

July 11th, 2018.

To: Blue Mountain Village Association

Re: 2018 Candidate Questionnaire

Thank you for the opportunity to share my views on the important issues you have identified. I am very proud to call the Town of The Blue Mountains 'home' and I'm running for Deputy Mayor to influence its long-term sustainability. The continued success of the Blue Mountain Resort area and its related economic partners are essential to this sustainability.

Supporting Tourism Industry & Employees

- 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 am well aware of the proud history and development of what we now know as 'The Village'. I first visited the Blue Mountains at age seven to see the Blue Mountain Pottery, something my mother treasured. Over the years, I witnessed the evolution, thanks to visionaries from Jozo Wieder, Gord Canning, Bill Skelton and many others, to Intrawest beginning in 1999, and now Alterra. Their efforts have created a truly world-class, four-season destination that we can all be extremely proud of.

Blue Mountain Resort is key to our growing and thriving municipality in a number of ways. Without Blue Mountain Resort, I believe the surrounding municipalities would all have suffered decline, much like many other municipalities in Ontario. The evolution needs to continue, however, to ensure its future, and the future of the Town of the Blue Mountains, is viable and vibrant.

As a candidate for Deputy Mayor, I support balanced growth because it stabilizes taxation while enabling the municipality to continue to invest in infrastructure and services that benefit all residents. When growth stagnates, municipalities begin to die. Young people leave and don't return, leaving behind an aging population equipped with fewer resources with which to invest and maintain town infrastructure. Schools close, medical and social services shrink to a minimum standard at best, and businesses cease to exist because the local market and workforce is limited. I recognize that there are many challenges that can, if not addressed properly, limit the continued success of Blue Mountain Resort and the continued economic success of the entire municipality.

Attracting and retaining a work force is one such challenge. The overall success of The Village and the surrounding area, coupled with the proximity to the GTA, has attracted population growth, which in turn has driven up the cost of accommodation in general. There is a critical need for entry-level and attainable housing in order to attract younger individuals and families who will not only fill the jobs at the Resort, but also those of the myriad of shops, services, restaurants and healthcare professionals required by the expanding population. Intertwined with affordable accommodation for a healthy workforce are transportation and child care needs. These must be addressed, both at the municipal and County levels.

With regard to helping the community appreciate the advantages of a healthy tourism industry*, Intrawest and Alterra capitalized nicely on the 75th anniversary to market the history of the Resort. However, in order to gain greater support for municipal investment into attainable housing, transportation and childcare to support the labour force, tax payers need a better understanding of the interdependence between the tourism industry and the impact on their personal lifestyles, regardless of whether they use the facilities at Blue Mountain Resort or not. Many people are anti-development out of fear of the unknown. They may see tourism as a negative because it spurs population in their cherished 'small town'. These people may not understand what happens to towns without the success of ventures such as the Blue Mountain Resort in terms of losses that impact them personally (i.e. schools, stores, services, etc.). This information, and a successful marketing plan such as 'Let's Talk Tourism Appreciation' events open to the general public, are needed to change perceptions and to increase appreciation for the history, planning, economic benefits and value that Blue Mountain has brought to the region for many decades, and, hopefully, will continue to bring for decades to come.

*This applies to the agriculture sector as well (apple industry, vineyards, cideries, etc.)

b) How would you organize & finance such initiatives?

The barriers (housing, transportation and child care) can be addressed through effective partnerships between all four levels of government (local, county, provincial and federal), representatives of major business interests, including but not limited to BMRA, and major property developers. This initiative may also need to include surrounding municipalities, certainly Collingwood, and likely other South Georgian Bay municipalities and Simcoe County.

Canada's tourism industry accounts for in excess of \$75 billion dollars in revenues, over 2% of our GDP, approximately 10% of all jobs. 98% of tourism is small business. The diversified nature of tourism makes it critical that all levels of government and all partners collaborate to build and maintain world-class destinations.

Ontario's tourism industry generated nearly \$35 billion and nearly 400,000 jobs in 2016. The Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport works with industry and organizations to support the maintenance and growth of tourism's economic contribution and may be able to provide assistance to address our local issues. I have already messaged the Hon. Jim Wilson, the new Minister of Economic Development, Job Development and Trade for Ontario and our local MPP, on this issue.

