

The VIEW from BLUE

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Box 405, Collingwood, ON L9Y 3Z7

The largest ratepayers' association in The Blue Mountains

December 2011

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they join our Association



PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Are you prepared to pay higher taxes and utility fees in 2012?

By Michael P. Seguin

As I contemplate retirement in 2012, I continue to ask the question: "How long will anyone, including myself, be able to afford to live in The Blue Mountains on a fixed income?"

During the ongoing Official Plan Review process, I continually hear about the need for affordable housing to assist and maintain development and business growth in our community. I think the real reason for affordable housing will be to assist the existing retired population on fixed incomes. These are the residents/taxpayers who are, essentially, being pushed out of their highly-assessed homes by continual higher taxes and higher utility costs which, in my opinion, go beyond essential services and are needed to support a growing bureaucracy.

As we move into the 2012 Budget Process, there seems to be a great deal of uncertainty regarding the tax hikes that we can expect. The current proposals call for a 6.2% increase in your property taxes, a 7.7% increase in your water rates and a 8.40% increase in your wastewater rates (sewage).

Given the state of the economy, both locally and in the rest of the country, do these rates reflect fiscal restraint and responsible government? The town staff repeatedly report to Council that these increases are required to deliver existing departmental service levels and to provide for "downloads" being mandated by various higher levels of government to provide for the future.

Council must now review the costs of delivering these services to determine whether to continue the "status quo" in allowing the bureaucracy to grow or to find savings in either cut-

backs or redefining the delivery of services. Rumour has it that Council has already mandated staff to roll back the proposed property tax increase to 2.0% in 2012.

We will continue to monitor how and whether they will do it.

Water rate increases

A quick note on the proposed water rate increases. The Town is promoting its commitment to a reduction of 15% in total water usage by 2015. They say that they are on-target to meet this conservation goal, and I offer my congratulations. What they don't tell you, however, is that conservation will mean higher water rates are needed to meet the ongoing operational challenges of maintaining their bureaucratic levels. Water rates are projected to rise by 22.50% over the next three years to provide for

See *President's Report* page 2

President's Report

Continued from page 1

increased operational costs and a provincially-mandated infrastructure “lay-away plan.” For whom?

Official Plan Review

On the planning front, the *Official Plan Review* apparently is moving along very quietly. I suspect that a new document is being drafted to consider all the ideas and suggestions made during two public workshops (both of which I attended). In the meantime, two interesting developments are worthy of note:

1. The first development involves the “Telfer” proposal that was discussed last December. The original proposal involved a “barracks” style high density townhouse development comprising 97 units to be situated on leased land in the southeast quadrant of Napier Street and Victoria Street in Thornbury.

The developer was promoting this proposal as an “Adult Lifestyle Community” or an “aging in place” development. More than 100 taxpayers and residents were “aghast” that the town would even consider this type of proposal, one that was truly out of character with the neighbourhood. Well, the developer has gone back to the drawing board and is now proposing an “adult lifestyle village” comprising 86 leasehold townhouse and semi-detached units plus a private recreation building. The new proposal is expected to provide an overall reduction in density and a more acceptable streetscape along both Napier and Victoria Streets, as well as increased open space, landscaping, public access, gateway vistas and new architectural design features.

Will these changes satisfy the concerns and needs of the surrounding single family residential neighbourhood? What about a more sustainable path objective involving a master plan for serving and development of the greater area – “a field of dreams rather than a field of schemes?” Stay tuned: a public meeting is scheduled for January 16.

2. The second planning proposal involves an interior 2.43 acre block of land in Thornbury bounded by Alfred, Elma, Alice and Bruce Streets (I will refer to this as “the Pyatt Lands”). The applicant submitted requests for various consents (severances) to assemble a block of land and have it rezoned from “Residential” (R2) to “Development” (D) to provide for future development. No plan of site-specific plan development has been presented – once again leaving the door open for unwanted “medium to high density development” or another “scheme” that would truly change the character of the community.

Council has agreed to the consents but has not agreed to a re-zoning, arguing that the “D-zone” might encourage higher density developments that are difficult to defend against. Interestingly, Mayor Anderson was the only member of Council who

wanted and voted for the zoning change – does she have a special housing project in mind?

