

Georgian Bay Vote 2010

List of Questions
Eleanor Pettit



1. General

- What is the main reason (or reasons) for your wanting to be on Council?

My main reason for wanting to be on council? I want the Township of Georgian Bay to have open, honest governance with an ethical and common sense approach.

- Based on your direct experience on Council (or observations of Council for those of you who have not served on Council) what do you feel have been the major successes over the past term of Council and what have been the shortcomings?

I am very pleased with the way the Master Plan has been presented. Allowing the public to have their input into these proceedings which will hopefully give us a proper balance in regards to the environment and infrastructure. The shortcomings are debatable. We have to have confidence in our elected council and know that they will manage our Township with integrity and unbiased decisions.

- How do you think Council and the Township should be run to overcome these shortcomings?

Due diligence and a fully informed Council should be able to make competent decisions on matters they are dealing with.

- How do you propose to represent all of the constituencies in the area for which you seek office (ie the whole Township for Mayor; the whole Ward for Councillors)?

I will have an open door policy to all residents plus written correspondence when deemed necessary. I plan to attend all functions when possible for personal interactions and opinions.

2. Administration

- What roll should Council as a whole, the Mayor, or individual Councillors play in the supervision of the Township's employees? To what degree do you think they should be involved in the hiring or releasing of staff?

Council should definitely be involved with senior staff including hiring and dismissal, and also to evaluate their work ethic and interaction with their co-workers and the public. Junior staff should be under the authority of senior staff, not council.

- How would you safeguard against possible abuse of public trust by members of Council or staff?

Each case would require a distinct approach. Much would be covered by the Municipal Act. Due diligence on the part of all is a positive way to prevent abuse.

- What do you see as the optimal level of staffing for the Township? (be specific)

I have no detailed knowledge of the work load of Township staff and the level of staff manning. I do not feel qualified yet to make specific recommendations.

- The past year or two have seen many incidents of poor decision-making by staff and various committees. Inquiries made by the public go unanswered, and a general malaise has invaded the township staff's attitudes. The customer service delivered by the Township staff, which exists to serve its public, is at an all-time low. What, if elected, will you do to correct these problems?

This appears to be a biased question. There will always be a differing of opinion in any decision-making body. Flexibility is essential to arrive at decisions and reviewing decisions. As far as staff go they are always friendly and easy to deal with.

3. Township finances

- Immediate past practice of Council was to invest tax surpluses in infrastructure projects. Do you agree with this practice? If not, how would you handle future tax surpluses?

Council should have the ability to decide tax surpluses, which would pertain to the situation at the time.

- The annual budget is of interest to taxpayers. How would you ensure more public understanding of and input to the budget?

The annual budget should be available on the Township website and also by other means if required. I will be prepared to meet with individuals and groups to help explain the budget. If required, I would enlist the assistance of the treasurer's staff.

4. Planning

- Community plans that reflect the specific characteristics of each community are important to taxpayers. The current Manager of the Planning Department has apparently questioned the 'relevance' of community plans in this township. How would you protect the integrity of existing and future community plans?

I understand that a consultant has been hired to make recommendations for an Official Plan Review. I expect that this question will figure prominently during that process.

- As a potential member of the Committee of Adjustment, please describe your ideas on the rights of the individual property owner, and the rights of the community as a whole to protect their community 'for the greater good'. How will you handle a situation where the two sets of rights are diametrically opposed?

It is my understanding that the Committee of Adjustment hears both points of view and then must make a decision. I do not know if any better methods exist for disputes to be resolved.

- What is your understanding of the zoning category called "Open Space"? How does it differ from Residential zoning, and what is allowed to be constructed on Open Space property and what is not allowed?

At this time I am not fully conversant with this situation. Until I have more information, I prefer not to give an opinion.

- Many permanent residents in this township are looking for economic development, ways to bring additional year-round residents and businesses into the area. Growth and development are seen as positive and beneficial. In contrast, many seasonal residents view themselves as stewards of a very unique natural area and believe that overdevelopment has the potential to destroy it. How do you see balancing the planning needs of the permanent communities with those of seasonal/recreation communities?

This is a very high in-depth question. As an island cottager and full-time resident, I think we all want the best of both worlds. There must be a balance between these competing views and Council must seriously consider these competing views in making decisions.

- Boat access only properties are dependent on marinas. What would you do to ensure ongoing marina access for these taxpayers?

Most people would agree that Marinas are not aesthetically pleasing to the eye, but are a necessity to island cottage owners. Water access residents cannot be abandoned in any consideration of retention of marinas versus other development.

- Our Township is blessed with considerable forests and wetlands that are home to a large number of endangered species. What actions do you think the Township should take to protect these forests and wetlands and the species therein?

Any development must be thoroughly scrutinized. Protected areas must be maintained. Any possibility of degradation of environmentally sensitive areas must be opposed.

- Other rural Townships use their web site to post notice of all proposed amendments to the Township's Official Plan and provide mailed notice to all neighbouring property owners within 1 kilometre of the subject property. Do you believe that this approach should be adopted by our Township? Please explain why you would or wouldn't support this.

I believe any amendments to a township plan should be available to an adjacent property owner up to 1km. An informed public is our best defence against misuse of our environment.

5. Water quality

- Water quality is of paramount importance to waterfront property owners. How would you ensure the protection of the water assets in the Township?

I believe the Township should be involved in water testing. Septic systems should be pumped a minimum every 5 years. Records of such should be kept and enforced if necessary.

6. Emergency response

- For non road access property owners how would you help them with emergency response?

I feel the Fire department and the EMS are doing a good job in the summer. Winter conditions are extremely difficult to deal with and should be specifically studied.

7. Council performance

- The current Council is perceived by many to be dysfunctional and not entirely transparent in their activities. What do you propose to do to change this perception?

This appears to be a repeat of the question at section 2 regarding decision making by staff and committees, which I do not fully agree with. We are back to basics- open, honest, ethical government.

- Do you think that using public advisory committees would be helpful? If so, which areas should these committees focus on and how would you structure these committees?

Public committees could be advantageous. Alternatively, e-mail input to submit opinions on township business could be a viable option.

- In the past the COA was comprised of citizens who would meet to review applications for minor variances. Do you believe a COA consisting of selected members of the public can effectively manage the challenges faced within the Township and if so would you support such a change?

Citizen based committees could be beneficial. Caution must be taken so as not to have a special interest clique dominate meetings.

- Would you consider allowing a period of up to say 15 minutes before each Council meeting for the tax payers to have access to Council as a whole, without the formality of a deputation?

Yes.

- Should our Township Council consider hosting an annual meeting, in the summer time, of the "Executive" of various organizations such as the Chamber of Commerce, Community associations and Cottagers' associations, to hear first hand their ideas or concerns?

In theory this could be a positive session. I would feel more comfortable with an open public meeting to accomplish the same aim.

8. Garbage

- What do you propose to do to ensure convenient access to garbage and recycling bins for those taxpayers who don't have curbside pickup?

This is an ongoing continuous debate. It is an area that will require continuing monitoring and review.

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