Grey County's Tourism Development Plan and Report Card on progress are a good source of general data. As Deputy Mayor, I would meet with the Economic Development staff (three Economic Development Officers) to understand this data as it relates specifically to the Town of The Blue Mountains. I would endeavor to understand what the County can and is doing to support our local tourism, and continuously promote their contribution in the Town of The Blue Mountains where 6% of its total population contributes 26 percent of the County's total tax base.

At the local level, in order for this to be a priority in the Town of The Blue Mountains and, by extension, Grey County, our tax payers (full-time and part-time) need to appreciate :

(a) the real value of the tourism industry to the overall sustainability of the lifestyles that we value, and
(b) the interdependence of the Blue Mountain Resort, the surrounding economy, and the residents in order to support municipal and county-level investments. There are many local residents who do not participate in the area's tourism ,and therefore they may not understand the underlying interdependence. This is an important step.

As Deputy Mayor, I would:

- (a) use my voice to promote the value of Blue Mountain Resort to Council and to tax payers, as well as to Grey County, and, if possible, at the provincial and federal levels as well;
- (b) maintain a focus on achieving attainable housing, transportation and child care to support recruiting and retaining a workforce;
- (c) ask for measures of progress over the next four-year term;
- (d) advocate for financial support for such initiatives through the budget process;
- (e) press Grey County to allocate an economic development focus to the Town of The Blue Mountains, and
- (f) request that Council support provincial and federal involvement wherever possible.

Blue Mountain Village Association Effectiveness

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

Yes. Given that BMVA exists to manage assets, market the resort as a four-season destination, promote events and festivals and provide maintenance, I have seen evidence that suggests that there is definitely value in protecting the assets of members, as well as stewardship of the natural environment.

Like many area residents, my family, guests and I often enjoy what the Village offers. In fact, my husband played golf at Monterra today and I visited the Village with my granddaughter and enjoyed the Cascade putting course and the Ridge Runner. While having lunch at Copper Blues, I noted landscape maintenance in progress in the main core area, and the high level of cleanliness in the open areas, especially given that this follows a weekend music festival.

Regarding BMVA's responsibility for promoting the interests of members and advocating to all levels of government, I have seen evidence of this, particularly when the BMVA addresses misconceptions that are published or spoken. BMVA is a formidable economic development partner, often sponsoring or leading collaborative efforts in this area. I appreciate the hard data that is used to illustrate these issues and hope the BMVA will continue to provide this kind of information to all stakeholders. As Deputy Mayor, I would appreciate this kind of data-based input on issues coming before Council or at Grey County Council.

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

I will always vote based on my understanding of issues, and in the best interests of all people of the Town of The Blue Mountains. I may not always agree with BMVA, but would keep an open mind and weigh all information fairly. I would like to understand the nature of the 'partnership' more completely before confirming, but from the information I currently have, I would certainly continue to support what I see as a

positive partnership, and I would support any effort to have the County engage more fully in supporting this partnership as well.

Leadership

- 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.

Please refer to my website <https://www.odetteforcounciltbn.com> to learn about my background, education and proven leadership that has prepared me to represent all citizens as your next Deputy Mayor. I may not be an expert in tourism, economic development and other areas addressed in your survey, but I am informed and always willing to meet to learn. I can be reached via email at odetteforcouncil@icloud.com or by phone at (705) 888-8462.

I arrive promptly and well prepared for meetings, and my attendance on boards etc. is near perfect. When I read a staff report, article in the local media etc., I often do further research, either via the internet or by contacting persons who have greater insights or knowledge about the issues. I can respectfully challenge information when I feel that it is incomplete or inaccurate. I am an active listener, I try to assume good intentions of others, and often consult people with varied perspectives. I am not, and will not be, a member of any special interest group, and will make tough decisions for the right reasons. My values of integrity and transparency, and my desire to see the Town of The Blue Mountains be prosperous and successful for all citizens will guide my work as Deputy Mayor.