“Economic development”

The biggest issue around town these days appears to be the demand for the Town to increase its commitment to “Economic Development.” At almost every meeting I have attended, some group is looking for money to support “an event” that will bring tourism and dollars to our community and businesses, describing it as a “sound economic investment.” I must admit that many of them make excellent and convincing arguments for financial support.

While I support tourism and try to participate in many of the events around town and the resort, we must be careful that the ever increasing financial requests for events do not affect the town’s purpose of delivering essential services at a reasonable cost to taxpayers. In my opinion, many of the proposed events do provide many benefits beyond our borders and are, increasingly, becoming more of a regional responsibility. Based on the demands for funding, I think the town needs to get a “better handle on economic development,” as Councillor Martin has said on more than one occasion, and start showing a more unified force with the surrounding municipalities and organizations.

Secret meetings

I would be remiss not to mention this Council’s obsession with holding numerous closed sessions or secret meetings this past year. It seems every Council Meeting is preceded or concluded by a “special meeting” to discuss matters the public are not allowed to know about. I’ve been following Council for the past five years and I can honestly say that I’m disappointed in their record on transparency and providing openness to the public. Maybe the presence of the public at every meeting and being held to a higher standard or scrutiny scares them.

AGM venue change

One announcement: The BMRA Board of Directors has agreed to change the venue for the 2012 AGM and have scheduled it for May 26th at the Marsh Street Centre in Clarksburg. This is an opportunity for our organization to branch out to other areas within The Blue Mountains and to strengthen our membership base outside the Craighleith area. Our mission is to provide a stronger and equal voice throughout our entire community.

If you have any comments regarding my statements in this report and throughout the newsletter, please do not hesitate to contact me at info@bluemountainratepayersassociation.com or send me a message via the Association’s mailing address.

As I have always said and will continue to say: “You are the heart and soul of the Association and we value your opinion.”

BMRA's pursuit of STA enforcement and licencing

By Michael P. Seguin

On November 7th a report was submitted to the Planning & Building Committee outlining the special requirements and expected costs of enforcing the Ontario Municipal Board-approved Short Term Accommodation (STA) bylaws and proceeding with a licencing regime for business operators.

D. Finbow reported that first year startup costs for STA enforcement would be in the \$180,000 range and annual operating costs thereafter would be around \$146,000 per annum. By adding a mandatory registry for all STA units, the Town would have to spend about \$14,500 in the first year and \$7,500 per annum thereafter. A licencing program would involve a \$49,500 startup cost (including registration) with an annual operating cost of around \$44,500. The total annual operating costs of STA enforcement and a licencing program would be in the \$190,500 range.

Now this may sound like a lot of money, but the Town has the authority to impose fees and charges related to administration and enforcement as well as the establishment, acquisition and replacement of capital costs. Based on 100 units (a very conservative number), an annual charge of only \$2,000 per year will provide sufficient revenue to offset the annual operating costs. This is just a "drop in the bucket" for most STA operators, who generally charge more than

\$2,000 for accommodation for a weekend.

The OMB determined that STAs were "distinct commercial entities with the goal of making a profit." If they are permitted to remain in a low density residential zone (i.e., "grandfathered"), then they should be reassessed as commercial units while in operation and any additional tax revenue should also be used to offset the costs of enforcement and licencing.

The Committee has referred Mr. Finbow's financial analysis on STA enforcement and licencing

to Council as a part of the 2012 Budget Review Process. Because this is not an existing service provided by the Town's Planning & Building Department, it must be considered by Council as an enhancement to future budgets.

As of the writing of this article, \$94,240 has been requested to provide for startup costs beginning on March 1, 2012 (salary, benefits, office equipment, vehicle, etc.) with annual operating costs of \$73,000 in 2013 and \$75,250 in 2014.

Council now has a "huge" decision to make. As Mr. Finbow says in his report "... they must weigh the impact of non-enforcement to that of the expectations of the community and the level of risk that the municipality is exposed to for non-enforcement, versus the

benefits of cost saving measures."

In my opinion, the decision to proceed is a no brainer. It is the duty of this Council to proceed with measures that will maintain and enhance the quality of life, health and safety of the residents of the community, as well as the travelling public, and to protect or safeguard the environment and the reputation of the community.

