

Responses of Deborah Doherty

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. Managed Growth – Protecting our Quality of Life

I support growth in our community – it pays for improved services for residents and businesses. But we must grow with a view to protecting what we value as a community – small town culture, quiet neighbourhoods, a walkable and cycle able community, waterfront, green space, trees and wildlife. I have strongly advocated for higher development property standards, tree preservation, phasing, so that entire tracts are land are not clear cut and decimated for years at a stretch, and limits on the operating hours of heavy equipment.

2. Town Finances

As Councillor this term, I supported the elimination of half the Town's debt while increasing revenues and strengthening our reserves. This was accomplished while reducing the tax rate year by year. Collingwood now has a long-range financial roadmap, and with the right Council we can see our way clear to investing in the community providing more and better services, without burdening taxpayers.

3. Jobs, Housing, and the Economy

Collingwood is now ranked as one of the top 10 Canadian cities for entrepreneurship and small business expansion, and is the Number 1 ranked town in Ontario. To continue to grow, our businesses need employees. New workers to our town need affordable accommodation and reliable transportation. I supported the investment in expanded public transportation and I will continue to encourage the development of mixed use neighbourhoods with housing options for a range of family budgets.

4. Health and Active Transportation

Our town today exudes healthy lifestyle – I supported the extension of the Healthy Kids Community Challenge which promotes physical activity and healthy eating among our children – and when kids take this message home, the whole family benefits. Collingwood is seeing more people than ever before cycling for work and play, and I support the expansion of trails and bikes lanes throughout the community.

5. The Arts

Arts and Culture are one of the 5 pillars of the Community Based Strategic Plan – they are very important to the residents of this community. We have taken affirmative action this term by expanding on the number of cultural events that we host, like sidelaunch Days, the creation and growing use of the Shipyards Amphitheatre, and our MOU with The Simcoe Street Theatre to provide a wide range of performing arts programming that is accessible to everyone.

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?

I believe Council has made great strides in improving transparency, honesty and integrity this term. One of the first orders of business for this Council was the execution of the Community Based Strategic Plan, which surveyed thousands of residents about their priorities for the community, among which was Open and Accountable Government. All council business since then has been governed by those 5 pillars. I supported a new, more robust Code of Conduct for Council, the introduction of a Purchasing Manager and new standards for fair and transparent tendering and acquisition of municipal goods and services. This Council held fewer in camera meetings in the past four years than did the previous Council over the same timeframe (92 in-camera meeting 2014-2018 versus 104 in-camera meetings 2010-2014). I supported the introduction of live streaming of both Council and Standing Committee meetings. And I supported the initiation of the Judicial Inquiry, investigating the sale of the first half of Collus. This transaction was fraught with exceptional irregularities in municipal practice, and significant information gaps having to do with the decision to sell, the decision to sell 50%, the delegation of authority to negotiate on behalf of Council, the apparent lack of legal oversight on behalf the town, certain terms of the shareholders' agreement, in particular the "shotgun" clause, and the disposition of the proceeds. We can see that the disposition of proceeds has already formed the basis of an OPP inquiry. It is my view that only a Judicial Inquiry could compel answers, shed light on the process, and provide formal direction on municipal best practices going forward. Paraphrasing George Santayano, if we do not learn from the mistakes of the past, we are destined to repeat them.

For the next term of Council, I will promote the establishment of a Lobbyist Registry to further enhance the transparency of dealings between Council, Staff and project proponents. I also would like to see an end to the use of hand-held devices during Council and Standing Committee meetings, through which private communication can take place in what should be an entirely public forum.

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 am always in support of inter-municipal initiatives that would provide better services to residents at a better cost, than the municipality can provide on its own. The Town of Collingwood is already participating in a 3-municipality cooperative public transit service (Collingwood, Wasaga Beach, Blue Mountains). The Town of Collingwood provides drinking water to parts of The Blue Mountains, and has provided staff to operate water treatment facilities to Stayner and to the Meaford Tank Range, in both cases on a full cost-

recovery basis. I believe Council and staff should always be on the look-out for these kinds of opportunities.

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?

Indeed, the issue I hear about more than any other is Growth – and how it is impacting our neighbourhoods, our streets, our natural heritage and environment, our lifestyle – the reasons why we have chosen to live here. This concern has really come to the fore recently, with the commencement of infill development projects that have caused major disruption to the formerly quiet neighbourhoods that surrounded them. Certainly residents around the Living Waters development are experiencing first hand the issues that arise as a result of development pressure. It will continue to be an issue as we grow, because most of our greenfield space has been developed, and new residential and commercial projects will have to occur in the remaining open spaces between neighbourhoods. I feel that we are at a critical juncture and that how we develop, how we grow needs to be addressed and could be enshrined better in our planning policies.

To be clear, I support growth in our community – it pays for improved services for residents and businesses. But we must grow with a view to protecting what we value as a community – small town culture, quiet neighbourhoods, a walkable and cycleable community, green space, trees, and our waterfront. From the beginning of this term, I have strongly advocated for higher standards of maintenance on development sites – meaning tree preservation wherever possible, better and neater storage of materials and refuse, control of noxious weeds, and phasing as much as possible so that entire tracts of land are not clear cut and decimated for years at a stretch – which has happened with a couple of our developments. I supported a robust new Noise Bylaw that limits the operating hours of heavy equipment. I could clearly “hear” the benefit of this new bylaw while door-knocking this past weekend in one of the neighbourhoods that has been significantly impacted by a new development – the peace and quiet almost made up for a rear yard terrain that resembled Passchendaele.

