

# The VIEW from BLUE

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The largest ratepayers' association in The Blue Mountains

www.bluemountainratepayersassociation.com

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February 2011

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## PRESIDENT'S REPORT

### More of the same – or changes ahead?

By Michael P. Seguin

Since the election, there have been strange happenings at Town Hall. Is the new Council a reflection of the “same old, same old” or will there be changes in attitude and direction over the next four years?

I quote from George Czerny's charge to the new Collingwood Council in early December, 2010, during which he noted that the word “charge” provided ample direction: clarity, honesty, attitude, research and responsibility, “go for it” and enthusiasm. He went on to say that this new Council must “harness the energy of the community” and must remember that “while there is wealth in the community, there are also a number of people going through hard times.” While I don't know George Czerny, he certainly sounds like a wise man.

If Mr. Czerny had given the same statements to our new Council, the

Mayor probably would have said that her Council had been charged over the last four years and that they will continue to perform in the same manner over the next four years. Is this the “same old, same old” approach?

What has happened over the past two months or so, to suggest that this Council will be “charged” and there will be changes in attitude over the coming four years.

**First up!** The staff tried to direct Council into believing that closing Mill Street was in the best interest of safety and a glorified entrance to the new Town Hall. They wanted to go to the public for their views but the local community rejected the process as only “a statutory requirement to push their Agenda.” Council agreed with the local community and stopped the process, but certain individuals – including yours truly – were blamed for

[See President's Report page 2](#)



**Saturday May 28th, 2011 beginning at 8.45 a.m.**

Senator Room at the Blue Mountain Inn (Conference Centre ground level)

### Annual General Meeting of the Blue Mountain Ratepayers' Association

Members of Town Council will join us to report on Town projects and current issues. MPP Candidates will be asked to outline their campaign platforms for the upcoming 2011 Provincial Election. All guest speakers will be prepared to answer questions from the floor.

**Reserve this date**

## President's Report

*Continued from page 1*

bringing awareness to an overzealous and ambitious staff desire.

**Second up!** The numerous residents and taxpayers who paid attention to the promises of many candidates (over 122 signatories to a letter/petition), asked that Council reconsider the demolition of the old Town Hall at this time and conduct a more open and transparent review and reassessment of this asset. We were assured by the CAO (at the time) that a study would be completed by staff and that the cost/benefits of the old Town Hall would be fully vetted. How transparent! The same staff that recommended demolition are now studying ways to confirm their recommendation was sound.

It's been more than six weeks since our presentation and this Council has not requested a more transparent review and reassessment – so much for harnessing the energy of the community! We already know what the non-transparent results will be!

### Spending and planning

**Third up!** Who on Council can be trusted to push the staff's aggressive spending and planning agenda over the next year? Apparently only one person: the Deputy Mayor (DM). The DM was hand-picked to be Chair of both the Planning and Building Committee and the Infrastructure and Recreation Committee for one year. He has also been picked to be the head of the powerful Official Plan Review Steering Committee. Tenure for one year means only one thing to this staff: you have been appointed to be the "Team Captain" to make sure the Agenda gets approved and then you can move on to become Warden of the County.

I guess no one else on Council is qualified to take on these responsibilities, or they can't be trusted – otherwise they would have challenged his appointment. Silence is a great indicator that the rest of Council is taking on the role as "team players" and will not upset the apple cart.

### On the road to change?

**Fourth Up!** The staff tried to direct Council once again into believing that changing the road structure within the community from local roads to collector roads was in the best interest of the community. Many reasons were given for the proposed Official Plan amendment change (especially in light of the OP Review) but at the end of the day the characteristics of a collector road meant allowing unplanned and probably inappropriate medium and high density development to infiltrate the community and change it from a rural environment with character into an urban environment with no character.

Which would you choose? Over 60 residents attended a public meeting and voiced strong opposition to this type of thinking. The staff has been asked to consider the many statements of opposition, but there is no word on their recommendations. Will they incorporate Council's charge to consider more "research and

responsibility?"

**Fifth Up!** The budget. Apparently the old Council has been studying the "needs and wants" of the 2011 budget since July, 2010, mostly (in my opinion) behind closed doors. Now the new Council has been asked to consider these "old needs and wants." There was never a mention of a 2.0% increase in 2011 or an increase of 6.9% in 2012. Who gave the marching orders to staff to come up with these numbers?

