



THE VIEW FROM BLUE

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Please pass it this on to your neighbours and encourage them to join the BMRA

Is TBM Open for Business?

If the BMRA were to pick a bumper sticker for the looming election it would simply be: TBM Open for Business.

There is a need for TBM to proactively display that we have an attitude that the Town is Open for Business. Many of the articles in the April Newsletter make reference to the Open for Business theme and the need for political change to champion that attitude.

There are some new initiatives on the horizon that can cause one to be optimistic that the Town can indeed shed its image in the minds of some who have tried to invest here. That image is that there are excessive, onerous obstacles that are a barrier to entry.

The newly established Economic Development Advisory Committee (EDAC) has enthusiastic members from a cross-section of businesses, stakeholders as well as members of Council and Staff. EDAC minutes of their first two meetings indicate there has been a healthy discussion about how TBM is not Open for Business. Moreover, that the cause is more related to culture and attitude than specific rules and regulations being burdensome. There has been agreement that better communications between EDAC and Town Planners to improve the reputation would be beneficial.

A couple of initiatives have been spearheaded by the Town's CAO Troy Speck and the new Economic Development Officer Elizabeth Cornish. One-stop-shop is a model to foster the notion of Open for Business. Another is called the Business Retention and Expansion Project (BR&E). But the business members of EDAC state that the Open for Business attitude is a very serious problem and we look forward to more flushing out by EDAC on an action plan to get to the bottom of it.

There will be more information in future Newsletters on these positive action-oriented developments.

But meanwhile, we would encourage BMRA members to read this newsletter with a view to asking themselves how will TBM deal with a need for culture and attitude change unless we elect some change agents willing to tackle the status quo?

We need to change the status quo on the TBM attitude regarding investment as well as the Value Proposition with the County (see article on that subject). Which Candidates embody the energy, tenacity and leadership skills to make these necessary changes?

Focus Five for the Election

The BMRA Budget Review Committee believes the following 5 objectives should influence the campaigns of Candidates in the 2014 Election. Committee members are: Ritchie Baird, Janet Findlay, Al Fraser, Brian Harkness, John Leckie, Boyd Marshall, Terry Thompson, and Ron Speight.

- 1. Project Development:** TBM needs a town employee culture that is genuinely supportive of the phrase "Open for Business".
- 2. Economic Development:** TBM must embrace economic prosperity as a cornerstone to a sustainable community. This starts with a TBM focused ED plan that can be broadened to regional collaboration where beneficial to TBM. We need to strive for prosperity in all sectors: agriculture, real estate development, tourism, industry, new digital entrepreneurial sectors as well as local merchants.
- 3. The County:** Optimize TBM's value proposition with Grey County. The TBM Official Plan (OP) is approved by the County but the County politicians are statutory not elected representatives. The (OP) needs to specifically recognize issues applicable to TBM's unique geographic opportunities. We must embrace both our agricultural heritage and our recreation/tourism heritage while optimizing the economic/environmental Sustainable Path which is of benefit to the whole County/region.
- 4. By-law enforcement:** TBM must engage in firm by-law enforcement while treating residents and businesses respectfully.

5. First Responder Services, OPP, Fire, EMS: TBM should be supportive of Association of the Municipalities of Ontario (AMO) initiatives seeking a solution to the unsustainable nature of OPP and Emergency Service contracts.

Should you have any thoughts or questions with respect to the above feel free to email them to:
info@bluemountainratepayersassociation.com

We'll do our best to post your thoughts and respond to your questions on the BMRA Blog
<http://www.bluemountainratepayersassociation.com/BMRA-Blog.jsp>

.....in a timely manner.

We reserve the right to edit them as might happen with any letter to the editor in a newspaper.

Value Proposition with the County TBM needs to review the Value of the Grey County Fiscal Relationship

By the Budget Review Committee

The Town of the Blue Mountains (TBM) sends \$13 million to the County each year, which represents approximately 25% of the County's annual operating Budget. For a Town that represents only 7% of Grey County's population, what are the TBM ratepayers getting in return for this huge contribution?

The Committee, on behalf of the BMRA, is proposing that in early 2014 the TBM undertake a review of existing Grey County services and address how TBM might obtain better value for these services in the future. The need for this review is highlighted by the growing importance of tourism in our County, which is placing heavy demands on our infrastructure and institutions. TBM isn't simply a Town of 7000 residents. We should add a floating population of about 70,000. The part-time residents and tourists are a vital and welcome part of our demographics.

