



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

April 2008

Board of Directors 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 3Z2

Don't miss your 2008 AGM!

YOUR association is at a crossroads. YOUR input to guide our future action on matters affecting every ratepayer in our town is vital. These include:

TAXES – the ever-present concern for us all:

They keep going up. We are told more and more are needed.
Water and sewer rates continue to climb.

Meanwhile, parking and development continue to plague many of us.

The Town has, after a concerted effort by your association and other concerned citizens, passed an interim (6 month period) by-law restricting further development and use of residential properties for short-term rentals. Town officials and your Association Directors need to hear from you on this contentious issue.

Your chance to say thanks to our champion:

Dorothy Healey, our long-time president and founding member, has retired as President after more than 25 years of championing all our interests as residents of the paradise where we live and play. Should her health permit, she would like to continue as a Director. We know you will want to join us in thanking her for all she has accomplished on our behalf.

Don't miss this most important meeting!

John Pineo, Interim President

NOTICE OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

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

Saturday, May 31, 2008 at 9:00 a.m.

In Huron # 1 Meeting Room
Village Conference Centre

Note: The Village Conference Centre is located just behind the Monterra Golf Clubhouse.
Parking is in Lot P2 – Village at Blue

For the purpose of:

1. Receiving the annual reports of the Board;
2. Reviewing the Financial Report for the year ended Dec. 31/07;
3. Electing Directors;
4. Transacting any other business brought before the meeting;
5. Question & answer period.

April 30, 2008

By order of the Board

John Pineo, Acting President

Blue Mountain Ratepayer's Association

Please arrive by 8:30 a.m. for registration and coffee



Community Connection is a registered charitable organization since 1969. Our mandate is to help people find the community, social, health and government services they need, and support the work of human services professionals in meeting client needs. **Community Connection** operates four programs to achieve this mandate:

211 Simcoe Country

- 211 (like 911) is a 3 digit phone number to access free, confidential, multilingual information about community, social, health and related government services
- 211 is 24/7 and answered live by trained specialists who help callers locate appropriate services based on their individual needs
- 211 tracks the reasons people call and the services they require, producing reports which can be used to identify service gaps, duplication & emerging trends in human services
- Community Connection's call centre will eventually serve more than one million people in Central East Ontario
- 211 is a national initiative (211Canada.ca)

Community Resource Centre

- A one roof initiative currently home to twenty three community, social, health and related government services
- The facility is 9,500 square feet and offers common reception, kitchen and meeting rooms
- The business model shares overhead and administration expenses resulting in lower costs for all tenants
- Approximately 10,000 people visit the Community Resource Centre each year

Volunteer Connection

- Due to launch early in 2008, the Volunteer Connection will offer an online matching service for volunteers and volunteer opportunities
- The site will offer access to local volunteer training events and links to other volunteer resources
- A professional mentoring service will connect professional volunteers willing to offer time-limited advice and counsel with not-for-profit organizations in need of assistance

Database Services

- Self help directories are available at both CommunityConnection.net and 211SimcoeCounty.ca
- Specialized database services are provided to many service providers including the Towns of Collingwood and The Blue Mountains, North Simcoe Muskoka Community Care Access Centre, District of Muskoka Emergency Measures, Ontario Training Boards, Ontario Aboriginal Services, Employment Ontario, Ontario Youth Justice, Ontario Justice Services and Ontario Professions and Trades.

Connecting communities to the services they need...one person at a time

Box 683 275 First Street Collingwood Ontario L9Y 4E8
 admin 705.444.0040 fax 705.445.1516 tty 705.445.1658
 www.CommunityConnection.net www.211SimcoeCounty.ca

Short-term rentals:**On May 12 it will be your turn — speak up loudly**

By Peter E. Sharpe

In February, the Town Council passed an interim (six months) By-Law to control short-term rental accommodation. A copy of this By-Law can be found at the Town's website: www.thebluemountains.ca. Click on "Municipal Government" in the left-hand column, and then on "Interim Control By-Law related to Short term Accommodation."

At an April 7 meeting, Town staff submitted for Town Council's approval a request to authorize a Public Meeting for the Draft Official Plan and Zoning By-Law Amendments. Members of your Association's Board attended this meeting on your behalf.

A copy of the Staff Report which details the proposed By-Law Amendments can be found at the Town's website. Three options are presented:

■ Option I (Status Quo) will make no changes to By-Laws and enact no Licensing By-Law. *This would mean the present unacceptable situation continues.*

■ Option II will have Town Council enact an Official Plan Amendment and 3 Zoning By-Law Amendments to regulate short-term accommodation (STA).

