

Responses of Steve Berman

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?

1. Continue on the current path already provided by the residents, in the Community Based Strategic Plan, Economic Action Plan and Waterfront Master Plan
2. Continue with the fiscal responsibility and policies of the current council, which has paid our debt down from \$39 million to \$25 million, and decreased taxes in 3 of the past 4 budgets.
3. Continue to improve transparency at Town Hall, by asking Council to make recorded votes mandatory at Council meetings on all substantive and procedural items, as is done in Wasaga Beach, Orangeville, Queen's Park and the House of Commons. I will ask for Council to approve the audio recording of all in-camera meetings, as is done in London, Niagara Falls, Brampton and more. This will be available only to the Closed Meeting Investigator in an investigation.
4. Improved Communication - I will ask Council to look at ways to improve the Town's communications. Simple links to documents will give residents an easier way to find facts on key issues. I feel the current system does not show residents what they want to know, rather what the Town believes they should know.
5. Trust - all items that come in front of Council should be judged by the same standards, regardless of the individual, company or organization who puts forth the item. RFP's, procurement, planning decisions, board and committee appointments, need to be made on merit. Each member of Council should be proud to declare a conflict of interest. It is an opportunity to show residents that openness & transparency are more than just words.

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?

There are always way to improve transparency, including the two items I stated earlier (recorded votes and the recording of in-camera meetings), but the public also needs to do their part to stay educated on what can, and can't be made public. There is a false narrative being used so far in this election, about "secret meetings" or a "high volume" of in-camera meeting that have been held by the current council. This is not true, and has been explained in great detail by the town clerk on the town's website (<http://www.collingwood.ca/node/18638#2018%2008%2017%20-%20202b>)

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 think it's very important for all the municipalities to understand that we are part of a region, in South Georgian Bay. If the region is a success, we all win. I remember saying four years ago, that all members of council for each municipality, should stand together at the top of Blue Mountain, and take a look down at the area. You can't see dividing lines like those on a map. It's one big area. Our successes rely on each other, and our failures can effect each other as well.

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?

I trust the town planning staff. I understand that our current head of the planning department is nearing retirement. The next council may be responsible for hiring her replacement, and that is an important responsibility. As with any other department, I would ask them to be pro-active with our planning, not re-active. Try to anticipate any issues and resolve them "before" it gets to the point that the residents feel they are not being heard.

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?

I have been at council for most of the public planning meetings over the past six years. They are typically well attended, and residents are usually both vocal and passionate expressing their concerns. As I stated previously, I would ask of the planning department, only that they try to be as pro-active as possible, in anticipating potential issues so that residents don't feel that their concerns are not being heard.

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?

My wife, my daughter and myself all participated in the public portions of the Waterfront Master Plan. I support the plan, as the residents got the express their own priorities. I don't know if any changes are required, but I do believe it is a living document, so of course different opportunities and obstacles may arise. I do believe that the continuation of the plan should be a priority for the next council. I attended the opening of the Awen' Gathering Place yesterday, and it was incredible. It far exceeded my expectations.

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?

I don't think that I'm qualified to answer that question. The Waterfront Plan just completed it's very first step, so it's likely too early to judge in this regard. As far as the OP, I would need to hear from the residents, user groups, as well as town staff in order to decide whether or not we can do 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?

A huge role. I was born and raised in Kingston, Ontario. We had an incredible waterfront, from one end of the town to the other. Protected wetlands in the Cataraqui Conservation Area and others, were incredible places to see. (<https://crca.ca/conservation-lands/little-catarauqui-creek-conservation-area/>)

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 only know peripherally about this issue. I knew of the deputations that were made at the committee level, but I was at the Judicial Inquiry meeting that night, so I didn't get to hear them first hand. I understand that the developer has deferred proposal until 2019. but that doesn't change anything, it just delays it. All I can offer is to do my full due diligence on this (should I be fortunate enough to be elected), part of which would be to hear the research and comments of all members of the public.

Thank for the opportunity, and I hope my answers helps

Cheers