

Georgian Bay Vote 2010
List of Questions
Answers by Larry Braid July 10th 2010



1. General

- What is the main reason (or reasons) for your wanting to be on Council? ***I believe a change in Leadership is necessary to bring sanity back to decision making, spending and overall management of the affairs of our Municipality.. I wish to bring accountability and democracy back into the hands of Council by changing the procedure bylaw and the procurement policy.***
- 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 ***Community Plans passed and in the works, the Port Severn Master Plan and the initiation of the Honey Harbour and MacTier Master Plans.*** and what have been the shortcomings? ***Loss of transparency, Loss of accountability, Loss of Council control, Loss of individual Councillors rights. The Grant Monies should have been more fairly spread around the Municipality rather than concentrated in Port Severn.***
- How do you think Council and the Township should be run to overcome these shortcomings? ***In a nutshell, PROPERLY. Somewhat like a private sector business, but certainly as if it was my very own money I am working with. As I indicated above, decision making and discussion must be returned to Council, all of Council. Committee of the Whole must be returned to ensure that all Council members are in the loop prior to recommendations to Council being adopted. Small AD Hoc committees for single item business matters work well and should continue. The Budget process must involve all Council members, must be made simple for all to understand. Budgeted items over a given amount, say \$25,000.00 should come back to Council for final blessing. All RFP's RFQ's etc should be approved by Council before going public and of course all Tender Openings should be in a public forum. Better liaison between Department Heads and Council such as brief reports periodically to Committee of the Whole in regards to challenges etc. Individual Councillors should be able to bring forward any issue at Committee of the Whole or Council without having to jump through hoops as we have to do now.***
- 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)? ***To the best of my ability and as I always have by listening, researching and asking questions and trying to come up with a fair answer or decision. As a current Councillor, I don't just represent my 2 wards, I represent all of Georgian Bay, always have and always will.***

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 be the supreme commander with the Mayor being the main liaison between Council and its direction and the CAO. The CAO must report to all of Council and not just the Mayor. It is up to Council to place suitable standards for reporting and performance on the CAO and it is up to Council to discipline or if necessary suspend or discharge the CAO. The rest of the staff are the responsibility of the CAO. There may be times when the CAO asks for Council's help in regards to subordinate employees and that is OK by me.***
- How would you safeguard against possible abuse of public trust by members of Council or staff? ***I know you are referring to an incident brought forward a while ago. The safeguards were there in the Procurement policy, they simply were not followed in my opinion. I believe outside expertise is now needed to assist us in setting up better controls so the Procurement Policy is absolutely followed and foolproof. One idea I have is to never have the CAO and Treasurer positions as one individual. The electronic signature of the Mayor should not be under the control of the other signing authority or it should be abandoned totally in favour of a real signature.***
- What do you see as the optimal level of staffing for the Township? (be specific) ***In the businesses I have run, I hired honest, properly educated, hard working and loyal people. I was able to basically run lean and mean and still had happy individuals. The organizational review that we have paid a pretty sum for at the township is in my opinion a joke and empire building. I will not comment further on that item in print.***
- 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 believe a change in Council composition would help that. I don't wish to publicize my ideas as to how I as the new Mayor with a supportive new Council would address the issues you mention.***

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? ***Tax surpluses can happen for a number of reasons and properly explained I don't take a huge issue with them. Year after year is however a problem that Treasury should be able to minimize. Proper management of Councils approvals for projects etc is the key and of course the CAO is the ultimate manager responsible to see that Council's wishes are fulfilled.***
- The annual budget is of interest to taxpayers. How would you ensure more public understanding of and input to the budget? ***I saw a sample budget produced for the public from the Town of Gravenhurst. It was easy to read and understand. However, my idea was not accepted. Again with the right Council, that change can and should happen.***

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 new community plans must be incorporated "intact" into the updated OP. I would hope that a majority of Council would be of the same mindset. Staff are of course, supposed to follow direction of Council as set up in Policies and Procedures and it is the CAO's job to make sure Council's wishes are followed to a "T".***
- 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? ***First of all, C of A has to be without a doubt the most difficult committee I have ever sat on. In a number of applications, neighbours end up hating the applicant and vice versa. The members of the committee***

end up creating enemies and that can result in a political problem for them in the next election (should they run) even though the two things are not really related. One person's opinion of something MINOR can and usually is very different than another's. Many people put a percentage on minor and in my opinion that is wrong. I like to look at what is a reasonable request as I believe everyone has the right to have a reasonably comfortable abode. When I look at an application, I try to see the whole picture of what the applicant could build without a variance, what they are looking for and their reasons why they think their ideas are better. Sometimes the committee comes up with new ideas and sends the applicant back to the drawing board. Sometimes our committee gives a little to get site plan control or re-vegetation or a new septic or at least an upgraded septic. Personally I would like to see the committee as a separate body of people, perhaps with one Councillor on it. Those individuals should by rights take courses to be able to make good judgements. Many properties were surveyed a long time ago and at the time people thought about occasional use and use during good weather. Times have changed and more and more folks want to take advantage of their own personal paradise to spend as much time as possible at the cottage. The electronic age has assisted that also. I could go on and on about this issue, but time does not permit. I will not comment on people's rights though.