Contrary to promises made by candidates in the last election and some members of this new Council to consider greater fiscal restraint and freeze new hiring, this new Council is now being asked by staff to consider building the bureaucracy within the 2.0% increase and converting consultants (an Environmental Engineer and an IT guy without benefits and overhead costs) into two new full-time employees.

### Town Hall occupancy

We have been advised that the new Town Hall will be 40% occupied by March/April, 2011. I guess there will be a rush to fill the place in order to justify the cost of its creation.

Although brief, these actions by Council and staff are just a sampling of some of the events within the last two months. Does the handling of these issues suggest that this Council is "charged" and there will be changes in attitude over the next four years. I'm not convinced yet, but there is still hope. Our mission statement is clear: the Blue Mountain Ratepayers Association will continue to monitor the direction of this Council and make sure they are "charged" and responsible to act in the best interest of this community.

If you have any comments regarding my statements, please do not hesitate to contact me through the web site ([info@bluemountainratepayersassociation.com](mailto:info@bluemountainratepayersassociation.com)) or send me a message via the Association's mailing address. As I have always said, you are the heart and soul of the Association and we value your opinion.

## Another election, or two?

By Lester Posen

We've just got through the municipal elections of 2010 and here we are preparing for the provincials. It sounds almost like a sporting event!

October 2011 is the date when we will be asked to evaluate and elect provincial governments. The BMRA will begin defining those issues which affect us here in The Blue Mountains and start reporting to you on these matters.

Now that the federal conservatives have come out swinging, we must keep an eye on what is happening at that level of government. We may be asked to evaluate how our federal members of parliament are performing. Should this become another election call, the BMRA will follow that election as well.

Stay tuned to our website and future newsletters for local information. If you have any comments or inputs, please make contact. This is your association – your participation helps all of us.

## Our garbage dilemma!

By Michael P. Seguin

The Town will soon be embarking on a solid waste disposal communication campaign. Below is a brief, prepared by the Town to help you understand why this campaign is necessary and why every taxpayer and resident in this community should be concerned.

Under the landfill expansion options, two scenarios (which include mining or excavating and screening of the existing landfill) are being examined and one will be recommended — it could cost the taxpayers between \$7.5 and \$8.5 million. These two options would provide an estimated net capacity gain of 180,000 m<sup>2</sup> and provide about 17 years more of site life.

The other option – export – would involve substantial landfill cap costs (more than \$1.0 million) and a much higher transfer of waste and disposal fees: probably over \$500,000 per year on the tax base. The Town is already preparing us for a 6.9% tax increase in 2012, with 5.0% of this increase (or approximately \$500,000) being set-aside or allocated for the landfill options that



For more info on long-term waste disposal, visit [www.thebluemountains.ca/solid-waste-solutions.cfm](http://www.thebluemountains.ca/solid-waste-solutions.cfm)



## So . . . what's next for waste disposal?

**I**n less than two years, The Blue Mountains' existing landfill will reach capacity. The Town has been actively studying a number of waste management options in search of a long term solution to the issue of diminishing waste disposal capacity at The Blue Mountains Landfill.

Two main waste management options are being reviewed in depth, with both having a series of sub-options, as outlined below:

### ■ Expansion of the existing landfill.

#### *Sub-options include:*

- Northern expansion (excavate a new cell within the site boundaries) and mining (excavating and screening of the existing landfill)
- Vertical expansion (over the existing landfill footprint) and mining (excavating and screening of the existing landfill)
- Vertical expansion (over the existing landfill footprint) and reduced mining (excavating and screening of the existing landfill)
- Northern expansion only (excavate a new cell within the site boundaries).

### ■ Export waste to a landfill outside of the Town.

#### *Sub-options include:*

- Close and cap landfill and export residential waste
- Close and cap landfill and export residential and commercial waste
- Close and cap landfill and close all other site operations and export residential waste.

lie ahead. A proposed increase of \$510,000 is also included in the 2013 budget and probably will be extended.

Please read the information below very carefully. The campaign will start heating up in February and March and your input will be required. If you have any questions or want further information, please visit the Town's web site indicated on the brief or email me at [mpseguin@rogers.com](mailto:mpseguin@rogers.com).

### **Expansion:**

Historically, creating waste disposal capacity was relatively inexpensive and typically involved simply backfilling gravel extraction pits. Updates to the Environmental Protection Act regulations now ensure modern features are engineered into new and expanded disposal sites. These features act to protect the surrounding natural environment – but they also result in higher costs of developing new capacity.

### **Export:**

Waste export is not without high costs as well. Export has been reviewed on a cost comparison basis with various site expansion scenarios. Comparing the cost of waste export to site expansion reveals that both options have a similar annual expense increase.

