

Georgian Bay Vote 2010
List of Questions

MAYOR JIM WALDEN



1. General

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

a. My reasons for wanting to be on Council are consistent with my goals when I initially ran in 2006. I want to manage and lead Council in promoting a sustainable Township which respects quiet enjoyment of one's property, pro-actively developing respective communities, furthering infrastructure, artistic, social and recreational development, creating a vibrant economy, maintaining our natural environment and promoting a healthy lifestyle.

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?

b. The major successes have been the adoption of new Procedure and Committee By-laws, the management of development activities in the Port Severn area, master site plan studies for the Port Severn, Honey Harbour and MacTier areas, extensive

infrastructure projects in the MacTier and Port Severn areas, promotion of community plans, the signing of a protocol to promote sustainability planning in the wider Severn Sound Environmental Association area, completion of the Development Charges Study, commencement of the Strategic Plan Review, celebration of the MacTier Centennial and the general stewardship of our natural environment. I do not believe that Council had any significant shortcomings in spite of a minority of difficult personalities on Council.

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

c. This is a highly subjective question. The dynamics of Council will depend on who the electorate chooses to represent them. The basic characteristics of Council members should be objectivity and open-mindedness, the capability for strategic thought, community spirit, desire to serve and basic civility.

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)?

d. Travel a lot, listen a lot, make assessments, develop plans and implement the same.

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?

a. The role of Council, the Mayor, individual Councillors and the staff are defined in the Municipal Act. They do not vary significantly from similar positions in the Federal and Provincial governments and corporations in general. Council, of course, has a general supervisory role over the senior staff and has a significant role in the hiring and releasing of the senior staff.

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

b. This question discusses two different types of people. Staff is in an employer/employee relationship within the Township. Council is not in such a relationship and the terms of service are largely governed by the Municipal Act and court precedents. Methods of dealing with breaches of trust are therefore different depending on what type of person we are talking about (i.e. Council or staff), rank, seniority, severity, etc. To safeguard against such breaches one must establish checks and balances such as comprehensive policies and procedures, strong supervisory relationships, fiscal accounting and comprehensive audit procedures.

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

- c. I see the optimal level of staffing as that which Council has already approved. There may have to yet be some fine tuning or tweaking. It is essential that the organization be structured to provide depth and redundancy and to ensure continuity and sustainability.**

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?

- d. This is not so much a question as an opinion. I do not believe this opinion to be accurate. We receive continuous compliments about the level of staff service and exceptionally few comments to the contrary; in fact, most compliments are related to comparisons with the term of the previous Council. Staff is inculcated with the understanding that they are servants of the electorate but at times they must deliver bad news. I do trust, however, that in those cases the message was passed in a courteous and respectful manner.**

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. Expenditures of the Township are broken down into three categories: operations, maintenance and capital. Tax surpluses are required to be expended for the budget requirements of the following year. I do not remember any policy which required surpluses to be invested in a special category titled "infrastructure". This term has generally been applied to programmes under the Build Canada Plan and the economic stimulus programmes. Regardless, in this sense, infrastructure is generally a capital expenditure. Any expenditure of surpluses is a decision of Council considering all the factors that pertain at budget time.**

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

- b. Budget meetings are generally special meetings which are posted on the Township website and in the Gazette. In spite of this, there are few observers at these meetings. The budget is posted on the Township website and I am personally unaware of a single inquiry. In short, preparing a budget is not an exciting exercise. I suppose council**

could call an additional public meeting to answer any questions about the budget. I am, however, somewhat sceptical that this would generate significant public interest.

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?

a. First, I must state that I have never heard the Manager of the Planning Department make such a statement. What taxpayers should know is that an Official Plan Review is mandated by the Planning Act at specific intervals. A consultant has been retained to guide the process. It will involve considerable public input and consultation. The community plans were approved by Council because they were considered to have merit. I have every reason to believe that the same situation will prevail.

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?

b. The Committee of Adjustment comprises all members of Council, and the decision is that of Council. The decision is made based on the facts that are presented and the input of those who attend the meeting to voice support or opposition to the application. No two properties or situations are alike. In spite of this, it is my observation that the Committee has done an admirable job of sorting out these two sets of conflicting rights.

