

The VIEW from BLUE

Published by Blue Mountain Ratepayers' Association

The largest ratepayers' association in the Town of The Blue Mountains
Box 405, Collingwood, ON L9Y 3Z7

December 2008

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MEMBERSHIP

Membership in the Blue Mountains Ratepayers' Association is only \$25 a year from: Blue Mountain Ratepayers' Association, Box 405, Collingwood, ON L9Y 3Z7. After you have read this newsletter, please pass it on to a neighbour and suggest that they join too.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

By Michael P. Seguin

Winter challenges

As I stated in my last message, I expected this winter season to be interesting and challenging for our members. Our first challenge was an OMB hearing regarding an appeal opposing the Town's Interim Control By-Law prohibiting new short-term accommodation uses. The hearing started on November 3rd and was immediately postponed until further notice because of a conflict of interest. However, almost 60 members and residents of the Town of the Blue Mountains showed their support for the Town – which impressed all parties!

While disappointed about the postponement, we were able to obtain some valuable advice from the Town's counsel, Mr. Leo Longo, regarding expert witnesses to be called (both sides), how we should organize our numbers and the best way(s) to express our concerns and ultimately support the Town's case.

As soon as we know of the new OMB hearing dates, we will be calling on as many people as possible to attend a meeting to organize our thoughts and delegate a list of key speakers.

Our next big challenge will come in the new year as Town administrators start their 2009 budgeting process or "wish list". I can assure you – it will lead to higher taxes and higher utility bills. The Town has several projects on-going (new

recreation building, fire master plan, Town Hall, etc.) and continues to warn us that they may cost taxpayers more money.

For those members who are still overwhelmed by substantial increases in their property assessment, don't fret – file a Request for Reconsideration in March in order to protect your right to appeal. This unfair practice of setting the appeal date prior to the Town setting tax rates must be challenged.

Your Board has considered holding a general meeting to discuss various issues relating to property assessment. We have heard very little from our membership, however. If you want expert advice, we would recommend you contact the *Canadian National Taxpayers Coalition* (CNTC/CAFTA, 705-696-2356, or www.cntccanada.ca). They will be glad to send you information on their organization and they currently are working on a manual that will help you appeal your assessment.

A quick reminder – we are still seeking new members to serve on the Board. If you want to help the organization and have some flexible time to spare, we want to hear from you. I sense that our organization is getting stronger, especially as we become more informative through the internet process. Keep providing us with your new email addresses and visit our new Website at bluemountainratepayersassociation.com. If you have suggestions on how we can improve this site, please let me know.

In the meantime, have a safe and joyful winter and Christmas season and all the best in the New Year.

By Deb Keep

Your financial support is needed to complete the first animal shelter within the South Georgian Bay Triangle. Recently renamed as “Georgian Bay Animal Rescue” to reflect more accurately the large area served, this registered charitable organization with its dedicated unpaid volunteers has been able to raise over \$670,000 to cover the cost of Phase I of the new shelter building.

The shovels broke ground last January 8 on land leased from the Town of Collingwood on the Tenth Line. That phase recently was successfully completed, and now fundraising is under way to complete the Building Campaign.

This shelter will be a place for animals to heal and get a second chance at life in a loving home. It will be a “No Kill” facility in which animals will receive compassionate care, medical treatment, spay/neutering and socialization in preparation for adoption. Being a “No Kill” organization puts additional stress and pressure on available resources, but GBAR believes it is the right approach to animal care – every animal deserves humane treatment in a safe, secure environment.

Kindness to animals builds a better world for us all

Caring for society’s needy, homeless animals is a community responsibility. Your contribution to building a permanent animal shelter in the Georgian Triangle will help to build civic pride in all aspects of community life, and make our towns, villages and neighbourhoods better places to live, work and play. Teaching members of our society, particularly its youth, about animal welfare and respecting others (human and animal) promotes the establishment of strong moral and civic values. Caring for our animals in a humane way makes us all feel proud of where we live.

NOW is the time for all caring individuals to come forward with their financial support for the completion of the first purpose-built animal shelter within the Georgian Triangle. What a wonderful legacy for this area to be proud of: that we have acknowledged the need and helped bring to fruition the reality of a home for all those sadly neglected animals which, through no fault of their own, have found themselves un-

wanted, unloved, uncared for and without shelter from the elements.

