

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

September 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

The challenges:

Your feedback, your involvement, and tax increases

The Board of Directors has shown the confidence to elect me as your new President for the coming year. While everyone will remember Dorothy Healey's relentless efforts in championing "everyday" causes for the residents of this community over the past 25 years or so, I hope to revitalize the organization by providing more open channels of communication and involvement by our members. The Board will be asked to explore ways of being more informative and getting response/feedback from our members as to their thoughts and opinions.

This year presents a challenge to all our residents as we enter into a new tax assessment year and the need to consider the tax implications and utility fee increases that will be required by the Town to fund their

new Town Hall Project. We also need to be very aggressive in our support for the short term accommodation (STAs) licensing regime. Without licensing, STAs will be allowed to create havoc and lead to the demise of many of our neighbourhoods. (See page 3.)

While the size of our organization has grown to over 225 family memberships in 2008 (more than 400 members), our strength still depends on leadership. At the present time, we have only seven Board members, many of whom have served for many years and feel a commitment to stay on until new Board members have been recruited. Unfortunately, none of our members have volunteered to serve on the Board, and this may ultimately lead to some serious decisions on whether we should or can continue with this organization. If you want to save the organization and have some flexible time to spare, we want to hear from you.

I hope everyone has had a good and safe summer (despite the rain). The Board looks forward to hearing from you as we move forward into a fall and winter season which I expect will be interesting and challenging to our members.

AN IMPORTANT MESSAGE FOR MEMBERS

You may have learned from emails that the Insiders Network's newsletter and web page will be closing down operations. We have been advised that this is now a reality and the BMRA's web site will cease to exist under this domain name around the end of September.

However, we are currently establishing our own web page under the domain name bluemountainratepayersassociation.com, and hope to have it up and running before the end of September. We will keep you informed of developments — we'll be asking for your help in its formation and presentation.

— Michael P. Seguin, President

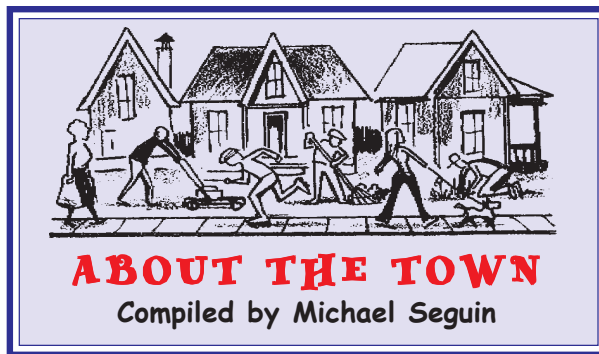
IN MEMORIAM**Ron Clifford**

Ron Clifford retired as vice-president of the BMRA in 2005 after seven years of service to the ratepayers of the Town of the Blue Mountains. Sadly, he passed away on August 18, 2008 at the Collingwood Nursing Home where he had spent the last two years as the result of a stroke.

Ron was tireless in his pursuit of the welfare of our members. He tackled the Craigleith parking problem and wrestled with the town throughout his tenure, unfortunately without resolution. His other main concern was the rapid increase in property taxes, particularly after the move to Market Value Assessment. This culminated in one of the largest public meetings your association has ever hosted: over 200 ratepayers convened at Blue Mountain Resorts to hear a presentation from the Canadian Taxpayers Coalition on the follies of MPAC.

Your Association is very proud and grateful for Ron's contributions to our goals. On behalf of all our members, many of whom were his personal friends, we offer our sympathy and condolences to his wife Jill and all their large family.

Ron's Obituary notice published in *The Globe and Mail* announced there would be a celebration of his life on November 15 between 2-5 p.m. at the Craigleith Ski Club North Lodge, 164 Craigleith Rd. The family would be grateful for donations to The Collingwood General and Marine Hospital in his name.

**New police station approved**

The future home of the new police station (4,000 sq. ft. building plus a 5,000 sq. ft. garage) was given approval next to the Thornbury-Clarksburg fire hall at the corner of Grey Road 2 and Clark Street. Construction is expected to begin in October, with a delivery date around April 30, 2009. The town's 2008 budget includes \$500,000 for construction and another \$25,000 for furniture and equipment. – *Courier-Herald 04/30/2008*

New by-law to put buildings closer to the highway?

