

The VIEW from BLUE

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Box 198, Thornbury, ON N0H 2P0

The largest ratepayers' association in The Blue Mountains

September 2012

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PRESIDENT'S REPORT

by Michael P. Seguin

Can Council handle the tough decisions ahead?

I hope everyone had a safe and enjoyable summer. It was certainly a hot and dry one. Farmers complained, golfers complained and the Town complained again. Why? . . . too many residents conserving water, resulting in less revenue. As always, conservation = a need to increase utility rates so as to maintain the bureaucracy.

On May 26, our AGM was held at the Marsh Street Centre and attended by 63 members and guests who were treated to two excellent speakers: George Czerny, author and former publisher of the *Enterprise Bulletin*, and Dan Skelton, COO of Blue Mountain Resorts Ltd. who provided us with interesting perspectives on many issues and events affecting our ratepayers.

I can also report that the BMRA Board gained a new member for 2012/2013: John Leckie from Thornbury-Lora Bay. John undoubtedly will add strength to the BMRA decision-making process and give us better representation from the

western portions of The Blue Mountains.

While our AGM program was successful, I was very disappointed in the low attendance. The Board has agreed to change the next AGM to Saturday, April 27, 2013, in hopes of avoiding too many early spring conflicts and thus increasing attendance. Make sure you mark this date on your calendar for next year.

As you read this September Newsletter, you will note a wide variety of interesting topics and issues that will challenge our Council. How they handle them will determine their success or failure in their four year term ending in 2014.

■ On the building front, the new Town Hall was christened at a grand ceremony on July 4. High-priced politicians from all levels of government attended, making such statements as "the project helped revitalize the town," "a Cinderella Story"

See *President's Report* page 2

How to lose a valuable asset . . .



The old Town Hall . . .

seniors and youths. The Mayor's supposed "money pit" was doomed from the beginning and the broader public was never given a chance to discover innovative and cooperative ways to utilize the building for future needs. A \$500,000 asset has now been transformed into a wasteland that will ultimately cost us more than \$500,000 in a landscaped cover-up.



. . . is now a wasteland!

By Michael P. Seguin

In my opinion, we have lost a very useful and reasonably good quality office building, one which would have provided an opportunity for future space and program needs of the community – especially for

President's Report

Continued from page 1

and “money well spent.” Too bad none of these politicians live in our community – their statements might have been different.

In the meantime, the old Town Hall was dusted away so there was no reminder of its “uncertain” benefits. The accompanying pictures (page 1) tell the story.

■ The *Official Plan Review* continues. A draft report is to be presented sometime in late September. We will monitor the process very carefully, because in my opinion, the words “intensification” and “resort” found throughout the document do not make it “taxpayer-friendly.” Planning and development issues continue to challenge the town without a highly qualified Manager of Planning to support Director David Finbow and his staff.

We also will need to monitor a new Consolidated Zoning By-law that will be used by the town to deal with the everyday building issues and requirements.

■ Council has financially approved staff proceeding with an *STA Licencing By-law Program* scheduled to be in place by March 31, 2013. However, before finalizing the draft documentation, Town staff has been instructed to conduct stakeholder consultation meetings to determine the content and how the

process works. The BMRA is considered a stakeholder and we will follow the process until its completion. Relevant updates will be provided via email “blasts.”

■ On the financial front, the town is planning to focus on the 2013 budget and will deliberate several major challenges including, once again, the existing service delivery, and enhancement of both essential and non-essential services. Like last year, the two biggest challenges will be the “huge” financial costs and tax impositions associated with “Long Term Solid Waste Disposal Needs” and the “Water and Wastewater Financial Plans.”

The Director of Finance & IT Services, Robert Cummings, states that based on last year’s projections we are starting at a 5.75% increase in the Town levy over 2012. Water and wastewater rates are expected to increase a minimum of 5% each – but the Council wants more.

Stay tuned – we won’t know until November what kind of financial damage this Council wants to inflict on us.

■ Can this Council handle the tough decisions ahead? Well, from where I sit (which is at most Council and Committee Meetings), there seems to be considerable confusion, lack of understanding and disagreement between the wants (plus personal agendas), the needs of the community, and affordability. I sometimes see staff shaking their heads trying to understand Council’s intentions and directions.

Personally, I think it’s time for a change and time to start preparing for the next election in 2014. Out with the old and in with the new. We can make a difference – yes we can!

As I have said many times before, our mission statement is clear and the BMRA will continue to monitor the direction of this Council and make sure they are “charged” and responsible to act in the best interests of this community. We will also continue to keep you informed through our new social network: twitter and Facebook.

