

## Questions submitted from the floor at the BMVA All Candidates Debate

1. Current council does not allow ride-sharing apps like LYFT and Uber. Innisfil has taken a different approach. What are your thoughts?

I would be open to investigating well-regulated ride-sharing proposals, as well as additional options for public transportation before making any decision. Uber, Modo, and others may be options. I visited Innisfil on Tuesday, October 9<sup>th</sup> to speak to people about the local experience, so I am aware that the Town of Innisfil hired a consulting firm to look at transportation options and that the resulting recommendation was that fixed-route bus service was too costly and would be limited to only a small area of Town. Innisfil residents also indicated the preference for an on-demand service, so they published a Request for Expressions of Interest (RFEOI) to investigate options further. Innisfil worked out a plan with Uber which is **subsidized** by the Town. Although the population of Innisfil is considerably larger than TBM spread across a different geographic area, I believe there are lessons to be learned from their experience. I also look forward to reviewing the data from our current bus pilots, as well as a comparison between Innisfil and TBM requirements to determine next steps.

2. AirBnB and other short-term rental websites are a reality that cannot be ignored. If elected, what rules would you want in place for STA?

I believe we have very effective STA rules in place now (approval of revised by-law is before Council on October 8<sup>th</sup>) and that data shows a declining rate of non-compliance and enforcement requirements. There are illegal unregistered AirBnB and STAs. When identified and reported, there is a system for enforcing our STA bylaws effectively.

3. Some areas of TBM do not have the greatest cellular and internet coverage. What will you do to ensure all of TBM have access to reliable high-speed internet and cellular coverage?

*"Do not have the greatest"* is an understatement. Many TBM residents don't have reliable connectivity at all! Connectivity is so essential that the United Nations has declared "internet access to be a human right". Grey County believes that "rural access to reliable and affordable broadband is pivotal to local economic development". I support both of these statements. Throughout my campaign, I have met several entrepreneurs whose businesses are adversely impacted by connectivity issues, not to mention families with children in school whose educational outcomes are also disadvantaged when affordable and reliable connectivity is not available. That's why the SWIFT (Southwestern Integrated Fibre Technology) network is so very important to TBM and all of Grey County as well as many other partners including several First Nations, colleges and universities, health care systems and other communities in the Southwestern Ontario region. The buying power of this network will drive the highest quality connectivity at the lowest cost to consumers. If elected as Deputy Mayor, I will continue to push for this project to continue moving forward.

4. Several candidates mention the need to manage spending in the TBM, how do you plan to keep property taxes affordable for residents?

Quality control, fiscal responsibility and long-range thinking regarding investments and infrastructure are some of the measures needed to keep taxes affordable for all residents. Fostering SMART development in a well-managed and sustained way will also manage taxation by spreading development charges out effectively. Ensuring that Town operations are efficient and effective through oversight of budgets, human resource deployment, asset management and infrastructure investment is a priority. Building strong relationships with Grey County to ensure that County Council directs a greater percentage of our tax dollars back to TBM through infrastructure investments, programs and services will result in using fewer local dollars for the same things from local coffers.

## Questions submitted from the floor at the BMVA All Candidates Debate

We must capitalize on all funding sources to achieve the goals of environmental and economic sustainability. That is good financial management! One example of this is my July 31<sup>st</sup> letter to Premier Ford regarding the claw back of 2.3 million dollars for the leachate treatment plan. Although another candidate openly celebrated this claw back, experts and Town staff have backed my position, and an announcement from the government is also expected soon to support this plan and return the financial support to finish the project. This plan was costed to be the most reasonable of the options too. Our overall economic sustainability depends on wise investments to resolve the labour shortage due to the lack of housing options, transportation and child care. Without economic growth and diversity, taxes will inevitably go up. As Deputy Mayor, I will work to keep that from happening!

5. Ensuring a diversified and balanced tax base is a goal for most municipalities. Do you feel we are currently achieving this goal? What steps would you take to bring the Town more into balance?

