

# 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

March 2008

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## MEMBERSHIP

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

## Dorothy Healey resigns as BMRA President

The following email was received by the Board on Feb 8/08):

To The Board of Directors  
Blue Mountain Ratepayers' Association:

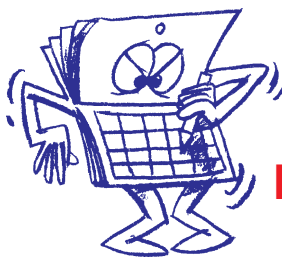
Due to continued poor health I must step aside as your chairperson. I have just returned from two operations in Toronto and the results are not as positive as we had hoped.

John Pineo, as Vice-President, will assume the chair until the AGM, which is scheduled for May 31. At that time a new Board will be elected and a new Management Committee chosen.

I have spent the past 25 years in active involvement with BMRA and its predecessor association, Craighleith Ratepayers. I deeply regret that ill-health forces me to this decision. I will miss the challenges of dealing with the Town on the many issues that confront us, and the friendly comradeship I have enjoyed with all of you.

Sincerely,

Dorothy Healey



## Mark your calendar

Blue Mountain Ratepayers' Association

### Annual General Meeting

Date – May 31, 2008

Time – 10:00 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.

Location – T B A

Details on Agenda and Presentations will appear  
in our next Newsletter

**Mark your calendar****“PITCH-IN WEEK”**

April 21-27, 2008

*Join your neighbours to make a difference*

**PITCH-IN WEEK** is a national week of activities to beautify our communities. The Town of the Blue Mountains has participated in “PITCH-IN WEEK” for the past three years.

Last year, many residents of Brooker Boulevard “PITCHED-IN” during this special week to collect more than 20 bags of trash which had accumulated over the winter months in their area.

This is your opportunity to make a difference! Help the environment by showing your community spirit! Join with your neighbours to collect the trash on the lawns, in the ditches and along the stream banks to make the Town of The Blue Mountains look great! Even a two hour investment of time will work wonders on your street.

All the trash which you collect can be left at the side of the road in any garbage bag. It will be collected by town trucks during the following week.

Expand your clean up session with a neighbourhood barbeque. Your PITCH-IN day becomes a great opportunity to reconnect and/or meet your neighbours.

If your neighbourhood/street participated in PITCH-IN week last year, please advise the writer as we wish to recognize community participation. (Written by Peter Sharpe [pesharpe@rogers.com]. Research by Janis Burton)

**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.

**A new Town Hall and offices proposed for Blue Mountains****By Dennis Stainer**

Whenever I hear about plans for a new town hall and offices for any municipality, I become very worried. The reasons given are always legitimate: lack of space, the town is growing, etc., etc. However, it quickly becomes apparent that what will be built will occupy valuable land, will be constructed like a mini Taj Mahal and will cost an enormous amount of money – mine and yours!

I can think of several examples: the Metro Hall building in Toronto (hardly used at all); the York Region Building (it came in at a grossly inflated figure and needed two architects to complete it); the Vaughan Council Building in Maple (as yet unfinished, but the rumour is that it also will be in excess of the budget).

Our current Council is considering plans for an expanded building, which might even be built on land recently appropriated – remember the gas station? We must be wary of what is going on. What is going to happen to the current Council Building and that gas station location?? These are valuable properties. Will they be sold to raise some funds? Probably not. They may even be retained for file and record storage – and then a new site might be chosen at a prime location in downtown Thornbury.

How to pay for this? Well, the recently imposed and extremely unpopular increased water and sewage charges could help, I suppose!

Municipal Offices should be constructed at minimal cost on land which could not be used for any other purpose – a good way to save money, yours and mine!

I trust our Mayor and Councilors are listening!

**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

## Water and Sewer rates — The Town still hasn't got it right!

**Editor's note:** *When the water/sewer rate review was published (see About Town, page 5), John Pineo, our Acting President, immediately drafted and presented to council the following correspondence to clearly present your/our concerns regarding tax increases:*

Town of the Blue Mountains  
26 Bridge Street East, Box 310  
Thornbury, ON N0H 2P0

### **Re: Proposed 2008 Water and Sewer Rates**

Dear Mayor and Council,

The members of The Blue Mountain Ratepayers Association have serious concerns about the current rate structure for water and sewer costs. These were most recently made evident by articles in our September and December newsletters, "The View from Blue."