■ Option III would include the actions in Option II and Council would also enact a Licensing By-Law, which would license, regulate and govern STA.

Please note: Option II is accomplished by Amendments under the Planning Act, and Option III is accomplished by Amendments under the Municipal Act — two separate processes.

The Staff Report also estimates potential costs of implementation.

OUR TURN TO SPEAK regarding the Official Plan Amendments and the 3 Zoning By-Law Amendments will come on Monday, May 12, 7 p.m. at the Beaver Valley Community Center in Thornbury.

If you want the short-term rental accommodation situation to change **YOU MUST SPEAK UP** — I will be!

If you cannot attend in person . . . send your comments to Cindy Welsh – cwelsh@thebluemountains.ca, or call (519) 599-3131 ext. 262, with a copy to our Acting President, John Pineo (m.jpineo@sympatico.ca) or Director Michael Seguin (mpseguin@rogers.com). Members of your Board of Directors will be front and centre on May 12.

Silver Creek wetlands — an update

By Donald J Kerr

Blue Mountain Watershed Trust

A. Approval of residential development in Consulate East Lands: The OMB hearing for this area — east of a line drawn south from the end of Bartlett Blvd. and bounded by Princeton Shores and Highway 26 — was concluded last year. We obtained enhanced Participant status by using an environmental consultant, and this was instrumental in getting our voice heard. Discussions culminated in an agreement between the Trust and the owner on the buffers to include an additional 20 metres on the north side. Otherwise, we accepted the buffers that NVCA had proposed.

We also participated in the development of conditions and mitigation measures that will form part of the Plan of Subdivision. A chain-link fence will be installed to prevent residents from moving into the buffer areas.

We expect that about 320 residential units will be approved in the central pocket of the East Lands. There also is a separate high-density development along Highway 26 which has not been fully resolved between the Town and the developer; this could result in between 40 and 100 units.

Overall, the outcome was as good as could be

expected given the 2004 Official Plan endorsement of residential zoning in part of the East Lands. The cost of environmental consultant services for the East Lands was \$10,770.

B: Consulate West Lands: This is a larger area extending west from the East Lands and bounded by Highway 26 and Georgian Bay. An OMB hearing is scheduled to begin Sept. 2. The likelihood of residential development is lower here because the upland areas are zoned Rural and the remainder, the wetland and floodplain, is zoned Environmental Protection. In addition, it is the home of the endangered Spotted Turtle.

We currently are trying to convince the OMB to allow our consultant to visit the site.

C: Potential expropriation of Consulate West Lands and Bass Bay Cottagers Corp. On Feb. 25, the Town Council passed a motion to obtain an appraisal followed by intent to expropriate the two properties above. In parallel with the appraisal process, the Town is developing the paperwork for expropriation; however, the formal intent to expropriate will not be served until Council reviews the appraisals and the associated staff report.

Given all the steps in this process, the decision to expropriate is not likely to occur until this summer. We strongly urge our members to support the expropriation process. We are offering to assist the Town in this project wherever possible.



Town of the Blue Mountains

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Dear Mr. Pineo:

Thank you for your letter of March 4 2006, which has been forwarded to Council for their consideration as part of the 2008 water and wastewater rate setting process. We are responding to this letter from a historical point of view, to most of the concerns that you have presented, providing clarification and rationale as to why Council made certain decisions last year when setting utility rates. Please review our comments and feel free to provide any further comments in subsequent correspondence.

Your letter states that, "When water meters were first announced the town government assured all ratepayers at several public events that the meters would NOT result in any cost increases to the taxpayer." Water meters were installed in residential dwellings throughout the Town and the cost to purchase and install the meters was recovered from utility reserve funds. No additional charge was included in the annual user rates to pay for the project. From that perspective there was no additional cost to the property owner. One of the many goals of metering the consumption of water, however, was certainly

About our water rates . . .

By John Pineo

The accompanying correspondence from TOBM Mayor Ellen Anderson is in response to my letter (see our March issue) expressing our concerns about water and sewer rates. I commend and thank them for their prompt and thorough analysis. Unfortunately, the Town did not accept all of the suggestions your association put before them.

The fact remains that water and sewer rates are continuing to escalate at an alarming rate. In 2006, the last year that fixed rates were included in our tax bill, the charge was \$683 and this had grown from \$603 in 2001 – a total increase of \$80 or 13% (less than 3% per year). In 2007, the first year of metered charges, my bill increased to \$854 a leap of 25% and I used only 144 cubic meters, 36 less than the "std" of 180. Granted, in one 2-month period I exceeded the "std" by 14 cm at a cost of \$43. Disregarding this, my cost went up "only" 20%. Currently, we are being told to expect even more increases to assure we have the very best quality water and a viable delivery system with ample reserves for system maintenance and replacement.

