

## **Paula Hope – Candidate for TBM Town Council 2018**

**Please see below for my underlined, bolded responses to each question below.**

**Thank you for this opportunity to share my thoughts on your vital sector,**

**Paula Hope**



### **Town of The Blue Mountains Election - 2018 Candidate Questionnaire**

Blue Mountain Village Association (BMVA) is a not-for-profit, member-based association and regional destination management organization (DMO). Our membership consists of more than 1300 lodging (hotel Condominium) unit owners, commercial businesses, homeowner residents and resort operators. Our homeowner membership class alone represents more than 2000 household votes in the upcoming municipal election. Collectively, we drive more than 2.5 million visitors to the region, employ between 2700 and 3300 employees throughout the year, contribute to the local tax base and support the economic growth of regional businesses from Main Street operators to specialized local service providers.

In addition to domestic and international marketing, year-round festivals and 24-hour operations management, BMVA is a proactive advocate for members to governments at all levels. BMVA ensures our members' best interests have a voice and their needs are met. With the upcoming municipal election, BMVA's membership is concerned about a number of pressing issues and the leadership required to shape our community and economy over the next four years. We want to learn more about how you, as an elected representative, will respond to the issues identified below. Your responses will be shared with BMVA members so that they have information that will allow them to make an informed choice on Election Day.

Thank you for your time and interest, we look forward to this important first exchange.

### **Supporting Tourism Industry & Role of Blue Mountain Village Association**

#### Supporting Tourism Industry & Employees

Blue Mountain Resort recently celebrated its 75th anniversary, a tribute to the vision of its founder and local icon Jozo Weider. In addition to this history, many do not know that planning for today's Blue Mountain Village dates back to the 1972 Official Plan and successive land use planning exercises into the early 1980s and beyond, led by local planners, municipalities and community members. Tourism is one of the main economic drivers and a significant employer in the area today - *by design!* Proactive planning almost 50 years ago ensured that our economy would grow leveraging our natural assets; it also ensured that we would rebound from the last decline in manufacturing. Today, approximately 2.5 million visitors

come to the area annually, providing thousands of jobs in all tourism fields and spurring growth and employment in many secondary sectors. Growth has largely been linked to the success of world class attractions and the supporting infrastructure for visitors such as accommodations, restaurants, agri-tourism and retail. As our community's "lifestyle value proposition" has strengthened, these benefits have also attracted interest among new residents and the development sector which has driven housing, population and tax-base growth for regional municipalities.

a) *What initiatives would you support to grow, improve and protect the tourism economy & to help communicate our history and planning, economic impact, and the benefits & value we bring to residents' lifestyles, property values, etc.?*

*I would support the following initiatives to grow, improve and protect the tourism economy,*

- 1) *Elect a TBM Council that reaches out and nurtures tourism, understanding that it is the # 1 driver of success in the municipality and the County.*
- 2) *Create a full-time Economic Development Officer role at TBM, with a strong background in tourism, whose main responsibility is to work closely with all tourism-related bodies in order that our world-class resort reaches its full potential.*
- 3) *Working with BMVA, create a co-ordinated TBM strategic plan that supports tourism, agriculture as well as enriching the life style of current and new residents*

b) *How would you organize & finance such initiatives?*

- 1) *No cost to taxpayers to elect Council members who recognize the contribution and potential of our tourism industry*
- 2) *No further cost to taxpayers - Request Grey County for funding for the Economic Development role to be re-allocated from the County budget that already supports 3 Economic Development positions at the County office, with no allocation for development at Blue Mountain*
- 3) *Very little cost to taxpayers to create a forum that supports communication between all sectors to develop a vision and an effective strategic plan for TBM that will be followed by elected officials and staff*

#### Blue Mountain Village Association Effectiveness

BMVA's **Vision** is to be the first-choice, year-round destination for those seeking personalized and authentic experiences that create lasting memories. Our **Mission** is to be an innovative destination management organization (DMO) which enhances and promotes the greater Blue Mountain experience to the benefit of Village stakeholders. We are internationally recognized and highly effective, growing Blue Mountain Village (and surrounding destinations) into one of the top four destinations in Ontario! Our leadership position and work locally drives our economy and provides benefits to the municipality in that BMVA takes the lead (and the costs) to execute international/national tourism marketing, annual festival programming and regional economic development efforts. As such, taxpayer dollars and municipal staff time are saved compared to similar tourism destinations that rely on the municipality to do this work. BMVA and the Town work together in partnership to support the entire municipality and we aim to strengthen these ties and efforts with the new Council in the future.