We suspect that our contribution to the County and its payback are out of whack with the emerging demographic reality. While the County update was an agenda item of the October 7th Council meeting and the issue was discussed, we do not feel it received the attention it deserved. Therefore the BMRA have asked Council to pose the following questions to the County and depending on the answers received we will formulate appropriate election issues for the Candidates to address.

Questions for Grey County - Over each of the last 4 years:

1. What is the breakdown of Grey County expenditures by municipality for emergency medical services?
2. What is the breakdown of Grey County expenditures by municipality for road improvements (capital expenditures rather than maintenance)?
3. What is the breakdown of Grey County expenditures by municipality for social housing?
4. What have been Grey County's administrative costs (Corporate Services) on a per person basis, and aggregated by municipality?
5. What have been the Grey County development charges collected by each municipality?

Next Steps?

Mayor Anderson has written an excellent letter to the County asking for the attendance of the Warden and CAO at a TBM interactive round table to "cover off specific questions". We look forward to that meeting being scheduled in a timely manner.

Mind the Gap!

By the BMRA Budget Review Committee: Richie Baird, Al Fraser, Janet Findlay, Brian Harkness, John Leckie (co-chair), Boyd Marshall, Terry Thompson (co-chair).

One of the areas where the BMRA feels it has met with some success is getting TBM to scale back its original Budget drafts on reserves charges particularly for Water and Waste/Water. Much of the infrastructure is newly funded with Development Charges yet residents are hit with reserve charges for replacement immediately... because once the Waste/Water lines are available to a lot then the owner needs to hookup or start paying fixed charges anyway. Those charges are essentially for asset replacement reserves. It's conservative to a fault; it is not in the spirit of "Open for Business". The Town has inadvertently swapped the risk of not having enough salted away in reserves to the risk of chasing away business because of excessive taxes/charges. Finding the balance isn't easy and Council itself has a healthy split on that debate which needs to become more of a public debate during this election season.

That public debate by Council should occur with the roll-out of the new Asset Management System being adopted by TBM. Meanwhile we understand the Town is finally looking at its assumptions on population growth made prior to the "great recession" of 2008. That impacts the Infrastructure gap because TBM is simply not seeing the growth it expected.

If we take for example Water and Waste/Water infrastructure assets, the TBM audited financial statements indicate a useful life of the assets between 20 to 100 years depending on the asset. Then assuming TBM staff is somewhat conservative in their accounting practices, the useful life for depreciation purposes tilts toward the shorter life range.

When we combine that conservative stance with the much lower than projected population growth we can make a realistic case that the useful life being incorporated in the reserve accounting is probably far too short and hence the infrastructure gap may not be nearly as wide as all the hand wringing would have us believe.

Having said that, these concepts are not a science. For example, sidewalks that were supposed to have only a life of 60 years can be seen to have lasted much longer in TBM. This raises the concept of repair versus replacement and that impacts the need for reserves enormously. These formulas require common sense judgment that should be revisited and fully disclosed to the taxpayers.

That is what the BMRA is hoping the Town will do with all the major capital assets on the books as it goes forward with the implementation of the new Asset Management System (AMS).

We look forward to both Council and election debates on this review taking into consideration both population growth estimates and a fully disclosed useful life calculation. That is the missing Gap in the Infrastructure Gap. We need to Mind the Gap!

Once Council fully debates the Infrastructure Gap as it implements its new AMS, then it can turn its attention as to how to close that Gap; including ideas such as the following which appeared recently in the Globe and Mail:

"The federal government's announcement of a \$14-billion Building Canada Fund brings Ottawa's national infrastructure commitment for the next 10 years to \$70-billion, the largest in Canadian history. But according to the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM), there is still a gap of more than \$200-billion needed to repair existing infrastructure and finance new projects. Where will that money come from? Faced with deficits fuelled mainly by health-care costs, the provinces aren't going to be of much help. And most cities and municipalities are struggling to contain growing debts.

A big part of the answer lies in public-private partnerships. P3s mitigate the problems identified in the McKinsey study because planning and forecasting is in the hands of private-sector experts, who are contractually accountable for successful execution.

A 2010 Conference Board study of Canadian P3 projects found that they had delivered efficiency gains of up to 60 per cent, that "the P3s ... have delivered a high degree of cost and time certainty."

The good news for TBM is that we are in good shape debt-wise. Our critique is about the Town being too conservative. Some Councillors get it. But some are not grasping that "over-reserving" is a damper on this year's electoral rally cry of TBM needing to be more "Open for Business", which in turn will permit all residents to prosper.

<http://www.theglobeandmail.com/report-on-business/p3-projects-help-bridge-the-infrastructure-gap/article17631819/>

Councillors/Candidates' Corner!