This will be a topic on our agenda for the upcoming AGM. Be there to ensure you have your say. We need to hear from you to guide our future actions.

"user pay" – those that use a large volume of water should pay more than those that use a small volume. This, of course, results in a shift of the financial responsibility to provide the services, where previously this cost was averaged and each residential unit owner paid the same flat rate per year. Those that used more than the average amount of water per year saw an increase in their utility bill; those that used less than the average saw a decrease. The installation of residential water meters did not result in an increase to the revenue required to operate the water and wastewater systems.

It is correct to say that the water and wastewater rates did increase in 2007 over 2006. This was a result of budget

increases and was not related to the installation and use of water meters. The user rate revenue required to provide safe drinking water to The Blue Mountains residents increased from \$1,759,000 in 2006 to \$2,510,000 in 2007 (a 43% increase). The amount required in 2008 is \$2,914,000 (a 16% increase over 2007). The revenue required to support the wastewater treatment system increased from \$2,050,000 in 2006 to \$2,267,000 in 2007 (an 11% increase). The amount required in 2008 is \$2,094,000 (an 8% decrease over 2007). We have attached information that was provided to the public last year that will assist in explaining the reasons for the budget increases in 2007. The main reasons were: changes in provincial legislation resulted in increases to many operational costs; consumables were a major area of cost increase; construction costs increased substantially; the agreement to purchase water from the Public Utilities Commission of the Town of Collingwood resulted in a budget increase; and there were substantial increases to the user fee share of capital works.

You note in your letter, "Not only has this principle been violated by removing the charges from the tax bill and not offering any offsetting deduction to the basic tax ..." The flat rate water and wastewater charges that were previously added annually to the property tax bill were in fact not added to the bill in 2007; the 2006 residential water flat rate was \$281 and the wastewater flat rate was \$407, resulting in a \$688 reduction to the total charges added to the tax bill in 2007 over 2006.

We may have misunderstood the details of this proposed solution, but your association has suggested capping the fixed charge at the 2006 level of the combined charge. The 2007 fixed charge for water was \$150, and for wastewater was \$190, already considerably less than the 2006 flat rates of \$281 for water and \$407 for wastewater. Please let us know if you meant something different from this.

The suggestion to limit the fixed charge annual increase by the rate of inflation might be considered if operation of the utility systems was static. The reality is that there are many factors that are beyond the control of the Town that drive the rates up. Changes and upgrades continue to be mandated by the Province in their role to protect public health and safety, resulting in infrastructure changes and additional staff. Construction costs continue to escalate, and energy prices increase. These external forces, and others, result in increased costs much higher than CPI increases could cover. Also, Council's decision last year to recover 30% of the budget requirements through the fixed charge and 70% through the consumption charge means that any increase in revenue requirement will be shared proportionally through both the fixed charge and the consumption charge.

Last year when Council was reviewing various options to calculate the water and wastewater bills based on meter readings, one consideration was to include 15 cubic metres of water in the fixed charge. The result is that those using a smaller volume of water would pay a higher minimum amount, as the fixed charge would increase. At the same time, there would be no incentive to conserve water below the 180 m³/year level.

Council decided to bill on a bi-monthly basis to generate a steady cash flow throughout the year as well as to provide the utility user with their consumption details in a timely manner. This allows the user to identify any problems fairly quickly, such as leaks that are difficult to detect, and that could end up being quite costly.

Billing user fees on an annual consumption basis would, as you have indicated, even out the peaks and valleys of usage. However, this would discourage conservation, and as a result would increase the Town's "peak day demand" volume. Infrastructure must be sized to accommodate the highest flow per day that the Town experiences. There must be enough water treated and stored to provide usual quality and flow for customer consumption, equalization of customer demand, and sufficient water for fire protection. If there is no control on consumption then infrastructure would have to be expanded to accommodate the required volume of water. Applying tiered pricing to water consumption over a shorter period of time results in a higher level of customer awareness.

We thank you for the opportunity to address your concerns. Your comments and your interest are most appreciated and do make a difference in informing the decision-making process. Council will consider your comments as part of the 2008 water and wastewater rate setting process and I do hope that you will share this correspondence with the Ratepayers.

Yours truly,
Mayor Ellen Anderson



ABOUT THE TOWN

Compiled by Michael P. Seguin

New police station planned

The Town of the Blue Mountains has budgeted \$500,000 toward the construction of a new 3,500 sq. ft. police station plus a 500 sq. ft. garage just west of the Fire Station at Grey Road 2 and Clark Street. The building will serve as a reporting location for the detachments' 10 constables, sergeant and an administrative support person. Unless there is a change in financial considerations, the building is scheduled for construction in the summer of 2008. — Source: *Collingwood Connection*, Feb 8/08

Pesticide ban coming soon?

