

Georgian Bay Vote 2010

List of Questions – Responses by Greg Sutcliffe



1. General

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

I have always had a sense of community stemming from my early days on Gloucester Pool. Through my interactions in the Gloucester Pool Cottage Association, serving as President for five years and direct involvement for over ten, I felt I could offer the community more. After two terms of serving as District Councillor for Baxter ward, I feel I served the people well. I believe that I have more to offer and take my now seven years of experience going forward to continue this effort not only for Baxter Ward but all of Georgian Bay taxpayers.

- 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?

Successes include Community plans for all three urban centres, economic development for Port Severn, and elimination of excessive waste costs, and greater community input and consideration into our going forward plan for development and protection of our urban and natural areas.

The major shortcoming would include an incorrect perspective that Council has been dysfunctional in some areas.

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

Council will always have differing opinions on matters. Each of us come from different areas and are doing what we believe our people want. Agreeing on each and every item will not make Council of the Township a better place. The differing opinions are healthy in my view and work towards a greater good.

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

As has been my past practise I participate in a number of community events, get involved with local people and issues and bring these viewpoints to both local and district Council. I'm confident that most of the people within Baxter Ward know my name and are aware that they can contact me at any time with any issue dealing with Township or District matters.

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 appoints the CAO, Clerk, Treasurer and CBO. In my view our actions should be only with this select group and does include hiring, firing and regular monitoring. This is a group effort not one for just the Mayor or any member of Council. The CAO, Clerk, Treasurer and CBO in turn should manage their staff.

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

Policies and procedures, guidelines, training and sign offs are the needed tools to ensure staff does what they are supposed to do. The Municipal Act also defines a great number of rules and regulations for municipal employees to follow.

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

40 maximum as follows:

Chief Administrative Officer, Executive assistant	2
Treasurer, Deputy Treasurer, accounting staff	5
Clerk, (Deputy Clerk - combined role with another position within), Bylaw Officer	2
Planning and Economic Development/Building Manager, Planner, Planning Technical Admin Assistant, Building Official, Building Inspectors, Building Technical Admin,	8
Fire Chief, Deputy Fire Chief/Fire Prevention Officer/Training Officer, Technical Admin Assistant/Health and Safety	3
Parks and Recreation/Public Works Manager, North and South Working Foreman, Recreation and Special Events Coordinator, Operation Staff	15
Seasonal, part time people, as required.	

- 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?

I strongly disagree with this viewpoint. I have not heard any direct complaints to me as an acting member of Council to support these comments.

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?

A strategic plan needs to be implemented with identifies the infrastructure projects wanted by the community in order of priority. The tax surpluses from one year to the next should be carried forward and applied against the budget in accordance with the municipal act in order to finance said projects or other operational requirements as needed thereby reducing the tax rate.

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

Public meetings to review the proposed draft budget could be offered in order to provide the opportunity for the public to offer comment. Offer reports in a user friendly manner with clear and concise detail.

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?

The challenge with community plans is one of determining if the whole community embraces the plan or just components thereof, this being said if the whole community is in agreement, then Planning and Council should stand to uphold the details thereof. The best way to do that is to include within the Township official plan that such polices must be upheld and those in opposition or disagreement should be challenged with the Ontario Municipal Board making the ultimate decision. Township would then amend our official plan accordingly.

- 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?

Great challenge for any member to vote on. I hear both sides of an application. I look to the Township documents, rules and regulations for what is law, I then apply my level of common sense to the situation. I vote accordingly. This is my practise both local and district where I sit on planning. Sometimes this decision will oppose the applicant, sometimes a community initiative. Ultimately though, my vote is based on the individual circumstance.

- 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?

Under zoning by-law 91-19 Open space is defined as property for the conservation of land and water, passive outdoor recreation, public parks and accessory structures, private parks. The wording seems abundantly clear; an area not able to be built upon with very few exceptions, a dock would be one of those exceptions. Residential zoning by contrast outlines the rules and regulations regarding what kinds of development can take place, the parameters thereof of properties deemed so and most importantly the areas within our community where residential development may take place.

- 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?

Challenge in every community in Ontario. Our official plan and strategic plan should identify where, why, what kind and when we are to provide areas of economic growth. Today, we are working from the hip in this regard in that we do not have an overall vision of the community which satisfies the conflicting interests of both members of the community. Our community plan exercise is working to correct this matter as is the input being received from the public. Growth will come. Growth has come and has changed what the area looked like ten, twenty plus years ago. Planned growth and a business plan for development is an essential tool to meet the differing needs of the community.

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

An item which should be included in the Township strategic plan. Possibly the Township should be offering tax incentives to marina operators who are unable to remain profitable in these economic times. The escalating values of waterfront properties have caught the attention of many marina operators who may see selling out as a viable family alternative versus maintaining status quo. Community Co-op operations may be a viable alternative for water access only people to protect their interests.

- 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?

This is a federal and provincial area of responsibility where there are numerous legislative restrictions in place to protect forests, wetlands and endangered species. Local bylaws such as blasting or tree cutting should be enhanced or developed to compliment the higher levels of legislation. We may also review and amend the building rules to implement a building envelope further back from the waters edge.

- 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.

Agree, the larger the circulation of notice to the community the better for all to comment. I would support anything we could do as a township to inform the community members of items of concern in their areas.

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?

There are provincial standards that need to be met for municipal drinking water that are imposed by the Province and detailed in the Source Water Protection Act. This is a District responsibility. Recreational water standards are established by the Province and monitored by the District and the Severn Sound Environmental Agency. Beyond that, the Township has outsourced two additional agencies to monitor water both in the Bay and on inland lakes. The Township embarked on a yearlong exercise to review who does the monitoring, where, when etc., the success of which was questionable. It would be my hope to rekindle this effort, pinpointing who should do what and dedicate additional funds to the monitoring exercise. Remediation needs to form part of this program given.

6. Emergency response

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

A review of the numbers of calls, the nature of the calls, the response times and outcome to the calls could be charted in order to provide a needs analysis. From there, a review of current equipment and training would be done to ensure what we can do is being done or to fill the gaps as needed. Equipment such as a snow scoot or snowmobiles may form part of the upgrade.

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?

Disagree with the dysfunctional comment and believe that the majority of time, council agrees on most items. As is the democratic way, members of Council do disagree on certain items and put forth their views on a particular matter. Sometimes those views sway the view of other members sometimes not, but that serves as healthy dialogue in my view.

From a transparency perspective, eliminate closed session in all instances and do everything in the public eye. Those interested in the process would be then able to hear first hand all matters of discussion as presented and viewpoints being offered.

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

The challenge with public advisory committees is that they have typically been made up of the same individuals year after year. The public may not be up to speed on certain legislation and work typically from the heart versus a bigger picture scenario. I was involved a number of years ago on planning committees for Port Severn and the issues raised seemed very minor. I am content with the current committee structures and welcome the input from concerned citizens each and every time.

- 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?

I believe the COA works in its current format. I have seen our neighbouring municipality work in a combined format and I do not believe that this system works as well.

- 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?

Absolutely.

8. Garbage

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

While a District responsibility, two committees have addressed the waste management issue from a Township perspective. I have sat on one of those two committee's and I believe that committee has met both the economic challenge and service level challenges faced by all in our community. There is always room for new ideas, concerns or comments to be exchanged.

Final Comment

Certain allegations have been put forward which include me and my role as District and Area Councillor for Baxter Ward. An internal review is being conducted and I am confident to have my good name cleared as a result of these empty accusations. To this end, I have been, am, and will continue to be fully committed to serve the people of our Township. Greg Sutcliffe 538-0001.