For this edition, we invited all declared Candidates as of March 4, 2014 to participate. They were asked to "submit a small article regarding your candidacy, for our readers".

John McGee, for Councillor (Five to be elected)

I believe the next Council will be challenged to provide a more sustainable community with stronger agricultural and urban economies, neighbourhoods that are walkable, connected and compatible with their surroundings and a natural environment that is protected and enhanced.

I believe that we must have a more sustainable local government, affordable for taxpayers, providing sustainable infrastructure and securing a healthy environment for generations to come. The water level and quality in Georgian Bay must be a concern for the Blue Mountains' Council and every council around the Great Lakes.

I believe we need a more accessible local government allowing and encouraging people to participate more easily and effectively in all the decisions of Council.

I had the honour to serve on The Blue Mountains' Council from 2006 to 2010. I feel that those 4 years on Council and my experience in the business world give me the skills to help keep The Blue Mountains a great place to live work and play.

Duncan McKinlay, for Mayor (One to be elected)

As a candidate for mayor, I offer three main strengths for your consideration: a passion for community service, broad experience in local and regional government, and the ability to lead Council and the community in building a sustainable future for ourselves, our children and our grandchildren.

We all enjoy the charms and character of The Blue Mountains and want to ensure that any new development is consistent with our community values. I believe that we should take advantage of new provisions in Provincial Policy 2014. They permit us to build into our local planning documents the development guidelines which reflect the unique character of our community.

I support opportunities to increase citizen participation in the many processes of Town government. Documents like "The Sustainable Path" and "Red Hot and Blue" were created with large scale community involvement. They have provided, and should continue to provide, valuable guidance to Council as it creates policies and sets long and short term goals.

As Mayor, I would ensure that Council continually reviews Town services; efficiency, effectiveness and transparency must be evident at all times and at all levels. We, as ratepayers, deserve the best possible value for our tax dollars.

The key to economic development in The Blue Mountains is supporting the creation and sustainability of small business in our towns, villages and rural areas. Ensuring the provision for these businesses in the Official Plan and providing the goods and services to make these opportunities viable, will bring added value to our community.

I believe that my experience in Municipal and Regional government has given me the necessary knowledge and leadership skills to serve our community as Mayor.

Michael Seguin, for Councillor (Five to be elected)

Over the past 6 years or so, I've kept you informed about the many issues imposing financial burden and impacting the quality of life in our community. Where possible, I have provided a leadership role in speaking to these issues and kept you informed through BMRA communications.

Dealing with many issues is an enormous task. No one person is capable of solving them all. However, if candidates could provide a clearer vision of what their objectives would be, if elected, then you could make better choices.

Because I have regularly attended Council and Committee Meetings, familiarized myself with policies and procedures and met most members of staff, I'm 'up to speed' on issues and have learned 'the ropes' about our local government.

Some of my objectives will be:

1. To encourage and support better 'Open for Business' development and building decisions;
2. To embrace sustainable prosperity for all and help drive the economic engine that TBM has become to the region;
3. To advocate on TBM's behalf, vis a vis the County, getting a 'bigger bang for our tax buck';
4. To support an integrated enforcement team that is respectful to all residents, businesses and visitors;
5. To support sustainable delivery of first responder/emergency services that will enhance growth in Tourism and our permanent population base.

If you have any questions that you want to ask, please do not hesitate to contact me at mpseguin@rogers.com or call at 519-372-6139. Visit and like me on a Facebook page - 'Michael Seguin for The Blue Mountains Council'.

Unsustainable Contract Services - TBM needs to support AMO Solutions

By the BMRA Budget Review Committee: Richie Baird, Al Fraser, Janet Findlay, Brian Harkness, John Leckie (co-chair), Boyd Marshall, Terry Thompson (co-chair).

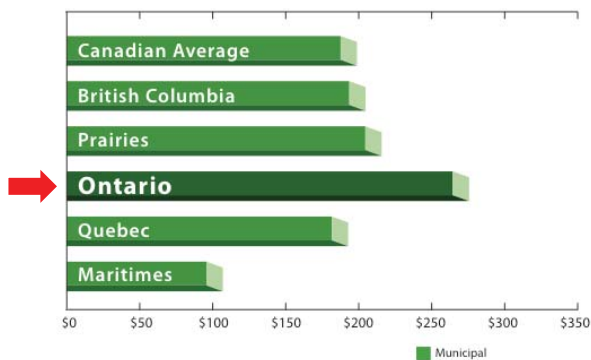
The adjacent graphs provided by the Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO) tell the story of the unsustainable Public Sector wages. They are out of whack with the real world economy. The Public sector consumes wealth that only the Private sector can create. But since our GDP has only been growing in the 2% range since the Great Recession then it should be obvious to Arbitrators for Public wages that there needs to be some kind of correlation to reality going on in the private sector. Many aren't getting an increase at all and too many aren't even getting a job.

