



Published by Blue Mountain Ratepayers' Association

www.bmratespayers.com

Box 198, Thornbury, Ontario N0H 2P0

MAY 2017

EDITION 17-05

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

By Peter Bordignon, President of BMRA

Friends, Neighbours and Members

The Blue Mountains Ratepayers' Association is growing in numbers and influence, thanks to many of you who keep us abreast of the issues and support our activities. There is always strength in numbers and that is why your BMRA is so successful and your membership is the proof of that.

We truly do have an amazing and dedicated group sitting on or advising your Board of Directors. Our established Committees are growing with expertise in all the areas that the BMRA and our members deem need to be focused on. This is both from within our board and from the community at large. I would like to personally thank all of them for their work and dedication.

New Committees are welcome to start up, join and use our resources. These include using our Web site and Newsletter which are both great vehicles of communication. As we cautiously approach the 2018 Municipal Election, we may want to take a page from our Past President

Michael Seguin's 2014 playbook, and revisit the idea of forming an Election Committee for our 2017-2018 term.

We really do need to find capable candidates who care about good local governance, candidates who will provide open and transparent leadership and candidates who can find solutions that are in the best interest of our whole community.

My personal goal as President for the BMRA is to build on the incredible strengths of Blue Mountains residents and ratepayers with our amazing culture of volunteerism, neighbourhood activism and passion found within not only the BMRA but other community associations. We need to work together where we can have a rich mix of residents, businesses and institutions that make our neighborhoods' what they are.

We need to unleash the potential of not only our group but all residents that serve our town collectively - by interweaving our individual missions into the rich web of our neighbourhood life.

This past year has been one of the most volatile in our Town's history. Court Cases, Lawsuits and Library board issues seem to be the norm when in reality a beautiful town our size should be relatively calm and running smooth. Working together, I know we will all grow and improve our services within our Community. Committees, Boards, and our Council work best when people are working for a cause, rather than against an issue.

Personally, I did want to let you know that I am putting my name forth to continue as your BMRA President for one more term then I plan to step down at the May 2018 AGM to make way for my successor.

Thank you all for another great year.

happy
mother's day!



BMRA-YEAR IN REVIEW

The Budget Committee - Terry Thompson, Chair

- Our past efforts to limit water and wastewater fixed and consumptions charges have been rewarded, as 2017 charges remain flat.
- Town budget presentations now include "Forecast Actual" in the budget summary pages - now we need to get the line by line comparisons for more transparency in the process. Including the cost line charts is also a goal for 2017.
- Excessive taxes are paid to the County annually! These funds that could be better used right here and were featured in our January budget presentation.

We will keep the pressure on to help Council during 2017.

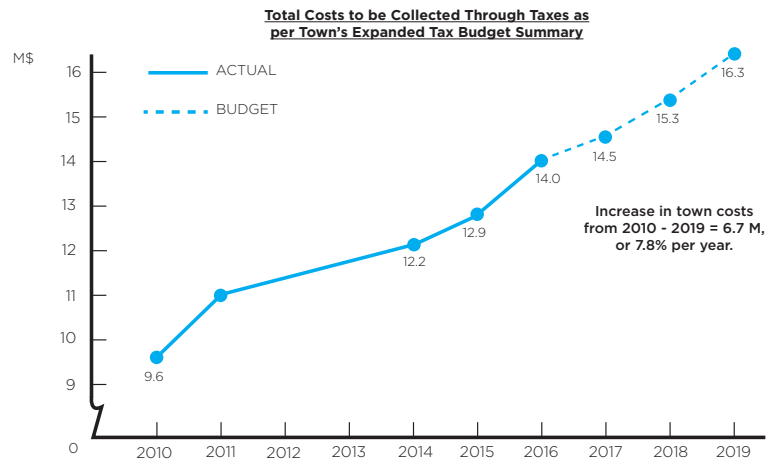


Short Term Accommodation Committee Terry Kellar, Chair

The BMRA has a long history with being most influential in the successful establishment of TBM policy and bylaws to govern Short Term Rentals (STA's) in low density Residential areas of the Town.

We now have rules & regulations that have consequences for poor management of a rental unit by an owner.

- The BMRA has been in the fore-front by supporting the Town when a STA owner has challenged the Town's right to regulate their industry at the Ontario Municipal Board (OMB).
- The Town prevailed. In the subsequent court challenge the Town again won and was awarded costs.
- Currently there is another challenge to the OMB to obtain a Legal Conforming STA license for a property in an area not zoned for STA's. The BMRA again supports the Town in this important and precedent setting fight.
- Recently the local STA industry has requested that the Town take into consideration how they operate their Business before assessing penalties, if there is a problem at one of their units. If the town accepts their lobbying then it would mean the owners would not be responsible for any of the bad behavior of their customers. The BMRA STA Committee does not agree with this approach and will lobby on your behalf.



Planning Committee - Brian Nelson, Chair

- The new Town of the Blue Mountains Official Plan was approved in 2016. BMRA played an important role as a citizen representative, with influence in key areas such as the elimination of density and height bonusing as well as the inclusion of the Town's Community Design Guidelines in the OP.
- The Town's new Sign Bylaw, also approved in 2016, is much more sensitive to the look and character of our community, thanks in part to the hard work of citizens like Vivien Alper, Rosemary Gosselin and the BMRA Planning Committee.
- BMRA will continue to be engaged in the development of important new Town Planning initiatives expected in 2017 and 2018, including a new Comprehensive Zoning Bylaw and policies for Short Term Accommodation.