These are the actions we can take that are consistent with our Official Plan and Urban Design Guidelines, but I propose that this is not enough, and we need to look at changes that would better address the impacts of development. For example, developers are required to plant boulevard trees in all new developments. I propose that buffering between existing neighbourhoods and infill developments be prioritized, but where this is not possible or sufficient, that developers also be required to plant trees in the rear yards, to make up for a lack of buffering, to accommodate/mitigate variations in grading and/or density between new and existing neighbourhoods, and to enhance drainage. Cash in lieu of parkland dedication should not be permitted under any circumstances – trails and greenspace are critical to retaining a “small town” feel in a community that is not quite small anymore.

I am very excited about the recent grant of \$96,000 that we received from the Federation of Canadian Municipalities from their Municipalities for Climate Innovation Program. This

will be applied to an Urban Forest Management Plan to increase green infrastructure and reduce the impact of stormwater caused by climate change and urban development. The plan will develop a vision for the urban forest, conduct an inventory and assessment of the status of the urban forest and develop a strategic plan defining objectives and actions and an implementation plan with dates and responsibilities.

Our waterfront must be protected – for public access, both physical and visual, and for environmental integrity. Other development factors may be addressed, for example building heights and massing. Should there be “stale dates” on Official Plan Amendments and Site Development Agreements? How many amendments to a site development agreement should be permitted?

The density targets that the province has established for Collingwood are very high, almost triple the average density that we enjoy today. It is not easy to challenge a provincial policy, but nothing changes if nothing changes.

As we grow, it is more important than ever to keep the vision statement of the Community Based Strategic Plan in mind: “Collingwood is a responsible, sustainable, and accessible community that leverages its core strengths: a vibrant downtown, a setting within the natural environment, and an extensive waterfront. This offers a healthy, affordable, and four-season lifestyle to all residents, businesses, and visitors.”

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 do believe that for the most part, the public consultation processes that we have in place today are adequate – there is in fact any number of opportunities to have input between Council Meetings, Public Meetings and Standing Committee Meetings. But there are two issues that do need to be addressed:

- Communication – with the decline of traditional newspapers, and with the loss of one of our two local papers, I don't believe that this traditional, and legislated means of informing the public of upcoming Public Meetings is adequate anymore. We must look at alternatives that align with how people are consuming news and current affairs today – and most likely that would be via digital and social media. Unfortunately, this is governed by the Municipal Act so we need to pressure the province to "get with the 21st century".
- Committee of Adjustment – In Collingwood, "minor" planning issues are dealt with via Committee of Adjustment, members of the public who are appointed by Council to deal with these matters. Mostly, the applications that they deal with are truly minor, but not always. The Planning Department are pretty good at bringing more important matters to Council, but this relies upon the judgement of the Planning Department. Technically these meetings are open to the public but in reality few people are aware of them let alone attend. I believe that Council should have more direct oversight of the CofA.

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?

I fully support all recommendations of the Waterfront Masterplan. This was a study which had the input of over 2000 residents and thus is a close reflection of the values and priorities of the community. It provided not only a perspective and vision for the entire Waterfront from Hens and Chickens to Sunset Point, it provided a detailed plan for implementation, phasing and costs. The Waterfront Masterplan is a key priority of the current Council. In fact Phase 1 of the development of Harbourview Park with the construction of the Awen Centre, a structure intended to be a meeting place and a salute to the first inhabitants of these lands, the Petun and Ojibway nations, was just completed and officially opened this past Friday. It should most definitely continue to be a priority for Council, within our "pay as you go" financial guideline.

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 believe that over the past 10 years, the Town has placed high priority over protection of the shoreline and particularly the wetlands. For example, the town took the owner of the Silvercreek Wetlands to the OMB and was successful at protecting all of the most sensitive areas from future development, at significant expense. Most recently however, as we have seen with the proposed amendments to the Living Waters development, in particular the Bear Estate lands, it is apparent that we need sharper tools. As I noted in the first question, perhaps it is time to look at the length of time that site control agreements that be in effect. I believe we need to look for higher standards of protection for sensitive shoreline areas. And we need to protect visual, as well as physical access to the shoreline. We have made sightlines a priority for the development of the Shipyards, we should do the same at Living Waters/Cranberry.

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?

Quite simply, it is access to and appreciation of these attributes that has brought so many people here, as tourists and as residents. It is a stated priority of residents in the Community Based Strategic Plan, and I for one believe that it is my responsibility as a policy maker to be true to those priorities that I was elected to protect. Let's not kill the goose that laid the golden egg.

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 do not support that proposal, and I admit honestly that I am up against the planning tools that we have at our disposal today. I believe that the role of the public, that means you, SOS Collingwood is to continue to attend meetings, make deputations and build petitions to compel us to think and plan outside the box, I want to turn down these "creeping amendments", and make it impossible for this to happen again, at Living Waters and anywhere else where the latest iteration of a plan has gone far beyond the original intent, and I want to force a new Environmental Impact Assessment.