However, the way the arbitration system works now is that there is an unpreventable ratcheting up of salaries to the highest payroll jurisdiction that the Government Unions compare themselves with. Arbitrators pay no attention to the ability to pay (because taxpayers are flush with cash) and they do no analysis of the lineup of eligible applicants in the recruitment line because the unions don't operate on a meritocracy, everything is based on seniority. That no longer makes sense in a knowledge based economy.

Even the usually union friendly Toronto Star headlines: "The Ontario Auditor General's 2012 report noted that while crime rates and serious accidents have dropped substantially over the past several years, OPP costs to municipalities have increased by 27 per cent."

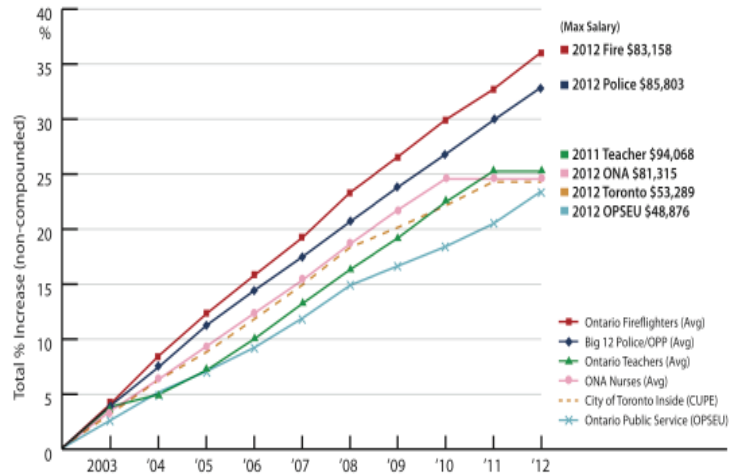
Additionally OPP costs are growing faster than the economy. So is almost every other aspect of Ontario government and that is putting us on very dangerous fiscal ground as explained in the Drummond report.

Municipal Per Capita Policing Costs



Wage Growth in the Broader Public Sector (BPS) since 2003

Source: Ontario Ministry of Labour

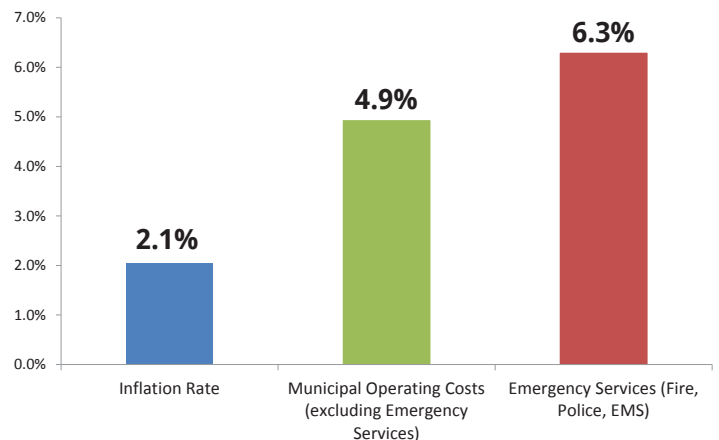


The OPP issue is just the canary in the coal mine. As the graphs indicate, the Firefighters wage slope is the steepest and we now have a situation in TBM where there is a movement to unionize.

The BMRA supports a continuation of a Part Time Paid Fire Dept. Therefore going into the election, our Candidates should be given a clear message this Part Time Paid Department is the only sustainable model. Our Politicians need to determine what can be done to prevent another slippery slope into what has happened to the unsustainable OPP situation in Ontario. That might include an analysis of management in the Fire Dept to insure it is clearly committed to the notion of Part Time Paid.

Finally the OPP has done an impressive job of trying to get municipalities to kick the can down the road until next January when supposedly there will be a rollout of a new

Average Annual Growth (2002-2011)



OPP billing system review to smooth out the inequities suffered by small rural populations. It is presumably some kind of reversal of downloading. But we need to be wary of that because there is only one taxpayer. Shifting our own money around and trying to convince us we are being subsidized with other peoples' money is a mug's game ... some of us are getting long enough in the tooth to have seen that movie before and it doesn't end well.