Economic diversification makes sustainability possible and can counteract the impact of economic downturns in the future. With a strong economy, we are also less reliant on property tax increases to fill gaps. We have experienced significant growth in the tourism and hospitality sectors, as well as retail and food services industries for the past few decades. Further diversification is happening in our agriculture industry as we turn from lower return on investment juice apple operations to higher quality fruit that is competing in global markets. Orchards are planting up to ten times the number of trees per hectare yielding more fruit at lower labour costs. In addition, we have a burgeoning winery and spirits industry. Our technology sector is developing quickly, with many entrepreneurs entering this field, and we already have some large industries such as Breaker Technologies who employ over 170 people and do global business. The Town requires a strategic economic development plan to further support economic diversification that adds value and prevents development that only capitalizes on our environment and does not return any advantages to our community. Incentives for community involvement should be used to draw in positive growth and diminish negative impacts. Businesses need to feel welcomed and supported. We have a well-documented labour shortage at the current time. The Town must work with partners and private investors to address the underlying reasons for this, including the shortage of attainable and affordable housing, child care and transportation. Development charges have enriched our community for more than a decade, but infrastructure investments are lagging behind while these funds sit in reserves. Managing development so that there is a predictable and steady stream of income over the long haul is key to ensuring long-term economic sustainability and balance.

6. In approving new subdivisions in TBM, residents have complained that the entire parcel of land is deforested to build homes. Do you agree with this approach to development or would you fight to ensure developers keep some of the existing trees?

I would support language in the Official Plan and Zoning by-laws to protect our environment, including protection of existing forests and the requirement for rehabilitation by developers within specific timelines. Many municipalities have tree-cutting by-laws which limit the percentage of deforestation or mandate rehabilitation. Grey County has Forest Stewardship Certified Status which holds the County to a higher standard in making sure any harvesting is done in a sustainable manner. Urban trees present a different set of planning considerations including ecological offsetting. I am currently registered to learn more about sustaining urban and rural forest management with the Ontario Professional Planners Institute on October 26<sup>th</sup> beginning at Kolapore

## Questions submitted from the floor at the BMVA All Candidates Debate

Forest. This is my commitment to ensuring environmental sustainability and being able to make the most informed decisions possible if elected Deputy Mayor.

7. Many Ontario municipalities are grappling with an infrastructure deficit. Aging pipes, roads and building are adding up. What priorities do you have for the Town that needs immediate attention?

The Town already has a system of continuous planning and updating of municipal infrastructure, much of which is guided by provincial legislation. Road surfaces, water and wastewater pipes and built environments require periodic renewal and there is a process for scheduled maintenance and planned reconstruction. If elected, I will request a formal update as to the status of the assessment cycle. Priorities that I am currently aware of include:

- **Clarksburg Water and Wastewater Servicing** - a preliminary study released in August identified a number of constraints, and that the identification of a preferred option is expected early in 2019;
- **Craigeleith Area & Highway 26 Environmental Assessment** - essential to developing a strategic roads/transportation plan with MTO, County and municipality and to bring some sense of future to residents who may be impacted down the road is needed as soon as possible. I have communicated this urgency to MTO and have already received an encouraging response dated September 19<sup>th</sup> which I have already shared with the Georgian Shores Drive Preservation Association membership;
- **Landfill Leachate Pump Station and Forcemain** – I addressed this in a letter to Premier Ford and other ministers on July 31st due to the provincial government claw back of 2.3 million dollars meant to fund the completion of this plan, previously identified by environmental experts as the most effective and efficient, as well as most cost reliable. Experts and staff have since backed up my letter and the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario is now involved. Good news is expected soon.

8. Will you extend the operating hours for the landfill?

I would be in favour of collecting information about the current patterns of usage of the landfill and survey to ascertain community needs. It may be prudent to change the existing operating hours to accommodate community needs better without adding additional hours and costs. However, continued growth may dictate adding additional hours as well. Decisions that add costs should not be made without adequate background information and real data.

