

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 2009

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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

A time to reflect

By Michael P. Seguin

As my first year as President comes to a close (at the AGM), I begin to wonder – what have I accomplished? Did I work hard enough to keep the members of the Association and community informed? Did I provide a strong enough voice to improve the performance of our local government? Was I respectful in all the messages I conveyed verbally or wrote over the past year on the

internet or in the newsletter?

So many questions – but I wonder how I'm doing? A number of people have said that I am doing a good job of keeping them informed. But what does the majority of our membership think? Everyone continues to renew their membership – that's a good sign. I haven't heard any bad things said about me, at least in public – that's a good sign. The Directors of the Board have not asked me to step down as President – that's a great sign.

Without the Directors' support, this would have been a difficult job, so many thanks to John, Catherine,

See President's Report page 2

NOTICE OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

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

Saturday, May 30, 2009 at 9:00 a.m.

in the

**VISTA MEETING ROOM
GRAND CENTRAL LODGE**

Note: The Grand Central Lodge is located at the base of the ski hill behind the Grand Georgian. Parking is in Lot P2 - Village at Blue (see map on page 2)

For the purpose of:

1. Receiving the annual reports of the Board
2. Reviewing the Financial Report for the year ended Dec 31, 2008
3. Electing Directors
4. Transacting any other business brought before the meeting
5. Question and answer period

March 13, 2009

By Order of the Board

Michael Seguin, President
Blue Mountain Ratepayers Association

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

President's Report

Continued from page 1

Peter, Stan, Dorothy and Dennis for their help.

Over the past year I have had to do battle with Council over the 2009 budget, the utility rates and now the construction of the new Town Hall. I know their job can be difficult at times, but I only asked and continue to ask that common sense should prevail during these most difficult times.

I must point out that the Town staff has been very informative and helpful to me in understanding the issues, which are often controversial. I want to especially thank Lisa Kidd, Town Communications & Economic Development Coordinator, who has kept me aware of all the local events and causes as soon as they have developed. Some of the worthwhile causes the Board has helped promote on your behalf are: The Craigeith Heritage Depot 2009 Lectures Series, the Community Family Health Centre in Thornbury and the Georgian Bay Animal Rescue.

As I continue to reflect, I feel a great sense of satisfaction in way the Website and our Newsletter (*The View from Blue*) have evolved to provide effective communication tools that reach out to our members. My primary goal as President has always been to improve the Board's communication

skills and get our members involved in issues and causes that affect all of us. It must be working – other groups are now requesting to partner with us as they recognize our ability to reach out to more than 250 households and over 400 people in the community.

Our AGM is scheduled for May 30th. This meeting is an opportunity for you to meet with me and the rest of your Board Directors to share some thoughts and ideas regarding future issues. You've read many of my articles and rants and I've seen many of your names on membership lists – now is the time to meet and get to know each other!

Also, members of Town Council and Town Staff have been invited to join us. They certainly wish to meet with you to understand your concerns and answer your questions.

Be sure to join us!



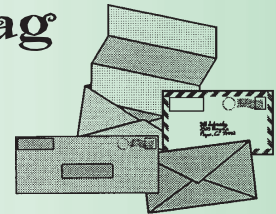
If you're not familiar with the Village at Blue, here's a map showing the location of the Grand Central Lodge (at top).

The Mailbag

LETTER TO THE EDITOR:

Subject: Our new Town Hall

Source: *Blue Mountains Courier-Herald*



Starting in 2003 I became interested in municipal politics. I have attended most council meetings since. In those days the previous council had put aside \$1.5m to build a simple two story addition to the present town hall. Now council wants to spend \$7.6m to build a 21,000 sq. ft. building.

Why do we need a new town hall? Well, that's a simple question. In 2000 we had 55 employees. This year we have 106. That's almost double. Staff and benefits now cost taxpayers \$30,881.00 per day. That's right – I said \$30,881.00 per day.

If we keep the current staff levels we need an addition or a new building. The question is: do we need to do it now?

At the last election all-candidate's meeting I asked the current Mayor if she was in favour of spending \$3m on a new town hall and her reply was, "I hope not." To my knowledge there was no talk of spending \$7.6m on a new town hall by any other candidate.

Does this council have the moral authority to spend \$7.6m of taxpayer money starting in an election year, 2010. I think not! At least that's the way I see it.

Paul Mitchell

An Integrated Community Sustainability Plan

By Peter Sharpe

An Integrated Community Sustainability Plan (ICSP) is described as “an over-arching, long-term development strategy that provides a path towards a ‘sustainable community’”. It is a planning document that outlines the objectives, goals and actions for different facets of the community” to achieve sustainability.

Sustainability is defined as “meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs.”