Town planners are considering a change to the Commercial 2 zoning designation on Arthur Street, King Street and Bridge Street in Thornbury (Highway 26 corridor) that would reduce the minimum setback from 15 meters to a maximum of 6 meters and a minimum of 1 meter. The reason? To promote a more pedestrian-friendly

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**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) _____ New Member? Yes ___ No ___

Mailing Address _____

City _____ Province _____ Postal Code _____

Home Phone _____ Chalet Phone _____

Email _____

Seasonal Residence Address:

Good news! Action expected soon on short term rentals

**By Michael Seguin
President, BMRA**

Look how far we've come! It's taken a few years, lots of community input and much hard work by the TBM Planning Department but progress is slowly being made toward controlling the proliferation of large, short-term rental accommodations (STAs) in residential neighbourhoods (R1-4).

In mid-July the TBM council voted unanimously to accept recommendations from the planning department, which included amending the zoning bylaws to provide a clear definition of STAs as a distinct commercial use along with other definitions that specify occupancy limits, parking limits, minimum distance separation requirements, etc. They also specify areas where existing and new STA uses would be recognized.

More details can be found in the "Short Term Accommodation Use Study" of July, 2008, which is available on the TBM website (www.thebluemountains.ca) – see the July 14 Council Meeting Agenda – or at the town offices. This document is long, but it details all the steps taken to date, includes maps showing affected areas and letters written by the public as well as providing proposed future directions. It's well worth the read!

More good news! Council has authorized staff to proceed with the development of options as they relate to a licensing regime – a crucial step in the

entire process of adequate control as well as providing a revenue stream to pay for proper monitoring and bylaw enforcement.

"With respect to licensing, the Director, Building & Bylaw, will lead a multidisciplinary Project Team to develop practicable options for Council's consideration. Staff will report back with final recommendations related to the Official Plan and Zoning By-law Amendments as well as options related to a licensing regime by the end of September 2008." (Planning Report to Council, July 14, 2008)

There is one outstanding appeal to the OMB opposing the Interim Control Bylaw (ICBL) and a hearing has been scheduled for November 3-7, 2008 at the Beaver Valley Community Centre (10.30 a.m.). The ICBL was enacted in February, 2007 and prohibits its new STAs from opening in residential neighbourhoods. At a July council meeting, the Council voted to extend the ICBL to January 4, 2009.

What can you do to help to protect your neighbourhood?

1) Be familiar with the issues:

The "Short Term Accommodation Use Study" mentioned above outlines it all.

2) Attend public meetings when STA legislation is on the agenda:

Good numbers in attendance indicate to Council and staff a high level of interest and support. We will notify members of upcoming meetings via e-mails, on the Web Page or by newsletters. Make sure your name is on the interest list at TBM to receive information about STAs and notification of public meetings. To do this, phone Ms. Cindy Welsh, Senior Planner at 519-599-3131 Ext. 262, or email her at cwelsh@thebluemountains.ca.

3) Write letters:

Make your letters constructive and provide support for your position. The more people who write, the higher priority the issue receives. It is important to note that Town staff and Council have reacted positively to our suggestions when they have been put in writing.

4) Acknowledge and thank town staff and Council when they do a good job.

5) Support the Town at the upcoming OMB hearing by attending, if possible.

In conclusion, we are pleased with progress to date and, hopefully, a positive resolution will be forthcoming by the end of this year. The Town has utilized expert legal advice and is moving ahead to address the concerns of the residents and the negative impact STAs are having on our residential neighbourhoods.

I welcome any comments you have, so feel free to write me at P.O. Box 405, Collingwood, ON L9Y 3Z7.

INFOLINE: 211

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

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 (Craigeleith): 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.