9. In your opinion, what services or programs does our community lack and how will you address this?

I have been hearing from community members that we lack a recreation facility that meets the needs of both young families and seniors. Parents are driving children to Owen Sound and Collingwood recreation centres for a variety of activities including swimming lessons which are in demand because we live on the Bay. Seniors are telling me that they are wait listed to join activities, such as pickle ball (60 currently on the wait list for that activity). Two out of three people leave our community for primary health care, and yet three physicians who have approached local health care centres have been turned away as there is no room to practice. We have a growing senior population and yet there is no plan to invest in long-term care locally. In addition, I have heard that services are available in Thornbury, but not in other parts, especially where there is significant growth such as the east end of TBM. This includes fire and police stations, libraries, recreation facilities, etc. I believe a master plan that describes where future

## Questions submitted from the floor at the BMVA All Candidates Debate

development will go and what it will look like in terms of population density is needed to plan for infrastructure investments that meet these needs. Goderich is one example of a community that addressed the needs of young families by building recreation, etc. in order to draw health professionals back to their Town and promote the inclusion of young people and families. Goderich now boasts more doctors per capita than anywhere else in Ontario, and a thriving economy. As Deputy Mayor I will work with Grey County and with private partners to achieve these goals in TBM.

10. Some candidates have suggested their preference for a ward system, others are happy with the current at-large system of electing council. Where do you stand on this issue? What if any other changes would you propose to council to help it better serve the community?

I did some research and published an article on this several months ago. Here it is:

### The Wards System vs. At Large System

I see myself as a member of the whole Town of the Blue Mountains, not just the immediate area where I live, that being Thornbury. I have friends across the Town from west of Collingwood to east of Meaford and south to Little Germany and we all utilize services and business across the entire Blue Mountains area. In my mind, we are always stronger together than divided, but I decided to do a little research into the pros and cons of the **Ward System** vs **At-Large** voter representation, since some citizens have expressed interest in this.

Ontario law gives municipalities the flexibility to choose their own ward and council structure. Finding a model that provides effective representation given multiple communities of interest and the expected distribution of population growth is a challenge. Four factors come in to play:

- Size of Council (the number of elected representatives);
- How Council is elected (wards or at-large or combination\*);
- How many wards, if a ward system is chosen, and
- The design of ward boundaries;

Municipalities are given a significant amount of discretion to determine the size of their respective councils. Beyond the five-member minimum, the Municipal Act does not provide criteria to guide or assist a municipality's decision-making process. Municipalities are free to choose a size that fits their unique circumstances.

\*Some systems combine At-large and Ward systems, giving voters a choice of councillor in their immediate area, while voting at-large for key positions such as Mayor and Deputy-Mayor.

We are not alone in asking these questions. I found evidence that many municipalities raised this issue prior to the 2014 election period. Some that had a ward-system in place wanted a change to an at-large system, but it is also true that some municipalities that had the at-large system looked at changing to a ward system. Some even had referendum questions about this on the ballot to impact the elections four years ahead. Other municipalities looked at this question in 2016, well ahead of the current election period. Some municipalities hired consultants and experts, while others held town hall meetings on the issue.

## **Questions submitted from the floor at the BMVA All Candidates Debate**

I looked at a number of studies. One of the studies that appears to have been well-done with some similarities to our area is Tecumseh (population was roughly double in 2016 but we will have a larger population in TBM by 2031). Like TBM, Tecumseh, has a number of distinct areas including urban and rural/agricultural (but not half as nice as TBM). Tecumseh was amalgamated with Sandwich South and St. Clair Beach in 1999, and wards were established at that time. Tecumseh has a mayor, a deputy mayor and five council members. Ward one has 2 council members due to larger size and wards 3, 4, and 5 have one each.

Click here or copy and paste into your browser for the full report:

<http://www.tecumseh.ca/sites/default/files/Tecumseh%20-%20Interim%20Report%20-%20FINAL.pdf>

### **At-large System:**

The majority of the 444 municipalities use an at-large system of council representation. Council has the citizenry as a whole for their constituents and are more likely to advocate for policies that will benefit the community as a whole, rather than a subsection of the community. All councillors represent all citizens, and individual citizens are free to connect with the councillor(s) that they feel best about. Research has shown there is less conflict between council members in an at-large system. Council may be more coordinated in an at-large system when it comes to dealing with county and/or provincial level government issues.

### **The Ward System:**

Ward systems came into effect in many rural communities in Ontario with municipal amalgamation orders by the provincial government in the mid-1990s. The ward system divides a municipality into districts within the municipality, either geographically or by population, or both. Some proponents of the ward system argue that ward councillors are closer to the people because they represent a specific 'neighbourhood'; a constituent with a problem knows who to go to, and it is usually an easier work load for a councillor. Ward councillors may also be more sensitive to the issues of their constituents. However, wards have greater conflict between councillors, and constituents have no say over members of council elected outside their ward.