Environment - Blanka Guyatt, Chair

- Close collaboration between the BMRA and the Blue Mountains Watershed Trust Foundation (the Trust).
- 2016-2017 The Silver Creek Initiative
- Originators on Phragmites identification, education and removal
- Continually works to protect the environment within new building development in the community



Several BMRA representatives attended the April 13, 2017 County meeting in support of TBM Mayor McKean, Deputy Mayor Ardiel, CAO Speck along with Councillor Martin Chair of the TBM County Committee and its members Councillors Halos and McGee.

The purpose of that meeting was to get the County to simply agree to going along with the Minister of Municipal Affairs' suggestion that instead of pushing Tier 1, that instead TBM retain a Facilitator to help us negotiate a fairer deal with the County.

After debate for about an hour the outcome was that the glass could be considered half full.

The case was capably pursued by our Politicians but hit the wall articulated by the County CAO who backed the County staff recommendation, put to a motion. That County Motion, to not support the Facilitator, carried with a weighted vote of 30/16.

The CAO essentially created a Catch 22 from which there was no escape. She wants TBM to make it clear the benefits it wants and how those benefits will be beneficial to all of Grey County. In other words we can ask for change as long as it doesn't change anything.

That was the low point of the meeting. But thankfully things got better.

The County did agree to establish a Joint Committee with TBM to consider the various issues: fiscal and governance. The idea of a Facilitator is not wholly off the table and may be reconsidered by the Joint Committee terms of reference.

Chair Michael Martin made it clear this was not an argument about the math or the existing rules. Therefore the next step at the new Joint Committee will be to make it clear what TBM wants and include tangible ideas such as has been explained at length in previous Newsletters. For example capital expenditures on our Library are approaching a million dollars. Our growth situation justifies that large expenditure but we don't have the full time population to give us the votes at the County to get our fair share of our own money that we send to them.

Speaking of votes. Having 18 Councillors at County, not directly elected and sent there by Ratepayers, makes no sense. Perhaps 9? And have them compensated directly by each Municipality? TBM is currently paying 26% of \$632K for the 18. Nuts! Put this on the Joint Committee agenda.

Other examples that need to go on the Joint Committee agenda

is dealing with the unfairness of what we receive back from the County are: roads, bicycle lanes, County Development Charges (TBM DCs are about a third of everything collected by the County, this is where the growth is happening, we deserve those charges for our infrastructure needs). The existing deal is unsustainable!

We need to do more work on our unique demographics and explain them to our own populace as well as the County. We were accused by representatives at the County of using a full time population of only 7000 whereas we tend to brag about 35000 arriving as tourists or part time on the weekend. Ok that's a fair comment. But it underlines our problem. We have to provide services for those kinds of peak population but we don't get a weighted vote at the County for over 35000 in population. So yes let's discuss the benefits and the costs of our type of demographic.

Bottom line:

Our growth demographics are complicated and that's why we require more autonomy to manage our destiny. It's called FAIRNESS! That's about as Canadian as it gets.

Grey County Committee - John Leckie - Chair

- The TBM County Committee has been formed with Councillor Michael Martin as Chair. A deputation was made on April 13th, 2017.
- TBM has had discussions and was in the process of retaining 2 very seasoned experts, retired deputy ministers of Housing, to get a better deal with the County. This will be delayed with the County preference to start the 'Better Deal Process' with a Joint Committee.
- Bradford has started a process to secede from Simcoe County with their claim of an unfair deal. Is this the beginning of a movement on archaic County structures? The committee will be following this initiative closely.

Communications - Paula Hope, Chair

Paula Hope, BMRA Communications Committee Chair would like to thank all committee members, with a special thanks to Linda Wykes of Riverside Graphics and Peter Bordignon for their assistance this year with the BMRA newsletter. Highlights are as follows:

- More newsletter editions, with even stronger, well researched articles
- A much improved “look and feel” to the newsletter, speckled with thoughtful cartoons supported by a new lay-out and an updated BMRA logo and website
- Establishment of the Letters to the Editor section, augmented editing and partnering with The Blue Mountain Review for cost-effective distribution

Membership - Jane Moysey, Chair

Jane Moysey, the Membership Chair is constantly informing and recruiting new and current tax payers to our association.

That naturally leads me to kindly remind everyone to renew your membership if you haven't already with the Blue Mountain Ratepayers' Association (BMRA). If you haven't joined in the past, we invite all permanent and seasonal residents to become new members.

This year our membership fees will remain at \$25.00. These are just a few of the highlights that your Blue Mountain Ratepayers Association is currently working on and involved with.



2016-2017 BMRA Board of Directors

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Terry Thompson, Budget Review
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Michael Seguin Past-President
Dorothy Healey Past-President

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visit the website and click on
JOIN NOW

JOIN TODAY!

The Blue Mountains Ratepayers' Association is growing in numbers thanks to many of you who keep abreast of the issues and support BMRA activities! Please don't forget to send in your \$25 and keep us the force we've become! New members and diversity always welcome!

We are actively seeking residential members as well as members from our agricultural community, corporate business, and small business. We are looking for committee volunteers with skillsets in website, social media, fundraising and municipal elections.

PLEASE RENEW OR JOIN TODAY!

**RENEW TODAY
ONLY \$25!**

www.bmratepayers.com

Visit the website and click on JOIN NOW today!

WHY BE A BMRA MEMBER?

- Strength in numbers = influence on government and community issues, paid membership is the proof
- Membership means you can bring issues of concern to the attention of the Association and perhaps find like minded support
- Represent the issues facing your neighbourhood or industry and make a difference
- While your Board are all Volunteers...
Website, Newsletters and AGM are costly: for effective and timely communication we need your dues!