

Welcome to the Citizens' Pages

This is the second 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, unless you have specified "no flyers" at the post office.

We had a very successful launch. We have had a lot of positive comments and in our first few weeks of crowd funding we raised \$1,200 dollars.

Thanks to your generous support we had enough to pay the BMR for the two page December Issue (\$400) and have been able to grow from two pages to four this month (\$600). With four pages this month we were able to add more content. I hope you will enjoy reading Citizen's Letters, Library news brought to you by VOCAL (Voices of Our Community for Accountable Leadership), as well as our Political Cartoon.

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 follow the link below and donate to keep us going.

<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. Alar Soever, Editor

Town Council Roundup

Changes to the Town's Harassment Policy

On [December 5th there was a Special Meeting of Council](#) where Lauren Bernardi, the Mississauga Human Relations Lawyer who co-ordinated the investigation into Councillor Seguin, gave training on the [Town Obligations Under the Workplace Harassment and Violence Program](#).

Ms. Bernardi reviewed the Town's obligations Under the the Ontario Human Rights Code, and the Occupational Health and Safety Act (OHSA), the definition of and examples of harassment, and the impact on victims. She noted that OHSA requires Town to ensure the investigation of "incidents and complaints" of harassment which is appropriate in the circumstances. Unfortunately, although the meeting was open to the public, the public was not allowed to ask any questions.

At the [Committee of the Whole Meeting on December 5th](#) several citizens made deputations re: the proposed changes to the Town's Harassment Policy. [Alar Soever noted in his deputation](#) that "The greatest weakness in this document is the lack of clarity with regards to who is responsible, and how to deal with complaints when they fall under the jurisdiction of multiple pieces of legislation." "A well-defined complaint protocol would assist members of Council and the public in understanding how complaints will be investigated and when they will be the subject of public report."

[In her deputation Rosemary Gosselin](#) suggested "More focus on prevention and amelioration would help too. Mediation has been suggested by the public and Council. Perhaps lawyers need not be our first line of consultation."

[Correspondence received from Paul Wilson](#) noted "You have already received letters from some citizens drawing your attention to possible problems in the report. I believe what you need now is expert, independent opinion on those contentions."

Amendments to Sign Bylaw

The December 5 Committee of the Whole also saw [the final draft of the new Sign Bylaw](#) approved. The following is from Vivienne Alper, who has kept us on top of its progress by combing through the various drafts, attending meetings, writing letters and giving deputations.

"The Community should be pleased with the outcome. After many meetings, deliberations, suggestions which resulted in numerous re-drafts, the final one, included a number of issues some of which were hard fought - the banning of pylon signs, the size of ground signs, the number of signs on a building, limiting the number and use of banner signs and banning backlit signs on anything but industrial/institutional buildings. We also took the opportunity to express the thanks of the public and our Community to the Sign Bylaw Committee for our inclusion in the process. We said how worthwhile the inclusion of the public had been, and perhaps this could be used as a template for other situations facing our Town."

The sign bylaw was approved by the Council at their meeting on Monday, December 19, 2017.

CITIZENS AT THE

THE CORNER

CAFÉ & GRILL

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: [Goldsmith's Orchard Market](#)



1. When was Goldsmith's Orchard Market first opened?
a) 1960s b) 1970s c) 1980s d) 1990s e) 2000s
2. What year did it first stay open all year round? a) 2012-2013 b) 2013-2014 c) 2014-2015 d) 2015-2016 e) 2016-2017
3. What are the ingredients in Goldsmith's famous Thornberry Pie?

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Breaking News

Integrity Commissioner Clears Mayor - Criticizes Town Media Release and Policies

At the Council Meeting on December 19, 2016 [a report of the Integrity Commissioner \("IC"\)](#) and a letter from the Ombudsman of Ontario ([Correspondence](#) pgs. 33-35) were tabled. Both dealt with complaints made to them that the Town was obligated to issue a public report on the findings of the Code of Conduct investigation into Councillor Seguin. Both stated that although the original complaint was made under both the Code of Conduct and the Town's harassment policies, the Town has told them that there never was a Code of Conduct investigation and that the entire matter was handled under the harassment policy and thus the Ontario Occupational Health and Safety Act, which does not require a public report. As a result, both the Ombudsman and IC have concluded there is no requirement for a public report.