### **Other considerations:**

All nine municipalities within Grey County elect their Councils at-large.

Since there will continue to be significant development in the Town of The Blue Mountains over the next decade, ward lines could change frequently. In the ward system, an argument can be made for using development charges raised within the ward to build and develop community resources such as fire stations, libraries, etc. with the ward where they are generated, instead of sharing development charges across the municipality to pay for infrastructure where it is most needed.

Overall, research shows that government issues like efficiency and how council is spending money are more affected by whether a mayor or a city manager (CAO) oversees the day-to-day operations, rather than how council members are elected.

### **Conclusion:**

There does not appear to be any definitive answer as to which system is best in the general sense. Further discussion is warranted, and I'd love to hear more from citizens of the Town of The Blue Mountains.

## Questions submitted from the floor at the BMVA All Candidates Debate

### 11. Please share your thoughts on the Pretty River Quarry proposal?

I applaud the work of the Friends of the Pretty River who have championed the challenge to aggregate development next to Pretty River Provincial Park. This is an example of a passionate group of people who have done everything possible to stand up to a big developer. I am saddened by the thought that the aggregate development may happen because existing Official Plans at the County and TBM level appear to allow it. As I understand the LPAT (Local Planning Appeals Tribunal – replaced OMB in April 2018) will hear an appeal but will only look at the application and whether it “fits” within the current Official Plans that apply. This is the poster case for an Official Plan that guards against this type of enterprise happening in this location, and for requirements that would ensure that existing aggregate pits that are mined out are rehabilitated within a specific time frame. As Deputy Mayor, I will support any reasonable cost-effective action to prevent this development without placing TBM at risks of law suits that have little chance of succeeding. I will also advocate for a long-term plan for all development in TBM with safeguards to protect our environment and precious resources like Pretty River so this type of challenge will be even less likely to succeed in the future. That how we ensure environmental sustainability!

### 12. Do you have plans to create or protect more green space in TBM?

The long-term development plan should protect agricultural lands and establish a percentage of all development as “parkland” or green space. I would also like to see all remaining public waterfront property maintained as public access parklands. There are properties currently owned by the Town that should be reviewed as to whether they are suitable to meet current goals and whether environmental protections or designations are needed in order to bring the total developed area into compliance with recommended allocations for green space. As TBM intensifies, green space will become even more necessary to maintaining quality of life and healthy living.

### 13. As more people use bikes to commute, exercise and enjoy the outdoors they find themselves in competition with cars for scarce routes. How would you address the concerns of cyclists who are looking for improved safety and capacity?

Although most of my data comes from the 2012 Public Health report: *Road to Health: Improving Walking and Cycling*, and the *Share the Road Cycling Coalition*, I know that there are significant benefits for the Town of the Blue Mountains, including significant savings in health care costs, improvements in air quality, reduced traffic congestion, economic and environmental sustainability, eco-tourism benefits and social inclusion.

TBM is already committed to being a **Bicycle Friendly Community** and has received a **Silver Designation** from the **Share the Road Cycling Coalition**. We can achieve Gold, Platinum and then Diamond levels by addressing the 5 ‘Es’ (Engineering, Education, Encouragement, Enforcement, Evaluation & Planning) by partnering with our neighbouring communities and Grey County. We have the expertise in our local cycling community to draw upon as we work to achieve goals as well. I’ve been out on a couple of rides with area cycling enthusiasts and have experienced some of the safety issues first hand, including the lack of, or discontinuation of, paved shoulders, dangerous crossings on major roads, lack of directional signage, variety of pavement surfaces, resurfacing materials and curbs, some more cyclist friendly than others, cracks in pavement, road calming measures and lack of education in both cyclists and motorists

## **Questions submitted from the floor at the BMVA All Candidates Debate**

regarding road sharing requirements and best practices. Road cycling and in particular, road cycling in groups tends to be a highly controversial topic, misunderstandings surrounding the highway traffic act (HTA) being the primary culprit. Grey County promotes a series of videos directed towards both cyclists and motorists to clarify the rules of the road and encourage all road users to co-exist. Although we do host information for cyclists (routes, safety info, etc.) on our Town website, more can be done to market and promote cycling safety in our community.