To put this so far rather negative article in better perspective; the BMRA needs to emphasize that we are grateful for the services we receive from our First Responders. The criticism is about the system. Specifically, the arbitration system in Ontario is very badly broken. That can only be fixed by Queen's Park and so let's keep that in mind come Provincial election time.

Meanwhile, our TBM politicians and staff should be supportive of AMO initiatives seeking a solution to the unsustainable wage curves depicted on the attached graphs and take whatever measures are available to bend those curves down.

BMRA Supports the Sustainable Path

By John Leckie and Terry Thompson

The Sustainable Path (SP) was created in 2010 with over a 100 Partners (including the BMRA) in TBM committing to this integrated plan designed for the community by the community with a vision over a 50 year period. A dynamic SP is necessary in the Province; for example, to meet the criteria of receiving funds from the gas tax revenue, it must have a documented Sustainable Path. Plus TBM's SP is embedded within the Official Plan, the OP.

The diverse range of Community Partners signing onto the SP (organizations, stakeholders, businesses, the Municipality) elected volunteers to oversee the implementation of the Plan. Additionally, to support the implementation of the Plan the Municipality had selected two Councillors; last year's Councillors Michael Martin and Bob Gamble are replaced by Deputy Mayor McKinlay and the Chief Administrative Officer, Troy Speck, serving on the Committee. The BMRA has one representative at this Steering Committee table. The Committee has been obliging to let 2 BMRA people be set up as alternatives, due to scheduling conflicts. We only get one vote and Terry Thompson and John Leckie share that 2 year position.

With the departure of Adam McMullin (Jeff Fletcher has

admirably crammed in some time since) as the Town's SP Coordinator; the Committee has lost a bit of momentum but Troy Speck is hopeful a replacement can be hired this summer and goals and targets achieved. The idea is to do something tangible and be a catalyst to help the original partners. This is essentially a common sense approach by all partners who want to conserve energy and sustain the environment. The irony is that Partners are so busy achieving their sustainability goals there is little time to exhibit their accomplishments. For example the Town has given 4 or 5 grants for "environmental farm plans"... we need to broadcast those results. There are modular courses at Georgian Bay Community College and many of us are familiar with organic products being successfully produced and marketed in TBM.

Going forward it's clear that championing something measurable is the way to clear a wider Sustainable Path. For example, TBM has recently partnered with Blue Mountain Resort and the Town of Collingwood on a trial project with transit. Since transit registers high on the need list presented by one of the academics at last fall's Sustainability Conference, transit would be an obvious project to champion. We were told that 91% on an SP focus group questionnaire push for a plan with transit in it; plus TBM's Official Plan also calls for transit. Therefore let's do our best to make this experiment become a sustainable solution for transit which will help improve the air quality, decrease greenhouse gas emissions and conserve energy.

Additionally, TBM is definitely part of a significant tourist economy in Canada. The region has 2 million visitors a year, which compares with 2.1 million visitors at Whistler. The latest available quantification of that is \$230 million was spent by tourists in Grey County in 2010.

Therefore, more emphasis is needed on a tourism strategy within the TBM region to ensure sustainability and resilience in our changing economic engine and demographics. We have gone from a low density Apple Orchard based economy to a higher density (a 70,000 population float) economy based on the Apple Run skiing slopes at Blue. We are very fortunate to have this magnificent geography to both enjoy and provide employment from a wide variety of businesses. Sustainability must address both "Open for Business" and the environment... all Partners know that and are working towards it.

More information on how TBM's Sustainable Path impacts ordinary ratepayers will be the subject of future articles leading up to the 2014 election.

Tyrolean Village – Is there hope for renewal?

By Blanka Guyatt, 114 Birch View Trail

Tyrolean Village is almost half century old. I remember visiting in the late 1960s and being very impressed by the modern single detached, semi-attached and triplex type buildings scattered over a vast rugged area with a breathtaking view of the Blue Mountains.

I came back in the mid 1970s determined to establish a summer home here for my family. The opportunity to belong to a newly created establishment was very enticing and the Tyrolean Village was aggressively being marketed as an exclusive country resort for families with tennis courts, swimming pool and a beach. I purchased a small remodeled concrete block double unit structure, thankfully away from the hub of the resort's centre and noise. The neighboring chalets were all privately owned. The resort was being modeled after some established and well-regulated developments in Austria or Germany.

