

Responses of Christopher Baines

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?

Priorities in next 4 years:

- a) Harbourfront Master Plan
- b) a ward system
- c) more parkland/green space
- d) affordable housing

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 is up to council collectively to define. Certainly greater communication throughout a number of media is important, as many folks I speak with seem to be unaware of the facts and policies of council. Whether that is a more public meeting, more use of social media, more blogs with sign ups from interested parties or advertising (or a mixture of all) the current system does not seem to be working “on Main Street”.

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?

I know we have some fences to mend with Clearview over the airport sale and certainly Wasaga Beach must be courted to maximize donations when the hospital fundraising starts but I cannot comment about TBM and their dealings with us. We must always be willing to listen more to our neighbours and their concerns.

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?

My belief is that council sets the mood and position to take with any development proposal. Planning staff should reflect that. With such developer interest in our town and region we have more power to say no or demand specific changes.

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?

As above, I think a greater variety of communication methods are needed to reach out to more groups and individuals and seek their responses and inputs. Our citizens must feel empowered to engage in these development proposals.

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?

Strongly support the Waterfront Master Plan. I participated in the process and accept its recommendations. Many parties (myself included) would like to see some specific areas tweaked but when you have such broad-based consensus on a final product, I think it is unwise to open it up again to changes as that would start the whole process over again.

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?

As someone who has worked in the land trust community for over 30 years, I am always concerned about municipal zoning and the possibility of a new council changing or slicing off sections for short-term expediency. However, it is not politically possible in my opinion for the town to consider such an option (even if it did guarantee preservation "in perpetuity"), as it would mean the transferring of a municipal asset. In the end "constant vigilance is the price of safety". Our citizens and non-governmental agencies must remain vigilant and vocal to protect and preserve what we have and to lobby for more.

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?

Anyone who has visited Chicago and seen the miles of Lakeshore Park can see what a visionary the businessman Montgomery Ward was as he bought and donated over 6 miles of waterfront to Chicago. Likewise Central Park in

New York. Imagine if Collingwood had had the vision to do the same 20 years or so ago? We need a bigger vision by more of our citizens.

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?

I would like to walk the shore in person and understand the current boundaries and zoning by-law as well as the proposed changes. At the current time I do not see the case for changing the rules as to do so begs the question, "When exactly are "the rules" the rule?"