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?

c. I am not prepared to answer the question at this time because there is such a matter before the Court. It would be imprudent for me to make a comment.

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?

d. I do not see this as a significant problem. Port Severn is a case in point. On the Georgian Bay Township side there is the potential for approximately 1200 – 1400 residences. With an average of 2.6 individuals per residence this equates to an ultimate size of approximately 4000 people many years down the line. This affects a very small piece of real estate compared to the huge acreage of relatively virgin territory in the Township. Township of Muskoka Lakes has urban areas such as Port Carling and Bala. The Municipalities of Gravenhurst and Bracebridge have the urban areas of the Towns of Gravenhurst and Bracebridge in addition to their large rural areas. These are beautiful areas with large natural vistas. I do not believe many would suggest that the limited urbanization of these areas scars their unique natural areas to an exceptional degree. I do not believe that the increased urbanization of Port Severn will unduly compromise the unique natural characteristic of Georgian Bay Township.

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

e. Like the Committee of Adjustment question above, each specific marina is a unique case. Three marinas have or are in the process of being closed on the Trent Severn Waterway. Each one has found a unique solution to resolve the issues of the water-access cottagers. If a case arises there must be a unique solution found to resolve the issues. It is inconceivable that Council would or could abandon the concerns of hundreds of water-access cottagers because of a threatened marina closure.

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?

f. I believe that most of the habitable areas in Georgian Bay Township have already been identified. There are hundreds upon hundreds of square kilometres of forests and wetlands which have little potential for development. I believe that Georgian Bay Township will continue to be just what it is today, a huge nature reserve.

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.

g. I believe that notices of amendments to the Official Plan are already provided. If the question is one of the required distance of notification this is different. I am sure this is an issue for the Official Plan Review and can be addressed during the public consultation stages of this review.

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?

a. I do not think there is anyone who does not appreciate the need to ensure the protection of water assets in the Township. This includes not only testing of water but also pro-active measures to guard against the pollution of our water. Improved septic tanks and re-inspection programmes, remediation of grey water, nutrient enrichment problems, invasive species and naturalization of shore lines are but some of the critical issues to be addressed. I believe that our Township may eventually require a dedicated staff member for water quality matters.

6. Emergency response

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

a. Some measures already in place are the placement of fire pumps and a maintenance programme to ensure serviceability, and the purchase during this term of a fire boat to enhance response on inland lakes. This is in addition to the fireboat on Georgian Bay. Admittedly, these measures are of value only in the temperate part of the year. We are fortunate to have very pro-active ski-do and ATV clubs which could be utilized to support emergency responders in more inhospitable times of the year.

d. 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?

a. I do not believe this to be a widely held “*perception*”. This Council has been exceptionally productive. There has been a majority and a minority on some issues but that is pretty much par for the course. All legislatures and most Councils have this situation. That does not make them dysfunctional. Similarly, Council has been as transparent as possible. It has spent significantly less time in closed session than the previous Council. Council will have to work diligently to allay this perception.

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?

b. I believe that public advisory committees could be helpful but recruiting volunteers may be difficult. On many occasions such as the study on the future of the Trent Severn Waterway volunteers have been sought to join such bodies. It is a very difficult task to find volunteers. People are busy on many different pursuits and may not be particularly interested in government matters. The fact seems to be that Council is elected and most of the electors expect and trust them to do the job. I just do not see hordes of people coming out to Council meetings.

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?

c. I do not know because I have never experienced it. I know of one Township which does this but anecdotal information indicates it is less than satisfactory. I could support it in principle but it will take some consultation and a survey of surrounding communities to determine if a change is recommended.

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?

d. I would welcome such a proposal.

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?

e. Again, I believe this to require some study. I go to a large number of cottage association AGM's and turnouts for these meetings are generally very limited; i.e. 35 people to represent a membership of hundreds. I have some doubt as to the success of such a venture in the summer. Where does the commonality come from between these diverse groups?

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?

a. This is a subject that was studied for a good part of this term by this Council. I am pleased at the outcome of this study and its implementation. Issues continue to be studied in specific areas but these are unique to those particular areas. It is a significant cost issue and it will continue to evolve; but this situation is not a case of *“one size fits all.”*