

Citizens' Pages in the Blue Mountains Review

The Mid-Term Council Report Card Issue



Mid-Term Council Report Card



**High Marks for STA Licencing/Enforcement,
New Sign Bylaw, Closure of 5th Line, Budget**

**Low Marks for Openness and Transparency,
Library Issues, Treatment of Councillor Seguin**

Council is now half-way through its term, so we thought we would ask Council and Citizens how they thought Council had performed so far.

On the whole people are disappointed. Generally people view Council as uncommunicative and unresponsive. Most complained about the lack of transparency, and the way the restructuring of the Library and the harassment charges against Michael Seguin were handled.

Positive comments were received on STA licencing, the sign bylaw, budget management, and the closing of the 5th line road allowance.

Citizens gave Council an average grade of "D".

We asked Council and the Mayor, and Deputy Mayor to provide a self-assessment. We asked:

- 1) Which is the one item that you campaigned and were elected on that you have had the most success advancing?
- 2) What would you rate as your most significant contribution to Council over the last 2 years?
- 3) What has been Council's most important achievement over the first half of its term?
- 4) What has been the one issue in which you are most disappointed with the lack of progress or the outcome?
- 5) What would you like to see Council accomplish over the next 2 years?
- 6) On a scale from A to F, how would you rate:
a. your own performance; b. that of Council as a whole;

We were pleasantly surprised by the response from Council, with 4 of 5 councillors and the Deputy Mayor responding. Unfortunately Mayor McKean and Councillor Gamble chose not respond. Three of the five who responded addressed only the achievements and not the disappointments. Only two Councillors were bold enough to give Council as a whole a grade, one a "C" and one a "D". See what each had to say in the following pages.

We also asked Citizens to rate each person, and Council as a whole, with an overall grade from A to F together with a reason for the grade, and to describe for each individual their most important contribution and their greatest disappointment.

The responses from citizens can be categorized into two categories:

- 1) People who looked at both the negative and positive gave a balanced assessment, and 2) people who are so upset and disillusioned that they were overwhelming negative and gave F's across the Board. The latter group who chose only to address the negative, in a way are similar to those on Council, who chose only to address the positive.

Hopefully councillors and citizens will read what each other had to say and we can start communicating again. One reader pleaded:

"Please initiate an open, transparent and consistent public engagement process so citizens don't feel shut out of their own government and we can start to rebuild trust. I realize that trust is a two way street and somehow we have gotten to the point where there is mistrust, perhaps on both sides. As a citizen, I want to be sensitive to the possibility that we have made council defensive, but I think that a discussion (involving citizens of course) about such a process would allow Council and citizens to work together and build trust."

Welcome to the Citizens' Pages

This is the third monthly issue of the Citizen's Pages, an insert into the Blue Mountains Review ("BMR"), which is distributed to about 3,000 people as a flyer in the mail each month. You would have received one if you have a mailing address in the Town of Blue Mountains, unless you have specified "no flyers" at the post office. Copies are also available at various locations around town.

It is funded through an online crowdfunding campaign

<https://www.gofundme.com/Citizens-Page-in-the-Blue-Mts-Review>

Donations can also be made to the Citizens' Pages care of The Blue Mountains Review and be dropped off at Riverside Graphics in Clarksburg.

All of the funds we receive go towards the printing and distribution. All content and editing is provided by citizen volunteers. **We have managed to raise enough to survive for our first three issues, but we are surviving month to month. We still have a long way to go to our goal of \$7,200 to keep us going for a full year.**

If you like what you see and want to see it continue, please donate to keep us going.

Alar Soever, Editor

CITIZENS AT THE



Come out and meet people who are interested in what is going on in the Town, and what is before Council. All citizens are invited to drop in at the Community Room at Corner Café on Monday nights between 4 and 7 for some socializing and friendly discussion on the issues facing the Town and what is on the Council Agenda.

Come, meet new friends, listen, and have your say.

Rules: Be polite, respect other people's opinions, and if you don't agree with them, just remember: They have the right to be wrong.