Support is needed from all the communities served by GBAR: Collingwood, Wasaga Beach, Stayner, Creemore, Clearview Township, Town of the Blue Mountains, Thornbury, Clarksburg, Meaford, and surrounding areas. Only \$400,000 will get the shelter up and running, providing care for animals left homeless and alone. The building can be completed within six weeks so our abandoned animals can have a shelter in time for winter. What a great Holiday gift to them.

**Our new animal shelter —
Help make the dream a reality**

Please do not let these animals down. They are counting on your generous, caring heart to get them into their much-needed home.

Buy a Brick, Lend a Paw!

Donations of any amount are most welcome, and can be mailed to: GBAR, PO Box 492, Collingwood, ON L9Y 4B2. You can go online at www.gbanimalrescue.com to donate with a credit card. People can also contribute through the “Buy a Brick, Lend a Paw” campaign: \$100 buys a brick with a commemorative plaque.

However people choose to participate, every penny will be used for the sole purpose of completing the shelter building.

Please help those who cannot help themselves.

**Craigleith Community
Centre**

Restored 1860s one-room schoolhouse
Designated as a heritage building
Includes kitchen facilities

Ideal for:

Business meetings, Weddings,
Social events, Anniversaries

For rental information, please contact
Bruce Loveless at 705-446-4673

Would a Ward System work in our Town?

Councillor Robert Gamble believes the problems outweigh the benefits

By Michael P. Seguin

At our most recent AGM there was some discussion and support for the election of Council members based on a Ward System. Many people feel that the existing process does not provide fair and equal representation for local issues throughout the Town.

In this regard, I contacted Mr. Robert Gamble, a senior and well-respected member of Council (especially with regards to spending our money), to provide some insight as to why the current system has never evolved or even become an issue.

Mr. Gamble advises “that we as members of council are elected at large to equally represent all areas of the Town and our decision-making on various issues looks at the benefit or impact on all the municipality and not just one segment or area.”

Mr. Gamble also points to the shortcomings of a Ward System, stating “that if you are elected to represent a ward in a Ward System, your efforts and decision-making process will dwell on your particular Ward and a decision for a particular ward may not be a benefit to the entire community.”

Mr. Gamble points out that before a Ward System can evolve there may be considerable difficulty in choosing which parameters should be

used to determine the location and size of wards. For example:

1. Land area base;
2. Permanent population;
3. Voters' list numbers;
4. Assessment values;
5. Annual expenditures (after County and School Board levies);
6. Public amenities, i.e. library, community centre, harbour, athletic fields, by-law enforcement, policing, fire service, ambulance, road maintenance, winter maintenance, etc.

Notwithstanding our members' interest in the Ward System, Mr. Gamble firmly believes that “with the current representation at large, all elected officials recognize the importance of all areas of our municipality, and staff do likewise recognize the need to provide the services from border to border, whereas if a Ward System is initiated, various staff services will become confused as to which ward should receive priority and council meetings could become a general discussion of who should receive such service and when.”

Our thanks to Mr. Robert Gamble for his time and interesting comments.

If any member wishes to make comments or offer their perspectives on this issue, please write to me at PO Box 405, Collingwood, ON, L9Y 3Z7, or email me at mpseguin@rogers.com.

Clarksburg Sewer and Water Project:

Ratepayers query necessity and costs

By Paul Malone

The Town of The Blue Mountains and Ainley Consultants held an Information Meeting at Marsh Street Centre to introduce the Clarksburg Sewer and Water Project. When I realized the very expensive personal cost of \$31,760 for this project was being downloaded on us residents, I decided to take a survey and see who wanted it and what they thought of it.

The results of the 140 people surveyed were: 124 owners against the Project, 4 requesting water only, and 12 for the project's implementation. Many people said that the price of this project would seriously hurt their financial position, to the point of bankrupting some.

Emergency & Information

Immediate response: 911 (Do not call unless it's an emergency or you will be assessed a response charge of \$300)

OPP (Collingwood & Town of The Blue Mountains): 1-888-310-1122; (Administration): 705-445-4321.

