

## **Responses of Michael Blair**

### **SOS Collingwood Questions for Candidates for Collingwood Town Council**

#### **1.) In order of priority how would you rank the top five (5) priorities for the Town of Collingwood over the next 4 years?**

My top priorities include:

- a. Lower property taxes and repay high interest debt with cash now invested in low interest securities
- b. Update the Official Plan to ensure all citizens have a clear picture of the plans for future development; the costs of related services; and, the limits placed on development.
- c. Move the new hospital program through to completion
- d. License and regulate short term rentals
- e. Plan routine maintenance of linear assets to ensure cycling safety with paved shoulders, cycling lanes, etc.

#### **2.) Much has been said recently about the need for greater “Transparency” in how the Town conducts its affairs. What changes do you think are necessary to improve transparency in how Council, and Town staff, make decisions?**

Transparency can be achieved as follows:

- a. No “in camera” meetings unless needed to protect confidentiality of sensitive information
- b. Formal minutes of all meetings released publicly shortly after the meetings except in the case of in camera meetings where minutes should be released when the need for confidentiality passes and in any event within 60 days.
- c. Pass a by-law requiring all parties contracting with the Town to disclose actual and potential conflicts of interest and to represent and warrant (with appropriate penalties for misrepresentation) that their disclosure is complete and they are aware of no conflicts not disclosed.
- d. Improve the Town’s web site to expand public access to virtually all Town files subject to applicable laws – e.g. Privacy Act

#### **3.) What is your position on inter-governmental cooperation between the Town and its neighbouring municipalities (e.g. the Town of Blue Mountains, Clearview and Wasaga Beach) and where and how do you think such cooperation would most benefit Collingwood?**

Inter-governmental cooperation is essential to fully benefit not only the Town but also adjoining municipalities and avoid duplication of efforts.

#### **4.) Collingwood is under intense development pressure like it has never seen before in its history. What increased complexities and pressures do you think this presents, and how will you ensure the Town’s planning and**

**building departments are equipped to address them? Are there any additional skills and experience you feel are required to manage these pressures?**

Development can be managed with a few key actions:

- a. Expand the availability of serviced lands to reduce the upward pressure on real estate prices
- b. Update the Official Plan with substantial inputs from Townspeople and include estimates of the capital costs and development charges needed to execute the Official Plan
- c. Add project management staff with development experience to the Planning Department and ensure all approved developments pay an appropriate charge for the benefit of the permits they receive
- d. Enforce the Official Plan without variation except in extraordinary circumstances

**5.) The mounting development pressure in the Town is generating a heightened level of community interest in the Town's planning and development process and decisions. Do you think the Town has adequate public consultation processes in place to deal with these decisions or do you think changes are required, and if so, what changes?**

Public consultation in the process of approving development is vital and our current level of consultation is inadequate. Having said that, I believe that once a full consultation process is complete, the Town must decide and proceed regardless of the fact that some factions will be disappointed. The changes I would make are to define the consultation process and schedule clearly and enforce it. For example, a 90-day consultation process can be mandated and Council required to decide to permit or deny a development with finality at the end of that process.

**6.) The Town has recently approved a Waterfront Master Plan. What is your perspective on that plan? Do you think it contains the right priorities or are there changes you feel are required? Should its implementation be a priority for the new Council?**

The Waterfront Master Plan seems reasonably sound except for the token estimate of cost to remediate the Terminals for which there is a \$500,000 allowance. The costs will be orders of magnitude higher. In my view, the Town needs to answer the question: "If the Terminals were not there, would we build them?". I believe the Town should develop a fully-costed set of alternatives for the Terminals; go through a thorough consultation process; and, then decide with finality how to proceed.

**7.) Both the Waterfront Master Plan and the Town's Official Plan state that the protection of Collingwood's sensitive wetlands and shoreline areas are a top priority. How would you rate Collingwood's performance in protecting these areas to date? Do you think Collingwood currently has appropriate processes and controls in place to protect these areas (especially from development), or do you think improvements are required, and if so, what improvements?**

**Wetlands and Shoreline:** I lack sufficient information to have a reasoned view on the state of our wetlands and shorelines but there is little doubt that these natural resources require protection. I can't comment meaningfully any further with the information I now have.

**8.) What role do you see Collingwood's protected wetland and shoreline areas playing in your vision of the Town's social, cultural and economic future?**

**Social, Cultural and Economic Impact of wetlands and shoreline:** The role of wetlands and our shoreline in the social, economic and cultural future of the Town is to allow future generations to benefit from living in an area rich with wildlife with hiking and biking trails and many recreational areas and beaches that in many ways define the Town of Collingwood. I live in the Forest and can only comment on the joy my children showed waking up their first Christmas in our log home to see a handful of deer in the back yard.

**9.) SOS Collingwood has raised specific concerns regarding the recent development proposal for the Living Waters/Bear Estate property. While the developer has asked the Town of defer consideration of the application until 2019, a decision on the matter will likely come before Council early in its next term. What are your views on that proposal and what level of public consultation and input do you feel needs to occur?**

**Living Waters and Bear Estates:** I don't know what is proposed for Living Waters and Bear Estates or what is the current status of public consultation and permitting. Whatever the current situation, development of that area should conform to the Town's Official Plan and proceed only after a full public consultation.

If elected, I will become privy to more information and better able to respond.