

SOUTHAMPTON RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION

PO Box 1081 Southampton ON N0H 2L0. Email: www.southamptonontario.org

ENSURING TAX DOLLARS ARE SPENT WISELY FOR THE BETTERMENT OF THE TOWN

JUNE 2011 NEWSLETTER

After a cold and wet spring, we are all looking forward to a wonderful summer to make up for the lost sunshine. Recently, we have experienced violent thunder storms and blackouts! As usual, there are a lot of events planned and the Town has a full agenda. It is also time for your membership renewal and we would ask that you do this now so we can concentrate on expanded activities rather than chasing up forgotten renewals. The former Pharma Plus on High St has been sold to a person from Port Elgin who plans to tear it down and rebuild into three upscale scale stores with apartments above.. It will be good to see this large space used to good effect. A major fire destroyed the Guest House Inn on the North Shore.

Membership Renewals and the Annual General Meeting

The membership fees are unchanged from last year at \$20 and \$55 for a membership and one house or cottage inspection. Additional properties are \$35 each over this. The form is included in this newsletter and please confirm your contact information, in particular your email address. Please mail your cheque to the post box shown or give it to one of the board members before it gets buried in the summer pending file!

The AGM this year will be at the Southampton Town Hall at 9.30 am on July 23rd. Please mark it on your calendar and plan to attend. We need your thoughts and input on the key areas we have identified as priorities:

- Participate in the Official Plan review which is now underway. Continue to lobby for compliance with the Saugeen Shores Official Plan and full and timely notice of significant projects.
- Continue to press for stronger efforts in protecting and preserving our beaches and the unique nature of Southampton. Continue efforts to carry out more water testing to ensure our lake water is pollution free.
- Continue pro-active monitoring of municipal and county finances. Review the bench-marking of municipal services.
- Provide input on signage and members concerns with signage in Southampton to ensure it adds to the beauty and character of the community.
- Increase total membership by improved communication with prospective and existing members. Increase services available to members, such as reduced insurance costs.

Progress was made in the past year in bringing many of these issues to the attention of Council and Staff. Ken Robertson will report to you in more detail at the AGM.

New Membership Benefit - Insurance Discount

The SRA has been working with Hills Insurance to develop a Group Insurance Program for SRA members. It will provide a 15% premium discount (over and above any current discount) for home, cottage, condominium and tenants as well as a 5% on automobiles including boats, mobile homes and fifth wheel units. This program will be through Hills Insurance and be with Waterloo Insurance Company, a member company of the Economical Insurance Group. The Block B Cottage Association on the North Shore has already has such a discount group program in place. Each paid up member of the SRA can participate in this program if they wish but you are not obliged to do so. More details are covered in the enclosed brochure and feel free to discuss the details of your own situation with Hills Insurance at (519 797 3431).

Activities

The North Shore sewer project is nearing completion. The connection to the treatment plant has been tested and ready to go when houses are connected. Residents affected have received a letter on the cost and time frame. The project is below budget and the charges to be paid by the benefiting residents are close to original estimates. The final cost will be around \$19.6 million and the Town will meet all the funding deadlines from the Federal Government without penalty. More details are available on the Town web site.

The Saugeen Memorial Hospital Auxiliary / SRA fundraising Golf Tournament will be held on August 4th at the Saugeen Golf Club at 1 pm. Last year's event was very successful and raised close to \$15,000 for the hospital. The cost this year will again be \$100 for golf and dinner for non-members and \$60 for members. The price for dinner alone will be \$40. Please plan to participate as the money raised will benefit the hospital and the service to us all. Tax receipts will be issued.

The SRA has been in correspondence with the Ministry of Transport on the dangerous section on Highway 21 at the Rail Trail crossing and Hi-Berry's. Last summer at our request, they conducted a traffic survey on two occasions. They have concluded that the traffic is not sufficient to warrant flashing lights or speed reductions. This avoids dealing with the risk for cyclists crossing 21 and the problem of dangerous turns into Hi-Berry's. We are still in conversation with the MTO to try and get their heads out of the sand.