If you have comments regarding my statements, please do not hesitate to contact me through the web site, www.bluemountainratepayers.ca, email me at mpseguin@rogers.com, or send me a letter via our 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.”

What is a BIA?

BIA stands for *Business Improvement Area*. Here’s some useful background on the Thornbury Business Improvement Area (TBIA), which comprises the core of Thornbury, from Foodland in the east to Pharmasave in the west, Maiolo’s in the North and the Dam Pub in the south.

The beautification of Bruce St. and Hwy 26 was partially financed by the TBIA in the form of a \$150,000 contribution, which helped pay for new sidewalks and lampposts and putting overhead wires underground.

In order to leverage its limited resources, TBIA has in the past few years partnered with Blue Mountain Village in the *Peak to Shore* and *Blue Mountain Harvest* festivals in order to extend its reach for new visitors, and the *Canada Day Parade* was resuscitated by the TBIA board.

Olde Fashioned Christmas has been the TBIA’s signature community event for over 30 years. This year, to benefit from and support the *Rodeo at Cedar Run*, TBIA organized a Country Hoedown on Bruce Street.

The former TBIA directors identified Thornbury’s charm as one of its main attractions and designed a marketing program of new banners to appeal to the area’s demographic and reinforce the “four seasons of charm” concept through rack cards and magazine ads. The “street appeal” has been enhanced by the purchase of LED lights, which are wrapped around the lampposts to give Thornbury a festive atmosphere at night. The hanging flower baskets and their watering in summer are paid for by the TBIA, as are the winter decorations.

Source: *Simcoe.com* 08/28/2012



Wind power in Ontario

Huge economic and societal costs with little environmental benefit

(This article, addressing a province-wide issue, appeared recently as a Letter to the Editor in local newspapers. Dr. Hartlen, the author, is a retired Professional Engineer. For emphasis and clarity here, Ron has changed the title and one passage, and has added a footnote to highlight its TBM context.)

By Dr. Ron Hartlen

There is a raging and intensifying battle over Wind Farms in Ontario. The Provincial Government and its various supporters, some materially disinterested and some not, would have us believe that wind power displaces coal-fired generation and is therefore good for the environment. Opposition voices are focussed on several well-known negative consequences such as the low production and high cost of power; destruction of visual environment; effect on wildlife; impact on property values; and, of course, effects on health and general well-being of neighbours.

By stonewalling on the substance of the issues, and accusing rural Ontario of NIMBYism, Ontario's Government, the industry and other supporters are essentially ignoring all voices of caution and dissent. The opponents have noted that, in addition to the specific issues, the entire fiasco was born for political purposes and is reaping fortunes for well-connected developers.

Benefits vs. cost

This battle might be justified and worth debating if there were legitimate benefit-versus-cost issues to be resolved. But there are not. Simply put, it's no contest.

For whatever reason, the key issue is seldom, if ever, communicated clearly to the public. One simple fact is that Ontario already has enough power, and a clean system; in 2011, only 2.7% of Ontario's power generation came from coal.

Another simple fact is that there is a nearly

complete mismatch between the demand for power and the availability of the wind. Most of the wind power appears at times of the year and times of day when demand is low and we are not burning any significant amount of coal. This mismatch is actually a fundamental characteristic of the province of Ontario: it is an unavoidable reality. So if some people fervently and sincerely tell you that wind power is displacing coal, tell them to put their ideology or vested interest aside and check some facts. The facts are clear, and available.

Wait! It gets worse! If the wind power is not displacing coal, then what is it displacing?

Well, we're spilling some water around the hydraulic plants, and reducing generation from some nuclear units, neither of which are emitting toxins or CO₂. So expensive wind power is replacing just-as-clean and far-less-expensive hydraulic and nuclear power.

Furthermore, the more wind power we have the worse it gets. At present, with roughly 2,000 Mw of wind installed, the nuclear units at Bruce B can stay on-line while reducing load somewhat to make way for the must-take wind power. However, with the planned build-out of wind by about a factor of five, to around 9,000 to 10,000 Mw, the nuclear units will not be able to reduce generation sufficiently to accommodate the must-take wind. They would have to be shut down, and could not come back up for a day or two. Then, as the wind fades, it would be replaced by natural gas.

CO₂ emission increase

Ironically, and perhaps even comically, too much wind power could cause Ontario's CO₂ emissions to increase!

Clearly, with too much wind capacity, there will be very serious technical and practical problems in dispatching of generation resources and managing the grid. One distinct possibility is a take-or-pay situation wherein the unneeded and awkward wind power will have to be dispatched to zero. Ontarians will then end up paying the wind generators for what they would have delivered if connected. Go figure!

Wind power without storage capability could make sense in a jurisdiction with a high fraction of generation from fossil fuel; wind, whenever available, could always displace some fossil. But wind without storage makes absolutely no sense in Ontario.