Since approximately 1990, Ontario has filled 649 landfills, leaving only 81 sites with remaining capacity. Reportedly, 40% of Ontario's waste is currently being shipped to the U.S.

Exporting The Blue Mountains' waste likely will result in adding to this cross-border transport.

Without a local option for waste disposal, the Town will be vulnerable to changes in disposal and transport costs over the long-term horizon (15-20 years). In addition, during the initial stages of the waste management study, public opinion was strong that the Town's waste should be disposed of in our own municipality and exporting waste was a less favourable option.

### **Integrated solution:**

Disposal is only one part of the Town's waste management solution. The Town is working towards a 60% diversion rate by 2015. The current diversion rate is 43%. The community has identified additional targets in the recently developed Sustainable Path – 75% diversion

by 2025 and 85% by 2050. Reaching these goals will be achieved by increasing recyclables capture and participation, implementing curbside organics collection, and expanding the existing diversion programs as well as developing new programs.

#### **Continued review:**

For certain, regardless of the option selected, waste disposal costs will require more of the municipal tax levy than in previous years. Taxpayers will be paying more taxes for waste disposal well into the foreseeable future. The increased costs will be required to pay for the construction of new landfill capacity (mining and expansion) or final capping of the existing site combined with transport and disposal of waste.

Over the next few months the Town will be considering the lifecycle cost of various scenarios within the expansion and export options. This cost analysis will be compared against the environmental and social factors behind each option to make an informed and sustainable decision.

Please watch for a public information centre to be held when more detailed information is available.

## **We await the OMB decision on short-term accommodation**

**By Lester Posen**

**T**he OMB hearings on Short Term Accommodation (STA) are finally over and all parties have been heard. There were approximately 17 days of testimony, rebuttal and closing arguments logging more than 70 exhibits. The decision now rests with the OMB.

This is not an easy task as there are several different sides to this issue and a mountain of information and notes to sift through. Somewhere, threaded through the side of the town, the appellant and the residents, is the path that will be taken.

One key item that appeared to get lost during the entire proceeding is that the issue of STAs affects the entire town, not just those areas and residents within 300 metres of the ski hills. This has become more and more evident with the emergence of STA-type accommodations along the waterfront in Craighleith. The STA issue is a town-wide problem that requires a broad view of needs and remedies in order to ensure the proper growth of the town as well as the peaceful enjoyment of property by all who work and play in The Blue Mountains.

Some key points cannot be dismissed:

- **First**, there is a need for this type of business – Short Term Accommodations – in the Town.
- **Second**, there is a need to have an appropriate zoning by-law that will ensure that these types businesses can co-exist and operate in concert with both businesses and residents.
- **Third**, there is a need to ensure that the appropriate licensing is put in place to regulate and manage this type of business

- **Finally**, there is a need to ensure that where these businesses exist and are non-conforming, a plan is in place to return the non-conforming use to one which conforms to the approved zoning.

At no point did anyone say that STAs should not exist in The Blue Mountains. In actual fact, it was acknowledged that these businesses do bring value to the area.

Testimony at the OMB dove into the “weeds” of garbage, noise, parking, etc., as being the main reasons for not having STAs in residential areas. The real issue, in my opinion, never really saw the light of day.

#### **The “good old days”**

Before the current scenario developed, people would rent their homes out a couple of times of year for short periods while they were away. This would allow the owners to defray some of their costs while providing some security in knowing that someone was looking after their home while they were absent.

It wasn't until the cycle of real estate began to affect the town, allowing speculators and developers easy access to lower-cost prime real estate, that the current business of providing short term accommodation in residential homes took root. This was highlighted by the town's council during closing arguments.

Another point that came raised but not clarified was that of the use of condominiums and similar types of accommodations versus the building and use of large homes for STAs. It is easy to assume that a family might rent a condominium or similar place for use while on vacation. But it is quite another thing to believe simply that a family would take a room or two in a large house that has been converted into what has been dubbed a “party palace.” Clearly, groups of individuals or even companies would be more suited to renting these accommodations as a destination.

As the Town made clear during closing arguments, STA use inside R1-R4 zoned areas is incompatible with residential property use. The STAs are businesses and were referred to as such throughout the appellants' case and in closing.