The Town has invested over \$600,000 on legal and administrative expenses to get us this far in an effort to develop much-needed STA regulations. We cannot walk away or abandon this huge investment at this time – we need to move forward while we have momentum.

Multiple fire code violations shut down STA on Tyrolean Lane

On June 30, the Town's Chief Fire Prevention Officer, bylaw staff and OPP attended to a complaint about a property at 195 Tyrolean Lane relating to bylaw issues, including noise and camp fires. It was reported that "in excess of 50 people" were staying at the property and many were unlawfully occupying the basement area.

The occupants were removed and an order by the Ontario Fire Marshall was issued to close, preventing the owner from renting the chalet. The owner has appealed nine matters of compliance before the Ontario Fire Safety Commission that require attention in order to make the building safe for multiple occupancy use.

While a ruling against the owner may not be precedent-setting, it will certainly send a message to other STA operators that it's just a matter of time before full enforcement and a licensing regime are introduced. It is important to note that if the owners lose their appeal to the Commission and appeal to divisional court, then the results at that level will be "precedent setting."

Source: *Courier-Herald* 10/19

PASS IT ON . . .

After you have read this newsletter, please pass it on to a neighbour and suggest they join our Association – the best way to keep up-to-date on what's happening in our community. Membership, which includes a subscription to our newsletter, is just \$25 a year, payable to:

Blue Mountain Ratepayers' Association
Box 405, Collingwood, ON L9Y 3Z7



A wrap-up note on the Old Town Hall

*Was the process thorough and transparent?
NO! . . . Council flunked the test!*

**By Ron Hartlen
Clarksburg**

The end . . . it's over!

The Old Town Hall is to be demolished. It's now time to disengage and move on. This article will summarize the events and make some final observations and comments.

In the beginning . . .

Many ratepayers were concerned about the plan to demolish the building. The issue was raised from the floor, by citizens, during the 2010 election campaign. In a letter delivered in early December of 2010, a deputation, supported by well over one-hundred signatures, requested that demolition be delayed to allow time for a thorough and transparent search for a suitable use.

Some members of Council, particularly the Mayor and Deputy Mayor, fought hard to avoid any reconsideration of the previous decision to demolish. This included an instruction to the administration to update a report on the building and related issues, and was reinforced via documents and presentations by former Councillors McGee and Kennedy. Much of this resistance was justified by reference to a previous "*Public Process*", i.e., a *design charette*, whereby a relatively small group favoured demolition and the development of a green central gathering place.

Decision to launch the search (i.e., request for expression of interest)

It took approximately *four months* (to late March) for Council to decide to launch a Request for Expression of Interest (RFEI). An initial motion by Councillor Halos was discussed and amended. In the process, Councillor Gamble argued for a sufficiently long time-frame for both search and lease, and Councillor Martin pointed out that there should be public participation from the beginning. Those two Council-

lors voted against the amended motion for those reasons. It was not a recorded vote, and was so quick that members of the Public in the Gallery didn't see exactly who voted in favour. Apparently, as determined by subsequent enquiries, the Mayor, Deputy Mayor and Councillor McKean all voted in favour.

The RFEI

The RFEI was developed without any participation by representatives of the public. Without revisiting the full detail, the framing of the RFEI (five-year timeframe for lease; existing zoning; and unknown costs for essential maintenance and upgrades) appeared to have little appeal to prospective businesslike tenants. Supporters of the deputation's case informally expressed the view that the RFEI was a non-starter and had little or no chance to actually turn up an anchor tenant or lessee.

Proposals, review by committee, committee report, and independent individual input

The response to the RFEI was limited and disappointing. No large anchor tenant or potential lessee came forward. The proposals received were all local and were for only partial use of the building. None could be pursued for various reasons.

The Committee's written report recommended that Council consider: issuing a revised RFEI with a much longer timeframe for use; zoning changes; and, if necessary, doing any essential repairs. Deputy Mayor McKinlay and Councillor McKean served on this Committee, as did I along with another member of the Public.