Clearly, there can be no sensible discussion about costs and benefits. The costs are known at least in a general way. But there quite simply are no benefits! It's strictly "no contest." Ontarians need to know this. Some will claim that Ontario is a leader. Others could justifiably claim that Ontario is a laughingstock.

See *Wind power* page 4

TBM moves forward with Short Term Accommodation Licencing By-law

By Michael Seguin

The BMRA's last communication concerning short term accommodation (STA) was an electronic "blast" sent to our members on July 22. At that time, we were delighted to advise that the Divisional Court had dismissed the appellant's Application for Leave to Appeal the OMB's favourable ruling concerning the Town's STA interim control by-laws and amendments to the Official Plan and Zoning By-laws.

Our heartfelt thank-you goes out to all residents for your continued support and patience throughout this long and arduous process. The zoning and development guidelines necessary to support the business of providing commercial tourist accommodations while protecting residential neighbourhoods are in full force and effect.

Our collective voice made a difference!

The final step, which the Town staff states it is proceeding with in earnest, is to develop ways to regulate short-term accommodation uses by way of a licencing regime.

We are pleased to report that a draft licencing by-law will be presented shortly for public and

stakeholder feedback as to its design and features. Stakeholders will include the OPP and by-law enforcement officers, health and fire protection officials, ratepayers groups and the owners of the short term accommodation units.

As members of the BMRA, you are being asked to take the time to read this draft when presented and provide your feedback, either directly to town staff and Counsel or via the our STA Committee, who will provide a consolidated report back to Council on all comments received from members.

Stay tuned for further updates as new information becomes available.

Some important stats:

- 102 STA files have been opened in 2012 (as of Aug. 17);
- 293 files have been opened by the By-law Division since 2009;
- 246 STA files are still active, representing 67% of all active By-law files;
- STA communication in 2012 includes 55 violation notices, 490 email/phone calls and 300 STA pamphlets being distributed;
- 74 STA site investigations in 2012, in addition to hours of patrols and online and advertisement investigations;
- 6 known STA operations were successfully shut down in 2012.

Source: Town Report B.12.21-09/04

Wind power

Continued from page 3

Footnote:

The development of industrial-scale wind farms comes with large costs. Some of these are economic "dollar" costs, and some are more-general "societal" costs. There is essentially no benefit to the environment to offset these known costs.

The new structure of the Green Energy and FIT programs is such that municipalities explicitly welcome such developments go to the top of the list for contract approvals. Presumably, municipalities which explicitly do not want the developments will go to the bottom of the list. Many Ontario municipalities have explicitly stated that such projects are not welcome. Our Council and our Official Plan should have a position on this.

Blue Mountains Council recently had an opportunity to take a policy position on the Green Energy Act and the FIT program. A rooftop solar company, working to a deadline, requested TBM's endorsement to help get proposed projects quickly to the top of the list for approvals.

A staff report pointed out that such projects couldn't go ahead immediately because of transmis-

sion limitations – Council did not have to take, and did not take, any position.

(As a technical aside: Solar energy is a good direct fit for the summer air-conditioning load. Nevertheless, solar-photovoltaic-electricity-to-the-grid is thermodynamically very wasteful of the Sun's energy, is very expensive and will drive up electricity costs for all Ontarians. This includes the operation of the geothermal system in the TBM Municipal Building.)

Does The Blue Mountains want to get to the top of GEA/FIT approvals lists? Or, based upon our core values, would we really rather be at the bottom? Council should be encouraged, and expected, to take a position soon.



**Membership in the
Blue Mountain
Ratepayers'
Association**

is only \$25 a year
payable to:

Blue Mountain Ratepayers' Association,
Box 198, Thornbury, ON N0H 2P0

A WARNING FROM BLUE MOUNTAINS COMMUNITY WATCH...

Fraudsters are always lurking!



"Hello – I'm Eric from Windows Support.

As you know, your computer has a Windows operating system. Our regular quality control check tells us your computer has slowed significantly because of a very common but serious infection. Let me help you out!"

Half an hour and \$399 later, your problem will be "solved." And you will have given access to your computer to a very corrupt organization! You will have been "had" by a well trained and convincing fraud artist.

For an additional \$400+/-, with the support of a hired-by-you reputable computer software technician, you may be able to work your way out of the clutches of the fraudster.

Microsoft or Windows will never contact you by

phone – hang up when you get this call!

Residents in Blue Mountains are prime targets for fraud artists of all sorts. Our Community's relative affluence and aging demographics encourage frequent targeting by fraudsters.