Fire Department (Craigleith): 444-2244

Municipal Offices: Thornbury 599-3131. Paul Graham, Chief Administration Officer, x234; Chris Fawcett, Treasurer, x236; Stephen Keast, Town Clerk, x237; Peter Tollefsen, Planning & Development, 599-3070 x247; David Finbow, Director Building/Bylaw & CBO, x246.

We then had a meeting at Marsh Street to discuss residents' concerns. Ninety-seven people attended and voiced many complaints about the project.

After I presented this information to a Council meeting they held an advertised public meeting on October 18th and 20th to answer our questions. They told us that under the Municipal Act of Ontario they have the right to go ahead with this servicing, based primarily on need.

They said that, according to their tests, some residents are having water problems. But our survey showed different results. We questioned Ainley's water sampling of more than 120 homes that found they couldn't pass Ontario standards. In our survey, everyone who took their water sample to the hospital for testing found that it passed. Misinformation was verified by two tests taken by Ainley on William Street. One passed and the one next door didn't – but they use the same well.

Expensive project not needed?

We all agree that we need services in downtown Clarksburg, but why spend such a huge amount on a project that isn't needed? Six new homes were built this year on my street, Faircrest Lane. They paid for new wells and septic systems, but the Town never advised them of the new costs nor took a survey to see who needed or could afford this project.

I feel this is totally unfair and undemocratic. When they want us to connect to a system that has restricted water use now and will negatively affect Georgian Bay's water level, it is a step in the wrong direction. With the existing problems of water removal and sewage treatment, this appears to be the wrong project to proceed with.

Note: You can reach Paul Malone at 101 Faircrest Lane, Clarksburg, ON, p.malone@bmts.com

www.bluemountainratepayersassociation.com

Have you visited our new Website? It reports on lots of good stuff, including informative articles about your community and other info and ideas you should be aware of, such as: art and cultural associations, maps, news media, attractions in and around the town, service clubs, ski areas and lots more. Check it out!

Discovering ability through the magic of snow sports

By Kathy Saunders, Track 3

Track 3 is a story of success. Success not only for its growth over the past years, but also for the hundreds of young people with varying disabilities who, through the challenge of skiing and snowboarding, have discovered that in spite of their disability they could live an active life.

Track 3 was launched in 1972 with a few amputee students and some hand-me-down equipment. The name Track 3 comes from the three tracks left in the snow by an amputee skiing with one ski and two outriggers. The program was funded by the Easter Seal Society, but was operated by a small group of dedicated volunteers. Some are still involved with the program today.

Since the program proved so successful with amputee youngsters, it was not long before those with other disabilities came on board. Once instructor-training methods were developed to teach these skiers, they too began to benefit in the same way as the amputees.

In 1987 a group of volunteers involved with Track 3 decided to separate from the Easter Seal Society, and incorporate as the "Ontario Track 3 Ski Association for The Disabled." Their mandate: *"To provided the best possible program for youngsters with disabilities, using only current ski equipment and fully trained and qualified instructors, support staff and ski technicians."* To further this goal, the new Track 3 created its own Board of Directors, charged with keeping the organization constantly looking and moving forward while remaining financially viable.

Specialized training for instructors

Over the years, Track 3 has more than met its mandate. The organization has developed a training system with detailed manuals that correspond to a graded instructor training program. Track 3 has its own trained, experienced course conductors to help enable new volunteers to work with the children on the hill.

Although we are fortunate enough each year to recruit new volunteers, we also, for various reasons (i.e., work, family, school, etc.) lose some volunteers. Each year we try to maintain and expand our volunteer base. This sometimes presents a lot of challenges, so if you or anyone you know would like to help us out we would greatly appreciate your assistance. We always need

more volunteers to help us with the endless list of kids waiting to get into the program. You can apply on our website: www.track3.org.

Any help that you can give will be greatly appreciated.

It has been more 20 years since Track 3 stepped out on its own. It is working with skiers and snow-boarders with a wide variety of physical and mental disabilities. The program has grown so much that new ski schools have had to be developed. We actively pursue new volunteers and try our best to maintain a good relationship with our returning volunteers who participate in these programs, to ensure that the students get the best instruction we can provide. With the ongoing support of returning volunteers, and the addition of new and energetic volunteers, the future of Track 3 looks bright. Almost as bright as the smiles on the faces of the children and youth who benefit from Track 3 directly.