a) *Do you believe that BMVA is effective in its Vision and Mission and that we add value to residents, businesses and government?*

*Absolutely! We are grateful for the value that the “Mountain” has added to our municipality. We just don’t show it very often. That needs to change with the new Council.*

b) *Will you support continued partnership between BMVA and the Town?*

*Absolutely! I will seek every opportunity to promote the relationship between the BMVA and the Town. You can bet on it!:) As the VP of the Blue Mountains Chamber of Commerce, I was pleased to be an enthusiastic supporter of the BMCC grant to the “Creating Attainable Housing in South Georgian Bay” initiative, led by the BMVA.*

## **Leadership, Strategy & Economic Development**

### Leadership

The Town of The Blue Mountains business community is very concerned about single-issue politics that detract from Council’s focus on big-picture planning and the leadership required to effectively serve our dynamic municipality. BMVA members are looking for candidates who drive community-wide leadership that considers the needs and aspirations of permanent and part-time residents, key business sectors, employees, entrepreneurs, municipal partners, visitors and more! Further, we are looking for solutions-based, service-oriented and collaborative mindsets.

a) *Please share what your leadership approach will be and how you will ensure that all community voices – including the business community – will be incorporated into your work.*

*I am saddened for our Town for the amount of time, resources and energy that has been expended on unproductive activities and dysfunctional pursuits during the last 4 years. Over a year ago, as the editor of the BMRA newsletter, I called for mediation on the single issue that has been absorbing Council for the last 2 + years. One of my first actions will be to encourage an equitable closure to this unfortunate moment in TBM’s history.*

*The bigger solution is teamwork between all elected officials and the staff of TBM along with its member communities, including the business community.*

*This teamwork needs to be empowered by a clear vision and a strategic plan with full community buy in. It must truly support smart growth of our Town and all of its sectors, the most important one of which is tourism.*

*I have partnered with 2 other candidates, Peter Bordignon and Rob Sampson, to demonstrate, by example, what is possible with the New Council when building a create a team becomes the primary building block. I also have maintained good relationships with all candidates and committed to keep it that way before and after the election.*

*My leadership tool box also includes my values and my political courage to do what is right for our community, at all times. My values are Truth, Honesty, Excellence, Personal Growth and Heart.*

*As for ensuring that all community voices are heard, my colleagues and I (nicknamed “The 3 Amigos”), are planning on regular town hall meetings. I would like to see a major town hall forum about the vision for the Town, using the Sustainable Path and Official Plan as a base. Leading by example, the 3 Amigos are holding a town hall-like forum on September 29<sup>th</sup> which will explore TBM’s relationship with the County including an evaluation of the delivery of services provided by both organizations.*

*I look forward to working closely with the business community, working with the Blue Mountains Chamber of Commerce, BMVA, BIA’s and any business community representation.*

- b) Please share your thoughts on how the Town of The Blue Mountains can improve its approach to solutions, service and collaboration.

*TBM can vastly improve its communication with all of its sectors by connecting with its constituents and learning more about solutions from its own electorate. With the Communications role in transition with TBM staff, I strongly recommend that a solid communicator be placed in that role. With the loss of our local newspaper, it is crucial that the Town take leadership.*

*Regular town hall meetings along with meetings on specific topics such as The County Relationship and the Vision for the Future are key.*

*It is imperative that the new Council set a Strategic Plan for the next 4 years and share that plan with community members asap. The first town hall should be dedicated to this process. Clear goals and objectives will be shared with the CAO who will be evaluated on his/her fulfillment of this direction.*

#### Economic Development Strategy for Future

It is important for our next Council to proactively plan for future growth to support existing sectors as well as to explore economic diversification; key ingredients to weathering economic downturns as well as the forces of market disruption. A well-developed economic strategy must be created to serve as a roadmap for our community’s growth. Further, this strategy must be supported by our new Council so that recommendations can turn into action through leadership vs. plans that tend to “stay on the shelf”.