Know your businesses



This month's business: Maiolo's Restaurant and Lounge

1. Where is Maiolo's?
2. What about Maiolo's location makes it special?
3. What kind of food does Maiolo serve?
1) Greek 2) Italian/Canadian 3) French 4) Japanese

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Mayor McKean - Self Assessment – No response received
Citizens Grades Range: “D” to “F” Average Grade: “F”

Citizens' Comments: People were almost unanimously critical of the Mayor's performance, and he got the lowest average rating of anyone. People said that they had great hopes for Mayor McKean, “particularly after the former Mayor”, but are disappointed that he does not listen or respond to citizens.

Citizen's cited a lack of leadership, poor communication skills, and a lack of transparency. He was criticized for creating a dysfunctional Council, and in particular for his handling of the harassment allegations against Councillor Seguin and the library issue.

The most generous assessment of the Mayor stated: “McKean seems like a nice man who is in a little over his head. He doesn't shows strong leadership or ask questions or seek clarification from staff. His depth of knowledge of municipal affairs appears weak, as he always defers to staff or requests legal advice. He has misjudged the importance of certain issues and seems totally out-of-touch with the residents. Instead of being open and transparent, he has withdrawn behind a veil of secrecy. It must be very difficult, as I think he wants to do a good job as Mayor. He has a quiet style and that hasn't serviced him well in his role as Mayor. He should seek the advice and opinions of his fellow Councillors as often as he seeks the advice of staff and he also needs to be a consensus builder.”

Deputy Mayor Ardiel - Self Assessment

Item most success advancing: 3 items, a fair contract with the O.P.P., Open for Business, and bring savings back to the town. I believe that council has worked hard to be Open for Business and this has been achieved by 1)the new Sign By Law; 2) Economic Development and 3)the reorganization of our Planning and Development Services.

Most significant contribution: Listening to the all the ratepayers and having the ability to make decisions, not alone but with the whole of Council. I also was elected to Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO) and Ontario Small Urban Municipalities (OSUM) to be able to bring forth the concerns of our town and other towns with similar concerns to a body of government that has more power to address issues with the province.

Council's top achievement: The Short-Term Accommodations licensing, this program is now working in our town and now other municipalities having the same issues are asking our town for help in developing and implementing a license regime.

Issue disappointed with: We have had many issues of late and would prefer to move forward on a clean slate.

In next 2 years would like to see: Moving forward with many projects regarding our Infrastructure, a new Zoning By-Law, and ensuring our Corporate Strategic Plan 2016-2020 is followed.

Self-Assessment Grade: I will let the people of this community decide the rating on my performance. I attend each meeting well informed, my attendance record is excellent. I participate in all discussions. I believe in open communication with full and part time constituents contributing to informed, intelligent decisions moving forward.

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D. M. Ardiel -Citizens Grades: Range: “A” to “F” Avg. Grade: “D”

Citizens' Comments: Positive comments received include that she “speaks her mind” and “seems to have thoughts in line with the community.” People also noted her support for the passing of the new Sign Bylaw. Deputy Mayor Ardiel was criticised for being seen as being overly eager to punish Mr. Seguin and for her silence during the entire library scandal. People also commented that they wish she would spend more time on the issues rather than self-promotion, noting that she mentions her position on AMO and/or OSUM at least once during each meeting of Council.

Councillor McGee - Self Assessment

Item most success advancing: Council's Strategic Plan for this term contains some aspects of my key campaign issues, sustainable communities, affordable government, accessible government and public engagement

Most significant contribution: Preparation is the most significant contribution a Councillor can make on an ongoing basis. Agenda topics are widely varied. Without preparation it is very difficult to contribute to the debate and the subsequent decision by Council.

Council's top achievement: Council's work in clarifying the vision for the future of The Blue Mountains through its Strategic Plan, the Official Plan and the Sign By-law.

Issue disappointed with: No response given

In next 2 years would like to see: I would like to see Council move forward on sustainability in many ways, one of the key aspects would be the furthering of our asset management plan to assist future councils in the prioritizing infrastructure maintenance and renewal and funding.

Self-Assessment Grade: This should be left to others to evaluate.