At first, all the inhabitants in the Village co-existed peacefully but that didn't last long. The new chalets were found to be badly insulated, too large and too costly to provide for the individual families. They were passed back to Tyrolean Village who converted them into a weekend rooming houses and began encouraging wild weekend gatherings and parties in the Village. "The More, the Merrier" became the theme and overcrowding was common and meant more money for the management, who really never knew how to manage and didn't really care about the reputation of the place.

Despite government grants to assist in development of the area as a resort and an infusion of some overseas investments in building more chalets, the Village chalets slowly deteriorated from misuse and abuse. A pool and tennis courts gradually vanished from neglect. Sadly many of my original friends and neighbors could not stand the noise, the filth and the traffic and sold their homes at a loss to get away. Nobody wanted to hear about our problems and we were entirely on our own against a management that couldn't care less about our concerns. The Village then sold many of their chalets to new owners whose managerial skills and need for money to support them were less than helpful.

Things were so chaotic at the beginning that I had no idea, before receiving the map and the title to the property, that I had actually bought a whole acre of land along with the house. Many years later I purchased the

adjacent unit, cleared the bush behind the house and dug out the sewage system at the back which belonged to the Tyrolean Village chalets on Kandahar Road. So now I enjoy two acres of land which is part of the sensitive watershed area. The ravine behind my house collects water that comes down from the mountains in the spring. It used to collect other things as well but it is now under control and flourishing. I planted pines, spruce, hemlock, linden and maple trees which now, after many years, complement the original growth of Canadian hawthorn, birch, and ash trees. I constructed a high fence and planted more trees and a hedge to minimize the noise on the weekends that comes from the neighboring Tyrolean Village rental. I had a high hopes when the new residences were being built across Arlberg Crescent thinking that people who bought expensive retirement homes would object to the lack of order and nuisances in the close proximity to their homes. Unfortunately, new development did not restore order in the area.

I retired and moved permanently into my house on Birch View Trail in March 2013. Despite the fact that I live next door to the large, double-unit Tyrolean Village rental chalet, I have enjoyed my first year of permanent residency in The Blue Mountains. I braved the problems and the tough winter because I love my daily dog walks, puttering on the skis, lots of time for reading and films and volunteering for ideas that are dear to me. My friends and my family agree that I made the right decision to stay. The situation in the Village is not perfect but the quality of the life in this area appears to be improving because of the impending Short Term Accommodation Licensing (STA) By-law and Program. Hopefully many of the older buildings will now be brought up to standards and new sewer lines, being proposed in the area, will help to replace the out-of-date sewage disposal systems, improving health and safety in the area.

I want to thank the Blue Mountains Ratepayers' Association for their many years of tireless and fearless effort in support of the area residents achieving a better quality of life. I firmly believe that nobody should be forced out of their homes because out-of-control business practices. We, the residents are not obstructionists and we do not stand in the way of good, decent businesses which respect the lives of the local neighbors. I also want to thank Town of The Blue Mountains and their By-Law Enforcement officers who frequently visit the area making sure that the garbage in the Village is being properly disposed of. I also hope that the Fire Department will help improve the building standards and will control the over-crowding of the Village chalets, and that the Police Department will continue to manage the traffic and the noise as they did in this past winter.

I admire the business development and the progress at the Blue Mountain Resort and the Village. I often ask why those companies succeeded and the Tyrolean Village hasn't become the much sought-after exclusive resort. I suspect the answer is: in addition to investment, in order to succeed, it takes a team of professionals who care, which has been amiss in the Tyrolean Village. In my forty years here I have never been asked what I think, how do I feel, what do I expect and what could be done to make things better for everyone. It is a pity because the Tyrolean Village management is losing the opportunity of working with and sharing with the citizens who care about their homes and remain here for the love of this beautiful country.

(Blanka has recently joined as a new Board Director with the Blue Mountain Ratepayers' Association and also serves as a Board Director with the Blue Mountain Watershed Trust Foundation)

Paving Hwy 26

By Kim Posen

The Public Information Meeting on March 27, 2014 to present the findings of MTO sponsored review of the stretch of Highway 26 from The Blue Mountains/ Collingwood boundary to the eastern edge of Thornbury was well attended. Did you know that Hwy 26 in this area is a rural highway, with moderate volume, and the only improvements required over the next 10 years are paving and drainage repair? Oh, and by the way, we understand that access to the Shale Beach is something that users want, so we will put in a pay-for-use parking lot with a ramp down to the beach. All to start in 2015.

