rowdyism, calling the police might help improve the quality of your life and the enjoyment of your property – especially if the Town does not proceed with STA Licensing.

A partial abstract from the Community Watch Website – bluemountainscommunitywatch.ca

ARTICLE 9 – NEWS AROUND TOWN

by Michael P. Seguin

Owners of Mountain Springs want more commercial uses on their property

A public meeting was held on September 3rd, 2013 to hear comments regarding a proposed zoning by-law amendment by Grey Condominium Corporation 37 (Mountain Springs, formerly Todd Brooker Lodge along Grey Road 19) to permit additional commercial uses to their Administration/Recreation building (known as the Gatehouse). The commercial uses being requested include personal service commercial uses, eating establishments, a tavern, commercial recreational uses, a place of entertainment, a check in desk for off-site cottage/chalet renters and uses accessory to the permitted uses. They also want to add a private laundry facility for off-site cottage/chalet renters.

The property currently operates as a resort complex providing mostly short term rental accommodations (STAs) for the travelling public and certain accessory uses. Owners are permitted to occupy their units up to a maximum of 120 days a year.

The Mountain Springs property abuts a newly constructed and affluent 137 unit condo-freehold residential development to the south known as “the Orchard”. The owners of the Orchard were alerted to the proposal in advance and submitted approximately 40 letters/emails of objection, citing increase traffic, noise, parking, trespassing, garbage pick-up, littering, etc. among some of the issues that will result if these additional commercial uses are permitted. They further argued that these nuisances and general rowdiness will impact their property values and the peaceful enjoyment of their homes. In their oral presentations at the Public Meeting, Orchard owners also expressed their knowledge and reading about these type of issues being experienced by other residential owners located closer to the Village at Blue, and the fact that the Town has done very little to enforce STA issues in the community.

The Director of Planning and Building Services, David Finbow, has indicated he will summarize the Public concerns/objections, present them to the Planning Committee on October 1st, and then outline the “planning” merits or non-merits of the proposed amendment at the November 13th or 25th meeting of Council.

Source: Town Notice dated August 1, 2013 and attendance at the Public Meeting on September 3rd, 2013

Sobeys request closing and purchase of part of Beaver St. and approval to build ‘Thornbury Square’

A public meeting was held on September 16th, 2013 to hear comments regarding the closing of the northerly portion of Beaver Street South and sale to Sobeys to build a local retail centre (Thornbury Square), in the west end of Thornbury, bounded by Victoria Street, Landsdown Street, Louisa Street and Highway 26. The proposed development will consist of approximately 53,548 sq. ft. in four retail units (to be built in two stages) with a total of 281 parking spaces. The first stage will include a supermarket (Sobeys Foodlands) containing approximately 30,410 sq. ft. and to be situated in the northwest portion of the site and a retail building (likely for the LCBO) containing approximately 8,000 sq. ft. and to be situated in the northeast portion of the site. The second phase will include two retail buildings containing approximately 15,140 sq. ft. and their construction will depend on the ultimate configuration of the site and market conditions.

A number of residents and owners in the local area expressed considerable opposition to the closing of Beaver Street South, which Sobeys and its consultants argued would help facilitate the proposed development. While no one expressed concern about Sobeys constructing a new supermarket in this location, there were many who expressed concerns about increase traffic flows and safety along Hwy. 26, buffering, lighting, noise, etc. Members of Council provided limited comments (as usual) with the exception of Councilor Gamble who stated that he was against the Beaver Street closing.

Interestingly, we were advised on September 26th (Simcoe.com and Town Notice) that Sobeys had withdrawn their request to close Beaver Street South and acquire a small triangular parcel on the other side of the road due to opposition from the 'neighbours'. However, Sobeys has indicated that they still plan to move forward with the food store and possibly the LCBO building, with site grading work to begin this fall, 2013. Their hope is that construction work will commence sometime in the spring, 2014. Council is expected to approve a revised plan sometime in October or November, 2013.

Source: Town Notice of August 21, 2013, Public Meeting on September 16th, 2013 and Simcoe.com September 25, 2013.

TBM Developers to face new charge on serviced and unconnected vacant lots

On December 11th, 2012, Council approved a staff recommendation (or strategy) to levy an infrastructure or utility fee (as we know it) against the property owners of serviced and unconnected residential lots. As you probably know by now, the Town wants everyone on water and/or wastewater services to pay more money into their "guesstimate" long term Asset Replacement Reserve Fund. Apparently, the developers/builders of future unconnected lots are not exempt anymore and are being mandated to contribute to the life cycle costs of municipal systems. The plan is to raise an additional \$85,000 asset replacement revenue in 2013 (4 months) and another \$280,000 in 2014 (subject to more increases, of course). The fee equates to approximately \$17.67 per month per unconnected lot fronting water service and approximately \$14.41 per month per unconnected lot fronting wastewater service.

