

COMMENTS OF PAT EDWARDS

Georgian Bay Vote 2010

List of Questions



1. General

- What is the main reason (or reasons) for your wanting to be on Council? **My reasons for running include; a sense of civic duty, my love of Georgian Bay, the fact that I was asked to rise to the occasion and lastly total frustration with the way the township has been run for the last 4 years. It also helps that we own a house in Honey Harbour and have a place to stay in the off-season.**
- 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 see mainly shortcomings- in process, in lack of accountability and transparency, poor spending decisions, and an apparent hidden agenda- a prodevelopment agenda- which I believe is contrary to the general wishes of the residents.**
- How do you think Council and the Township should be run to overcome these shortcomings? **There should be a return to the previous way of conducting business with decisions being made by the council as a whole. I suspect that the current committee system is not democratic and is not the way that things should be done.**
- 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 listen to the views of seasonal and permanent residents with special attention to the comments and requests coming from the various cottage associations- which are in my mind an extension of the democratic process.**

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? **While I am not an expert on municipal government my current view is that council should be like a corporate board of directors- providing oversight and process to the activities of the township. I think that the township has a few very specific responsibilities and should be run like a well organized small business. Councillors and the mayor should only be involved in "special projects" especially where they have unique experience that can be of benefit to the township. In my case I would hope that as a CA for almost 40 years I could provide some of that training and experience for the benefit of the township. The day to day running of the township should be left to the employees of the township.**
- How would you safeguard against possible abuse of public trust by members of Council or staff? **This is a difficult question. I would hope that by following the organization and procedures suggested by municipal affairs together with a good system of internal controls we should be able to avoid such abuse.**
- What do you see as the optimal level of staffing for the Township? (be specific) **I understand that the # of employees has risen from approximately 25 to over 40. I would think that we should look at ways to return to these lower levels unless there are good reasons to have new functions performed by additional personnel. I am a fan of small government- ie avoiding the temptation to add employees because tax revenue is available.**
- 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 have experienced the unacceptable treatment of the public and it is totally contrary to what I think the township should do. Again i would hope that with my unique education and experience i can make the budget and reporting process something which all residents could access and understand.**

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? **I think that the township should try and avoid having tax surpluses since when such funds are available they can fall victim to a rogue council such as we have just experienced. Since the township raises funds through annual taxes I see no need to build up large reserve funds. Infrastructure is important but only if it is needed.**
- The annual budget is of interest to taxpayers. How would you ensure more public understanding of and input to the budget? **This would be one of my priorities to make the whole aspect of finance understandable, with good internal controls, straightforward budgeting and clear financial reporting.**

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? **Having been heavily involved in the Cognashene OP I fully support the concept and hold it as a basic principle of planning. I suspect I won't be in agreement with a number of the views of the manager of planning.**
- 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? **This is a difficult one, since with the significant # of non conforming properties we have to**

show some flexibility in dealing with variance applications. This does not mean allowing all of them or denying all of them, but rather seeing how the requested change fits into the landscape. Having just gone through a variance application last year I am in favour of the role of an advisory group within each cottager association, however, it is very important that we look for compromise and use common sense in the application. It is important that the OP of a cottage area have wide support within the community. We must also be aware of the implications of Law in formulating our decisions. The role of the committee is to be the “fair judge” weighing the merits of the local plan vs the request of the property owner and try to find a compromise that makes sense while staying within the Law.

- 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? *While I am aware of the issue I hold the view that the restriction on development must maintain the existing concept with no change in interpretation after all these years. This particular case was well decided by council and the OMB, i don't believe it is the role of the twp employees to find new ways to allow development which has clearly been denied in the past.*
- 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? *I am trying to understand the question. I suspect that what you are saying is that a number of permanent residents are prodevelopment since it is financially good for them in that it offers them work employment or financial reward? This is my take on the situation. While having full employment is good for society I feel that my constituents are more interested in maintaining the tranquility and beauty of the township- and my support for economic activity will be guided by the views of the majority of the residents. I am not interested in having development so that we have successful contractors, or have a few property owners who enjoy a windfall. Development should only be encouraged if it has the support of a majority of the residents.*
- Boat access only properties are dependent on marinas. What would you do to ensure ongoing marina access for these taxpayers? *I would vote against the current plan for HH of storing boats in the woods and having walking easements through the marinas. The marinas are vital for enjoyment of the water access community of which I am a member/*
- 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? *I would encourage donation to bodies such as the land trust.*
- 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 support full use of the internet/website to disseminate information of the township.*

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 would support a comprehensive plan to ensure we monitor water quality. This is a key requirement in the township.*

6. Emergency response

- For non road access property owners how would you help them with emergency response? **The township should continue the fire pump program. I would expand it by encouraging local participation of neighbours- so that all are aware of who has a fire pump and how to access it- not just the township pumps. We should also ensure that the fireboat(s) are always in working order.**

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? **Encourage the election of a responsible group of councillors & mayor.**
- 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? **I am not sure on this one. This is really the role that council has and I suspect that to give this power to another group would be confusing & dysfunctional. The control process is normally the ballot box. This does not mean there shouldn't be public input but I do wonder how one can do this both legally and effectively?**
- 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 think there is a good historical reason for having this power vested in council members- given the large # of non conforming use properties. I think the use of the local cottager review committee would likely give the type of input that is being suggested.**
- 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 would leave this question to current members of council who can comment whether this structure makes any sense.**
- 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 think an annual meeting like done for public corporations is an interesting concept. I do wonder how this would fit in under the Municipal Act, however the concept is sound and would be a good addition to the democratic process.**

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? **I got involved in the garbage issue several years ago meeting with Larry Braid and the district engineer. I was impressed with how the garbage question was being handled, and don't have enough information at this point to comment on specifics of access and location of bins. I would however observe that I don't understand how the comment can be made that it is cheaper to have door to door pickup than to have drop off bins.**

I hope I have answered the questions- Again this should be a simple small business, we need to keep it small yet responsive. There is no need in my mind to make the township staff and activities larger.