Take time to learn about the scams that you are likely to experience. Visit www.bluemountainscommunitywatch.ca and click on News: *The Little Black Book on Scams*. Tell your neighbours about this essential homework and help you, your family and friends to avoid the ex-pense and embarrassment of becoming scam victims!

In the last year, for example, five members of your Community Watch team have been approached by fraudsters. You could be next! Remember to report these attempted crimes. Call 1-888-310-1122, the OPP non-emergency number, or follow the instructions in "*The Little Black Book on Scams*" which recommends calling the Canadian Anti-fraud Centre at 1-800-495-8501, or visiting www.antifraudcentre.ca.

Membership Today

By Kim Posen

Three things came to mind as I typed "Membership Today." The first is the obvious: how many people belong to the BMRA? But it could also refer to *now*, as opposed to sometime in the *past*. My third thought is very timely: What does membership mean to me right now, today?

During a recent cottage clean-up, I discovered an envelope that had been sent to my mother in 1982. It contained the material that was mailed out to members of the Blue Mountain Ratepayers Association (the original name, which was changed and then changed back) prior to the Annual General Meeting. That deserves its own article, so stay tuned for the next newsletter!

When reported at the AGM this year, we had 202 member families. We are now at 220, representing 348 people. Close to 65% of members are full-time residents, with most having Blue Mountains mailing addresses. The Thornbury area has shown the most growth over the last several months.

From a slightly different angle, there are 124 members (58%) with phone numbers beginning with 444 or 445. These were the original Collingwood numbers, so these members have probably been in the area for a very long time. (I have a 445 number from over 40 years ago that started out as a party line!)

The digital age is alive and well in the Blue Mountains. There are email addresses for 89% of member families, and so we are able to provide timely, cost effective information in ways not possible even five years ago. Email blasts are sent out every time there is "breaking news."

In addition to updating our website – www.

bluemountainratepayers.ca – regularly, we are on Facebook at www.facebook.com/bluemountainratepayers2 and Twitter (@BlueMtnRtpyrs). And let's not forget the newsletter (as you read this, my point is made!).

The Blue Mountain Ratepayers Association is made up of people who are concerned about their community. We want to ensure that our tax dollars are spent to improve safety and living conditions in the community and by extension recognize the rights of individual residents. Our product is information, advocacy and input into Town policies and initiatives. The larger our membership base, the louder our voice is heard. There are three simple things you can do to help:

- If you are a two-member family, add both email addresses to your renewal membership form;
- When a new member joins between now and the end of the year, their membership will be valid until the end of 2013. Most new members come from your referrals (or gentle persuasion, up to and including filling out a membership form for them). Is there anyone that you think would be interested in joining the BMRA?
- Feel free to forward any email blasts or newsletters to someone you think might benefit from the information. They may want to join to receive their own BMRA emails!

Membership to me means having a group of people who share my concerns. It is comforting to know that they will work on my behalf to highlight issues and advocate for change. As a Board member I see the tremendous effort behind the scenes. And I truly appreciate the efforts of every member to help whenever, and however they can. That's just the culture of the Blue Mountain Ratepayers' Association.

What does membership mean to you, today?

TBM policing costs up 12% from 2010-2012

Ominous trend for new five year contract?

(John, Ritchie and Janet, residents of Lora Bay, have a strong interest in financial matters affecting Town spending, and are concerned about increases in taxes. All three are new members of the BMRA.)

**By John Leckie, Ritchie Baird
& Janet Findlay**

During the recent Town of the Blue Mountains 2012 budget discussions, the cost of policing was identified as the single largest contract item at \$2.35 million. Further, police costs were projected to escalate under a five year contract with the OPP (to be renewed for 2013-2018).

As concerned citizens, we have met with senior Town officials and followed discussions at Council. We are writing to the Blue Mountain Ratepayers Association to gather support for our position that the Town should NOT renew its OPP contract for the next five years. Instead, the Town should consider paying for actual hours of police service on a non-contract basis or "Section 5.1," as explained below.

Background:

Chief Administrative Officer Troy Speck prepared a comprehensive report to Council dated June 11, 2012 in which he provided background information regarding the police contract. Highlighted in the report was the fact that the renewal of policing contracts with the OPP has been a big concern for many Ontario municipalities, due to rising costs as well as unsatisfactory transparency and accountability.

Apparently, OPP proposals are not negotiated, but presented for approval. Municipalities pay highly variable police costs per household, and similar municipalities are assigned widely different staffing levels.

While discussions about policing costs are under way among senior levels of the Province, the OPP and the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, a number of Ontario municipalities have banded together under the Mayors' Coalition for Affordable, Sustainable, Accountable Policing.