One theme that emerged from reviewing the received proposals and the Committee process, was that there may have been value in the Town's retaining ownership as multi-use facility. Feeling very strongly that this potential should be explored, I resigned from the Committee in order to clearly frame the issue and push strongly, as a private citizen, for it to be pursued.

My input to Council and my reaction to Council's dealing with it are available on the BMRA website.

The decision, the rationale, and the flunking of the test

Council recently decided to forego any further exploration of use for the old hall, to do no further spending on the building; and, to proceed with demolition. (For the record, Councillors Gamble and Ardiel voted against the motion; Councillor Halos did not take part, having removed himself from the entire process for potential conflict of interest).

Tellingly, in the brief discussion, the Mayor referred to the OTH issue as a hangover "platform issue" from the election. Excuse me! I saw this issue *raised from the floor!* Furthermore, a key part of the motion for demolition was: to do otherwise would be *inconsistent with the previous public process*. Well,

By Michael P. Seguin

The town staff has identified a need to update their “Cash-in-Lieu of Parking (CiL)” policy, primarily as it relates to the Thornbury/Clarksburg area.

What does this mean?

An established rate will be charged to businesses for on-site parking spots that cannot be provided under the town bylaws.

For example, if a downtown business requires three parking spaces but can only provide two, then that business must pay a cash-in-lieu fee for one space to the town to go into a reserve fund for future parking needs.

Reports were brought to the Planning and Building Committee on Dec. 7, 2009 and on Nov. 7, 2011 to consider the actual rate to be charged to existing (change in use and expansions) and new businesses in the future. Staff advised that the town’s current cash-in-lieu rate is only \$1,500, which is considered significantly below the estimated actual costs of \$14,700 associated with land acquisition (\$8,900) and parking space design and construction (\$5,800).

Council was asked to consider various options between full cost recovery at \$14,700 to partial cost recovery at 25% or \$3,675 plus indexing.

At the Nov. 7th Planning Meeting and after much debate, the majority of the committee (Martin, Gamble and Halos) voted in favour of a \$11,025 fee based on partial cost recovery of 75% (or a 735% increase over the old rate at \$1,500 per space). Both Gamble and Ardiel voted against this fee, basically



Please note: This photograph was *not* taken in Thornbury or Clarksburg

Is there a real parking problem in the Thornbury/Clarksburg business areas?

arguing that this type of rate would have a negative impact on growth and development in the Thornbury/Clarksburg business areas.

At the Nov. 14th Council meeting, Linda Wykes, a former board member of the Chamber of Commerce and a business owner in Clarksburg, spoke out against the town’s proposed CiL increase (with letters of support from the business community), stating that the town has not really established whether a real parking problem exists in the Thornbury/Clarksburg business areas.

This type of rate increase will certainly deter businesses from relocating to our community, Wykes warned.

She gave examples of interested businesses that have basically walked away when they were told by town staff that they would have to pay high CiL rates for parking they could not provide.

She also gave examples of businesses that have renovated with additions that *would not* have completed their works if faced with these financial charges – they probably would have closed down and looked elsewhere.

In my opinion, both Linda and the business groups make a compelling argument for a much lower CiL charge. It appears that Council in their wisdom also agreed that an increase at this time may be premature, with the majority voting to table the Planning Committee decision and wanting more detailed information and support before establishing any rate change.

Councillor McKean was opposed to halting the decision to charge the higher CiL rate, arguing that businesses should pay the cost, not the taxpayers. Councillor Martin, who changed his opinion on the matter, argued that the town needs to get a better handle on economic development and growth in the community before setting any new rates.

To Councillor McKean, I say: if you run the small businesses out of town, then there will never be any need for new parking – just more vacancies. We live in a small rural setting, not in an urban one, which has greater parking needs and requirements. Let’s face it – larger businesses requiring high parking needs and wanting to develop in our community will certainly locate outside the downtown core areas.

The Old Town Hall

Continued from page 4

excuse me again! *If that was to be a pre-determined overriding condition, why on Earth did the controlling majority on Council launch the RFEI process in the first place?* It was a waste of money, staff time and the public’s time.

The Deputation was never looking for a particular outcome. It was simply seeking a thorough and transparent process. The majority of Councillors flunked the test.