#### **Rules for the STAs**

The Interim Control By-law (ICBL) and the proposed new Zoning By-Laws (ZBLs) are intended to provide a set of rules whereby all those who wish to operate this type of business in the Blue Mountains will be able to do so under a common, public set of rules. These rules will also set out the rules so that all residents and business operators clearly understand where and how the business and residential areas will be defined. Longer-term, licensing and regulation must be completed in order to ensure that the traveling public is protected and that resources consumed by these businesses are accounted for and apportioned appropriately through fees.

The combination of new ZBLs and licensing and regulation will protect those business operators already operating in the town as well as define how and where new operators can fit into place.

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**BMRA MEMBERSHIP – IT'S TIME TO RENEW****Dear Member:**

Our records show that a number of people have not yet renewed their 2011 Family Membership in the Blue Mountain Ratepayers Association. If you have forgotten or misplaced your application form and do wish to renew, then please fill out the application form below and mail it, along with your cheque, to the address shown below. (If you've already renewed, please ignore this notice.)

Your membership fee is very important to us. It enables us to publish our *Newsletter* on a quarterly basis, to provide for an Annual General Meeting in the spring of every year and, most of all, to maintain our Web site ([bluemountainratepayersassociation.com](http://bluemountainratepayersassociation.com)) so that we can reach out to as many people as possible on an on-going basis.

If you choose not to renew, or you no longer want to be involved with our Association, **then we will remove your name(s) from our mailing list and email list shortly after the AGM, scheduled for Saturday, May 28th, 2011.** Thanks for your past support – you are welcome to re-join at any time in the future.

If anyone has any questions regarding their renewal, please do not hesitate to contact me at [mpseguin@rogers.com](mailto:mpseguin@rogers.com) or call me at **519-599-7179**.

**Michael P. Seguin, President**

**BMRA MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION FORM FOR 2011**

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:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Blue Mountains Phone No:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Email:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Blue Mountains Address & Phone Number:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Neighbours Wishing to Join:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Would you prefer to receive your newsletter electronically? Please check one: Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_**



## Helpful hints for winter

- Keep your headlights clear with car wax! Just wipe ordinary car wax on your headlights. It contains special water repellents that will prevent that messy mixture from accumulating on your lights, and it lasts for up to six weeks.
- Squeak-proof your wipers with rubbing alcohol!

Wipe the wipers with a cloth saturated with rubbing alcohol or ammonia. This one trick can make badly streaking and squeaking wipers change to near perfect silence and clarity.

- Ice-proof your windows with vinegar! Just fill a spray bottle with three parts vinegar to one part water and spritz it on all your windows at night. In the morning, they'll be clear of icy mess. Vinegar contains acetic acid, which lowers the melting point of water, thus preventing it from freezing!
- Prevent car doors from freezing shut with cooking spray! Spritz cooking oil on the rubber seals around car doors and rub it in with a paper towel. The cooking spray prevents ice from melting into the rubber.
- Fog-proof your windshield with shaving cream! Spray some shaving cream on the inside of your windshield and wipe it off with paper towels. Shaving cream has many of the same ingredients found in commercial defoggers.
- De-ice your lock in seconds with hand sanitizer! Just put some hand sanitizer gel on the key and the lock – presto, the problem's solved!



## Planting trees for the environment

The Town has launched a Tree Lottery called “The Blue Mountains Lottree.” This lottery is being offered thanks to a grant provided by the TD Green Streets Program. As a successful applicant in this program, the Blue Mountains has committed to planting several trees to help offset our greenhouse gas emissions and enhance our tree canopy.

The Town wants the public to participate in planting trees within the community (at no charge) and has offered everyone a chance to win a **\$50 gift certificate** from the Grey-Sauble Conservation Authority to purchase a tree sapling or landscape stock tree. There are a 100 gift certificates to give away.

It is important to remember that trees represent one of the best ways to extract carbon dioxide (which the tree absorbs) from the air. To achieve long-term reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, a diverse mix of species and ages of trees must be in place in our community.

It's easy to participate. Go to the following Town web link, fill out the on-line survey and enter into the lottery for a chance to win: [www.thebluemountains.ca/green-streets-program.cfm](http://www.thebluemountains.ca/green-streets-program.cfm).

To find out more, contact Jeffrey Fletcher at 519-599-3131 Ext. 238, or [jfletcher@thebluemountains.ca](mailto:jfletcher@thebluemountains.ca).

The BMRA strives to promote green initiatives and is favour of programs that protect the environment. Thanks to the Town for offering this worthwhile program.