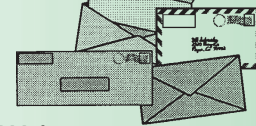
We are pleased that the Town of the Blue Mountains recently passed a motion in support of the Mayors' Coalition. However, it is unlikely that this work going on provincially will help the Town in its forthcoming discussions on the OPP contract, set to begin Jan. 1, 2013.

Options:

Town CAO Troy Speck has outlined what options are available. There are the (probably) more expensive options of either re-establishing the Town's own police force or jointly establishing a police force with

The Mailbag

Grey County taxes



The final tax bill from the TBM for 2012 shows that 42% of our tax dollars go to the County. If you read the information folder included with the tax bill you will see that 22% of your taxes goes to Education, 36% to the Town and 42% to the 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 residents. We are the largest single County contributor. In fact, in 2012 we will pay \$13 million to the County compared to \$8.0 million paid by Owen Sound. Does that make sense?

Back in 2003, the TBM paid \$8.0 million to the County, while Owen Sound paid \$6.0 million. The TBM had a population of 5,000 people, while Owen Sound had a population of 17,000 people. The County politicians will tell you it's because of the assessment – but that is not entirely believable. Owen Sound got out of Grey County for a period. What deal did Grey County give them to come back in?

Is it time that our County representatives give answers as to why we should be paying 42% of our taxes to the County and what benefits do we get? Should this be the next election issue?

At least that's the way I see it.

Paul Mitchell

a neighbouring municipality. There are the options of accepting the OPP proposal, or adding enhancements at additional cost.

Finally, the Town could decide not to renew a contract with the OPP but instead be charged for actual hours of service under "non-contract policing," or "Section 5.1." Non-contract policing can save money but there is the risk that policing requirements may be higher than might be paid for under a contract. This risk could be mitigated by maintaining a reserve.

Non-contract policing:

When the OPP make their presentation to Council in September, we believe it would be prudent for the Town to consider non-contract OPP policing. The Town could always choose to re-enter discussions about a five year contract at a later date. In light of ongoing discussions at senior levels of government, we expect that improvements will be made in the

See Town policing, page 7

Telfer development application goes to the OMB

By Michael P. Seguin

In a split decision by Council on June 11, the Telfer development application, comprising an “adult lifestyle community” of 86 residential units on land leases, failed to pass. Councillors Martin, Halos and Ardiel all voted against the development, concluding that there are too many outstanding questions about local planning, land division and tenure, infrastructure costs, maintenance, financing and potential ratepayer liabilities.

Obviously, the developer disagrees with the Town’s political decision and has referred this matter to the OMB to be overruled. So what will the Town do to defend its position?

In my opinion, an OMB pre-hearing will be called to determine whether the Town and the developer can mediate a settlement – or find a way out of this mess. Will the Town staff and their big-time legal representative from Aird & Berlis work out a “back-room deal,” to be approved by Council behind closed doors, that will allow the development application to move forward? Will the public be treated once again to a lack of transparency and more flip-flopping by some members of this Council?

Questions

In a recent conversation with one of our BMRA members, having no direct interest or knowledge of the specifics regarding the proposed Telfer Development, I was asked the following questions:

“What does ‘adult lifestyle community’ really mean? What are the target demographics for this development? i.e., how do I picture who the residents will be, what their lifestyle will be, and how that lifestyle may impact their neighbours? Will it be a gated community (one of the most anti-social scenarios imaginable)? If so, is it fair to say “I can afford to isolate myself from crime, and those outside

my gate don’t really count. Don’t raise my taxes to make the Town safe for all. Is ‘no children allowed’ a good thing anywhere in the Blue Mountains?”

These questions prompted our member to consider challenging the triumvirate of Mayor Anderson, Deputy Mayor McKinlay and Councillor McKean and ask, “Do you know what ‘adult lifestyle community’ means and do you consider it to be a good thing (or at least acceptable) and worthy of your support?” Our member states that the term ‘adult lifestyle’ should be front and centre in this issue.

The Duntroon quarry expansion:

Niagara Escarpment votes for judicial review of Board’s decision

By Michael P. Seguin

The Environmental Review Tribunal (ERT) issued a decision on June 18 approving Walker Aggregates’ application for expansion of their quarry at Duntroon. The location of the proposed expansion is north of the existing quarry across Simcoe County Road 91, in the Township of Clearview.

This decision will permit Walker to remove more than 44 million tonnes of aggregate from the site (which reaches below the water table) over the next 40 years – thus posing continuous environmental threats to a unique ecologic area and safety threats in the community (haulage routes carrying 500 trucks a day), for a long, long time.

To read the decision, visit: <http://www.ert.gov.on.ca/English/decisions/index.htm>.