Citizens Grades: Range: “A” to “F” Average Grade: “C”

Citizens' Comments: Mr. McGee received high praise for his initiative to have Council meetings recorded on audio/video to improve accountability. He was both praised and criticised for his focus on sustainability. People criticised his attendance record noting “McGee was absent for most of the summer and seems to have just recently re-engaged.”, also noting he was absent for the meeting at which sanctions were applied against Councillor Seguin. People pointed to poor communication skills with his electorate and lack of strong conviction, as “he voices his views about a number of issues even when not agreeing with the majority, but does not always follow through when he votes”.

Councillor Gamble - Self Assessment:- No Response Given

Citizens Grades: Range: “A” to “F” Average Grade: “D”

Citizens' Comments: People didn't have much to say about Mr. Gamble. He was given credit for his long service on Council and for keeping a watchful eye on the budget over the years, and for voting against the amendment to the Purchasing Policy, which removed a level of Council oversight over spending. He was criticised for his lack of action against what many view as the unprincipled firing of the Library staff. People noted that his contribution and attention to detail appears to be lessening, and noted “he often closes his eyes and appears to have fallen asleep during meetings.” He was also criticised for not responding back to citizens' e-mails.

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Councillor Martin - Self Assessment- Submitted with the comment: *"No one councillor is responsible for any specific aspect of Council's agenda. Once an issue is resolved by at least four votes, the balance of Council whether for or against must support the resolution of the majority. This council has to its credit followed that principle. In fact and my opinion: all of the members of this Council act in a principled manner to each other and the community at large. That said, I feel I can only answer Questions "1, 3, & 5"*.

Item most success advancing: Council accountability for spending and its priorities and objectives.

Most significant contribution: No response as per above

Council's top achievement: 1) 2 budgets with modest surplus and tax within or below cost of living percentage increases; 2) Strategic Plan; 3) final resolution of Official Plan; 4) STA licensing programme, 5) Setting stage to resolve the financial disparity of this municipality paying for 26% of County budget, through our initiative to assume County roads within the Town, 6) Resolution of the Georgian Trail crossing issue championed by Mr. Sequin, 7) Appreciation of the importance of the Library and Depot as a community centres.

Issue disappointed with: No response as per above.

In next 2 years would like to see: Resolving the financial disparity of this municipality paying for 26% of County budget

Self-Assessment Grade: No response as per above.

Citizens Grades: Range: "A" to "F" Average Grade: "C"

Citizens' Comments: Mr. Martin received high praise for acting *"with objective integrity in all aspects of the handling of the charges against Mr. Sequin, and spoke out about the unnecessarily harsh sanctions."* He was also praised for his persistent push for a fair deal from the County of Grey.

People were critical of his role in the library issue and the fact he does not return their e-mails. They noted that he is an independent thinker, is knowledgeable, and comes prepared to meetings. One described him as *"the voice of reason on Council"*. People gave him credit for his well thought out opinions, but noted that unfortunately he often does not show leadership by more forcefully advocating for his positions. Several added that they wished he had a *"more forthright speaking style"* noting *"he continues to put his hand in front of his face and then mumbles into the microphone."*

Councillor Halos - Self Assessment

Item most success advancing: New sign Bylaw. I made a commitment to work on a new sign bylaw during the election. We had considerable public input and crafted a low height, low light model.

Most significant contribution: Councillors sit on many committees and work behind the scenes. Housing affordability has long been an issue and I feel that the work that I and others performed with the Attainable Housing Corporation made a significant contribution to our Town. We put programs in place to help citizens purchase homes as well as renovate existing to create new dwelling units. We were also able to attract significant capital from developers through the bonusing provisions in the old Official Plan to fund future projects.

Council's top achievement: Closing the fifth line to vehicular traffic. This removed access by vehicles to the Loree forest, Bruce trail, Len Gertler Memorial forest and other public lands where the environmental degradation was significant. This issue was attended and commented on by more interested citizens than any other during

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my terms of council, thus my rating.

Issue disappointed with: "Sigh..... the Michael Seguin affair."

