



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.?

The very first step is for all stakeholders to understand that our business is tourism, that concept has been totally lost on this current council. Comparisons to the towns and cities that have been mentioned by council are not only wrong but frightening and damaging to our core. You need the municipal government representatives of this town to also be a leader in the area of tourism and not fight against it. E.D.O.C. participation is a good start, but the council members on that committee need to fully embrace not only the concept of tourism but to understand the positive economic impact that tourism brings to the entire town as a whole.

Secondly, Blue Mountain Resorts and the Village seem to be a thorn on the side to some currently at Town Hall. In reality, we need to be embracing and assisting those organizations for the driving force that they are in the entire area, not just the east side of town.

How would you organize & finance such initiatives?

As with any initiative, we need to factor these committees into the TBM Annual Budget, spend money smartly doesn't always mean spending more. Establish these priorities within our budget.

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, in a word, YES. Over the past years, (decades really) Blue Mountain has firmly established itself as a Top Tier Resort destination in not just Ontario but all of Canada. The Blue Mountain summer concrete rides down the mountain that I remember just to get people here during the hot months have been replaced with world class shops, restaurants, housing and festivals.

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

Not only will I support it, it should be expanded. I have already mentioned to fellow candidates that once elected, it is so important to myself personally that I would like to be the Council representative on that committee.

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.

This current council has been derailed many times over single polarizing issues that take up too much time and energy.

One of the first things I would like to do is to establish a Community Communications Committee. This would include representatives from the public community, the business communities (throughout the region), senior staff and 2 council members. This way working together, there is a flow of information and we can expand activities throughout the whole town.

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

This item ties back into my Community Communications Committee on collaboration as it would involve all stakeholders. Seeking solutions and common sense seems to be lost at the municipal government level. In an ever changing economic climate, we as a Town need to swift with simple decisions for business such as retail signage.

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?

First Initiative is for the TBM to further invest into Economic Development as a Town, not just relying on the business community to drive it. We lack far behind our neighbours at Grey County, Collingwood and Meaford. We should also be establishing cultural/tourist areas throughout the town. We have so many areas/hamlets within our own borders. I always say, two heads are better than one and \$2.00 is always buys more than \$1.00 so why not work together on marketing initiatives. I believe in some cases there can be complimentary cross over marketing and symmetry with different areas in Town. For example, if the BMVA hosts a Salsa weekend, then maybe the restaurants or galleries in Thornbury (if not competing) picks up on that theme and markets Latin inspired food and art that weekend.

Second would be Listening is Key, the Town Council needs to Listen to the Business Community when they forecast or experience a downturn and once again more swiftly to assist and implement contingency plans that are available.

b) How would you organize & finance such initiatives?

This organization would be a part of the EDOC, and the new Community Communications and TBM EDOC committees. As with all this needs to be part of the fabric of the Town's budget, as important as all other services.

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?

Two words, Housing & Transit it sounds simple but they are complex issues.

- 1. Education in regards to Attainable Housing vs Affordable Housing**
- 2. Expansion of Transit routes/times**
- 3. The agriculture industry has been using out of country workers for years expand the search pool but give them a place to live. This needs to be the same for our work force, especially in attracting new non local talent to the area**

b) How would you organize & finance such initiatives?

- 1. Working with developers on inclusionary zoning in certain areas**
- 2. Grey County, 26% of our money flows North West, but only about 18% comes back, this has to change.**
- 3. Realistically in regards to Transit, I don't think we will ever have a Blue Mountains Bus Company. BUT, having true bus routes in the Town is very achievable. We don't have the Blue Mountains Police Department, but we are very well protected by contracting our Police services to the OPP. The same can be done with Regional transit.**

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?

This really ties back into the Labour Shortage but we do need to work with developers on inclusionary zoning in certain areas. Public Education between attainable vs affordable is paramount to gain public trust and support. You can elevate NIMBY fears by education in regards to Attainable Housing vs Affordable Housing.

If amendable with the resort, build dormitory (University style) housing specifically for workers When a typical Ontario University welcomes 3000 first year students each fall, they guarantee them housing.

We can use Grey County property to build attainable housing. This is also a way to use our money that has already been taken from us.

Housing needs to be Regional not just Local, you can live in Collingwood or Meaford and work in TBM Proper.

b) How would you organize & finance such initiatives?

We can work with Town Budgeting and Grey County and Tax breaks to developers that are on board. Rental fees like the cost of housing at Colleges and Universities. In some cases the Town may help facilitate, approve and partner with the Resort owners on a housing project.

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?