In fairness, there was a bit more involved in the "improvements". Residents with any structures or overgrown brush that encroach upon the MTO right of way beside the highway have received letters to have it removed by October 2014, for safety reasons. While there is no intent to deny residents access to their property (i.e. if you do not have a driveway, some minor variance for a parking pad will be allowed), move those garbage boxes and fences. The fact that the highway runs very close to the lake along some sections doesn't seem to be important. And don't try to build the small bridges across culverts so that you can cross the highway on foot without walking all the way to the closest road.

Considered but rejected were any reductions in speed limit, or the addition/modification of turning lanes. Some additional paved shoulders were added. Fortunately

there were only a few highway entrance removals. Project staff were kept busy with individual resident concerns about their property. The large table for people to fill out comment sheets was well used. A frequent opinion expressed was that these improvements were a waste of taxpayers' dollars when everything would have to be reviewed again in 10 years.

There are some improvements planned in concert with the MTO project. The Blue Mountains is now doing a review of the areas surrounding the intersections of Hwy 26/Grey Road 2, and Hwy 26/Grey Road 40.

Detailed feedback on these areas of Hwy 26 were given during the first review. The plan is to coordinate the work between TBM and MTO. The opportunity to provide input into areas you feel need to be addressed for these intersection and the surrounding area is:

PIC – HWY 26 & GREY 2 Intersection Improvements
Municipal Class EA Study and
PIC – HWY 26 & GREY 40 Intersection Improvements
Municipal Class EA Study

Thursday April 24, 2014

4:00 pm to 8:00 pm in the Town Hall, Council Chambers

Let's show TBM that road safety is important!

BMRA Board of Directors

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www.bluemountainratepayers.ca

Call for membership info, or visit the website and click on JOIN NOW today!

News Around Town

By BMRA Editorial Board

Remember Thornbury Gate - the "Talk of the Town"

The owners of property behind the medical centre and the Thornbury Cidery continue to push for a higher density development than is permitted. The original development proposal was submitted in 2009 and proposed a 169 unit seniors assisted living housing project, consisting of a 3 storey and 5 storey apartment buildings. This obviously didn't go over well with the locals and the application was deferred pending a review of the neighbourhood concerns.

Now the owners/applicants are proposing a new or revised development proposal consisting of 45 townhouse units with a maximum height of 3 storeys in height. While density and type of development have certainly changed for the betterment of the community, there are still concerns from local residents and the neighbouring industry, Breaker Technologies Inc. (BTI). Local residents are concerned about the density and changes in the character of the community, while BTI has legitimate concerns about potential complaints about on-going industry in the area. BTI is currently working below capacity and expect, with improvements in the economy, to increase both production 24/7 and add another 50 employees.

There certainly needs to be a compromise before allowing this type of development to proceed. While growth in the community is important, business retention is just as important.

Source: Town meeting dated March 17th, 2014 and Collingwood Connection dated March 27th, 2014.

TBM moves forward with STA Licensing Program and Fees

At a meeting held on March 17th, The Council Committee of the Whole unanimously agreed to move ahead with an initial two-year licensing fee of \$2,000 based on an estimated 360 Short Term Accommodations (STAs) in TBM. STA operators disputed the numbers but were reassured that that the fee would be adjusted should the numbers increase and additional staffing resources were not required.

Other fees include \$750 to renew the license, \$500 for an appeal to the licensing committee and Council, and \$50 for a replacement license.

The fees are based on the recovery of both direct and

indirect costs (borrowing) projected to be \$178,325 on an annual basis. It is expected that these fees will allow the town to recover its costs by year four of the licensing program.

You will also note in your tax and utility bills, a Notice advising that the Town's STA Licensing Program (for rentals less than 30 days) will be effective July 2, 2014 and will be receiving applications by April 4, 2014.

This is a TOWN-WIDE Licensing Program, but will only start initially in specific and more problematic areas designated around the mountain.

If you have any further questions or concern, you are asked to call the town (519-599-3131, ext 249 or visit the website at

www.thebluemountains.ca/sta-consult.cfm.

Source: Town Report PL.14.27 dated March 17th, 2014

For your pleasure and education

The Watershed Trust Foundation (BMWTF) and Elephant Thoughts are continuing to offer the "Be the Change" documentary film series at the Gayety Theatre in Collingwood. These educational films are about environmentally-focused challenges facing our world today.

Make sure you plan to see the remaining film:

April 16, 2014 Fat Sick and Nearly Dead - an inspiring film about the director's personal mission to regain his health. Tickets can be purchased at the door for only \$8.00 (starting at 6.30 p.m.) For more information on the film series, please visit: www.bethechangefilmseries.com

Real Estate News Update

Everyone agrees that extreme weather and the unseasonably frosty temperatures appear to have had an influence on the Georgian Triangle real estate market as well as so many other aspects of life in the area, including Tourism. Travel conditions were often hazardous, discouraging the willingness of property owners to venture out and snowbound conditions made it difficult to view and access properties. Needless to say, the number of property sales, by the end of February, 2014 continued to lag behind last year's pace, which was compounded in part by lower inventory of available properties.