The Blue Mountains has launched the process to create an ICSP under the sponsorship of Jeffrey Fletcher, Manager of Waste Management and Environmental Initiatives, and Adam McMullin, Environmental Initiatives Coordinator.

Participants in the development process will number 75 or more, encompassing about 25 Town Council members and staff with approximately 50 key stakeholders representing a broad spectrum of businesses and community agencies and organizations.

Orientation workshops were scheduled for April 8 and April 15, 2009. The Orientation meetings were to be facilitated by the Natural Step Canada (www.naturalstep.ca) and LURA (Listen, Understand, Relate, Advance) Consulting. The goal: to provide participants with a shared understanding of sustainability, roles and responsibilities as well as an overview of the project processes.

Possible focus topics of the development strategy include, but are not limited to:

Energy	Water Resources
Land-Use Planning	Wastewater Management
Infrastructure	Arts & Culture
Transportation	Food Production
Trade/Tourism	Economics/Employment
Housing	Solid Waste Management
Municipal Operations	Pollution – Air, Water, Soil

Following the Orientation Workshops, a meeting proposed for May 27 will further explore and define the Vision and refine focus topics.

A follow-up meeting in June will establish the various working groups. It is expected that the Working Groups will meet 4-6 times during the summer to examine the individual topics and to develop short and long term goals and objectives for each issue.

Review of a first Draft Plan is planned for October 2009. Extensive community review and comment will be undertaken.



A sign of our healthy future

By Michael P. Seguin

In previous newsletters I have drawn your attention to a worthy health cause: Two Community Health Centres are planned within our area, with the first to be completed this fall in the community of Thornbury; the other is to be constructed in Meaford. However, construction of the first centre depends on having sufficient financial resources in place. My understanding is that donations are still necessary in order to begin construction.

I need to stress to everyone the fact that without these two health centres and our financial support, there will not be enough doctors to keep the Meaford hospital going and we could possibly see the ruin of health care in the region.

A temporary sign has been installed on the proposed Thornbury Medical Clinic site on the north side of Highway 26 between the Thornbury Village Cidery building and the Tigs Clothing Store. Every time you pass this sign, **think about the future of our health needs and saving this medical gem in our community – the Meaford Hospital.**

For more information, please visit our Website (bluemountainratepayersassociation.com) for a link to the founding non-profit organization (NEGHC), or go directly to www.communityfamilyhealthcentres.org.

Remember, without our health, the quality of our life is compromised.

INFOLINE: 211

Need help? Got a question?
Simply dial the INFOLINE at 211
anytime – day or night.

Clarksburg sewer and water proposal . . .

Town Council relents, but . . .

By Paul Malone

Clarksburg Ratepayers' Association

The Blue Mountains hired the Ainley Group to report on the need to install sewer and water systems throughout the whole Town of Clarksburg. They called a public meeting on March 24, 2008 in the basement of the Marsh St. Centre, which could not hold the crowd of locals who turned up.

The public had no idea this project was even being considered. Because half the people did not get a copy of the report they did not realize that they would each be hit by a cost of \$31,760.00 for services they didn't need.

The Clarksburg Ratepayers Association decided to do a public survey for reaction regarding this project. Of the 110 residents surveyed we found: 96 were against it, 4 wanted water only and 10 wanted both water and sewers.

We decided to have a public meeting to let everyone know what was going on. One hundred people turned up and wanted us to let the Town know that they were against this project. On July 8, 2008 we made our presentation at a Town Council Meeting.

After many meetings with the Town's Engineering Committee, we finally talked them out of it.

What promoted this action by the Ratepayers? Of the 36 wells Ainley tested and said were contaminated (one was a farm property that didn't even have a well), everyone who sent their water to the Hospital were told it passed and was drinkable.

Six new houses were built on Faircrest Lane in 2007. Why weren't these new owners told of this project? They invested \$25,000.00 in new wells and septic systems which the Town wanted to make them abandon.

Since the Provincial Government amassed all our local communities into one, laws have been passed that changed our democratic system. Only those hooked into a local system will have to pay for the required upgrades. Local governments can pass laws to make the public connect to these unwanted and unnecessary systems.

If we want to preserve our democracy we will need to monitor our government to make sure they work within the democratic framework.

Singing the Housing Market Blues

According to an article in the *Toronto Star* (March 7, 2009), the economic downturn is beginning to take its toll in ski country. New home builders are offering plenty of incentives, ranging from free cars to free hot tubs to free skiing and golf – and a host of upgrades.

The completion of Intrawest Village has been pushed back four years to 2014. No new projects are scheduled for launch in the near future and about 8% of the nearly 800 homes already built here are being offered on the resale market. Prices have been slashed by more than 30% from their original purchase price.