You have scheduled public meetings for discussion of these rates for March 5 and 26. We submit the following comments and suggestions for consideration at these meetings.

Many of our Ratepayers (the writer included) feel the current rate structure is unfair and excessive. Water is a basic necessity and must be available to all at a reasonable cost.

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.** They stated the main reason for their installation was to better measure usage, and the fiscal impact would be revenue neutral.

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, but also the tax-sewer bills are significantly higher than previously charged.

We suggest that the base fixed charge for both water and sewers include the standard or average usage of 15 cubic liters per month or 180 cubic liters per year. Any excess usage beyond this amount should be charged at a much higher rate than at present. This would be much more effective in supporting the objective of encouraging water conservation beyond the basic minimum.

In keeping with the promise of revenue neutrality the fixed charges should be capped at the level of the combined charge on the 2006 tax bill. Increases to this fixed charge should be limited to the annual rate of inflation. Any increase in costs relative to increased production would then be properly borne by those who use the excess water.

This would also simplify the problem posed by condominiums where water is received through a central meter. Individual units would be billed the standard charge which would include their normal usage and any excess usage by the combined units could be added to the maintenance fee of the corporation.

Our members further strongly suggest that the regime of bi-monthly billing be scrapped and changed to the same process as the tax billing. The current process penalizes users for short-term anomalies over which they have little control. The billing period should be annual, based on annual usage. Users could then have the option as they do now with their taxes.

By not changing or canceling the current "water restriction by-law" the town has indicated that it must be working, so the reasoning behind the two-month billing period is negated. Our members feel strongly that the by-law should be amended to allow out-door watering for the same two hour length of time, but in the middle of the night, say from 2 to 4 a.m., when temperatures are lower and evaporation would be minimized.

The Blue Mountain Ratepayers Association, while being quick to criticize, has always tried to offer reasonable solutions. In this case we believe we have proposed a win-win proposition that would allow proper allocation of costs for these most valuable services.

Respectfully submitted

John Pineo

Acting President, Blue Mountain Ratepayers' Association (BMRA)

## Town of the Blue Mountains 2008 proposed budget highlights & facts

*The following information regarding the 2008 Town budget was extracted from the INFORMATION BOOKLET provided at a public Open House on Wednesday, Feb. 6, 2008*

- “The Proposed Budget presented recommends a 4.2% increase in Local Tax Rate over 2007.”
- “\$13.7 million operating budget for tax-supported programs in 2008 increasing to \$15.3 million in 2010”
- “\$1.18 million budget for other user-fee supported programs (Building Inspection, Harbour) in 2008 increasing to \$1.33 million in 2010”
- \$3.1 million operating budget for Water and Wastewater”
- “Proposed expenditures for the Town of the Blue Mountains Water System for 2008 increased 6.3% over 2007 while Wastewater proposed expenditures have decreased 7.6%”
- “Emergency Services is being supported through increases in Fire Services operations and Police Services through a contract with the Ontario Provincial Police.”
- “Significant infrastructure investment in Roads, Bridges and Buildings.”
- “Recreation emphasis in terms of Parks, Trails and Shoreline coordination.”
- “Continuing contributions to Grey Bruce Health Services – Meaford Hospital (\$100,000 over five years with three years remaining)”
- “Staff expenses have increased due to proposed additional full-time and contract staff in order to maintain existing and expected service levels as well as some legislated requirements (PSAB 3150)”
- “A minimum \$1.683 million from the Ontario Municipal Partnership Fund in 2008 has been confirmed.”
- “New Town Hall facility addressed in the proposed budget has an estimated cost of \$5 million. The impact will not be recognized until 2010.”

- Overall reserve and Reserve Fund transfers have decreased by \$11,000 from 2007 to 2008.

*At a planning meeting (Feb. 27/08), four members of council, including Mayor Ellen Anderson, voted to adopt the budget while Coun. Bob Gamble, who is the finance chair, cast the one negative vote. Deputy mayor Duncan McKinlay was absent.”*  
(Source: Enterprise-Bulletin 29/02/08)

### Real estate in the TOBM — It's a “Buyers’ Market”

**By Michael P. Seguin**

The latest information obtained from the local real estate board and published by Royal LePage representatives at [www.collingwoodhomes.ca](http://www.collingwoodhomes.ca) indicates that the average price for a detached single family dwelling in 2007 (12 month period) for the Town of the Blue Mountains was \$433,958 (171 sales) compared to \$254,726 in the Town of Collingwood (281 sales). The sales-to-listing ratio for the Town was only 32% – a “Buyers’ Market.”