The Town of Collingwood is advising residents that it is time to start considering alternative methods for lawn and garden care as well as how they control pests in their yards. As of Jan. 1, using pesticides for cosmetic purposes carries a fine of \$225 for a first offence; repeat offenders could face tougher fines: up to a maximum of \$100,000 upon court conviction. The intent of the new by-law is to bring awareness that pesticides are harmful to our health and that there are alternatives.

The Township of Clearview and the Town of Wasaga Beach are considering a similar type of by-law and hope to adopt a regional approach to a proposed pesticide regulation, recognizing that 135 municipalities across the nation have enacted pesticide ordinances, benefiting more than 13.7 million Canadians. In Ontario, 27 municipalities have introduced bans or restrictions on pesticides. — Source: *Connection*, Feb. 8 & Feb. 15/08

Grey County's Growth Management Study ignores the Town of the Blue Mountains

This study is being prepared to provide the basis for assessment of housing needs and priorities for municipal infrastructure for the next 20 years. The Town argues that the GCGM and its policies do not accurately reflect the Town's seasonal recreational development and a 1.0% per annum conversion to permanent status. By not recognizing the importance of seasonal development, there is a danger that the infrastructure needs for the Town of the Blue Mountains will not now (if ever) meet peak

residential demands: the times when seasonal residences are in use. Interestingly, the county collects development charges at the same rate for both seasonal and permanent use but does not recognize seasonal use as part of growth and part of the infrastructure needs of a municipality. — *Source: C-H, March 5/08*

Plan to ban plastic bags gains momentum

There is a continuing concern about the proliferation of plastic grocery bags in landfill sites and littered across the country, especially across our trails. Simcoe County is promoting the use of reusable cloth bags as part of its public education program relating to the organics program that will be launched this fall. A number of municipalities across the country now ban the use of plastic bags. — *Source: Connection, Feb. 22/08*

Village cidery brewing in Thornbury

That old concrete block building sitting across from the Thornbury Video and Mall has seen some physical changes over the past year and is now the site of a new cidery operation. The new owners are hoping to use locally grown apples to capture a potential retail growth market in the southern Georgian Bay area. Hard cider is considered a light and refreshing alcoholic beverage (4% alcohol content) made from the fermented juice of apples and is very popular in the UK, France and Spain. There are large commercial productions throughout British Columbia and New Brunswick and considerable growth is occurring in Ontario markets. — *Source: C-H, Feb. 02/08*

Museum and Heritage Centre at the Depot becomes a reality

The historic train station at the corner of Grey Road 19 and Highway 26, which underwent extensive renovations in 2006, will soon open a display of artifacts and materials relating to the history of the

Town of the Blue Mountains in addition to providing a much needed tourist information centre. The operation of the centre will come at a cost, with a deficit of \$64,250 projected for 2008, decreasing to between \$21,000 and \$26,000 for 2009 and 2010. — *Source: C-H Feb. 27/08*

Ford Gretzky Classic needs volunteers

Volunteer information will be available soon for the inaugural Ford Wayne Gretzky Classic golf tournament coming to the Georgian Bay Club and the Raven at Lora Bay between June 23 and June 29. A website has been launched at www.gretzky.com. People interested in volunteering should email volunteer_99@sympatico.ca — *Source: C-H, March 5/08*

TOBM wants your input on the new Town Hall design

You are being asked by the Town to review the basic information and concept plans relating to the new Town Hall Project. The Town website — www.thebluemountains.ca — has a link to all the project information and a questionnaire that includes a ballot to vote for one of the four designs for the proposed building. A timetable has been set by staff, with the official opening expected in December of 2010.

A public meeting is scheduled for June 9/08 to discuss preliminary elevations and floor plans, with public open houses on June 14 and 23. Tenders are expected to be called in the fall, with construction anticipated in March 2009.

As you can see, a new Town Hall building is quickly becoming a reality. You need to visit the Town's website to understand the whole process, consider the cost and what impact it will have on you as a taxpayer, provide some input and prepare yourself for the inevitable. Taxes, water and wastewater rates will all be going up in 2009 – that I can guarantee! — *Source: C-H, March 12/08*

Craigleith Community Centre

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

Ideal for:

Business meeting	Weddings
Social events	Anniversaries

For rental information, contact
Ruth Doherty, 705-445-2101

Emergency & Information

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

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

Fire Department (Craigleith): 444-2244

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