Other incentives being offered include introductory golf memberships at the Raven Golf Club without the \$25,000 initiation fee. A development at 11 Bay Street in Thornbury is offering a free elevator for each home, while the Orchard at Craighleith is offering a free hot tub with the purchase of a detached chalet.

Finally, Tanglewood at Cranberry Trails is guaranteeing mortgage payments of \$500 per month for five years on its existing inventory of town villas, which sell for around \$200,000. (The catch is that you have to put \$50,000 down.)

Do your part

Join your neighbours to Make a Difference
Operation Clean Sweep - National Pitch-In Week
 April 20-26, 2009

Pitch-In Week is a Canada-wide Environmental Improvement program supported by The Blue Mountains

Join with your neighbours to gather the trash left by Winter.

Collect the trash on lawns, in the ditches and along stream banks and Spring will appear faster.

All trash collected should be placed in plastic bags and left at the side of the road. The Town waste collection staff will pick up all bags on the normal collection day.

Invest two hours of family time to **Make a Difference!**

Organize neighbours for a *Spring Cleaning Blitz* — then have a *Street Barbecue* and enjoy a great day

Thank you

A recreational 'gem' — the Plunge Aquatic Centre

By Michael P. Seguin

The Blue Mountains continues to promote the development of its recreational department and to look for partnerships in order to provide new facilities that will help expand leisure services broadly to the community.

The Plunge Aquatic Centre in the Village at Intrawest is an excellent "state-of-the-art" recreational facility that is offered to the community at significant discounts (20% on daily entrance fees) – but it is not supported by our Town. Why? In our opinion, it's because it is managed by the Blue Mountain Village Association (VA). While Plunge contributes substantial tax dollars, more importantly the town doesn't own it and it's not located in Thornbury.

The Plunge has several physical components, each capable of unique programming. There is a large inter-active splash pad, an indoor/outdoor pool area with two slides, a deep outdoor action pool with Tarzan rope, and two hot tubs. Full capacity is 352, with observation seating throughout. There are men, women and family change areas. The facility is wheelchair accessible, and there is immediate parking adjacent for 50 cars, plus shuttle service to the Plunge from all resort areas.

The Village Association operates the Plunge based on stabilized annual losses at \$80-thousand pre-property tax. However, the loss per visitor is only \$1.03. This compares favourably with Toronto municipi-

pal pools, which lose between \$15 and \$59 per visitor.

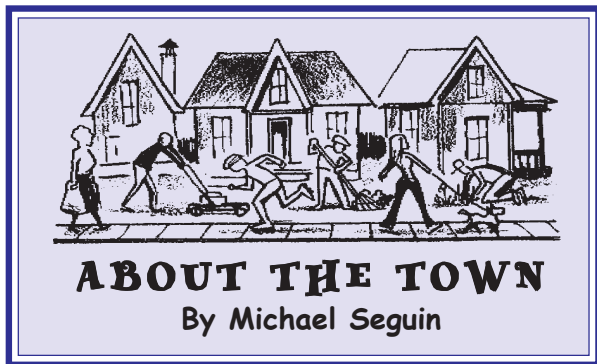
MPAC has assessed the Plunge at a value that results in an annual property tax bill of approximately \$50-thousand. The VA is appealing this assessment, seeking the same treatment that MPAC has afforded the other public areas of the Village – a nominal level.

Here is the issue: Integrated municipal aquatic programs in the Plunge would serve the interests of *both* the VA and the Town (and the community it serves). The Town would gain an aquatics programming capability with no capital outlay and no operating expenses. This is consistent with the Leisure Activities Plan and provides a real world test of demand for aquatics in the community.

This experience would be very valuable in the Town's long term leisure planning – so why not?

In order to sustain this valuable community asset, we agree with the VA that the Town should declare the Plunge a municipal asset under the Municipal Act. This would relieve this facility of its property tax burden, releasing funds the VA could use to increase destination marketing and assist in aquatic programming within the community. The Town should also pursue supplemental aquatic programming through grants.

We welcome your comments, especially if you have experienced the Plunge Aquatic Centre



Volunteers for water sampling program

IN FEBRUARY, the Town began seeking interested volunteer homeowners to be part of the Town's water sampling program. The Town wants to test older homes built before the mid-1950s for elevated lead levels or corrosive water *coming from your pipes and taps* (not from the municipality). The program is free and if you are interested in having your water tested, please contact Meghan Boyd at (519) 599-5287 (mboyd@thebluemountains.ca). I had my water tested and now

feel relieved to know my water is safe to drink. I have been advised that this will be an on-going program and I recommend that you volunteer if you have an older home. – *Source: Town Communication, Feb. 23/09*

■ P.S. Please be cautious of any private companies that solicit you for water testing. Make sure you check the person's identification – all Town Water Facility Staff carry photo identification. Do not make a commitment without contacting the Town at (519) 599-5287.