Open air burning

By Catherine Sholtz-Seguin

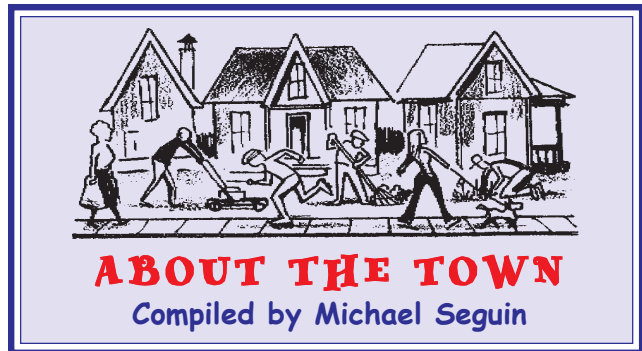
This article has been written to support the efforts of Fire Prevention Officer A. J. Lake in establishing minimum requirements for open air burning as the Town develops a By-Law to prevent or limit burning in all residential areas of the Town of the Blue Mountains.

The Town of the Blue Mountains did enact By-Law 2004-23 pursuant to the Municipal Act as it relates to the nuisance associated with open air burning. This is a by-law to prohibit and regulate public nuisances and to regulate matters related to the health and well-being of the inhabitants of the municipality. Although this By-Law protects from the nuisance of smoke, odours, ash, etc., from drifting from the property upon which the open air burning occurred to other properties, it fails to regulate and establish requirements or minimum conditions for open air burning.

The Ontario Fire Code Article 2.6.3.4 states: *“Open air burning shall not be permitted unless approved, or unless such burning consists of a small, confined fire, supervised at all times, and used to cook food on a grill or a barbecue.”*

Ideally, open air burning should not be allowed; at the very least the TOBM should insist on permits to burn in all areas. If open air burning continues to be permitted, then burnings should be contained in a pit measuring **no larger than one meter in diameter and located no less than 50 feet from any structures or buildings.**

See OPEN AIR BURNING page 6



Humane Society gets new name and new shelter for homeless pets

The Collingwood and District Humane Society is now known as the Georgian Bay Animal Rescue because: 1) The Humane Society is owned by the Ontario SPCA and the Collingwood organization is not a branch of the OSPCA; 2) Residents and volunteers objected to the fact that Collingwood was featured in the name when the group also serves the Town of the Blue Mountains, the Municipality of Meaford, the Town of Wasaga Beach and the Township of Clearview.

If you have a chance, make sure you visit the first phase of the new shelter on the Tenth Line just north of the Blue Mountain Golf course (near the Collingwood Public Works facility). Show your support and generosity with a donation – this is a much need facility for our community. – *Source: Courier-Herald 10/08/2008*

Worth repeating!

This summer marked the official launch of the fundraising drive for two Community Family Health Centres, one in the Town of the Blue Mountains and the other in the Municipality of Meaford. The first family health centre is expected to be completed in the fall of 2009 in the Town of the Blue Mountains.

The Meaford Hospital, a medical gem in our community, can only function with the support of sufficient numbers of Primary Care Family Physicians. Simply put, this area does not have enough physicians – in fact, the area is under-served by three physicians and recruitment has been very difficult as new Primary Care Family Physicians want to practice with colleagues in a health centre without having to be concerned about being landlords, accountants or facility managers.

Without these new health centres our communities will not be served by enough doctors to keep our hospital going. Please be generous this winter

season – your donations will go a long way to promoting much needed health care in our town. – *Source: Meaford Hospital Foundation Newsletter Fall/Winter 2008*

Town approves a new recreation building

Council approved a budget of \$495,000 to build a new operations centre building at the Tomahawk Recreation Complex (417230 10th Line). The project will be 90% funded by Development Charges. However, the budget is expected to reach closer to \$635,000 when heating and cooling, site works, well, sewage, furnishing and fencing are taken into consideration. The plan is to build a 50 foot by 60 foot single storey building with a 12 foot by 60 foot mezzanine for storage and locker rooms above the office space. There will also be a climate-controlled workshop and a 40 foot by 50 foot single storey addition with no heat or water service for storing equipment. More information about the building is expected to be posted on the Town's website. – *Courier-Herald 10/30/2008*