### PASS IT ON

After you have read this newsletter, please pass it on to a neighbour and suggest they join our Association – the best way to keep up-to-date on what's happening in our community

*Continued from page 4*

STAs fit in the longer term. This is not an easy issue. However, the ZBLs cover this as well. Those businesses currently operating in areas where this type of business will not be allowed by the ZBLs will be deemed legal non-conforming. This means that they will be able to operate until the current owner decides to terminate this use of the property.

If the property is sold, the new owner must conform to the zoning use for the property as outlined in the ZBLs. Should the current owner decide to terminate the use of the STA on the current property then the property would revert to the current zoning use as defined in the ZBLs. This "succession" plan allows for the eventual return to appropriate zoning use for all properties. It is not immediate but it provides a palatable method of getting back to a semblance of appropriate use of all lands and a degree of fairness to those already engaged in this activity.

#### **Why . . . ?**

Clearly, there are a number of ancillary issues that affect everyone. Why should some businesses be allowed to operate under the old rules while others are forced to use the new ones? Why should some residents be unable to use their properties for the same purposes as those around them? All valid points, and all challenging.

Regardless of the outcome and the final look of the OMB decision, we must remain strong in our convictions on this matter. We must all continue to press for the appropriate licensing and regulation of this business in our town. We must ensure that the costs for the operation of these businesses, including the town resources required to manage them, are born by the businesses. These costs should include, but not be limited to, the preparation of licensing and regulations, the cost to operate such a business in the town, the cost for by-law monitoring and enforcement, the cost for health and safety inspection, the cost for fire and safety inspection, as well as the cost for policing and by-law enforcement.

The OMB hearings were a true experience in watching our adversarial system in action. The OMB chair stated that no new law was being examined through this case. Madame Hussey was complimentary regarding the deportment of counsel for all sides. She particularly noted the attendance of residents throughout the hearings and their participation in this matter.

#### **Competing viewpoints**

A great deal of ground was covered throughout the entire hearing and the opportunity to speak with some of the attendees provided an interesting view on the thoughts of residents and business owners on both sides of this challenging issue. The decision will be rendered by the OMB member in due time. She has a great deal of information to review. I for one am happy that this is a job for someone else.

Sitting through and listening to the proceedings was interesting, enlightening, entertaining and I am glad I was there to represent at least one view of the residents of this Town and our association.

## **The horse, the cart and strategic thinking**

**By Ron Hartlen, Clarksburg**

**T**he Fall Municipal Election is long since over. However, some questions raised in the campaign are still worth thinking about.

At the BMRA's all-candidates meeting, a question from the floor addressed the interrelationship between Economic Development and Affordable Housing. This question apparently arose because some candidates had previously implied that affordable housing was a prerequisite to having job-providing businesses locate here.

The questioner challenged the candidates to state which is the Horse and which is the Cart. One or two candidates came down firmly on the side of Business and Employment as the Horse, but some appeared to be groping for an answer. The purpose of this article is to present some simple ways of looking at the Horse and Cart issue.

#### ***Evolution . . .***

*The Town has been shifting and will continue to shift toward being a place of Recreation and Tourism.* This is because of unstoppable natural forces. This is a beautiful area with abundant opportunities for unhurried healthy living and recreation. People from elsewhere want not only to visit as tourists, but to live here. One result is an ever-increasing number of higher-end homes occupied by relatively high-income residents. As will be outlined below, this is a good thing which should be continued and encouraged.

#### ***The Horse . . .***

*The Big Horse is already here!! We know what it is and how it works!*

Tax revenue from businesses in Recreation and Tourism, and property taxes from higher-end homes, provide a significant component of the Town's revenue. These revenue sources are physically planted here, and are as clean and green as it gets.

*Dollars that flow into the Businesses and Homeowner's bank accounts come from outside the Town, and then flow into the Town.* These dollar flows are of huge economic benefit. This is very important to recognize. We need to value and nurture this Big Horse, and not make decisions that could adversely affect this Horse's long-term health.

Consider another potential Horse: appropriate, clean, knowledge-based businesses. These clearly are attractive, as both clean revenue sources and employment opportunities. There is an unsettling risk factor, however: *In today's world, any knowledge work can be shipped out and returned, all via the internet.* If such businesses are to take permanent root here, it will be simply because the owners and prospective employees want to live here. This will happen naturally.

Yes, remove any unnecessary hurdles and barriers – but do not subsidize relocations.

***The Cart . . .***

In essence, the real “CART” is *what kind of a town we'll have and the well-being and employment opportunities* for a healthy demographic mix of families.

Where will the Employment come from?