The complaints were restricted to the lack of a report and not whether the Town acted properly in addressing the Complaint against Councillor Seguin. In her report the IC notes:

"This report stays within the limits of this complaint and has avoided making any findings concerning the investigation into the original complaint against the member of Council which led to the communications under review."

We will have to wait for the results of the Judicial Review filed by Councillor Seguin to see whether he was properly treated under the law. Given what is described in the IC's report, there appears to be a lot to complain about the process, and the results of the Judicial Review will be most interesting.

In clearing the Mayor the IC noted:

"On September 19, 2016, the resident sent an open letter to the Mayor reviewing the history of the matter and expressing concern that "secrecy" surrounding the complaint against the member of Council was eroding public confidence in elected officials."

"The Mayor forwarded a copy of the open letter to the Town's lawyer and asked for advice on how to respond. The lawyer in turn engaged a communications firm to provide advice on the content of the press release."

"The Mayor acted on this advice and approved a press release drafted by his external advisers. There is no suggestion in any of the communications leading up to his approval of the press release that he was trying to mislead the public or acting in bad faith. Accordingly, I find that the Mayor did not release the press release with any intent to mislead." "On this basis, I find that there was no breach of the Code of Conduct by the Mayor in issuing the press release, as described above."

With regard to the press release she was less kind, noting:

"The September 23 press release was factually correct although not comprehensive."

"The press release, as far as it went, did not contain any false statements."

"The press release could have gone farther in explaining why the choice was made to limit the investigation to the procedures under the town policies. As such, the press release was not completely responsive to some of the publicly raised concerns."

Stating the press release was truthful "as far as it went" is hardly a ringing endorsement.

With regard to the Town's policies, in her report the IC noted:

"A complaint protocol would assist members of Council and the public in understanding when complaints made under the Code of Conduct will be investigated and the subject of public report."

It should be the subject of debate by Council and once in place, posted along with the Code of Conduct as part of the ethical infrastructure for use by all. It can reflect the value of early complaint resolution, provide for fair and orderly classification of complaints and contribute to Council's public commitment to upholding the principles in its Code of Conduct."

In her presentation to Council on Monday night the IC reiterated this last point, saying that Council should put in place well defined Complaint protocols which allow for early classification of complaints, an opportunity for early resolution, and well defined transparent processes for dealing with formal complaints. She offered to assist with this. The saddest part is the IC's remarks echo the deputations made by citizens when the Town was amending its Code of Conduct last summer, and many of the deputations being made by citizens relative to the changes being proposed to the Harassment Policy. Council after hearing the same recommendations from the IC, finally listened, and directed staff to act on these recommendations. Let's hope they do.

While the fact Council is prepared to now act is most encouraging, it raises the question, **why don't we have good transparent protocols already?**

With all the advice we have been paying for from big city lawyers and media consultants, how is it that we find ourselves in the current situation, with a report critical of the Town's media releases and its policies, and a Councillor having to resort, at his own expense, to a Judicial Review to get a fair hearing?

It is time for a serious look how this whole situation developed. It is time someone started to show leadership on this issue.



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Library news

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

THEN AND NOW: HOW LIBRARYGATE SQUANDERED PUBLIC GOODWILL.

It seems so long ago. Was it only last December that we all gathered at the L.E. Shore Memorial Library to celebrate the 20th Anniversary of our community treasure? The evening was rich with memories, recounted by our esteemed once-upon-a-time Chief Librarian, Ken Haig.

Who knew what was lurking in the shadows?

If December 4th was an evening to remember, March 8th was a day that we wish we could forget. Black Tuesday, it's not too far-fetched to say, initiated a collective trauma. When an unexpected event severs the ties that bind community members to one another, it constitutes a collective trauma, according to sociology professor Neil Gross. And trauma stays as fresh as yesterday if not addressed. The individuals who made the soul of our great community hub and centrepiece were all fired. So began our trauma.