ABOUT THE TOWN

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atmosphere, remove parking lots in front of buildings and improve the landscape along the Highway 26 corridor. Some of the issues include snow removal, the potential widening of Highway 26 to four lanes to meet future arterial road/high volume traffic standards and safety for pedestrians/cyclists vs. vehicle movement between buildings. A final decision has not been made. – *Courier-Herald 05/07/2008*

Town commits to supplying land for new medical clinic in Thornbury

A non-profit corporation called *North East Grey Health Clinics Inc.* (HEGHI) has been formed and has begun fund-raising to build medical clinics or Community Family Health Centres in both Thornbury and Meaford. It has been determined that today's family physicians are seeking a turnkey operation in which administrative and business functions are offered without the need for the doctor to be accountable for the operation of the clinic. Neighbouring communities such as Wasaga Beach, Southampton and Hanover have been successful in attracting new doctors once new and fully equipped family health centres are established.

The Town of the Blue Mountains has committed to providing the necessary property, at no cost, for the proposed Thornbury Medical Clinic. The Town recognizes the need to attract new physicians to the area and have sustainable health care facilities for its residents. It also recognizes that the viability of the Meaford Hospital is at stake if the services of family physicians are not available to sustain both inpatient service and the Emergency Department.

A campaign to raise \$4.3 million dollars towards construction of the new community health care facilities was launched on July 19 at the Town Hall. Many donors and sponsors have already contributed \$1.2 million, and now the community is being asked to step up and make a donation. For more information you can visit HEGHI's web page at www.communityfamilyhealthcentres.org – *Courier-Herald 04/16/2008 and 07/24/2008*

New Town Hall reaches design stage

The Town has acquired the Diane's Attic property for \$270,000 and now has an overall development site that stretches between the Beaver River and Mill Street and between the Georgian Trail and Highway 26 (Bridge Street). A proposed Town Hall of about 1,720 square metres is now in the preliminary design stage, with the building to face the intersection of Mill and Bridge Streets. Everyone is encouraged to visit the Town's web page at www.thebluemountains.ca to view the new Town Hall project and voice their opinion.

There was some controversy surrounding possible retention of the old Town Hall to entice an entrepreneur or community group to take over once it is vacated. However, it was determined that the costs of retrofitting and maintaining the building far exceeded the financial capability of any organization without Town money and it was decided to proceed with demolition at the appropriate time. – *Courier-Herald 04/16/2008 and 05/14/2008*

Blue Mountain gets its own Postal Code!

Residents in the east end of the town will soon have new postal addresses. Canada Post is moving ahead with a change from Collingwood L9Y to The Blue Mountains L9Y in November after nearly 10 years of lobbying by the municipality. The change will affect about 945 properties in the area bounded by Wards Road in the west, Osler Bluff Road in the east and 6th Sideroad in the south, including Osler Bluff Ski Club and Castle Glen. – *Courier-Herald 05/21/2008*

Water and sewer services for Clarksburg?

In April it was announced that the Federal Government, through its Municipal Rural Infrastructure Fund (MRIF), would provide \$5 million in funding for municipal water and sewer services in Clarksburg. However, at an estimated cost of around \$14,927,000 (which has now risen to \$15.9 million as of May 28), this funding is conditional on the province matching the funds and the Town contributing the remaining third of the costs.

At a public meeting in May, residents were told the benefits of bringing these services to Clarksburg would incur significant costs: each household would face a capital charge of about \$31,000 (possibly as high as \$36,000) to be paid immediately or over an amortization period. In addition, residents also would be responsible for connecting their homes to the new services (possibly another \$5,000-\$10,000, depending on the location of the house).

At a subsequent meeting in July, residents, through the Clarksburg Ratepayers Association and a survey of their membership, fought back, stating that they opposed the new services because of the cost – most people could not afford the staggering capital charges. There also was discussion about the potential environmental impact that expanding the water service to Clarksburg would have on Georgian Bay, i.e., creating even lower water levels.