Of the three-person Consolidated Hearings Board (CHB), the two Ontario Municipal Board members, Mr. Conti and Mr. Atcheson, approved the quarry subject to some conditions, including an increase in the buffer zones to protect the wetlands and the habitat of the endangered American Hart’s Tongue Fern.

The third member, Mr. Wright, the Vice-Chair of the Environmental Review Tribunal, wrote a lengthy dissenting opinion based on his reading of the Niagara Escarpment Planning & Development Act (NEPDA) and the Niagara Escarpment Plan (NEP).

The Clearview Community Coalition (CCC), representing many residents of the surrounding community, Mrs. Emelia Franks and other concerned citizens and the Niagara Escarpment Commission (NEC), supported by the Blue Mountain Watershed Trust Foundation (BMWTF), were opposed to the expansion. In their opinion it would negatively impact the surrounding environment and the natural heritage features of a UNESCO World Biosphere Reserve, i.e., the Niagara Escarpment. In such a setting, quarry activities are not a compatible and

Town policing

Continued from page 6

next year or so as to the way contracts are renewed with the OPP. Furthermore, there is a possibility that police wages may see austerity controls similar to the wage freeze for public servants.

By setting up a reserve for possible additional OPP costs, the Town can ensure it meets its financial obligations while keeping the budget’s largest contract item as low as possible in the short term.

sustainable use and do not in any way preserve and enhance the Escarpment and our watersheds – in fact they do the opposite.

Citizens' groups such as the CCC and the BMWTF have fought hard, and have gained some valuable concessions. However, they argue that this decision/approval sets a serious precedent for continued development in the Niagara Escarpment of aggregate extraction and requires immediate action to remedy. They want the NEPDA and the NEP reviewed and amended to provide better protection of the Escarpment.

These organizations, together with Environmental Defence, have also pressured the Niagara Escarpment Commission (NEC) to seek a judicial review of the decision.

On Aug. 16, in a landslide 10-3 decision, the NEC voted to send the Walker decision to a judicial review. The courts will now rule on the primacy of the Niagara Escarpment Plan (NEP) as it relates to the Walker application and will determine whether the CHB made errors in law by failing to apply the NEP and give the appropriate protection to the Niagara Escarpment's most sensitive natural features. The vote was a milestone.

It is evident that the NEC stands firmly behind the NEP and is willing to listen to the voices of the public expressed by sensitive and caring organizations such as the CCC, Environmental Defence and the BMWTF that act on their behalf.

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)

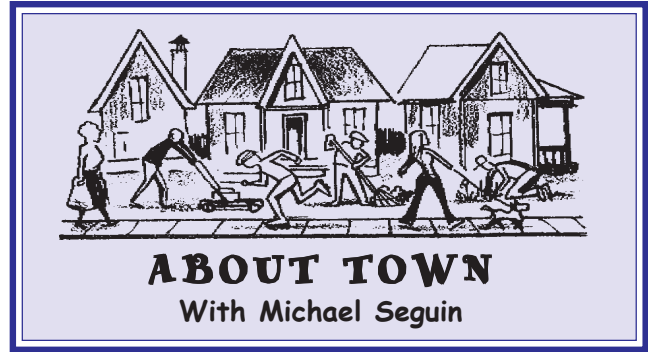
Fire Department: Thornbury Fire Station # 1, (519) 599-5411; Craigleith Fire Station #2, (705) 444-2244

Municipal Offices: Thornbury (519) 599-3131. Troy Speck, Chief Administration Officer, x234; Robert Cummings, Treasurer, x245; Corinna Giles, Town Clerk, x232; David Finbow, Director of Planning and Building x246; Reg Russwurm, Director of Engineering, x260

Road Emergency: (705) 443-5393; **Water Emergency:** (705) 446-5853; **Wastewater Emergency:** (705) 446-5041; **Garbage Pick-up:** (519) 599-3131 x276

Please pass it on . . .

When you have finished reading this newsletter, please pass it on to your neighbours and encourage them to join our association!



Construction in TBM on the decline

As of the end of July, building permit revenue was down approximately 30% from 2011 and 45% from 2010. Interestingly, the number of permits issued was 197 by the end of July compared to 210 by the same time in 2011. Most of the permits being issued are for decks, additions, signs, temporary tent installations, etc. The number of new dwelling permits was only 25 by the end of July compared to 36 in 2011 and 57 in 2010.

In May, Mr. David Finbow, Director of Planning and Building Services, was quoted in an article posted on Simcoe.com as saying that, "Staff has no confidence that all this will pick up." Judging by the continuing decline in permits and revenue, it would appear that Building Department must start cutting costs or suffer another substantial deficit in 2012.

Is there anyone out there who thinks that there will be another "building boom" in the Blue Mountains?