We asked the Grey Bruce Health Department to do some testing on the water quality on the various storm sewer water outflows into the lake, especially after a storm when pollutants can be washed into the lake. They are looking into this further. They don't feel lake water testing on a regular basis is necessary. We are concerned about sporadic surges in pollutants at different times of the year or during heavy runoffs. The SRA will continue to push for some testing and will also try and determine the cost of doing this.

There has been a lot of controversy on the new so called Way Finding signs in town. The \$2 million project is very costly and many feel is excessive. Some find the signs ugly and others don't mind them. Appearance, size, location and number of directions involved are the key issues. The Town held a series of public meetings last year or before but a lot of the discussion centered on the town entrance signs. There was a lack of appreciation for the size and design as well as the number and their location within our Town. The Town needs to do better in the future in their presentations and residents need to get involved more in the meetings. We are talking to the Town about some modifications along High St. One sign was removed as a result of pressure from the SRA and local residents who rightly didn't appreciate its placement blocking their view of the lake.

Problems still exist with the common reed infestation. In general the various government authorities are in agreement with the use of Round Up to destroy this invasive species. But specific approval from all these bodies has to be obtained prior to proceeding for each location and application. This is time consuming and slows down the program significantly.

Council Activities

Mayor Mike Smith is also the Warden for Bruce County. The County is directed by a committee of all the mayors of the municipalities involved and the Warden chairs it. He gave a presentation recently to the Probus Club and the points covered gave a good insight into the direction of cost, projects and challenges. In summary:

The County has a budget of \$85 million with \$35 million raised through taxes and the balance by user fees and grants. Saugeen Shores pays the major share (\$7.5 million) based on assessed values.

- About \$8.1 million is needed for General Government which includes the jail, low income housing, I.T., treasury, long term debentures, administration.
- About \$10 million is spent on highways and waste management.
- \$5 million goes to health services.

- \$4.5 million is needed for ambulance services.
- \$5 million is spent on social programs such as the museum and libraries.
- \$2.5 million is spent on rural programs for water resource protection, environmental projects, rail trails and forest management.
- The county has 148 bridges and need to rebuild 2-3 per year to maintain the infrastructure. With the help of infrastructure money, two were built last year and two more are planned for this year. It used to be that the province paid for roads and bridges but this has been downloaded to the lower tiers. The plan is to pave the shoulders on the coastal road from Southampton to Oliphant and eventually to Lyons Head allowing for bike access.
- It costs \$180,000 to collect hazardous waste and the county is looking at a couple of year round sites.
- The Museum has become more active with bigger exhibitions and is planning one on the General Hunter for next year.
- Economic Development and Tourism are important for the area and Bruce are partnering with Grey County on several initiatives. The Local 100 mile food program has been very successful. The Spruce up the Bruce to improve downtown centers is underway. The area is being marketed as a premium destination and the passport program for visiting local attractions and stores has proven to be successful.
- The County is in the midst of centralizing purchasing and hope to save money by doing so.
- The Geared to Income housing project in Port Elgin is nearly complete. It is jointly funded by the federal, provincial governments as well as the county. It will accommodate 22 new tenants. The 10 year plan indicates a need for 445 over this timeframe or 45 per year. They are looking at different ways such as mixed development to finance this as the upper tiers have to cut back.
- The libraries see the swing to digital formats and an increase in DVD, etc.
- The County believes a jail is needed locally rather than incarcerating prisoners in Penetanguishene as the province wishes to do. Crystal Meth is a major problem here.
- The county needs more LT care facilities to relieve emergency rooms and beds. They have met with the SW LIHN but they plan NOTHING for 15 years!!!! The County is putting \$400,000 into reserves each year.
- As usual there is a heavy capital expenditure program on roads, etc.

The Town of Saugeen Shores budget is \$23.5 million with \$8 million coming from taxes. The Town debt is 27% of the Long Term Debt Ceiling allowed by the province. The Town will look at using LT debt to finance long life assets as it is unfair to current residents to pay for them in one year. The province is unlikely to be providing any infrastructure funding due to its own debt troubles.