Well, there appears to be great opportunity for simply providing top-quality services to residents. In addition to retailers, there are many providers of professional, semi-professional and trades services. We see them all around us every day. Provision of hands-on services cannot be shipped out to India or China. They can only be provided here. Services are of great value, and those who provide them are highly respected and well compensated.

Again, from an economic viewpoint, the dollars to pay for those services will flow largely from outside the Town into the Town. It doesn't get any better than that.

Long-term, the employment opportunities will enable people to stay here, and their incomes will enable them to first pay rent, and then own a home.

***Strategic thinking . . .***

The Blue Mountains does not have a Strategic Planning body. Issues such as Housing, Economic Development, etc. are tackled by Committees operating without any top-down strategic direction.

What can result from a lack of strategic planning?

Well, for one thing, there seems to be a collective view that the appearance of increasing numbers of higher-end estate homes is a problem, because it eliminates opportunities for affordable housing. Along the same lines, economic-development findings appear to recognize the importance of “tourism,” without recognizing new permanent residents as an economic driver.

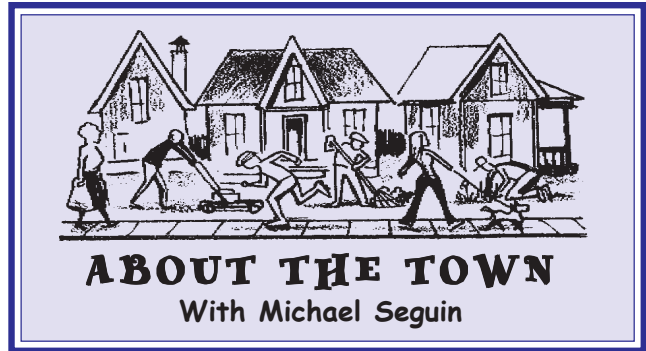
For another, consider the location of the New Town Hall vis-à-vis the plan for green space. Accept, just for purposes of argument, that constructing a new building and demolishing the old one to make way for green space were good decisions. There would still remain the question of the location of the new building. The location selected not only pre-empted possible prime commercial use, but actually reduced the amount of land that would have been available for an even larger public green space! Go figure!

Maybe some of the thinking was to have an impressive centrepiece, a highly-visible focal point. Well, here's another take on that: Let's picture an entrepreneur looking for a location for a new business, or a couple looking for an area for retirement living. They've chosen TBM, and they're being interviewed as to why. Can you picture either saying, “Well, we considered several options. But the thing that really swung it was that Honkin' big New Town Hall. You can't miss it?”

Not likely!

***Wrap-up . . .***

The material I have presented here is admittedly oversimplified. It is in no way intended to belittle the efforts of many people working hard on various committees. It was designed to jog us all into stepping back a bit, so as not to overlook the obvious.

**The CAO has left the building**

According to an article by Erika Engel on January 28, 2011 and posted on Simcoe.com, the Chief Administration Officer, Paul Graham left his position on Jan. 19. Did he actually resign or was he asked to leave (fired)? Will the taxpayers be informed of the circumstances and how much will this cost them? Many questions need to be answered – but will the Town consider hiding the truth?

In the interim, the current Director of Engineering, Reg Russwurm, has been appointed as acting CAO. We wish Reg the best of luck, as the task and responsibility of this position, in addition to his own, will be a difficult one on such short notice. The Mayor has promised to commence the hiring process immediately by advertising “in-house” and nationwide.

I guess this leaves the opportunity open for the Directors of Engineering, Planning and Building Services and Finance to apply for the position and be promoted within – this is how Paul Graham originally got the job in 2006, being promoted from Director of Engineering.

I hope that Council does their due-diligence and take their time in choosing the next CAO – someone who is highly qualified, vibrant, refreshing and wants to take Paul Graham's “Dare to Dream” concept for our local government to the next level. We wish Paul Graham all the best in the future.

*Source: Simcoe.com 01/28/2011*

**The Town does not want a county-run library system**

Grey County is planning to study the possibility of taking over library services from the municipalities. However, our Town wants no part of that and has opted out of funding any studies for this purpose. The Town already pays the highest amount per capita. The Library's CEO, Carol Cooley, says there is no way county involvement would be financially beneficial for the local library system. Cooley also argues that our library system could not be made better with county governance: there would be less attention given to patron's tastes, there would be smaller discounts for new books, more time and costs would be associated with processing books on the shelves, and there would be a loss of community ownership.