On September 16th, Staff brought forward a Draft Policy and Procedural Guideline to begin the process of charging these fees and communicating this information to affected lot owners. Public Information Sessions are being proposed at the Town Hall on Saturday October 19th (10.00 a.m. to 12.00 p.m.) and on Monday October 28th (5.00 p.m. to 6.30 p.m.), with a PUBLIC MEETING to be held at a Council meeting that same night at 7.00 p.m.

More information on the proposed Policy and Procedures, and what lies ahead, can be viewed on the Town website under Local Government – Minutes & Agendas – September 16th – Report FIT.13.34.

Source: Report FIT.12.74 dated December 11, 2012 & Report FIT.13.34 dated September 16th, 2013

Real Estate News Update

It appears that the Georgian Triangle Real Estate market continues to remain positive and strong with 1,442 properties sold by the end of August, 2013 compared to 1,359 properties sold over the same period in 2012 – this reflects a 6% increase in sales. The total dollar volume numbers also reflect a similar increase. The August market showed a surge in activity for homes in the \$350,000-\$500,000 price range with a total of 37 sales in August, 2013 compared to only 20 in August, 2012. So far there have been fewer listings in 2013 making it a tighter market and more a seller's market.

The average residential price over an 8-month period ending August 2013 was \$332,512 compared to \$314,359 over the same period in 2012 – a 5.8% increase. Most of the increase came at the beginning of the year as the average sale price in August, 2013 actually dropped to \$330,155. However, the average price is expected to smooth out at 5% or around \$334,000 over a 12 month period ending December 31, 2013.

There has been plenty of talk about a recent surge in sales being tied to the anticipation of rising interest rates or to take advantage of pre-approvals at lower rates. While this may be the case, most realtors will state that the interest rates do not play a significant role in the Georgian Triangle, especially with regards to week-end, seasonal and/or investment properties. Well priced and attractive products play a more important role as indicated by the August surge in the \$350,000-\$500,000 price range. Notwithstanding, affordability will continue to play a significant factor in the Georgian Triangle urban markets.

Source: www.thechestnutparkblog.com (provided by Brendan Thomson – Chestnut Park Real Estate).

Quick Announcements:

- Request from our Furry Friends: their Bizarre BZAAR continues to be open weekends Fri/Sat/Sun from 10.a.m to 5.00 p.m. at Diane's Garden on Hwy 124 opposite the Bowling Alley. You can help the furry friends in care in many ways - by fostering, sponsoring, volunteering, donating and/or educating. Go to www.cwfurryfriends.petfinder.com or call 705-606-8700.
- The Blue Mountain Watershed Trust will be presenting their Vision for the Silver Creek Wetlands (both in Collingwood and The Blue Mountains) on Monday October 7th at the TBM Town hall at 7.00 p.m. For those interested in the protection and preservation of provincially significant wetlands in our region and the protection of wildlife species at risk, you will want to know more about their stewardship proposal. The presentation was well-received by the Collingwood Council on September 16th 2103.
- Council and staff have scheduled a Short Term Accommodation (STA) Licensing Workshop on October 28th, to determine the appropriate clauses/articles that are needed to implement a 'much-needed' Licensing By-law and Enforcement Program in the Blue Mountains. The time is still to be announced – stay tuned.

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BLUE MOUNTAIN RATEPAYERS' ASSOCIATION

"Protecting the Interests of the Community"

BMRA Membership Application – 2014

Please enclose a cheque for \$25, payable to **BMRA**, as your annual family membership fee. Mail the cheque, and this application form, to:

Blue Mountain Ratepayers' Association
Box 198
Thornbury, ON NOH 2P0

Last Name:

First Name(s):

TBM Address:

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Postal Code

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Mailing Address:

(if different from above)

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Postal Code

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E-mail(s):

In order to manage costs and protect the environment, newsletters and information updates will be sent to you via email. If you do not have access to email, copies of newsletters will be mailed.

In addition the email newsletter, I would also like to receive one in the mail

Can you recommend anyone that may wish to join?

Name/Address

This application is for the 2014 membership year (Jan 1/14 – Dec 31/14). As a special bonus, the remainder of 2013 is included for new members.

We protect your privacy. Our privacy statement can be found at
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