

Town of the Blue Mountains Election – 2018 Candidate Questionnaire

Supporting Tourism Industry & Employees

The Town of The Blue Mountains is presently looking to hire an Economic Development Officer which I feel would greatly help to assist not only the Blue Mountains Village Association but the businesses and economy throughout the municipality. This individual would be able to work with all parties to better achieve the improvement, growth, historical preservation and tourism we all want to achieve.

BMVA has been effective in its vision & mission over the 17 years I have been on Council, from Bob Cornish, Don Braden, & now Andrew Seigwart. These individuals are great leaders who have worked tirelessly to develop the village and the results are highlighted in every way with residents and tourists enjoying everything from the accommodations to the businesses, special events, festivals and animation in the village.

Yes, we need to continue to talk and have meetings. Years past we would meet and discuss many issues that the Village Resort and town were facing. Having those conversations resulted in positive communications within both the town and BMVA, I would like to renew the conversations again. Communications is the key to problem-solving. The cost of this is minimal compared to the results we would achieve.

Blue Mountain Village Association Effectiveness

Yes, I do believe that the BMVA is effective in it's Vision and Mission as otherwise the 2.5 million visitors wouldn't be enjoying, visiting and helping to grow our area. I would most definitely support a continued partnership with the BMVA and Town as without tourism and growth our area would suffer and having owned my own business, having raised my children here and live within this beautiful region that is something I do not want to see.

Leadership

Focusing on the Future is my slogan.

The past few years were not as productive as they could have been and I feel that this is now a time to redirect our focus to the items that matter most which are the businesses big and small, support our residents and visitors and to improve ourselves to better reflect our goals and mission values.

I believe meetings with all who drive the community are important and imperative. With the increase in tourism we need to be ready to advance the transportation, attainable housing & growth in other areas of the town. All departments at the town need to work together and not in silos with a strong leadership approach from the CAO and Council which will bring a collaborative approach to the issues we are facing.

Economic Development

This brings me back to the need for an Economic Development Officer who is much needed to help develop and maintain a strategy which builds a stronger more diverse and robust plan for short and long-term growth, is where we need to start in order to look at organizing and financing such initiatives.

Many years ago, the Cause Group investigated how to keep our town vibrant and economically viable. I believe the time is now for a checkup and having public consultation as well as ratepayers, businesses, Chamber, BIA, BMVA and Developers so that we can come up with solutions to the short and long-term goals. Money would have to be budget for this initiative and it would require a full council discussion, but I do believe this is and would be a step in the right direction.

Labour

My biggest goal is to help develop attainable housing within the area to support the attraction and retention of workers to our beautiful area. Right now, the costs are too high and this needs to be addressed if we look to grow and prosper.

The first thing is housing, people won't come unless they have a guaranteed place to call home. All your questions relate to the Labour Strategies. People need good paying jobs and then the housing issue falls into play.

Many individuals are working on this within each community, but the answer lays in a team approach with Meaford & Collingwood to help understand the issues, not only staff, but the Councils must be fully engaged to generate the initiatives. From that point we can set priorities with each other to move forward.

Housing

Interesting there is many NIMBY, living in our town who don't want attainable housing in their backyards. We need better education informing them we are an inclusive and diversified community. Not all can afford the million-dollar homes. Having attainable housing stock will bring the workforce we require.

Presently we are working towards a Public, Private initiative and the new council must be informed as to why and understand we need the lower priced home in our area. Educating the new council about each development and where they are situated in our town will help them understand the importance of the housing shortage. I realize the Resort pays above the entry level, but those workers need dorm-style housing, in the offseason of the resort these units could be used for hostels purposes.

Short Term Accommodation (STA)

Just recently a report came to council to change and limit the occupancy levels and I believe that staff needs to go back to the original policy, it was working. There were less noise complaints than in previous years due to diligence of the operators. Not all the complaints are STA's.

All of Council needs a 101 on past and future issues with a clear policy relating to the operations of the business groups in the area. Without the STA's our town would not be as vibrant as it is. The Village could never support the nearly 2.5 million visitors we currently have and we're still growing. STA's also provide options to the families and friends visiting. The new Council must meet with the STA operators and the ratepayers to better understand the optics of the tourism industry.

Town Services & Municipal Taxes

My priority is to have a Service Delivery Review.

The municipality has piecemealed in the past and the timing is perfect to do this review. The review entails all departments. Council must understand the workings of the town and where and how we are to improve. At the completion of this review everyone would have a comprehensive understanding of what exactly what the town's needs are.

I would not be in favor of a zero-balance tax rate. During my time on Council from 2000 – 2003 when the Council of the day did zero tax rates; we paid for this with huge tax hikes for many years after as we needed to catch up on entire projects that the town required. Steady taxes rate and excellent budgeting are vital to the economy of the town.

Public Transportation

Grey County has been working on an initiative for transit from Owen Sound to the Blue Mountains this was approved by the County and the Province. The Province was giving out Infrastructure funding and the County applied and was granted the funds, now we wait to see if they cancel the program or move in the right direction. The project will move people for employment, tourism and other reasons to our area.

Active Transportation

Well a recent story in the Star is reporting an issue around cycling, better education is needed for both locals and visitors we all need to Share the Road. The CCC has over 400 cyclists and this group is heavily involved in many municipalities.

Grey County passed a motion to bring forth a design plan for a roundabout at 19 & 21. They will also complete the cycling lanes from the village out to Grey Rd 19 & 21; this will be financed through Grey County. The roundabout project is a joint endeavor with Simcoe County.

Road Safety

All your examples are important but must be prioritized.

As per the street lighting many residents prefer the night skies, but I feel not all streets warrant having more street lights. Yes, safety is paramount to the residents and visitors and we ensure that road construction is built to Provincial standards.

Further discussion can occur as to where the street lighting is needed. Paved shoulders have been a part of the plan now and in the future and some paved shoulders are slowly being realized as development infrastructure increases. Repairing and improving maintenance in every town is an issue and must be prioritized at budget time. The town presently prioritizes road repairs, but if there is a specific road BMVA feels is requiring immediate action I would be glad to speak with the BMVA regarding this.