Source: Documents Library, Monthly Building Permit Activity, TBM, July 2012, and Simcoe.com, May 16, 2012

BIA executive resigns

In a letter to the Town, the Business Improvement Area (BIA) Board stated that "the vote at the 2012 AGM made it clear that the majority of the members who attended did not support the board's vision." So what happened? The Board wanted to increase its budget (through membership levies) in order to provide more flexibility in beautifying the town and promoting events.

A proxy vote campaign by councillor and BIA member Joe Halos resulted in the proposed increase being voted down, causing the BIA to lose half (\$5,000) of its town grant money. Halos proposed and used his 19 proxy votes to pass a motion to apply \$5,000 in town grant money to reduce the annual levy fee to individual BIA members. At its June 25 meeting, council then voted to rescind \$5,000 in grant money because it was no longer being used for its intended purpose.

Was the BIA Board "hijacked?" Should businesses in the community be allowed to control the

direction of the BIA because they are not retail or they are not located in the downtown core area? Should a councilor who is a BIA member be allowed to use his influence in directing the use of town money? Isn't there some sort of conflict?

Three members of Council will now operate as the Interim Board of the BIA and try to work with the existing membership in completing scheduled events such as the *Apple Harvest Festival* and the *Olde Fashioned Christmas*. For the future, the Interim Board, with advice from representatives of the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing and the Ontario Business Improvement Area Association, will examine the role and impacts of the BIA and, most of all, look for ways to continue their good work in the downtown area.

A general information meeting of the current membership of the BIA has been called for Oct. 3 to help facilitate discussion on how to (hopefully) move forward.

Source: Simcoe.com 06/29 & 07/12

Grey County continues to look for ways to justify its existence

On July 20, I attended a Grey County "branding" workshop. The County finds it necessary to better communicate Grey's strengths to residents, visitors

and potential investors. It also wants to build on the underlying attributes that are distinctive to Grey County and will ultimately lead to a new logo and tagline. The hope is that this will help develop a more broadband strategy that benefits all nine member municipalities, including the Blue Mountains.

Surveys have been conducted with a number of County residents, tourists and businesses (contact kathie.nunno@gre.ca for more information) and we were advised by the facilitator of the following results, so far:

■ Three most frequently recommended brands:

- 1) Friendly community;
- 2) Quality of life; and
- 3) Good place to raise a family.

■ Three most common descriptors:

- 1) Beautiful scenery;
- 2) Natural; and
- 3) Friendly and welcoming.

What do you think?

Source: Simcoe.com 06/11, 06/28 and an announcement on the Town Website 03/04.

Real Estate News

It's always great to have a discussion with real estate agents in a bar or on the golf course. No matter how bad things are, they will always argue that the current and future resale real estate market continues to remain "bright, buoyant, positive, stable and growing." True optimists! I wonder how many have second jobs?

What do the Georgian Triangle Real Estate Board and the numbers say? According to their MLS statistics, there were 977 sales in the first half of 2012 compared to 891 during the same period in 2011, representing a 9.7% gain – not bad, if you are an optimist! However, this increase represented only a 4.6% increase in dollar sales volume.

It appears that a greatest number of sales took place in the second quarter of 2012, with almost 52% of these in the \$250,000 or less category, and with 40% in the \$250,000 to \$499,999 category. Forty-three 43 properties in the \$500,000 to \$999,999 category were sold; only five properties sold in the \$1-million plus range. Over a six month period, approximately 52% of the 977 sales were in the \$250,000 or less category – truly an indication that "affordability" is the number one priority of most buyers in the local market area.

In terms of location, the Blue Mountains saw a 18.5% increase in the first six months of 2012 compared to 2011. Don't get excited – this was up by only 12 sales (77 homes in 2012 compared to 65 in 2011). The Town of Collingwood saw an increase of 9.3% over the same period, while Grey Highlands and Meaford were the hot spots with sales up 46% and 39%, respectively, over 2011.

Interestingly, the average residential price of a

IN MEMORIAM

Thomas John 'Brian' Dinsmore

(March 26, 1952-August 10, 2012)



Surrounded by his family, Brian passed away peacefully in his home at Din-I-Vale Farm, Thornbury. He was the devoted partner of Virginia Ludlow and cherished father of Jeremy (Amanda), Jonathon and Emily. Beloved brother of Marilyn and her late husband Ricardo, Andrew (Jean), and Kate (Doug). Dear Granddad to Gage and Ellie and loving uncle to many nieces and nephews.

While Brian was not a member of the Blue Mountain Ratepayers' Association (BMRA), he may have touched many of our members by helping them establish their roots in the Blue Mountains. He dedicated 35 years to serving the community and surrounding area through his excavation business (demolitions, grading, digging basements, septic disposal systems, water and sewer lines, etc.) and many of his clients became close friends.