- a) What initiatives would you propose to ensure Town of The Blue Mountains has a robust and diverse economic strategy for short and long-term growth?

*The first step is to create a vision for TBM in which all sectors can buy for the next 40 years. With that vision, the strategic plan can be developed for the next 4 years. That plan needs to be shared and further developed with full public consultation, including a separate town hall dedicated to developing and sharing the vision and the 4-year strategic plan.*

*That plan becomes the base by which TBM staff brings initiatives before Council and by which the Council measures itself, with a full invitation by its electorate to do the same.*

- b) How would you organize & finance such initiatives?

*This should not take a lot of funds. This is what Council is supposed to be doing.*

## Labour Market Issues

### Labour Shortage

South Georgian Bay is facing critical labour shortages that threaten the economic stability of the region. Unemployment in the region is forecast at 3% versus 7.2% province-wide. Region wide, we estimated 800 unfilled tourism positions as winter 2018 approached. Servicing visitors is becoming very difficult as visitation to the area continues to grow year-round. Furthermore, there is a very small pool of new local employees entering the labour force resulting in a need to attract new hires from outside the area. Further job vacancies exist in health care, manufacturing, transportation and other key sectors.

a) *What initiatives would you support to attract and retain workers to the area?*

*I would support any initiatives that assist with attainable and affordable housing, reliable transit and more daycare spaces in TBM. As per the NBLC study on "Creating Attainable Housing in South Georgian Bay", recently commissioned with the help of BMVA leadership, I would support all programs and policies that would address the priority # 1 and # 2 group, young people who work in the TBM who will be engaged by the unique life style of TBM and want to come back to raise their families. Initiatives such as building dormitory environments, assisted ownership apartments and tiny houses are all strong options for the area. Affordable housing initiatives such as bonusing opportunities with partner developers and second mortgage assistance are other programs that will bring relief to employers facing labour shortage challenges.*

b) *How would you organize & finance such initiatives?*

*Public policy initiatives which support this direction is key. The financial muscle will need to come from PPP's, Public and Private Partnerships between the Town, Employers and Developers. TBM and The County will need to consider making surplus land available for these initiatives. TBM needs to select its developer partners carefully. According to the NBLC study, local developers would make the most sense.*

## Housing Issues

### Attainable Housing

One of the key challenges for attracting and retaining workers is a lack of attainable housing. The average price for a single-family home in South Georgian Bay has rapidly increased by 52% since 2011, thus depleting the stock of available residences for both permanent and seasonal workers. While high-value property construction continues to grow in Town of The Blue Mountains, rentals and middle-income dwellings for young people and families are virtually non-existent. Further complicating this issue is a "Not in My Backyard" attitude from some community members that opposes necessary density

requirements to build attainable rental units for workers, entry-level condominiums and townhomes, starter homes for families, etc.

- a) *What specific initiatives would you support to increase the supply of attainable housing in Town of The Blue Mountains & area?*

**As per my earlier answer under Labour Shortage, I would support the recommendations put forward in the NBLC study on “Creating Attainable Housing in South Georgian Bay”. I would bring forward and support policies all initiatives that facilitate the solutions underlined in the study.**

- b) *How would you organize & finance such initiatives?*

**As per my earlier answer under Labour Shortage, “public policy initiatives which support this direction is key. The financial muscle will need to come from PPP’s, Public and Private Partnerships between the Town, Employers and Developers. TBM and The County will need to consider making surplus land available. TBM needs to select its developer partners carefully. According to the NBLC study, local developers would make the most sense.”**

Short-term Accommodation (STA) rentals are an important economic driver in the community. Proposed changes that limit occupancy levels may have significant economic impacts on STA operators and for local businesses that depend on visitor spending. Proposed changes do not align with data which demonstrates that STA operators have achieved continuous improvements in noise, garbage and impact measures since the STA regulation has come into play.