I wouldn’t pretend to be able to read anyone’s mind or accurately infer motives. But from where I sit, based upon the facts of what I’ve seen and heard, Council’s handling of this matter was opaque, arrogant, dismissive and insulting. We deserve better!



ABOUT THE TOWN

With Michael Seguin

Gord Canning Drive!!!

On Oct. 21, a surprise tribute was held at the Village Conference Centre and attended by nearly 400 guests who honoured the life and business contributions of Gord Canning to the success of the Blue Mountain Resorts. Gord, who remains as CEO and Chairman of the Resorts, attributes most of his success to a business philosophy of bringing both “culture” and “values” to the area.

Gord received many tributes and recognition awards, but the one that stands out is Mayor Anderson’s announcement that Mountain Drive will be renamed **Gord Canning Drive** in the spring of 2012. This is a well-travelled street at the base of the South Lodge and this street recognition is expected to put Gord on “GPS.” Dan Skelton also announced that the Ski Resort is naming a ski-trail after him: “Gord’s Groove.”

It is important to note that Gord has also been very supportive of the Blue Mountain Ratepayers’ Association and has been instrumental in our growth involving Condo memberships. On behalf of the Association, I want to thank and congratulate Gord for all his hard work and successes. In my opinion, they should have named a mountain after him.

Source: Courier-Herald 10/26

Ambulance service finds a new home in Craigleith

The Blue Mountains and the County of Grey have reached a land lease agreement for construction of a new stand-alone Emergency Medical Services (EMS) ambulance station behind Fire Station 2 (Jerry Teed Fire Hall) in Craigleith. Construction of a masonry two bay station is expected to begin around the end of November and be completed in the spring of 2012.

A public meeting was held on July 4, 2011 to address the concerns of the public: proximity of the existing trail to the east of the dwellings fronting on Drake’s Path and ensuring that adequate buffering of the building is provided between the proposed site improvements and the lots fronting on Drake’s Path. The Town agreed that these concerns would be considered in the final site plan approval stage.

Source: Courier-Herald 11/09

Blue Mountain Village Association’s Centurion Cycling event a success

At a recent Town Finance and Administration Meeting, Don Braden of the Blue Mountain Village Association (BMVA) reported that the Centurion Cycling Event held Sept. 16-18 had a great, positive impact on the overall community. Approximately 3,100 riders competed in three biking events (25 mile, 50 mile and 100 mile races), up from 1,299 riders in 2010. The resort experienced a 12% increase in accommodations over 2010, with many visitors staying in other commercial lodging. Survey results indicate that 53% of the participants and guests visited the surrounding communities and 12% involved people coming back to the area for the first time in more than five years.

Mr. Braden also reported that the 2012 event has been scheduled for September 14-16 and it is expected to draw another 2,000 riders for a total of 5,000. Approximately \$125,000 will be spent next year on advertising, marketing and promotion, leading up to and during the event. The goal is to make The Blue Mountains the champions of the Centurion North American series and promote growth in the road cycling business in the community. The Town, as “host,” has been instrumental over the past two years in providing in-kind services such as coordination of permits, policing, fire, roads and monthly meetings, and also in making a financial contribution to the marketing program.

Source: Slide presentation by BMVA 11/15

At the movies – pleasure and education

The Blue Mountain 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 the world today.

Four films are left in the series. Admission is only \$7 per person at the door (free for students). Live

Emergency & Information

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

OPP (Collingwood & Blue Mountains): 1-888-310-1122; (Administration): 705-445-4321. Blue Mountains Resorts Security: 705-445-0231 x8281/8911 (24 hours)

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

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

music starts at 6.30 p.m. followed by a film at 7.30 p.m. For more details contact the BMWTF at 705-445-0357.

- **Jan. 18:** “Gasland” – a look at the largest domestic natural gas drilling boom in history that has swept across the United States
- **Feb. 15:** “The Economics of Happiness” – people resisting globalization and the consolidation of corporate power and demanding a re-regulation of trade and commerce
- **March 14:** “The Story of Bottled Water & the Story of Cosmetics”
- **April 18:** “Waste Land” – a look at the world’s largest garbage dump on the outskirts of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

Real estate news (as of Oct. 31)

■ Despite recent volatility in the stock markets, persistent negative economic reports as well as the instability of the broader international scene, some realtors believe that buyers are continuing to show confidence in the Georgian Triangle real estate market. October MLS statistics indicate continuing momentum from September with an increase of 8% in sales in 2011 (177 units) compared to October, 2010 (164 units). Dollar volume gains were up as well – 8.5% over last October, highlighting continued activity in the higher priced property market.