Councillors appear to be more concerned about losing funding than the exorbitant costs to be borne by residents. Council needs to tell both levels of government that \$5 million apiece is simply not enough to make the project affordable. While the Council fights for affordable housing, they also must pay closer attention to how much the proposed tax increases and capital charges will contribute to affordability. – *Courier Herald 04/09/2008 and 07/18/2008*

**MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF MAY 31, 2008
BLUE MOUNTAIN RATEPAYERS' ASSOCIATION**

**Location: Blue Mountain Convention Centre, Huron Room #1
Blue Mountain Resorts (Town of the Blue Mountains)**

Meeting was called to order by Acting President John Pineo with opening remarks at 9 a.m. Attendance: 52 members, 9 guests = 61 recorded. Motion to accept the minutes of the 2007 Annual General Meeting were moved by G. Miller and seconded by Jill Clifford. Motion carried.

President's Report for 2007 Operations – Dorothy Healey, Retiring President

D. Healey began with references to J. Pineo's letter to the Mayor and Council with regards to a new City Hall, MPAC, sewer rates, short term rentals, parking issues and how pleased the Association was municipal representatives were able to answer questions with regards to the town reserves. She instructed the audience to read J. Pineo's letter (which was in the AGM package) and be prepared to ask questions. She also advised the members with regards to the new 211 system through Community Connection. She complimented the Mayor on her efforts to being a driving force for the new Humane Society building. She thanked J. Pineo, P. Sharpe and M. Seguin for all their Newsletter articles over the past year. She requested members to become Board Members or possibly sit on Committees.

John Pineo presented Dorothy Healey with a print of the Craighleith Community Centre in recognition of her years as President of the BMRA.

Treasurer's Report and Presentation of the Financial Statements – Dorothy Healey, Retiring President

D. Healey reviewed the Statement of Income and Expenses and explained that the increase in expenses in 2006 over 2007 was due to extra mailings for the All-Candidates Meeting. Motion to accept the Treasurer's Report was moved by Ian Hoffman and seconded by Ron Healey. Motion carried.

Membership Report and Web Site Update – Michael Seguin

M. Seguin reported that there had been an 85% renewal of memberships over the past year. Fifty-three per cent of the membership now live in the Town of the Blue Mountains, with the majority in the Craighleith area.

M. Seguin explained the Insiders Network (IN) to the members. The IN allows for the posting of our newsletters, blasts, letters or articles. The website address is: www.insidersnetwork.com. To access the BMRA information, click on "bulletin board" then "read more." He reported in March, 2008 there were 91 hits and in April, 2008 there were 232 hits as reported by the Web Master. He also reported that 80% of the membership renewals have provided e-mail addresses. He also explained the confidentiality issues around e-mail addresses.

Motion to approve the Membership Report was moved by Brian Withers and seconded by Jill Morgan. Motion carried.

Presentation of Nominating Committee Report and Slate of Nominees – John Pineo

J. Pineo introduced the current slate of directors and requested nominations from the floor. There were no nominations from the floor. The following slate of Board of Directors was presented: Dorothy Healey, John Pineo, Catherine Sholtz-Seguin, Michael Seguin, Peter Sharpe, Stan Back, Dennis Stainer. Motion to accept the current slate of Directors was moved by Bob Booth and seconded by Ron Healey. Motion carried.

Other Business from the Membership:

Brian Atkinson: Addressed a Ward System and suggested that the BMRA should push for this to happen in the Town of the Blue Mountains. There was unanimous support from the members for a Ward System.

Brian Withers, Board Member, *Community Connection* thanked D. Healey for mentioning the 211 system and also thanked her for her good work.

Gail and Valentino Arena thanked the Board and Dorothy Healey for their roles and good work. She addressed Pesticide Use/Ban – Ontario ruling vs. the Town of the Blue Mountains. Councillor R. Gamble addressed the question and indicated that there is no by-law in effect and there will be none until the Ontario Legislation is in place.

The meeting recessed at 10 a.m. for a 10 minute break. J. Pineo called the meeting to resume at 10:10 a.m. John welcomed representatives and guests: Mayor E. Anderson, Deputy Mayor D. McKinley and Councillor R. Gamble.

Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative presentation – Mayor Ellen Anderson

Mayor Anderson introduced and thanked the following for attending the meeting: Councillor Robert Gamble, Deputy Mayor Duncan McKinley, Kevin Weppler, Director of Finance County of Grey, John Caswell, Manager Water and Wastewater Services, and Rob Cummings, Director of Finance. Mayor Anderson also brought greetings from Helena Guergis, M.P.

Mayor Anderson asked that we make a request to Minister Bradley, Ministry of Transportation, to review and make changes to the G-2 licensing system. Mayor Anderson reviewed events and accomplishments from the Town Hall, including patriotism about Canada, drinking water, Youth Advisory Commission and the town's development of a website to address the concerns you may have as taxpayers.

Mayor Anderson proceeded with a presentation on the Great Lakes Initiative. This Forum, involving eight states and two provinces, is working together on legacy issues, forward-looking and environmental issues. Mayor Anderson represents a municipal seat for the Cities Initiative Strategies which includes: collaboration, best practices, local recognition, and working with governments to improve policy, communications and outreach. Mayor Anderson requested that the members review the website: www.gslcities.org/glinvestments.htm.

Deputy Mayor Duncan McKinley:

Deputy Mayor D. McKinley spoke as the Chair of the Planning Committee for Grey County and advised members that Grey County Transportation has partnered the Town of the Blue Mountains in a study to address the improvement of roads and intersections and parking.

Councillor Robert Gamble:

Councillor R. Gamble reported on the municipal budget, property taxes, water and sewer charges and market value assessments. Councillor Gamble reported that there is \$2 million in cash reserves, \$18 million for Water and Wastewater Fund with \$14 million for a new filtration system for the Water Treatment Plant; \$2 million is charged to current users, interest is used to reduce charges, less interest as reserves go down, borrowing is internal and reserves are used to reduce charges. If further information about the budget is required, Councillor Gamble suggested contacting Rob Cummings, Manager of Finance.

John Caswell, Manager, Water and Wastewater Services:

J. Caswell discussed drinking water standards, capital projects (Thornbury Water Treatment Plant filtration system, Thornbury Wastewater Treatment Plant – 2009-2010 expansion, Mountain Road reconstruction and Scenic Caves roundabout system), and Safe Drinking Water Act regulations.

Kevin Wepler, Director of Finance, Grey County:

K. Wepler thanked the BMRA for the invitation to speak and thanked Mayor Anderson and Council. Mr. Wepler reported on a 1.5% increase in the County Budget for 2008 – \$44 million in net taxes. Residential taxes for 2008 are \$462.00/\$100,000 of assessment.

Question Period:

J. Pineo questioned the short term rental issue and asked the Mayor and Council to give serious consideration to this problem. Deputy Mayor D. McKinley replied that there have been presentations to Council and they are under review before being presented back to the public for further information. He explained they have to consider legal issues and a number of complex questions that have been raised.

Mr. Seguin asked if this Council could assure the taxpayers that there will be no increases in property taxes or to the utility bills that would help fund the new Town Hall. Deputy Mayor Duncan McKinley responded to the question with “no, we cannot assure that there will be won't be further increases to either taxes or the utility bills.”

Lori questioned the postal system changes (first phase). Deputy Mayor Duncan McKinley stated that this was a three year phasing project, and for further information to e-mail David Finbow at the town hall.

Brian Atkinson commented that he is fed-up with tax increases.

Gail Arena questioned wetlands vs. development. Duncan McKinley responded that the TBM protects the major wetlands with the County of Grey.

Ian Hoffman, President, Condo Association, reiterated the concerns with ghettos and property values as a result of the short term rentals.

Gord Canning, Blue Mountain Resorts:

Gord Canning spoke to the members about the current changes and developments at Intrawest. He discussed the purchase of Intrawest for \$3-billion by Fortress Corporation, the Activity Centre, Mosaic Hotel development and the second Nature Project.

Motion for adjournment was moved by D. Healey, seconded by I. Hoffman. Motion carried. Annual General Meeting adjourned at 12:30 p.m.

— **John Pineo, Acting President; Catherine Sholtz-Seguin, Secretary**