How could this happen? A citizens' group was formed almost overnight in an effort to answer the many troubling questions: VOCAL (Voices of Community for Accountable Leadership -- [OurLibraryOurVoice.com](#)). Former board chairs protested the loss of a legacy they had carefully nurtured. Their efforts and Strategic Plans were dismissed as "boilerplate" by one of the town councillors on the board. The fired staff cast off as "collateral damage." For what? A new library/museum that no one had asked for and that no one on the Library Board would explain.

Was the Depot Deal based on a community needs survey, as was the 2015-2018 Strategic Plan? No. There is no evidence, either in the 2014 Library Survey or the 2016 VOCAL Survey for expansion into Craigleith. However, service could easily have been provided to Craigleith without firing the entire library staff.

For the new Library Board to ignore the Strategic Plan shows a lack of respect as well as questionable leadership. The leadership changed hands when the Chair stepped down but this did not lead to any of the community's questions being answered. Nor did the subsequent resignation of two Board members, one of whom said: "I stepped down due to mounting frustrations with the governance, lack of candour, and refusal to acknowledge the community with respect."

These disturbing behaviours continue. Letters and deputations are ignored; questions remain unanswered. Could it get worse? Yes. At least one grandmother was sent a threatening letter by the Town Mayor for objecting too strongly. Persistent questions are met with threats of harassment charges. Not only has goodwill been lost, but also a moral compass.

VOCAL has assembled a detailed timeline of all that contributed to March 8th and all that has followed. If our elected and appointed representatives won't answer our questions, we will find the answers on our own.

Rosemary Gosselin, Thornbury

Town Council Roundup continued **Online Video Streaming And Archiving Of Council**

At its' meeting on December 5th Council also approved a [motion brought by Councillor McGee](#) which noted that since the Town does not provide detailed transcripts of Council and Committee of the Whole Meetings, that the availability of a detailed record of Council and committee proceedings in the form of webcasting would be useful for informing the public.

We agree, as the Minutes of meetings are often very brief and do not always provide a complete picture of what happened. For example, the Minutes of the Council Meeting of September 15th at which Councillor Seguin was sanctioned do not include the fact that Councillor Martin voted against the sanctions on the basis that they were "disproportionate to the allegations".

Council passed the motion and directed staff to include video streaming to the 2017 budget for Council consideration. This was approved by Council during budget deliberations on December 14th. Councillor McGee is to be commended for his leadership on this issue.

Budget Update Staff does great job -Council adds \$240K to reduce 2018 election year pressure

On December 12th and December 14th Council met to consider the Draft 2017 Budget. Staff did a great job in preparing a very comprehensive document. The 2017 Proposed Budget provided for the same services delivered in 2016 at a 0.42% increase. Taking into account the County's Approved Budget, the 2017 Proposed Budget proposed an increase in the overall blended property tax levy of 0.89%. There are no increases Water and Wastewater rates. The 2017 Budget doesn't suggest any new debt for 2017 projects, however the existing Landfill and Harbour will be formalized into external debt in 2017.

With some additions and deletions by Council the proposed budget would have resulted in a tax increase of 1.49% or 1.32% when blended with the County rate. Councillor Gamble noted that there is projected to be a larger increase in 2018, while McGee stated "We should take advantage of the opportunity in the 2017 budget to add to our asset management reserves as there might be different pressures on the budget in 2018, an election year." Gamble, seconded by McGee brought a motion that Council approve the addition of \$240,000 to capital reserves for the Elma Street Reconstruction Project for inclusion in the final draft 2017 Proposed Budget, so that these funds would be available to reduce financial pressures in future years. The motion carried with Councillor's Seguin and Halos opposed. This raised the Town's 2017 tax increase to 3.19%, and the blended increase with the County and Education to 2.00%. The [revised draft of the Budget](#) can be found on the Town's website.