■ We understand that the year to date sales (January-October, 2011) still lag behind last year’s performance by 5.3% with only 1,592 properties sold so far this year compared to 1,677 properties at this time last year. Unless there is a considerable surge in sales over the last two months of 2011, the local Georgian Triangle Real estate market will be hard-pressed to reach the total of 1,906 sales achieved in 2010.

■ Listings are down slightly by 6%, with 467 new properties coming on the market compared to 497 last October. To date, however, numbers are still slightly ahead of last year, with 5,719 new properties for the year compared to 5,624 last year at this time. There still is an indication of ongoing confidence in the market moving forward.

■ Steady price increases continue to be recorded on a monthly basis with the year-to-date (end of October) figures reflecting a 4.5% increase over last year at this time. Specifically, the average sale price

published by Georgian Triangle Association of Realtors (GTAR) for sales-to-date (10 months) was \$327,513, compared to \$313,308 for the same time last year. The average price for the first six months of 2011 was \$322,936.

■ It will be interesting to see whether the sales volume will pick up over the remainder of the year and will reach near the 1,906 transactions of 2010. Also, the average price for all of 2010 was \$285,852 and a surge in volume is expected to bring the ten month average down closer to the low \$300,000 level.

Note: This information was abstracted from reports provided by the Movie Gals: Barb Thompson and Anita Lauer of Chestnut Park. They are currently very active in marketing the Far Hills condominium project in Thornbury. You are welcome to visit their web site at www.themoviegals.com to see more links or to share with them some of your interests in the real estate market.

Did you know?

1. The Town is now offering Civil Marriage Services at the new Town Hall. For \$200 you can get married (or renew your vows) during normal office hours. It will cost you another \$150 for services outside of normal office hours.

2. The Town is offering “gathering” space for use at the new Town Hall by not-for-profit groups, providing service to the residents and the community of The Blue Mountains at no charge. At the present time, each request is being considered separately based on timing, staff availability and costs necessary for set-up, site supervision and disassembly of the event.

3. The Town now has a “Public Art Policy” to handle the “administration, acquisition, safe-keeping, and de-accessioning of public art” in or on municipally-owned public space. Apparently there has been strong demand from the public either to donate or showcase local art in public areas.

4. The BMVA reports that “The Apple Pie Trail” continues to be a successful attraction to the community in promoting our heritage, our farmers (their apple products and markets), unique shopping experiences and local dining establishments. Developed only two years ago, the Trail has received provincial and international recognition and continues to be a key tourism driver for the region. In 2011, the Apple Pie Trail won the Ontario Culinary Tourism Experience Award.

5. The new Georgian College “John Di Poce South Georgian Bay” Campus is now officially open (October). The 20,000 sq. ft. facility will provide for 250 full-time and 3,000 part-time students and will offer popular student training programs that will help our residents and youths in achieving higher education and skills to continue living in our community.

Craigeith Community Centre

Restored 1860s one-room schoolhouse

Ideal for: Business meetings, Weddings,
Social events, Anniversaries

Includes kitchen facilities. For rental information,
contact Bruce Loveless at 705-446-4673

Death of the Old Town Hall – Council's wishes prevail over common sense!

In April of this year, many ratepayers predicted that the town's process of finding a user for the Old Town Hall would be a failure and that it was "doomed" and awaiting demolition. Even Erika Engel of the *Courier-Herald* agreed in her article: "The Old Town Hall's time has come, and gone." I guess many of us are psychic and understand the mentality of this Council.

Before bringing in the bulldozers, this Council temporarily relented to increasing demands for more public involvement and basically went through the motions with a newspaper advertisement

asking for an Expression of Interest (RFEI) to find some alternative use of the facility, one that is considered to have another 25-30 years of life. However, restrictive zoning, unknown repairs and a short rental period basically eliminated any potential and viable user.