In next 2 years would like to see: Continued strong financial performance. Stand against rezoning to expand extraction uses in significant recreational and escarpment lands. Not get sidetracked with personal agendas, stick to running the Municipality. Start webcasting our meetings. Continued attention to ensuring public access to public waterfront areas. Continued attention to improving our development process. Continued attention to regulating STA's. etc. etc.

Self-Assessment Grade: "C"

Citizens Grades: Range: "B" to "F" Average Grade: "D"

Citizens' Comments: Mr. Halos was commended for his support for the closing of the fifth line, his participation level in Council discussions, and the openness of the Sign Bylaw Committee. He received both criticism and praise for advocating for the business community.

Mr. Halos was heavily criticised for his harsh attack on Councillor Seguin during the application of sanctions. Others commented that they are often not sure where he stands on issues. Others criticised him on flip-flopping on issues.

Councillor Seguin - Self Assessment

Item most success advancing: 1) The upgrade and assumption of the road network within the 87-unit Thunderhill subdivision so that all residents of this community receive fair services for their tax dollars and, 2) the adoption of a new Sign-By-law that provides more clarity and better reflects the existing and future vision of the community.

Most significant contribution: Staying true to my election promise/word that I would bring a **C**harge to this Council **C**-clarity and/or a clearer vision, **H**-honesty and no hidden agendas, **A**- attitude and higher standards, **R**-research, responsibility and preparation, **G**-get things done and, **E**-enthusiasm. Apparently, that was too much for the CAO and Council to accept from a new councillor!

Council's top achievement: The adoption of a new Official Plan that provides better zoning and design controls and promotes compatible and more modest growth and development. The removal of flawed BONUSING policies, until clear Guidelines are developed that provide more open, transparent and a predictable development process--no surprises; no side deals.

Issue disappointed with: This Council's lack of interest in neighbourhood road safety (reducing speed limits) and trail safety (crossings) and continue to ignore residents' cries for security and rely on outdated standards. In my opinion, this does not promote a HEALTHY COMMUNITY or LIFESTYLE – Goal #3 in the new Strategic Plan

In next 2 years would like to see: Show more respect for each other and the public by listening and responding to their concerns.

Self-Assessment Grade: "B" I was only allowed to express myself over 1 year and suppressed over the second year.

Citizens Grades: Range: "A" to "D" Average Grade: "B"

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Citizens' Comments: Councillor Seguin received the highest rating of all the councillors. He was given high marks for being responsive and caring about the citizens. Comments included: *"The ONLY Councillor to return emails, phone calls and the only one who actually listens to the electorate."*, and, *"Represents citizens and cares deeply. Perhaps, too much."* Some commented they could not judge him as they did not know what he was accused of *"if I knew what he did and said I would be in a better position to judge."* He was criticised on the Library issue *"Not doing enough to investigate the suspicious firings of 9 municipal employees last March"*. One reader summed it up as follows: *"Seguin is a lone wolf/the outsider on Council. He has a blunt style that rubs people the wrong way. He asks the 'hard' questions and pays the price. He cares deeply for this community, comes fully prepared to each Council meeting, and is not afraid to ask questions or speak his mind. He should reach out more to build relationships and liaisons with colleagues and others who can help advance his ideas. Consensus building is an important part of interacting with people in order to ensure a positive experience and outcome."*

Breaking News: STA Owners Group Joins ex-Mayor Anderson in Criticising Councillor Seguin and his Supporters

In a media release which was widely picked up by various local media, a group calling itself The Blue Mountains Short Term Accommodation Owner's Association ("BMSTAOA") stated that it *"wishes to add its voice to others, including former Mayor Ellen Anderson, on the topic of the continuing saga of the unprofessional conduct of Councillor Michael Seguin."* And, that it *"wishes to strongly encourage Mr. Michael Seguin to immediately resign or, at an absolute minimum, recuse himself from Council until such time as these serious allegations have been satisfactorily resolved."*

When questioned by the Citizens Pages about what it knew that the public did not, as the media release referred to *"serious allegations of unprofessional conduct and inappropriate behavior"*, Stu Frith, President of the BMSTAOA stated *"We, like you, do not have the facts so we are unable to come to any informed conclusion."* *"Mr. Seguin's guilt or innocence is not able to be determined at this time. We support his right to due process. We are simply suggesting that he should resign temporarily until such time as the final determinations are made."*