- a) *What initiatives would you support to protect occupancy levels of existing operators of STAs?*

**Short Term Accommodation (STA) units are an important solution to housing our visitors. As STA occupants enjoy their time at TBM, they will be asked to comply with its bylaws which have been carefully developed to create a balance between visitors and residents. These bylaws need to be equitably enforced, with the full assistance of STA owners. The existing inventory of STA’s should be maintained.**

- b) *What initiatives will you champion in relation to the STA program in the future?*

**Moving forward, the balance that has been maintained between visitors and residents in STA locations must be a template for the future. New STA’s will need to be planned well where they complement, not conflict with, new and existing developments. Once again, proper enforcement of TBM bylaws is critical.**

## **Town Services & Municipal Taxes**

Town services such as winter maintenance, waste management, fire and safety are funded through the municipal tax base. These are made up of a levy to property owners, development charges, and other taxes. Last year the tax levy imposed by the town was approximately two percent. The Town’s budget is approximately \$15 million for 2018.

- a) *What Town services would you increase or decrease?*

*TBM collects much more in taxes than its \$15 million budget. It sends another \$15 million of its collected revenue to Grey County where TBM elected officials have very little input as to the allocation of these funds. As a result, TBM elected officials are making decisions with much less funding than it actually raises. A more equitable arrangement with the County will be one of my first priorities. With some of the initiatives led by the new provincial government, there may be more support to adjust or remove this layer of government in the near future. Once more funding is secured, I would like to see attainable and affordable housing initiatives supported immediately, much improved transit services, bicycle lanes on all roads, water and waste water in Clarksburg, more day care spaces.*

b) *Would you favour increasing or decreasing the tax rate of residents and businesses?*

*Given the current funding inequity with the County, it is difficult to gauge the efficacy of TBM service delivery. Until more is learned about provincial initiatives, it would be my position to maintain the current tax rate.*

## Transportation Issues

### Public Transit

South Georgian Bay has a limited public transit infrastructure, limiting access to jobs for workers who live in less expensive but further away locations. An important six-month test pilot of a full day scheduled bus service between Town of The Blue Mountains, Collingwood and Wasaga Beach began on July 1<sup>st</sup>, 2018. This regional bus service will allow for more visitors to take advantage of the area's recreational offerings as well as offer a transportation option for residents and workers in the area.

a) *What initiatives would you support to increase transportation options for visitors, residents and workers in the area?*

*I fully support the current six-month pilot test. I would also encourage much more co-ordination with other southern Georgian Bay communities to assist with solutions to the labour shortage challenge.*

b) *How would you organize & finance such initiatives?*

*Infrastructure for transit solutions should come from the various government partners with an affordable user pay contribution.*

### Active Transportation/Cycling

Improving green transportation improves our environment, traffic congestion and our health. A shovel-ready plan has been developed to build a safe and direct cycling route between Collingwood and Blue Mountain Village (to support local residents and employees); now that the plan has been created, it requires leadership to take the next steps to build it.

a) *Do you support increased cycling options for the region, including the Collingwood/Village cycling route?*

*Yes, I do support increased cycling options for the region including the Collingwood/Village cycling route. Cycling fits well with all 3 of TBM economic drivers: tourism, agriculture and residents who seek the TBM lifestyle.*



All roads must be bicycle-friendly. The Georgian Trail should be fully protected. No more personal driveways approved for crossing the trail.

b) *How would you organize & finance such initiatives?*

Roads and trails are currently funded by government bodies which is appropriate as there is a return on this investment with additional spending in the region.

#### Road Safety

The condition and safety of our roadways (County and Municipal) are critically important to residents, businesses and visitors. Our members feel that improvements need to be made such as, clearly marking pedestrian crossings, repairing potholes in high-traffic zones, improved maintenance and addition of more street lights, more bike lanes, more paved shoulders on busy roads, etc.

a) *What road safety improvements would you prioritize and why?*

All roads in TBM must be made safe for pedestrians and cyclists, including clearly marked pedestrian crossings, patched potholes, more street lights and extended shoulders for bicycling lanes. If TBM were to receive the funds that it raises and deserves through its tax dollars, these challenged areas would be the first place to invest.

I hear from business owners in Clarksburg that the speed limit must be lowered in Clarksburg to ensure the safety of all. The state of sidewalks in Clarksburg, near businesses, are of some concern as well.

b) *How would you organize & finance such initiatives?*

As mentioned above, a more equitable arrangement with the County would assist with funding of these basic services.

*With many thanks for the opportunity to reply to your questions,*

*Paula Hope*

*TBM Candidate for Town Council 2018*