*Source: Simcoe.com 01/14/2011*



### Thornbury Health Centre no longer on hold

The North East Grey Health Clinics (NEGHC) has announced that construction of the Thornbury Health Centre – scheduled to start in the fall of 2010 – now will begin in April. Reason for the delay? The Board was startled by much higher bids than expected because of substantial winter costs, adding several hundred thousand dollars to the bill. The building underwent the process of redesign and a cost adjustment, and the Board has now signed a more acceptable contract with Deziign2000 for spring construction.

Source: *Simcoe.com* 12/30/2010

### No Gretzky Classic this summer

The Gretzky Classic golf tournament will not return this summer – and probably not at all – because of a lack of sponsorship, which is necessary for a charitable organization such as the Wayne Gretzky Foundation. The Foundation has donated \$22,125 this year to help first-time kids (without financial capability) in the Blue Mountains who want to play minor hockey. Over the past three years the Foundation has donated \$100,000 to our community, including \$50,000 in the first year to the Thornbury Community Health Centre.

The golf tournament had a huge economic impact on the town: surveys indicated that 50 million people a year were exposed to it and our community through the golf channel on TV and through other media such as print, television, radio and the internet. The tournament also encouraged more than 700 volunteers every year for three years – a major reason for the donations and success of the tournament.

Source: *Simcoe.com* 01/11/2011

### Official Plan review begins soon

The Town of the Blue Mountains has finally appointed members to the Tender/Proposal Award's Committee and Official Plan Steering Committee. The Award's Committee, mostly made up of senior staff, is expected to choose a consultant by the time you read this newsletter. The Steering Committee, which will oversee the Official Plan Review process, comprises Duncan McKinlay from Council, the Director of Planning and Building Services, one representative from the County of Grey Planning and Development Department and two members of the Public: Bob Waind and John Corrigan.

The Request for Proposal (RFP) states that the Work Plan calls for six Steering Committee Meetings, 14 Public Sessions consisting of workshops, presentations and meetings, plus a Statutory Public Meeting. The entire project is expected to be completed by January, 2012. Of particular importance for taxpayers, the RFP clearly states that the "Town wishes that public input be maximized" and that the "public consultation is an important, indispensable component of the process." In addition, "this process must take into consideration that the Town has a large number of seasonal and part-time residents and/or stakeholders and the consultant must

develop a consultation strategy that captures input from these groups including weekend and evening sessions." The BMRA will monitor the Work Plan and continue to keep our members informed of critical dates and public sessions of importance.

### For your pleasure and education

The Blue Mountain Watershed Trust Foundation (BMWTF) continues to co-sponsor with Elephant Thoughts, a "Be the Change" documentary film series at the Gayety Theatre in Collingwood. These educational films are about environmentally-focused challenges facing the world today. Three films are left in the series. Admission is only \$7 per person (free for students). Live music starts at 6:30 p.m. followed by the film at 7. For more details contact the BMWTF at 705-445-0357.

**March 16:** *The Clean Bin Project* – "Is it possible to live completely waste free?"

**April 20:** *Dirt! The Movie* – "The glorious and unappreciated material beneath our feet."

**May 18:** *The End of the Line* – "The devastating environmental effects of overfishing due to our global affair with fish as food."

■ **The Craigeleith Heritage Depot 2011** has announced dates and speakers for its lecture series at the Beaver Valley Community Centre in Thornbury. Admission is only \$7 per lecture and \$10 for couples (discounts for youths and museum members).

**Feb. 28:** Kevin Moyse – Songs of Georgian Bay

**March 28:** The Blue Mountain Antique Show

**April 25:** Charles Garrad – Indian Myth and Magic on the Blue Mountain

**May 30:** Dr. John Carter – Dispelling the Myth of the Little Red Schoolhouse

**June 27:** Frank Dobbs – From Craigeleith to Fort McMurray to Colorado: The Commercialization of Unconventional Oil in Canada

**July 25:** Ron Brown – the Train Doesn't Stop Here Anymore

**Aug. 29:** Janet Iles – Home is Where Your Study begins

### 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 & Blue Mountains): 1-888-310-1122; (Administration): 705-445-4321. Blue Mountains Resorts Security: 705-445-0231 x8281/8911 (24 hours)

**Fire Department:** Thornbury Fire Station # 1, (519) 599-5411; Craigeleith Fire Station #2, (705) 444-2244;

**Municipal Offices:** Thornbury 599-3131. Paul Graham, Chief Administration Officer, x234; Robert Cummings, Treasurer, x245; Corinna Giles, Town Clerk, x232; David Finbow, Director of Planning and Building x246.