- Within the next year the Official Plan has to be updated and approved. A consultant has been hired to collect all the data and five public meetings are planned. The wooded area on the North Shore will be studied to decide how it should be developed. Development charges will be reviewed and updated. The Port Elgin Community Plan is being implemented to upgrade and develop and make the core area more attractive and convenient. A similar project will be carried out for Southampton, starting in 2012.
- The MTO is upgrading Hwy 21 north of the Saugeen River. More work will be done on High St.
- It is the 100th anniversary of the Town Hall this year and a review will be made on its condition, possible uses as well as the Library and Art School. This will likely be a 2-3 year program. A Council Meeting will be held there on August 8th as part of the 100th celebration. Please plan to attend.
- A Waterfront committee has been struck to develop a master plan for the whole shoreline as was done for the successful Parks and Trails development.
- The pool situation has changed as the Education Board and province are planning on upgrading and repairing the existing school. The Town is looking at upgrading the existing pool, rather than rebuilding it.

As a further update on the Official plan, a visioning meeting was held June 6th. It was poorly advertised, the date was moved ahead without notice and it was a stormy night with blackouts. As a result there were only five residents present (three SRA directors), three staff (two planners) and four councilors. We were able to raise several issues but the planners were pushing for expansion of the highway commercial along all of Hwy21. We

told the consultant that this would be a declaration of war! There will be further public meetings on July 20 and September 15 when we will hear more of their ideas.

Grey Bruce Health Services (GBHS)

The SRA participated in a community meeting in March as part of a strategic review of their plans for the future of GBHS. The Province is considering a change in the funding basis away from block grants to treatment based funding in areas where the units can show efficiency and low costs. It has not yet been approved by the political masters. The discussion revealed an interesting insight into the alternatives and the group was able to table a number of key issues to be considered to be very important. This input will be considered by the consultant and the hospital board who have the responsibility to finalize the strategic plan.

- Emergency room care at Saugeen is critical and it must remain open 24/7.
- Doctor recruitment must continue as there will be turnover. With full time ER doctors, older ones and others are cutting back on their hours. New doctors need to be under contract to work some shifts in ER. There are discussions about having evening hours at the medical clinics to ease the load on ER for minor problems. New initiatives are needed to handle off hour coverage.
- GBHS should look at adding centers of excellence for cancer treatment, geriatrics and mental health to reduce travel and inconvenience.
- More diagnostic testing should be done in Southampton. Echo cardiograms are now done in Southampton.
- Lab and blood work must remain at Saugeen Hospital.
- We need more access to rehab as the population ages.
- Facilities must be maintained and updated. It takes years to get provincial funding. ER needs to be updated and expanded.
- ER and hospitals are jammed with elderly patients who need special care at home with help or in Care Centers. Care Centers are run by a completely separate arm of the Provincial Department of Health. No one is looking at the need and cost across the whole system for elder care. Some day's 10 out of 12 beds here have elderly patients awaiting room in care centers, rehab facilities and other alternatives.
- Better arrangements are needed at regional hospitals for other specialties, not just SE Ontario. Many people prefer Toronto as they have family there.
- The Board and Administration need to look at different and better ways to inform the public on changes and improvements underway. Newsletters along the lines of the Bruce Power reports in laymen's language could be one approach. Information is available and also in press releases but we need to know our hospital better. What testing can be done here, what operations, etc?
- The hospital has video conferencing in place as well as Owen Sound and could be used for doctor patient discussions. Other vehicles are available such as Skype but privacy is an issue.
- There is a risk that with budget restraints in the upper tiers, capital programs will be cut back creating problems down the road.
- GBHS has done a commendable job in implementing digitization for test results and files. Much more has to be done to become more efficient and to lower costs.

It is amazing how much is going on in this community and it is quite possible that a number of important items have been overlooked. Apologies and have a wonderful active and healthy summer

Tim Andersen for the Board,
June 2011