There will be a Public Information Centre on the Budget 6-7 pm Jan. 23, 2017, followed by a Public Meeting. The Committee of the Whole-Finance will meet to follow-up on the comments received at 7:00 pm Monday, Jan. 30th, following which Council will consider adoption of the 2017 Budget on Feb.13th, 2017.

Citizens' Letters

Welcome to the first edition of Citizens' Letters. This new section of the Citizens' Pages was prompted by the many letters we have received from citizens asking if we could print their letters as they want to have their voices heard.

Many complain they have written the Town and have had no acknowledgement or response to their letters. More recently some have wondered: how it is that former Mayor Ellen Anderson's letter, a particularly personal attack on Councillor Seguin and the citizens who support him, was posted as correspondence at the December 19th meeting of Council, while they don't even get a response to their letters. You can read Anderson's letter which is posted on the Town website under the tab for Correspondence for the Council Meeting of December 19th. The letter is at pages 53 to 54 of the [correspondence file](#).

We would never post in the Citizen's Pages a letter such as Ellen Anderson's, which makes general accusations about the behavior of Councillor Seguin and his supporters, without getting into the specific actions referred to. We will not spread this kind of rumour and innuendo. We hold ourselves to a much higher standard. We will be happy to post letters which are either critical or supportive of the actions of Council, but only when they relate to specific actions and are respectful.

Some people, who have followed in detail the recent discussion on amendments to the Town's Harassment Policy, have suggested that Anderson's letter is harassment and she should be charged under that policy. We disagree. We should let Anderson's letter speak for itself. We do not need yet another investigation with costly expenditures of our tax dollars on big city lawyers and media consultants: lately it seems that we have become an employment plan for these individuals.

The citizens of our Town are smart people. They will judge the letter for what it is. The letter says far more about the author than the citizens she attacks. We don't need lawyers and media consultants to tell us what to think.

We will however note here that at least two of our Councillors seem to have been paying attention to the discussion on harassment. Prior to the meeting, Councillor Seguin seconded by Councillor Martin, requested that the letter be removed from the agenda and the website. Their motion was defeated 5-2 with the rest of Council, (Mayor McKean, Deputy Mayor Ardiel, as well as Councillors Gamble, Halos, and McGee), all voting against the motion. Unfortunately, Council has now set the bar very low for the kinds of letters they will post.

To those citizens who want to have their voices heard, please continue to send us your letters. As long as they are respectful and deal with the issues, we will try to post them, however our space is limited so we can post only a very few of the letters we receive.

To have your letter posted as correspondence at a Council meeting you should proceed as follows:

1. Address the letter to the Mayor and Council.
2. Send a copy to Ms. Corrina Giles, Clerk, Town of the Blue Mountains, 32 Mill Street, P.O. Box 310, Thornbury, ON, NOH 2P0 or e-mail to cgiles@thebluemountains.ca
3. Ask for acknowledgement that it has been received.
4. Ask that it be posted as correspondence at the next meeting of Council.

If Ellen Anderson can get her letter posted, so should you.

The frustration of many citizens is obvious from the copy of a letter below, which we received and were asked to print.

13 December, 2016

Mr. John McKean
Mayor, Town of The Blue Mountains
32 Mill Street, Box 310
Thornbury, ON NOH2P0

Dear Mr Mayor.

In October of this year I sent a letter to you asking a number of questions and then a few weeks later a reminder as no answer had been forthcoming. To date still no response. I believe answers should be given.

In the meantime I have been told by a library board member that in February when the turmoil commenced re: staff, that no one on the board was aware of the grievances that had been filed.

If the CEO of the library withheld this information she should be fired for cause and paid no severance. If by chance you knew of these grievances and withheld this information you should be ashamed of yourself and you should resign.

May I please have a response to my questions. The professing of transparency is and has been belied by actions, and actions speak louder than words. Please enough!

Sincerely, Don Green QC Cc/ Councillors, Library Board

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.

Answers to Know Your Businesses

1. 1960s
2. This year, 2016-2017, is the first year Goldsmith's has been open year round, offering our customers the freshest produce and baking all winter.
3. Apples, strawberries, blackberries, raspberries and blueberries make the Thornberry Pie a taste sensation.

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