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

Streamlining of many processes, by-laws, etc. is needed. Some by-laws are currently so long that the average person who refers to them doesn't get through the material and salient points are missed. There are often too many steps for approvals (and the steps are not outlined in checklists or flowcharts). Conversely, there is not enough monitoring of compliance, making the expectations seem inconsistent and sometimes meaningless.

Communication, or lack of, is one of the greatest barriers to finding win-win solutions, providing service excellence and engaging in collaboration with multiple parties. In the absence of good communications, opinions (often inaccurate) are frequently published and taken as factual, leading to many issues and divisions in the community, which may have been avoided.

Customer service training for all Town staff who interact in any way with members of the public, local businesses, etc. should be ongoing. A complaint process should be implemented and marketed widely so that dissatisfaction with public services can be addressed in a timely manner, with data being collected to spot trends so that proactive measures can be put in place. Appropriate performance reviews for professional growth need to be implemented, with training on implementing review cycles provided for all staff who have supervisory duties.

The notion of collaboration is misunderstood by many, including staff and community members. While there have been recent improvements in giving the public a means of communicating at Council Meetings, true collaboration on major issues does not happen often. One of the challenges is the flexibility of time to meet, given that the role of municipal officials is part time and that many individuals who want to engage cannot do so due to work schedules.

Another barrier that I have observed is the lack of coordination between the municipality, the County and the Province. Planning roads is an example, with MTO making decisions from London, Ontario, without taking into account voices from either the Town or the Province, let alone from entities dependent on the transportation network, such as the Blue Mountain Resort.

Economic Development Strategy for Future

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

I would endeavor to understand the current plan(s) as well as the Grey County Plan more fully, and to look at pros and cons: what has worked, what doesn't and what is already known in terms of needs. For this more comprehensive understanding I would welcome assistance from BMRA, Chamber of Commerce and others. I also believe in developing a long-term vision for the Town of The Blue Mountains, and then backing up to short-term milestones or sub-goals and measuring (and reporting) progress along the way. From what I currently know, attainable housing, transportation and child care must be investigated further, and a plan must be put in place with objectives, resource needs, timelines and who is ultimately responsible for the accomplishment of each goal attached. Collaboration with partners will be crucial to the development and implementation of this plan.

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

There must be an alignment of resources between both local and County governments, and possibly across County lines, to include the South Georgian Bay area municipalities, in order to achieve our goals. I believe that achieving an economic strategy, including multiple aspects of tourism, should be the basis of our efforts to achieve a fair allocation of the 26% taxes that our Town (6% of the population) contributes to Grey. As Deputy Mayor, I would also advocate that budget be allocated to enable an experienced and highly qualified economic development resource person to lead the collaboration on such a plan.

Labour Shortage

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

Verification of the key barriers to recruiting success for the kind of workers required across the region may still be needed. At the current time, I believe these barriers are attainable housing/accommodation, transportation and child care. There may be others as well. I also look forward to reviewing the results from the housing consultant hired by South Georgian Bay Tourism Industry Labour Supply Task Force, and the Employer One Survey Results from Four Counties Labour Market Development Group that have been initiatives in 2018. I have spoken to a few business and development experts who have lived in Whistler and Squamish about initiatives that addressed housing for workers there, and I believe in being open-minded and investigating further.

I would support initiatives that encourage a percentage of attainable housing to be included within each new development as soon as possible. I also support planning for some higher density zones, preferably on transportation routes and within close proximity to employers.

On transportation, I believe the current pilot is too limited regarding where the stops are and that it should extend further to the west and south. This could involve a partnership with Meaford in addition to the current one with Collingwood. Other alternatives might include setting up a ride share system such as France's 'Blabla Car' which is a very effective and environmentally responsible way to travel. Encouraging car pools by

establishing no-cost sheltered pick up/drop off/parking spots and websites for registration by the municipality and County should also be considered for both worker transport and environmental protection.

Child Care is a County responsibility and as Deputy Mayor I would also investigate what more they can do in our area. I would also encourage a range of day care options that includes shift workers since many workers in the service industry do not work straight days. There are provisions which certify and monitor home day care that can be initiated as well. There are also initiatives which create affordable day care spaces, as well as before and after care in public schools, that could be investigated further.