Highway 26 rehab proposed from Meaford to Thornbury

THE MINISTRY OF TRANSPORTATION and its consultant, Stantec Consulting Ltd., held Public Information Sessions in March to inform the community of proposed improvements scheduled for Highway No. 26, from the west end of Thornbury (Peel Street) to the east limits of the Municipality of Meaford. Proposed upgrades include: an eastbound passing lane between St. Vincent 3rd Line and Starlight Drive; a westbound passing lane between Christie Beach Road and Old Highway 26; intersection improvements; the addition of turning lanes at Christie Beach Road, Grey Road 113

and Peel Street; and closure of auxiliary access points (i.e., roads and entrances).

Although no timeline has been given, you can expect construction to begin this summer. For more information, contact Ms. Maya Caron, Environmental Planner, Stantec Consulting Ltd. at (416) 598-7162 (call collect), or by email at maya.caron@stantec.com. *Source: Notice from Public Information Centre, March, 2009.*

Roundabout coming to The Blue Mountains

GREY COUNTY has finally approved the awarding of a \$1.287-million contract for the construction of a roundabout at the corner of Scenic Caves Road and County Road 19. This roundabout – the first in Grey County – is being installed in an effort to alleviate concerns in and around the Blue Mountain skiing/village area. This type of traffic control has been considered for a number of areas to replace traffic lights. Construction is expected to begin this April/May. *Source: Courier-Herald 03/11/09*

Town implements strict street naming policy

Council has approved a new street-naming policy that gives the Town the sole responsibility for approving the naming and renaming of all public and private streets. I guess there have been too many instances where names have been inappropriate: too long, duplication, advertisement, cumbersome, discriminatory, derogatory, etc. In certain cases, names to honour certain individuals posthumously have been done without consent of living relatives.

The Town planning and building services department will now compile and keep a list of proposed street names. Approval by Council will be based on suitability. New street names will fall into six categories, including: honouring those who have served their country or who have given their lives in public service; local history; national or international community service; names reflecting the municipality's agricultural and or recreational heritage or nature. A copy of the entire street naming policy is available on the Town's Website. *Source: Courier-Herald 03/11/09*

Town endorses Pan Am Games equestrian event in our area

The Town has agreed to support a proposal (as part of the Toronto bid for the 2015 Pan Am Games) to hold the equestrian event at the planned Thornbury Horse Park, which is to be developed by the Cedar Run Corporation. It appears that Grey County also supports the proposal

although no dollars have been committed for the bidding process. The Blue Mountains approached the Collingwood for their support as a co-guarantor of \$1.8 million in funds for improvements to the Thornbury Horse Park – and were turned down.

Deputy Mayor Duncan McKinlay is quoted as saying: "The equestrian centre would create enormous spin-off benefits for the entire region." Does Mr. McKinlay guarantee that there will be no financial burden to the taxpayers? History has shown that almost every international sports event held in Canada has lost tons of money and left very little in terms of sustainable infrastructure. *Source: Courier-Herald 03/11/09*

Town seeks affordable housing

The Blue Mountains and the Town of Collingwood have joined forces to work on solutions for affordable housing. This has been a long-time goal of Mayor Anderson, who apparently is not happy about losing a number of potential projects because of objections from NIMBY (Not in My Back Yard) groups. Mayor Anderson was quoted at the first joint meeting of the Towns as saying, "How do we teach people that it just is not cool not to support affordable housing," and, "How do we shame them?"

While her heart may be in the right place in considering the needs of the less fortunate, I think she needs to give more consideration to the planning process (i.e., official plan and zoning) and spend less time trying to shame the taxpayers, who basically care about their neighbourhoods.

Hazardous Waste Depot Days

Blue Mountains has announced Hazardous Waste Depot Days so residents can safely dispose of and recycle Household Hazardous Waste.

On Tuesday, **April 21**; Saturday, **May 9**; Saturday, **June 13**; Saturday, **August 15** and Saturday **October 3** between 1 and 4 p.m. each day, residents can deliver — at no charge — Household Hazardous Waste to the Waste Disposal Site.

The Waste Disposal Site is located on Grey Road 13 south of Grey Road 40.

Household Hazardous Waste includes but is not limited to paint, batteries, pesticides, cleaners, solvents and fluorescent light bulbs.

Also, at the same site, during regular hours of operation the Town provides no charge Electronic Waste Recycling for computers, televisions and monitors, stereos, VCRs and most other home electronic devices.

Yard waste, grass, leaves, plants, brush and bush trimmings will be received free at the Waste Disposal Site for composting during normal hours of operation.

There is no curbside pickup for any of the above items.