Despite a reduction of sales in 2014 over 2013, The Western District of the Southern Georgian Bay Association of Realtors, which includes Wasaga Beach, Collingwood, Clearview Township, the Blue Mountains,

Meaford and Grey Highlands, saw a 8.3% increase in the average price of a residential home from \$361,487 to \$391,311. However, over a 12 month period the annual increase is anticipated to be lower based on a much higher volume of sales.

The \$200,000 to \$349,999 price category led the way in the most number of sales with 82 being recorded by the end of February. The highest increase for the Western District was in the \$500,000 to \$799,999 with 17.6% more sales recorded over the first two months of 2013. Listings are still down with only 918 listings (YTD) by the end of February, 2014 compared to 975 in 2013.

So, what do all these stats say about the market? Real estate brokers and agents say it's too early to predict and are awaiting an end to the deep freeze. If the inventory of properties on the market continue to decline and sale prices continue to increase, our region will definitely move out of a distinctive and lengthy Buyers Market and into a more Balanced Market overall.

Source: Karen Poshtar (Clairwood Real Estate), Brendan Thomson, Chestnut Park News.

Quick Area News Flashes:

- On Wednesday March 19th, the Beaver Valley Arena was transformed into a 5-sheet curling rink. Wednesday through Friday, the arena was packed with school kids and adults participating in learning instructions and games. On Saturday, the arena was packed with over 800 curling fans to watch professional curlers, led by Olympic Gold medalist, Jennifer Jones. Thanks goes to the "Beaver Valley Rocks' committee, the sponsors, the volunteers and the fans.

- Canada Post is making cuts to hours of service and even threatening to close some rural post office locations in Grey County. Postal staff in Thornbury indicate that no plans have come down yet to cut times in Thornbury or Clarksburg. Oh, did we mention that the cost of a single stamp goes up to \$1.00 on March 31st, 2014 (\$0.85 if you buy in bulk).

- Many residents are questioning the TBM's recycling program (blue and grey boxes). There have been sightings and the belief that all waste is being thrown into the truck together and not into separate compartments. We are reassured by the Manager of Solid Waste that these are split body trucks and the recycling material is still being separated from general waste. We expect a report to Council this spring regarding this program.

- In case you're interested, TBM Council salaries and allowances (per diem, travel and computer allowances and benefits) came in at \$214,958 for 2013. Additional expenses vary between \$0 (McKean) and \$6,030, (Ardiel).

- Six employees from The Blue Mountains made the Sunshine List in 2013 (over \$100,000) equating to almost \$590,000 in salaries and benefits. This is up from 4 in 2012, so what does the future hold? Is the Fire Department next on the radar?

Notice of Annual General Meeting (for members in good standing only)

Notice is hereby given that the Annual General Meeting of the Blue Mountain Ratepayers' Association will be held

Saturday, May 3rd, 2014 at 9.00 a.m.

The Marsh Street Centre - 187 Marsh Street, Clarksburg
(Public parking available next to the Legion Building and at Riverside Graphics on Clark Street)

For the purpose of:

1. Receiving the Report of the Directors;
2. Receiving the Financial Report for the fiscal year ending December 31, 2013;
3. Election of Board Directors;
4. Proposed Amendments to the Bylaws;
5. Transacting any other business presented at the meeting;
6. Question and answer period.

By Order of the Board, January 4, 2014

Michael P. Seguin, President, Blue Mountain Ratepayers' Association

Although the meeting is scheduled for 9.00 a.m., please arrive by 8.15 a.m. for registration, cookies and coffee.

We are pleased to announce that our guest speaker will be

Don Braden, Blue Mountain Village Association

following coffee break at 10 am.

Don was appointed President of the Blue Mountain Village Association in December 2004. He directs its key activities:

- i. destination marketing;
- ii. events and animation;
- iii. ensuring a safe, clean and well maintained environment for guests
- iv. government relations. The Village Association is a key stakeholder in the resort development at Blue Mountain.

TBM is one of North America's premier resort destinations. Don's talk will be about how this brings prosperity for all to our region. Also his role on the Economic Development Advisory Committee, set up by TBM, gives Don insights on what the Town must do to drive the "Open for Business" attitude change that the BMRA has as its rally cry in the 2014 election.