Town plans to expand landfill site

The Town is seeking approval from the Ministry of the Environment for expansion and mining projects at the current landfill site in order to make the site last another 25 years. Without modifications, the site will reach capacity in three to four years and waste would have to be sent to an outside location which, the Town warns us, would cost taxpayers more money. – *Courier-Herald 11/05/2008*

Open air burning

Continued from page 5

With all the construction of new homes and subdivisions, this Municipality is growing. Open air burning in all residential areas only adds to poor air quality affecting the health and safety of residents.

If burning is to be allowed, I support the recommendations from A. J. Lake and the Fire Department to establish requirements.

INFOLINE: 211

Need help? Got a question? Dial the INFOLINE at 211 anytime, day or night.

Blue Mountain Fire Master Plan in the works

The Town is debating necessary changes in levels of fire service, including a possible revision of the current by-laws. Such a change will not only affect the public safety of Blue Mountain residents but also will impact municipal taxes in 2009. One of the biggest decisions to be made is whether firefighters should enter a burning building on search and rescue missions. – *Courier-Herald 11/12/2008*

Council makes Clarksburg servicing project a priority in requesting provincial funding

The federal and provincial governments have committed \$362 million towards the Building Canada Fund community component, which is given out to municipalities on the basis of 17 eligible categories, three of which the Town will argue currently apply to the Clarksburg project: drinking water, wastewater and disaster mitigation. Other categories include public transit, green energy, solid waste management, culture, sport, connectivity, local roads, core highway system, short sea shipping, local and regional airports, tourism and capacity building projects.

The town's case for funding is based on the fact that one third of the water wells in Clarksburg exhibit poor water quality. This number is expected to increase over time. In addition, an increasing number of failing septic tanks are expected to negatively impact the Beaver River and Georgian Bay. The Town has already received a commitment for \$5.0 million from the federal government and needs another \$5.0 from the province so the Clarksburg project can move forward.

Quick Hits . . .

1. While lots of development is being planned, the construction boom appears to be slowing down. Building permits were down by the end of August by about 30% over the same period in 2007, primarily because of a decline in permits for new subdivisions and multi-unit buildings. As a result, the Town building department has revised the amount of building revenue it expects to collect by the end of this year from \$859,600 to \$475,000.

2. Based on Georgian Triangle Real Estate Board MLS statistics, the Royal LePage Collingwood Homes web page reports that the average price of a single family home in the Town of the Blue Mountains for the last 12 months is \$463,600 compared to \$255,683 for the Town of Collingwood; the Town of the Blue Mountains sales-to-listing ratio is only 27% making it definitely a "buyers" market.



BMRA MEMBERSHIP — IT'S TIME TO RENEW

... and bring a friend

Dear Member:

The winter season is upon us and we are now asking you to renew your 2009 family membership. Your membership fee is important to YOU so that your Association can provide You with ongoing information on events and issues in Your community and can strongly represent You.

If you have already sent in your application form and cheque, we thank you for your continued support. If you haven't renewed and wish to continue receiving this valuable information and representation, then please fill out the application form below and mail it along with your cheque to the address of the form.

When you have completed your review of this newsletter, please share with a friend or neighbor. A second membership form is attached for your convenience.

If you have any questions regarding their renewal, please contact: Michael P. Seguin, President and Acting Membership Chairman, mpseguin@rogers.com, or call 519-599-7179.



BMRA MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION 2009

Please enclose a cheque for \$25 as your annual family membership fee and send it with this application to:
Blue Mountain Ratepayers' Association, Box 405, Collingwood, ON L9Y 3Z7

Name (Last/First): _____

Mailing Address: _____

City: _____ Postal Code: _____

Phone No: _____ Chalet Phone No: _____

Email: _____

Seasonal Residence Address: _____

Do you wish to receive your quarterly newsletter electronically? If yes, please check here _____



Please pass this form along to neighbours or friends who would benefit from membership in our association

BMRA MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION 2009

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