New developments in the Town include two new restaurants at the Village at Blue: Centro’s (formerly the Indian Motorcycle Club) and Three Guys and a Stove.

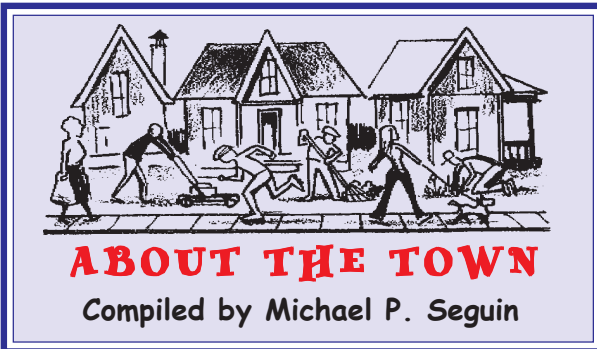
Construction and sales have begun at a new development on the Thornbury Mill Pond. They will have 40 townhouse condos in a community called the Mill Pond at the Village.

Georgian Bay Club is getting ready to break ground for 50 luxury villas along the 10<sup>th</sup> fairway called the Private Retreats at GBC.

For more information on the current state of the economy in the Town of Collingwood and in the Town of the Blue Mountains, I would recommend you visit the above Web site and subscribe to free quarterly publications. (Source: Royal LePage Winter 2008 Publication: [www.collingwoodhomes.ca](http://www.collingwoodhomes.ca))

#### Please pass it on . . .

Once you have read this newsletter, please pass it on to your neighbour and encourage them to join our association!



## “Party Palaces” — The Town gets tough

Finally, the Town is listening to its constituency and cracking down on “Party Palaces.” After almost continuous complaints from the public relating to short-term accommodation (STA) uses and abuses, including public nuisance, garbage, noise, parking concerns, overcrowding and safety, the Town has finally passed an interim by-law that prohibits anyone from using land or buildings in the town as a short term rental house. Exempted are hotels, motels, bed and breakfast places and residences if the owner lives in or near the building.

We recommend that you view the Town’s staff report and the actual by-law (2008-12) at [www.town.thebluemountains.on.ca](http://www.town.thebluemountains.on.ca)

The interim control by-law is for a period of six months (expiring Aug. 4, 2008) and is to provide sufficient time for Town staff to review the issue of short-term accommodation uses and proceed with the development of draft Official Plan policies and draft Zoning By-law Amendments, as well as a licensing by-law to regulate existing short term accommodations. (Source: E-B 02/08/08)

It is important to note that this interim by-law is the result of over 43 submissions and continuous complaints from the public. We cannot let up and just allow this by-law to expire or be extended without the Town’s assurances of a permanent by-law to license, regulate and govern short-term accommodation uses. We cannot allow Council to be intimidated by the gloomy predictions of the Director of Building & By-Laws who, without providing any real evidence, envisions a substantial financial burden to his department and the 2008 and 2009 budgets. And lastly, we cannot allow the Town to be

intimidated by “cut-throat” and irresponsible landlords who threaten legal action because they think a loophole in the existing zoning by-law supersedes the interests, concerns and the “heart” of the residents of this community.

## Changes coming to 2008 Water/wastewater user rates

A public information session was held on March 5 to outline the expected — the average water consumer will be expected to pay approximately 14% more this year (\$433 vs. \$378 based on 180m<sup>3</sup> per annum). While the fixed rate has been lowered from \$12.49 to \$12.11 per month, the “tiered user rates” have been substantially increased from \$1.27 to \$1.60/m<sup>3</sup> for 0-30m<sup>3</sup>, \$1.42 to \$1.42 to \$1.75/m<sup>3</sup> for 31-60m<sup>3</sup>, \$1.57 to \$1.90/m<sup>3</sup> for 61-90m<sup>3</sup> and \$1.72 to \$2.05/m<sup>3</sup> for greater than 90m<sup>3</sup>. Undoubtedly, heavy users will pay much more.

The Town is proposing a decrease of about 11% in wastewater rates (\$407 vs. \$456 based on water consumption of 180m<sup>3</sup> per annum). If you’re lucky to have both water and sewers on your street, we are told that the net differential will only be \$6. However, I think the reality is that most people still do not have sewers and the basic necessity of water will result in the average user paying about \$55 or more in 2008.