**Sept. 26:** JoAnne Fleming-Valin – Earthy, Wet and Leafy

**Oct. 31:** TBA

**Nov. 28:** Dr. Peter VonBitter – A Rock Talk

### Real estate news

According to the Georgian Triangle Real Estate Board's MLS statistics, there were 1,906 sales for 2010 versus 1,855 in 2009 – a 2.75% increase. Sales volume reached almost \$545 million as against \$484.4 million in 2009, reflecting a 12.48% increase and an average price of \$285,852. What does this mean? There's still a very strong buyers' market, especially for modestly priced product, and one of every three listings finds a buyer.

However, the Blue Mountains saw a decline in units sold (151 units in 2010) compared to 165 units in 2009) with an overall average price of \$510,427 (compared to \$453,258 in 2009). Collingwood had 280 transactions with an average price of \$275,895. Meaford saw 117 transactions with an average price of \$264,954, and Clearview saw 153 transactions with an average price of \$348,674. Wasaga Beach was the most active trading area, with 357 unit sales and an average price of \$267,477 in 2010.

The condo resale market continues to be flat with 237 condos listed for sale in the Blue Mountains and not finding a new owner. Many new units are being planned for and/or built; this will continue to put pressure on older, less desirable units. The majority of units being sold are in the \$100,000 to \$120,000 range.

Karen Poshtar provides a quarterly newsletter that often deals with new developments and real estate trends in Collingwood and the Blue Mountains, and you are welcome to visit her Web site at [www.collingwoodhomes.ca](http://www.collingwoodhomes.ca) to see more links or to share with her some of your interests in the real estate market.

You can also view some interesting market briefs by visiting the Tri-W Realty Inc. Web site and newsletter by Jane and Steve Moysey at [www.tri-wrealestate.com](http://www.tri-wrealestate.com)

### Quick hits!

1. It's official! *The Courier-Herald* announced on Dec. 15 that Duncan McKinlay is set to run for Warden of Grey County in 2011. It has been tradition at the "Old Boys' County Club" that councilors interested in running for the Warden's job in a year's time receive (and decline) a nomination a year before they plan to run; as predicted, McKinlay was nominated and declined to seek the position (this year) but was made a member of the five-person Warden's Committee.

2. Canada Mortgage and Housing reports that Collingwood's residential vacancy rate dropped to less than 1.0% in the last quarter of 2010, while the average

rent dropped to \$794 per month – is an all-time low and could have been worse given the recent rash of fires affecting a number of rental units. This compares to a vacancy rate of 4.2% at the same time in 2009.

3. Several new restaurants recently opened their doors in Collingwood: *Cabin at the Cranberry Mews* (Hwy 26); the *Empire Grill and Gastro Pub* on Balsam Street across from Canadian Tire; *Tremont Café* on Simcoe Street behind the new Library. The *Bruce Street Wine Bar* recently opened behind the TD Bank in Thornbury.

4. The By-law Division of the Blue Mountains reports that in 2010 a total of 545 complaints were received, an increase of 29% over 2009. Interestingly, 163 (30%) were Short Term Accommodation complaints, of which 153 were still open as we went to press. It's obvious where the problems lie.



### SUBJECT: Town CEO vs. CAO

Since the town CAO has left the Town Hall building I have been asked by numerous people this past week: who is the CAO and what does he/she/ do?

To answer this question, the definition of the term CAO is Chief Administration Officer. The CAO's job is to supervise the staff and to report to the Mayor and the Council. The Mayor and Council create policy and ask the staff through the CAO to implement these policies.

The CEO (Chief Executive Officer) should not be confused with the CAO. In fact CEO is the Mayor's job as head of council in charge of day-to-day overseeing of the Town's operation.

Now then, how does this all relate to The Blue Mountains?

Since 2003 we have, in effect, not had a CEO since the Mayor preferred to allow the CAO to run the show and (in effect) come up with ideas and policy for the Mayor and Council to implement. As the Mayor explained during the recent election, she preferred to break ties at council meetings and attend to the social needs of the town rather than the traditional way of being the Mayor: CEO and leader of council.

We now are in a position where the CAO has left town and, until we have a new CAO, the Director of Engineering Public Works is the acting CAO.

Because the Mayor has made it clear since the election that she intends to run things in this term exactly as last term then, we are unlikely to see the town go back to the traditional way of a Mayor, CEO and Council.

*At least, that's the way I see it!*

**Paul Mitchell**

### INFOLINE: 211

Need help? Got a question? Call the INFOLINE at 211