Over the past four years, we have seen a tremendous improvement with STA issues. That shows that regulations and by-laws are working. Occupancy levels need to be in line with a bedroom or true definition of a sleeping area. I do not think that the few extra people that could be added to a non-bedroom would have a dramatic influence on the tourism economy. Just as the hotel rooms regulate occupancy levels so should STA houses. I do support all Legal STA operators as strong members of TBM business community and applaud all the steps they have taken to organize and adhere to by-laws.

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

My biggest problem is illegal STA operations. These are usually in residential areas that do not allow STA licences and can often fly under the radar from the Town and its By-Laws. This underground type of business hurts everyone including all the reputable STA Operators that have invested so much money into our economy to operate within the law. I would crack down hard on

these and charge people who advertise on line. I think this would help to strengthen the legitimate STA Business Sector.

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?

That is a hard question to answer specifically without having an inside 'look at the books'. There are always efficiencies that can be found with businesses as large as the Town. The TBM should be looked at as you would with any other business, pay for what you can afford and spend wisely. We do need to be more business friendly, helping our business partners with simple things that benefit all like snowplow assistance, ice rink subsidies for non-profits and maybe group insurance so the shops in downtown Thornbury or Clarksburg (as an example) can put a bench outside for tourists without buying a patio license and \$5 million worth of liability insurance.

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

You will not hear me say, "I'm going to make lowering taxes my first priority!" This may well be the most irresponsible thing that you can hear during an election. What is the point of municipal taxes if the only thing we care about is not spending any money? My point is fiscal accountability and responsible spending are very important and really no one likes paying taxes, including myself. But in reality, the first responsibility of a Councillor is to build community infrastructure for future generations. We do need to monitor taxes and be fair and reasonable in our governance. The people you elect do not just enact policies which affect us living here today, as Elected Officials must enact policies that will affect generations of Blue Mountains residents into the future. You have to think several stages ahead and as a Town and we need to think the same way. It is that ability to conceptualize and propose policies such as Housing and Economic Development that take into account not only the immediate needs of the present, but which also set the stage for decades – centuries – of future growth.

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 1st, 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?

The expanded Bus route trial was a very important first step as we need to look at the entire Region as a whole for all services including transit, not just within our own borders. People need transit, plain and simple, finding an answer is more complex. REGIONAL transit is needed not only from an economic POV but from a pragmatic one as well. People need to get to work, school and home and more then ever, they rely on public transit.

b) How would you organize & finance such initiatives?

From a tourism angle, in the summer we see the resort bus shuttling happy families to and from the village to the resort beach on Hwy 26. Maybe we take a page from that book and work with all groups from the local B.I.A.s, Chamber of Commerce, BMVA, Resort and Town to pilot shuttles around this great Town of ours. Stay and play in the Village, take a shuttle for wine and cheese in Thornbury, shop for art in Clarksburg and then back to eat and sleep in the Village. From an employment angle, the entire Triangle needs to get together to share costs for expanded bus lines, routes and schedules.

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?

Absolutely, this is a win/win both from a Green local transit position and from the Tourism point as well. TBM is garnering world wide attention from the Cycling community as a premier location from both the sport and leisure groups. The main benefit is to make working life easier for our residents and give them an easier route to work.

b) How would you organize & finance such initiatives?

This is a shared cost that would involve both TBM and Collingwood. I would also bring Grey and Simcoe Counties into the mix and some of our Business Stakeholders. Corporate private sponsorship for one off projects can work as well, The Westin Bike Trail maybe.

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 of the above; clearly marked pedestrian crossings, repairing potholes in high-traffic zones, improved maintenance, addition of more street lights, more bike lanes, more paved shoulders on busy roads and add in more roundabouts and LEFT TURN LANES. We need to work with Grey to have control over the roads in our own Community. The widening of Hwy 26 will change the very core of our identity and needs to be addressed ASAP. We need to launch a task force to get the MTO to the visit Blue Mountains to stop referring to us on a plan or map.

b) How would you organize & finance such initiatives

Roads and Bike Lanes are an important fabric our Town and Infrastructure and need to budgeted for as part of our annual budget and our future forecast. This will be paid for through our regular revenue streams of taxation and development charges. Working with Grey County to recover our own Roads Budget, we estimated over the past four years we could have saved hundreds of thousands of dollars just by proper road management.

Thank you to the Andrew and the BMVA for engaging all candidates with timely and very important questions for our TBM Community. I look forward to the all Candidates Forum and sitting down with all Stakeholders to discuss these priorities.

Sincerely,

Peter

**Peter Bordignon
Proudly running for Councillor
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