The Town advises that the 2008 proposed utility rates have been set to cover all operating costs as well as the current users’ share of capital repairs, capital replacement and non-growth related updates to existing infrastructure. The Town also advises that no part of the annual water and wastewater user fee goes towards paying for growth. The cost of expanding the water and wastewater infrastructure or the cost of excess capacity needed to provide for growth-related development (new construction) will be paid for by development charges.

The public information session provided the staff report that will be presented to Council for their approval as well as a number of tables outlining the history, the financial breakdown of 2007 and 2008 costs, budgets and rates, the assumptions considered and some options to be considered. This information was posted on the Town’s website during the week of March 10: [www.town.thebluemountains.on.ca](http://www.town.thebluemountains.on.ca). If you cannot access the web page, contact Serena Wilgress,

Administrative Assistant, at (519) 599-3131 x278.

**If you have any concerns, please review all this information and be prepared to attend the Public Meeting to be held at the Beaver Valley Community Centre at 7.30 p.m. on Wednesday, March 26.** If you cannot attend this meeting but have comments you wish to express at this meeting, you can contact me at (519) 599-7179 or send me an email at [mpseguin@rogers.com](mailto:mpseguin@rogers.com)

### **Roundabout proposed at south end of Blue Mountain**

The Town has approved in principle a cost-sharing arrangement with the Blue Mountain Resorts group to build a \$1.8 million roundabout at the intersection of Grey Road 19, Mountain Road and the lower end of Scenic Caves Road. Traffic in the area is expected to increase significantly with the development of the Orchard Hill area, which includes a new ski lodge and several parking lots. The design was considered to be the best option for safety reasons.

Statistics from Britain and the United States indicate 40% fewer collisions and 80% fewer injuries in roundabouts compared to traditional intersections. The Town has agreed to pay 20% of the cost, estimated at around \$360,000, with the Resorts and Grey County paying the remaining 80%. (Source: E-B 11/28/07)

### **Fires and vehicle idling — “grassroots” campaigns**

A ban on vehicle idling is being sought by the Town and the community to help reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Some 20 other Ontario municipalities already have prohibited unnecessary idling. The Town is committed to reducing greenhouse gas emissions to meet targets set by Partners for Climate Protection, a coalition of governments and service agencies.

There also is community interest in implementing an “Open Air Burning” by-law. Most municipalities have demonstrated a priority to regulate and prevent fires on residential properties. Many studies have proven that open air burning is both a fire and safety hazard and negatively impacts the quality of the air we breathe and the environment.

At the present time, only a phone call to the fire department is needed to start a fire. The

person starting the fire needs no experience and there is no control as to type of material someone throws into the fire. We need only to look at the devastation in California this past year where over 1,000 homes were destroyed by a human-ignited open air brush fire. (Source: E-B 11/28/07)

### **Low water levels creating waves**

Dropping water levels in Georgian Bay are causing great concern for the Town of the Blue Mountains. At the present time, the municipal intake for the Water Treatment Plant is in approximately 22-24 feet of water, rather than the former 28 feet. Under optimum conditions, the intake should be located in at least 30 feet of water.

Mayor Anderson reports that if the water level drops another two feet, the Town will probably be forced to extend the water intake further into the bay, at an estimated cost of \$5 million. Yikes – another tax increase on the horizon?

There is a major concern that these lower water levels may also lead to beach contamination in coming years! (Source: E-B 12/07)

### **Wineries in the Beaver Valley?**

For all you wine lovers, Georgian Hills, a local vineyard along the Grey Highlands-Blue Mountains townline, has been harvesting its second crop of grapes for a smooth, pear-flavored ice wine which is available for distribution in the local community. So far the company's product is available in several restaurants, including Oliver and Bonacini at the Mountain, Café Chartreuse in Collingwood and the Falls Inn in Walters Falls. The company indicates that they also grow a wide array of grape varieties: Gamay, Riesling, Chardonnay, Marechal Foch, Seyval Blanc, Baco Noir, Pinot Noir and Gewurztraminer. Their success may encourage more wineries to develop in our area. (Source: Courier-Herald 12/19/07)

### **Canada Post changing addresses in the Craigleith area**

Attention residents in the L9Y Craigleith postal area — your new mailing address could soon change from RR2 and RR3 Collingwood to The Blue Mountains. While no date has been set for the changeover, the Town indicates that funding is being allocated in the 2008 budget to install pads for new community mail boxes and to replace older community mail boxes. (Source: C-H 01/30/08)