- 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? *My understanding is just that, with passive use. If the property was originally surveyed as residential use, then we have a problem as in some cases buildings were put up. If these were liveable cottages, then in some instances I can see small expansions. That is a very touchy situation and I know there are some differing opinions in regards to recent decisions. As yet I don't have all the information on one particular property zoned as Open Space and will not comment. Overall though, Open Space designations (at least on undeveloped land) should mean that building should be extremely limited to providing only enough for passive recreational use – not for tool shops or cabins or anything of the like.*
- 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? *Tough question to answer. The cottager and residents of year round communities don't have to be viewed as being all that opposite in interests. We need to preserve and if possible enhance the ability of people to get to their cottages – and that would necessarily mean maintaining existing marinas. Those marinas in turn provide a lot of local employment. In the long run, we could do better at fostering more attractive "downtown" areas for the hamlet of Honey Harbour and for MacTier. That can be done without in any way compromising the viability of the marinas – or the notions of preserving, perhaps via special plans, our waterways, lands and forests.*
- Boat access only properties are dependent on marinas. What would you do to ensure ongoing marina access for these taxpayers? *The Township as far as I know cannot ensure that the owner of a marina will not at some time want to sell out to someone proposing a different use for that property. Depending on the zoning of that property the new use may require a re-zoning for a new use and that starts a public process with public meetings. Council must be very careful as the OMB can overturn a biased or not so legal decision. The best way of ensuring marina access for offshore folks, is demonstrated by the Honey Harbour Boat Club. I would urge renters at other marinas to do the same thing. In the meantime, we should leave intact the notion that marinas cannot be converted to other uses except by way of an amendment to the Official Plan. Such a provision is in place for Honey Harbour and it should stay that way.*
- 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? *Bring the stakeholders together for a proper – proper - discussion (call it a symposium) on what should and can be done. That would include cottager groups and upper levels of government. This may take more than one meeting. At this point there is not enough appreciation of what various governments can or should be doing. If we could generate a common meeting of the minds as to who should be doing what, hopefully we could put programmes into place (e.g. the identification of sensitive areas, water quality testing) that would be sustainable – and not subject to political bickering from one year to the next. Then there is the issue of abuse by campers of Crown land. So far I have not found an answer to that problem, but I would continue the search. I*

think we could revisit how we operate some of our parking lots that provide access for some of these campers.

- 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 we currently provide notice to a considerable distance. I suppose those requirements could be looked at again. It is also my understanding that our staff do go outside of the requirements from time to time if there are no people close enough to comment.***

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 you all know my stand on that issue. I would like to see all of the different testing agencies working harmoniously and that any expenditures of public monies are well accounted for. I would also support spending more money should there be a need. Again, bring all the stakeholders together for a symposium.***

6. Emergency response

- For non road access property owners how would you help them with emergency response? ***Associations need to merely ask for more fire-pumps, so long as there are people to steward them. As far as other emergencies, I'm always open to ideas. We do have a 911 Response system and possibly that could be enhanced in some way. With a new Council we should be able to have more productive dialogue with those members of senior staff that can help us.***

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? ***New Procedure Bylaw. Back to Committee of the Whole. Revised Procurement Policy to put spending control back into the hands of Council. Hire an experienced CAO perhaps one with a legal background. CAO and Treasurer should NEVER be the same person.***
- 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? ***After trying a number of different committee systems since 1997, I am of the firm belief that Council is elected to do most of the grunt work. I am all in favour of small local committees, but they always seem to fall apart at the seams. Most of you will know how hard it is to get people involved. Just look at the number of candidates that have stepped forward this time. What does seem to work is a committee on an Ad Hoc basis, with a defined goal and a timeline.***
- 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? ***YES and YES.***
- 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? ***I have thought about this idea for a long time and if it was part of the actual meeting, I believe it would get out of control. I could put forward the idea to Council to see if a 15 minute period prior to the actual meeting start time might work, if Councillors were available for a one on one basis.***
- 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? ***I would suggest another time of year, as the summer is extremely difficult to get everyone together. Remember, most people want to come up Friday night, be with their family for down time, beer or wine, and then depart for the grind back in the big smoke. Most don't want to hear of political problems on their days off.***

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? ***What is convenient to one is inconvenient to another and that is simply a geography problem in my view. We are very limited to where we can have sites and any new ones have to jump through many hoops before approval is granted. Believe me I have tried new locations and then there is the NIMBY problem. I believe we have made most of the changes from the recommendations, and it is up to the users of unsupervised sites and even the stewarded marina sites to maintain them as they are intended to be used for. MOE has made it clear they are tired of the messes and illegal dumping. District and the contractor has also made it clear that people's habits must change. MOE's rules keep getting more strict. We have tried to make it as easy as possible to get rid of that mattress or fridge etc. Interesting, people get that new mattress or fridge out to their place, but it is too difficult to dispose of the old ones appropriately. Why is that? I don't wish to get into an argument, as it is a select few that cause the problem, but perhaps they will change. As far as the question, abuse will decide convenience in my estimation.***