

SOUTHAMPTON RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION

May Newsletter

After a harsh March and a cold April, spring is finally here. It is good to see so many people out and about and also being able to welcome back the winter travelers. The SRA has a busy summer ahead of us and we need your help and support.

Call for Membership Renewal due June 1 and Annual General Meeting July 21

Please take the time to fill out the membership renewal and send it back to us with your cheque before you get too busy with the summer activities.

We will also have a table set up as usual at the AGM on July 21 so you can renew then also. As we discussed in the last newsletter, we are forced to raise the fees this year, the first time in at least ten years and possibly longer. The basic membership for the 2007/2008 year will be \$20 and the cost of patrol will increase also to \$35 for a total of \$55 for one property patrolled. This increase will offset the cost of insurance we are forced to incur to protect the Association and all members. This will allow the SRA to continue its activities in many areas as in the past and several of these initiatives are listed with the renewal form. The Association is very interested in your views on the direction we should take in the future.

The Annual General Meeting is planned for Saturday, July 21 at 9.30 am. Please make a note of the date and plan to attend. The Board looks forward to your support and input.

The Third Annual SRA Golf Tournament will be on August 2nd at Saugeen Golf Club. It involves golf and dinner with prizes but non golfers are encouraged to come for dinner in support of the Association's activities.

Town Council

It is that time of the year when you receive your tax notices reflecting the budget set for 2007. The property value assessments have not changed this year as the Province has instituted a moratorium pending a review of the process. It also conveniently delays the issue of escalating property values until after the October provincial election. Now for the bad news. The taxes set by the Town are up by 5.7%. The County taxes are increasing by 5.0% but the Education levy is not increasing. This will result in an overall increase of 4.2% for all residents on their tax bills.

Why do taxes keep on rising? This is a complex question and we have told the Town that they are not doing a good job of explaining these increases and the Town's operations to the taxpayers. Their response has been that the explanatory information is given to the press but they don't use it. One problem is that municipal accounting is totally different to normal company reporting and hard to simplify.

The Town spends operating funds on the day to day operations and capital funds on major assets like roads, sewers, buildings and equipment.

Major operating budgets are:

- Public Works
(Roads repairs, snow clearing, garbage, etc) \$3.550 Million
- Policing \$2.566 Million
- Community Services
(Parks, trails, sporting facilities, library, harbor, tourist camps) \$2.300 Million
- Water Treatment \$2.091 Million
- Administration \$1.686 Million
- Sewers and Treatment \$1.614 Million
- Medical Bldg and Dr. Recruitment \$0.484 Million
- Fire and Emergency \$0.449 Million
- All Others \$0.702 Million
- TOTAL \$15.452 Million

Major increases this year are in Medical Building and Doctor Recruitment (15.4%), Public Works (13.8%), Water Treatment (10.2%) and Fire and Emergency (9.8%). The overall increase is 8.8%. Part of this expenditure is offset by user fees for Water, Sewers and Community Services, totaling \$7.6 Million.

Capital expenditures are also large. The total 2007 plan is a massive \$20.679. The details of these projects run to 10 pages and are available on the Town of Saugeen Shores web site. Major items include:

- Water Treatment \$7.297 M - New water intake and plant improvements
- Sewers \$6.461 M - New pumping station and new sewers in Port Elgin
- Medical Bldgs \$1.534 M - New medical building in Port Elgin
- Road Construction \$1.459 M - McNabb St/Hwy 21 improvements, High St upgrade, gravel road repairs, Market St drainage
- Libraries \$0.980 M - Port Elgin Library renovations and additions.
- Waste Management \$0.534 M - Closure at Port Elgin and expansion at Southampton, tandem garbage packer.
- Fire Dept \$0.392 M - Fire truck
- Road Equipment \$0.299 M - Snow plough, pick up truck.
- Harbor \$0.247 M - Harbor repairs and improvements
- Traffic/Street Lights \$0.222 M – Traffic controllers, lighting upgrades

After special grants for Provincial/Federal programs, bank borrowings and other sources, \$7.359 Million has been raised through property taxes, 8.9% more than last year. Growth due to new houses and businesses generates 2.9% of this and the tax levy has to increase by 5.7% to cover the balance. The Town is adding some new positions and the full time head count will be 88 in 2007.