An increased partnership with Georgian College for the education and training of workers, and job skills programs, could also be investigated more fully to resolve the labour issues.

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

There are opportunities to include requirements that necessitate all developers to allocate a percentage of all development to attainable housing. Generally speaking, attainable housing has a higher density factor which also reduces costs. I believe that changes to the Official Plan may be necessary in terms of density to facilitate this as well.

On transportation, subsidy may be needed for a prolonged period until ridership is actually known. There are some grants that can be earned, as well as contributions from major employers and some fees to workers. Although child care is a County mandate, as mentioned above, there are options for increasing the number of day care spaces through licensing and monitoring that can make quality child care more affordable, as well as more available to fit the schedules of shift workers. Providing subsidies for some workers according to ability to pay may also be necessary, and such subsidies are available through the County but may not be well-known to local workers. I also suggest the Blue Mountain Resort and other employers could partner with the County to offer flexible day care options at Blue. Beaver Valley Outreach is also involved in the provision of Day Care and could become an advisor/partner in solving this issue.

Short-term Accommodation (STA)

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

- (a) Publish the data more widely and more frequently. I believe that most opposition does not come from actual negative experience, given that the recent data shows a decline in incidents.
- (b) Identify the few who repeatedly do not uphold the requirements and make the consequences more significant for repeaters where demerit points do not lead to resolution. This will protect the majority of STA owners who are responsible and, hopefully, weed out those who cause problems for all.
- (c) Regarding occupancy limits, as long as parking and exterior use is reasonable, and all other aspects of the bylaws are adhered to including noise, garbage disposal, etc., (no negative impact on neighbouring residents) I do not know why reduced occupancy is being proposed. Also, this applies to some of the other conditions as well and may lead to the perception that nothing is enforceable and therefore increase non-compliance.

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

- (a) I would like STA owners or BMVA to publish a comparison summary of our regulations as compared to those of a few similar municipalities, and publish the data that measures compliance and complaint reduction at regular intervals. I think this would go a long way to educating people in general. The majority of residents do not read this kind of material on the Town website and awareness is key.
- (b) Clearly differentiate between STAs, B&Bs, long-term rentals, etc.
- (c) Make clear to the community who is responsible for enforcement and for addressing complaints, and promote the existence of the Responsible Persons. This information is generally unknown to non-STA owners.

Town Services & Municipal Taxes

a) What Town services would you increase or decrease?

Before decreasing any services, I would look for efficiencies to determine whether the same or better level of services could be offered without increasing costs. An audit would be appropriate at the beginning of each term prior to setting a new budget.

Council should also look to the County to determine whether increased services for Blue could come from County resources, or whether or not there are duplications or other efficiencies to be realized with pressure to return some of the 26% taxes contributed by The Town of the Blue Mountains.

I feel that much of the infrastructure is Thornbury-centric, meaning areas to the east where development is increasing steadily do not have services close by, such as libraries, fire and police stations, etc. Development charges are earmarked and enveloped for these purposes. I would like to see the Town investigate multi-use complexes to offer new services in the east end, similar to those planned for Stayner and Wassaga Beach. One thing the Town currently does not have is an indoor pool. I believe the population is large enough to support a pool, and I would like to see all children have access (preferably free) to swimming lessons, a life skills, as well as a safety issue, given our proximity to water. Pools also offer a safer way for elderly people to exercise and enable people with injuries to do physio.

I would also like to see a remedy to trail crossings at Highway 26; either trail tunnels that will still permit pedestrian and bike traffic, or a Highway overpass. Either would take significant influence with the MTO and the County.

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

We have not had an appreciable increase for several years, and I would like to see that continue, especially for the sake of residents who are struggling to maintain their homes now.

Our capital debt is very small compared to similar municipalities, largely due to the development boom over the past ten years. Development charges over that time are enveloped and are sitting in trusts. There should be plans and timelines in place to build the infrastructure based on these funds.