In an interview with the Citizens' Pages Councillor Seguin stated, *"I am limited in what I can say as I have filed for a Judicial Review of how this whole matter has been handled and this is now before the courts. I can assure you that I do not plan to resign. The people that elected me would not expect nor want me to resign. The fact that this group has joined Anderson in attacking me does not surprise me. They have been trying to get rid of me for some time now, due to my advocacy for the regulation of the STA industry."*

Little is known about the BMSTAOA. The e-mail given in their press release did not exist. They seem to have been formed last fall and initially claimed to represent the STA industry as a whole. After their initial deputation Blue Mountain Resorts advised the Town they did not represent their views. They currently claim to represent "members who own approximately 120 Chalet and Cottage STA's and 100 or so condo's that would be defined as either STA Condo's or Commercial Resort Condo's." When asked by us, Mr. Frith would not divulge their paid-up membership number .

Library news Brought to you by [VOCAL Voices of Our Community for Accountable Leadership](#)

The Vocalist: On the principle of "cooperative arm's length."

VOCAL members are sometimes asked: "The Town pays for the library; why shouldn't they run it?"

This is a common misunderstanding. Many public institutions can't function properly unless they operate at arms-length from government. The Federal government pays for Elections Canada, for the National Library and the National Archives, for Statistics Canada and the CBC, but the government of the day doesn't run them, because if it did, the institutions would lose all credibility. When government tries to interfere, as it sometimes does, it creates chaos, uncertainty, and dysfunction.

Library independence is considered so important in Ontario that libraries are administered, not under the Municipal Act, but under a separate Public Libraries Act, which restricts the number of council members on any library board to "one less than a majority of the board." In other words, boards may be advised by, but not run by, town councils. Guidelines issued by the Ontario Library Boards' Association make this very clear: under current legislation, "A library board is an independent body and cannot become a committee of council." It also says that for library board members, "The interests of the library take precedence over . . . those of any other group with which [they] are associated."

VOCAL believes that current problems at the library stem from a failure to observe these principles. We believe that the take-over of the Craighleith Depot and the "restructuring" that involved firing the entire library staff, was planned and imposed on the library by some members of council and the town staff, with the cooperation of the Human Resources department and the library CEO, and that it was done without properly informing the board of all the details. The result was a public-relations disaster and a text-book example of why library boards must be free to resist political pressure and make decisions that are in the best interest of the library.

We would like to believe that a council respectful of the Public Libraries Act, and a board fully aware of its powers and duties under the Act—and also aware of the sensibilities of the community— would never have allowed this debacle to happen.

We encourage all readers to attend this month's meeting of the library board, Thursday Feb 16, at 2: 00 in the Town Hall, Thornbury.

Answers to Know Your Businesses

- 1) Maiolo's is located at 15 Harbour St., down by the Thornbury harbour. At the light's turn down towards the water, turn left on Harbour St.
- 2) Maiolo's is the only restaurant where you can enjoy a view of the Bay and Thornbury Harbour.
- 3) Maiolo's features Italian / Canadian Food. Casual fine dining at **very reasonable prices.**

We gladly accept letters to the editor. Please be advised that these letters will be reviewed & published at the discretion of our Editor. Please limit your letters to 200 words or less. You can email your letters to tbcitizens@gmail.com. Please include a phone number for validation. By submitting a Letter to the Editor you agree to be bound by the following terms and conditions: You may not use a false e-mail address, impersonate any person or entity, or otherwise mislead as to the origin of submitted material. You agree to be fully responsible for your own submissions. You agree to grant The Citizens' Pages a right to use your name and other identifying information you provide in connection with that letter. You agree to indemnify and hold the Citizens' Pages and its associates harmless from any claims, damages, losses or costs that arise out of any Letter to the Editor that you submit, including, without limitation, any material submitted or otherwise provided by you that infringes upon any copyright, trademark, or intellectual property right of any person, defames any person, or violates any person's rights of publicity or privacy.

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