This was the plan. In case the plan didn't work, two members of Council who were already on record as wanting to proceed with demolition, volunteered their services to review any proposals (the RFEI Evaluation Committee) – another step to assure our prediction.

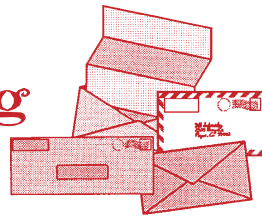
Interestingly, the RFEI Committee, in its report to Council on Oct. 12, recommended that Council direct staff to proceed with a new RFEI based on revised criteria that would make sense to the broader community – more suitable zoning, funds to upgrade the building and a lease period that would extend beyond five years. The upgrade or renovation costs were estimated at \$250,000. While \$250,000 to renovate may sound expensive to invest in this solid community building – consider some of the other proposed town

investments: \$500,000+ in landscaping to replace the old town hall and \$1.0 million to build a garage in Ravenna to store unused machinery and equipment.

No need to fret! The two Committee members from Council (McKinlay and McKean) did as predicted and showed no support for the public committee members, by failing to move that Council proceed with a new RFEI – their names are shown at the bottom of the report as

supporting the recommendation. Councillor McKean and Deputy Mayor McKinlay, along with Mayor Anderson and Councillor Martin, are now responsible for the demise of the Old Town Hall. They have called for demolition immediately, bypassing an easy opportunity to quickly consult the full community. Why? Do they fear the broader public may discover innovative, cooperative new ways to utilize the

The Mailbag



This Letter to the Editor was submitted and published in the Courier-Herald on Oct. 26 but did not make the Connection nor was it posted on our web site. It relates to Council's half-hearted attempt at transparency and their predetermined decision to demolish the Old Town Hall Building. We would like to share it with you and welcome any comments you may have. I can assure you, I will be monitoring the demolition costs. – MPS

building in the future?

Interestingly, the motion that was passed by Council included a clause stating "that the recommendation of the Committee would not be in accordance with the public process, which called for the clearing of the site for public greenspace use." Why on earth did they launch the RFEI in the first place? A dialogue in 2007 with a few "hand-picked" community members is not, in my opinion, a public process and representative of the public at large and the new electorate in 2011.

Now, the cost to retain a sound and useful building will have to be weighed against the cost of demolition (over \$100,000), the cost and location of dumping the materials, the unknown costs of clean-up or potential contamination and more importantly – the lost opportunity to provide future space and program needs of the community. RIP to Council's supposed "money pit" and the debated "hangover" from the 2010 election! Wait until the next election and another prediction!!!

Michael P. Seguin
Thornbury

**Membership in the
Blue Mountain Ratepayers' Association**
is only \$25 a year
payable to:
Blue Mountain Ratepayers' Association,
Box 405, Collingwood, ON L9Y 3Z7

INFOLINE: 211

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

Dear Member – ITS TIME TO RENEW

The winter season is quickly approaching once again and we are now asking you to renew your family membership for 2012. Your membership fee is important to YOU so that your Association can continue to provide YOU with ongoing information on issues in YOUR community and can strongly represent YOU.

If YOU have already renewed, we thank you for YOUR continued support. If YOU haven't renewed then please fill out the application form below.

YOUR membership fee enables us to publish our quarterly NEWSLETTER (*The View from Blue*), provide for an Annual General Meeting and, most of all, to maintain our Web Site so that we can reach out to as many people as possible on an on-going basis.

If you have any questions regarding your renewal, please contact Michael P. Seguin at 519-599-7179 or mpseguin@rogers.com. Info also is available at www.bluemountainratepayersassociation.com.



BMRA MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION FORM – JANUARY TO DECEMBER 2012

Please enclose a cheque for \$25, payable to Blue Mountain Ratepayers' Association, as your annual family membership fee. Mail your cheque and this application form to:

Blue Mountain Ratepayers' Association, Box 405, Collingwood, ON L9Y 3Z7

Last name: _____

First names(s): _____

Your Address: _____

City: _____ Postal Code: _____

Phone No: _____ Blue Mountains Phone No: _____

Blue Mountains address _____

Mailing address: _____

(If different from above)

Email: _____