I am also in favour of advocating for more infrastructure investment by the County to return more of our taxes to Blue. Roads with shoulder bike lanes, traffic circles on Hwy 26, a long-term care facility in Blue (due to the projections regarding aging population by 2025), etc. are all areas that the County can invest in and for which they collect significant dollars that often get dispersed to the other eight municipalities involved. As Deputy Mayor, I would work towards a more equitable redistribution to reflect the population demographic in Blue.

Transportation Issues

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

The Town of the Blue Mountains currently partners with Collingwood to provide bus transportation for residents between Collingwood and Craigeleith with extended hours having begun on July 1st. I would like to see The Town of the Blue Mountains mirror this and pilot a trial route with Meaford going as far as the Collingwood bus loop at Blue Mountain Resort. Those wishing to travel into Collingwood could do so from there, especially if schedules are integrated.

I would prefer to see a twelve-month pilot to determine ridership through all seasons. Data collected regarding ridership, access points, schedules could inform next steps. More needs to be done to promote the existence of the bus routes and schedules to ensure that those who might use the bus are aware of them.

How would you organize & finance such initiatives?

The cost of the pilot could be shared between The Town of the Blue Mountains, Meaford, and Grey County with riders also paying a portion of costs. Some employers may be willing to purchase weekly or monthly tickets as well, as this might attract workforce. There may also be subsidies available for seniors and low income earners through provincial and county grants structures, and possible funding through the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corporation (OLG). It may also be worth investigating whether any integration of general bus services with school bus services is possible. There is also a daily Grey Coach run from Owen Sound. Investigating the possibility of having those runs connect with those mentioned may be possible as well without increasing costs.

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

I support initiatives that promote green and healthy lifestyles. Grey County is increasing bike lanes on County roads. These need to be well delineated for safety. I feel that the South Georgian Bay municipalities need to ensure that the trail is well maintained and that links to urbanized centres are provided. Safety infrastructure, such as a tunnel under the highway where the trail crosses it and crosswalks with appropriate traffic lights where needed will facilitate greater use of a variety of passive transportation methods. Recently, bicycle repair stations have been installed in various locations and they are getting noticed. More bike rental stations could be beneficial, especially if located in centres such as Craigeleith and Thornbury. Recently I saw a bike rental van in Collingwood and such an idea could be used as a pilot program. However, marketing their existence is needed as well.

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

I would forge partnerships with all four levels of government, biking associations, related businesses, etc. Cycling is a growing tourism trend throughout this area and there is huge potential to develop this branch for significant economic rewards. I'm thinking of the Tour de France and similar global events that bring untold attention and economic benefits to the regions that host them. We have seen some efforts to engage the cycling world (Subaru Centurian, the Gran Fondo, and even the Enduro for the mountain bike crowd). Convincing Grey County's economic development people and finding cycling enthusiasts who are willing to get involved to shepherd this initiative, is a possible first step.

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

Added bike lanes and bike repair stations throughout The Town of Blue Mountains and Grey County are essential, as are safe crossings where trails meet highways or where vehicle driver vision is limited or impeded. This is a question that would be best addressed in collaboration with serious cyclists who have experience both in the Town of The Blue Mountains, and in places that have made infrastructure investments to support the activity.

b) [How would you organize & finance such initiatives?](#)

Engaging multi-levels of government, including the Federal Sports Minister Kirsty Duncan, Olympic cyclists, local bike-shop owners, companies that manufacture cycling-related equipment, and finding area cycling enthusiasts to map out a vision is a first step. Going after funding from all of the fore mentioned and engaging in events at increasingly complex levels each year will inform everyone involved as to the economic and cultural worth of investing further, hopefully with the goal of hosting an international Tour de Bleu-type event in the future. More locally, Hamilton recently hosted such an event, putting Hamilton on the world map.

Thank you for allowing me to share some of my ideas with you. As your next Deputy Mayor, I look forward to collaborating to make the Town of The Blue Mountains a stronger, more vibrant and flourishing one for all of us.

Kindest regards,

Odette Bartnicki

Vote Odette Bartnicki
for DEPUTY MAYOR

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