Brian was a tough negotiator when it came to price but in the end he was always fair and took great pride in his work. During many discussions at the Dam Pub about politics at the Town Hall, Brian would often ask about and support the position of the BMRA on many issues.

Brian was also a dedicated member of St. George's Anglican Church in Clarksburg and had a church family that will greatly miss him. Funeral services to say goodbye were held Aug. 16 at St. George's.

home in the Georgian Triangle was down by 4.7% to \$308,038, compared to \$323,181 in 2011. The average price of a home in Collingwood was \$279,232, reflecting a 3.9% decline, while the average price in the Blue Mountains was \$514,501, reflecting a 5.8% decline.

So where will the real estate market head in the third and fourth quarters of 2012? Should real estate agents continue to remain “bright, buoyant, positive and growing” about the market? Should they continue to rely on baby boomers to continue investing and retiring in our communities because of the amenities and quality of life offered by Georgian Bay’s four-season recreational lifestyle? Is affordability becoming more of an issue than they would like admit?

Source: *CollingwoodHomes.ca* newsletter (Karen Poshtar) and *Simcoe.com* July 6, 2012

Collingwood News:

■ Soon the former Georgian Triangle Tourist Association building and site opposite Wal-mart will be the home of the Journey Community Church coffee house, offering family support, addiction recovery programs and a Sunday morning breakfast program for children in need.

■ A new youth centre is presently being con-

structed at the south east corner of First and Maple Streets. *The Door Youth Centre* will be in a 3,500 sq. ft. building to be completed in October and totally funded from donations.

■ A new fire hall is being built at Heritage Park at the corner of Third and High Streets. The building will comprise a 20,000 square foot state-of-the-art facility with eight garage bays, a training room and a training tower – costing taxpayers \$4.7-million (mostly through debt and reserves) . . . ooch!

■ The Shipyard developers have closed their sales office and are looking for partners or investors to continue future development. Only 133 of the anticipated 700 units have been sold in the past eight years. A slow economy, distracted investors and construction financing pressure to be more aggressive in pricing have forced the developers to put everything on hold.

■ Collingwood Council finally decided to purchase the Mountainview Hotel at the corner of First and Hurontario Streets (for \$600,000) and proceed with demolition to make way for the reconstruction of the intersection. The total cost has been estimated at about \$1.3 million, with the hope that MTO will pick up most of the tab.

■ Admiral Collingwood Place owner Steve Assaff has purchased a 1.6 acre parcel of land from the Fram/Slokker Group that wraps around the old Mountainview Hotel and stretches east to St. Marie Street. In another deal, he also purchased a portion of the Mountainview property that did not involve the building component. The entire 2.0 acre site will probably make room for a future prime retail and commercial office complex.

■ Collingwood is pushing for a transit link to the Blue Mountains Resort and possibly, Thornbury – who will pay for it?

■ The Highway 26 realignment, between Airport Road and Sixth Line, is expected to be completed in November – a \$30-million project that has taken 10 years to build. The next phase will involve connecting to the old Highway 26 and Pretty River Parkway.

■ Council has finally decided to forge ahead with new recreational facilities at Central Park off Hume Street: a \$7.4-million, 250-seat, single-pad arena and a \$1.5 million cover and upgrades to the existing Centennial Pool. These two facilities plus the refurbishing of the Eddie Bush Memorial Arena could cost the taxpayers another \$43 per year on their tax bills, although it could be even more considering operation costs estimated at \$350,000 per year.

Kittens! Kittens! Kittens!

Loving FOREVER homes needed!

FURRY FRIENDS, doing animal rescue work in the Georgian Triangle, needs loving FOREVER homes for the many great animals rescued from desperate situations . . . homeless, abandoned, unwanted, sick, injured. Adopt your next BEST FRIEND by checking out: <http://www.cwfurryfriends.petfinder.com/>. Lots of kittens and wonderful cats available.



Fundraising events:

Fall Bazaar & Yard Sale: Friday, Sept. 14, Noon-5 p.m. & Saturday, Sept. 15, 8 a.m.-5 p.m., at Diane’s Garden, Hwy #124, opposite the Bowling Alley. Donations of good saleable items accepted. Call Dori at 705-444-7208 to volunteer or donate stuff.

ALL proceeds benefit needy animals in **your** community!

Bizarre BAZAAR store: Open every weekend, 10 a.m.-5 p.m., Friday, Saturday and Sunday until the end of September, at Diane’s Garden, Hwy #124. Donations accepted. The need is great and unending! Your ‘Furry Friends’ thank you.