We are not trying to justify the Town's spending but hope that this mass of numbers helps our members to see where the money goes. It costs a lot of money to provide services and to meet the needs of residents. Growth has not lessened our tax burden as service needs and expectations keep on expanding. It would have been better if development charges had been instituted two years ago by the previous council. This could have reduced the increase by two thirds. We all should push our councilors to institute development charges at the highest practical level as soon as possible. The need for a new sewer pumping station on Concession 10 for about \$4 million is an example of costs of new housing that should be paid by the new owners through development charges.

There has been a lot of publicity, especially from Toronto on the under funding for the aging infrastructure. Small towns face the same problem. One hopes that federal and provincial politicians don't direct funding towards the large cities at the expense of small town Ontario.

Happenings Around Town

Several changes have occurred along High and Elgin Streets. Designing Women have moved down High St to a new store, The Cook's Cupboard has opened in its place. It is owned by Elspeth Macgregor and Glenn Conlan who are new to the area. They stock specialty foods and cookware. Thirty Something is now called Kimberley's By the Shore and has basically the same merchandise. A new store next to Bayberry's has been totally renovated by the owner, Jay Neiva and is called Jui Kali Gallery. It will open on the May 24th weekend and offers a range of artwork. Martin's Bicycle Shop has already opened across from Martin's Hardware and is in full swing for the spring rush. We all need to support our local merchants to keep the main shopping core vibrant and successful. Check out the new shops as well as the stock in the well established stores.

The Southampton Art School is celebrating its 50th Anniversary. A building renovation and upgrade program for James Howe's historic building is underway at a cost of \$120,000. The Town is contributing \$40,000, a Trillium Grant for \$40,000 has been approved and the balance has to be raised locally by fundraising. This project will bring all services up to code, including an elevator and with improved insulation; it will be able to be used year round. This is a worthy project, deserving of our support and will strengthen the arts in the area. The School is sponsoring a lecture series with a range of topics, starting Tuesday May 15 and continuing through to September. It costs \$15 per lecture or \$90 for the seven lectures all given by well known artists. Proceeds are going towards the Restoration Project. Posters are up around Town with all the details or phone 797-5068. The Shoreline Artists have also produced a calendar featuring local artists as a fund raiser and it is now on sale.

There will be activity on the beach at the shipwreck site. Wave action and low water levels led to further sand erosion at the site. The small barge that lies to the north of the main wreck of the H.M.S. General Hunter, became exposed. It was necessary over the winter to temporarily place a series of cement blocks as an extension of the main quarry stone revetment. After further study and consultations with the numerous government departments involved, it has been decided to excavate and remove the small barge to another safer site. Originally the plans

called for the barge to be taken out to the long dock and sunk at a sufficient depth for its natural protection. It would have been an attraction to snorkelers and divers as well as a home for fish life. Agreement with some authorities could not be made in time and so the barge will be reburied further up the beach. Excavation will start early May and the project is scheduled to be completed by the end of May. All sand will be restored to the original contours and the temporary, unsightly cement blocks removed. This will cause some disruption in the short term but is preferable to adding more cement blocks at the site.

The Southampton 150th Anniversary Committee has been hard at work planning the activities for 2008. A sixteen month calendar is at the printers and will be available by the end of May. It contains a beautiful collection of old and new photos of Southampton. Many of these have not seen the light of day before. This is an important fund raiser for the anniversary celebration and we ask for your support. It will be on sale at stores in Town and also at various events over the summer, such as the AGM and our golf tournament. It will make a good present for your kids who spent time here over summers past.

Development Issues

Discussions are continuing on the Tim Horton development. The residents in the area are concerned about safety and traffic issues. We have written to the Town expressing our concerns on the type and depth of traffic studies done at the request of the Town by the developers. It appears that these studies are self serving and unlikely to show anything likely to cause trouble for the developer who is commissioning and paying for the work. With Mike Sterling's input, we are suggesting the Town have a consultant prepare a full traffic model for Highway 21 and surrounding streets to see the cumulative effect of growth, traffic lights and turning lanes. There is talk of traffic lights at McNabb, Adelaide and even Emerald St. The last thing anyone of us wants are traffic snarls over the summer that occur in other municipalities. There have already been three accidents at the intersection of Emerald and 21.

The OMB hearing on the windmill at the CAW site resulted in a go ahead for the project with some additional restrictions. Another hearing is scheduled for the large commercial project south of Port Elgin. The Province has developed few planning guidelines and so the local communities have to grapple with issues of setbacks, noise, etc. A preliminary hearing on the Wal-Mart project didn't resolve the issues and a full hearing will now be scheduled.

Have a great summer. See you at the Annual General Meeting!

Tim Andersen for the Board. May 5, 2007