

Georgian Bay Vote 2010

List of Questions



Paul M Wiancko

Candidate for Area and District Councillor for the Gibson/Freeman Wards

1.0) General

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

Answer: I am concerned about the direction that the existing Council and Township has taken. The Township is presently managed by the Mayor and 3 Councillors, not 5 Councillors. They have become entrenched in their decision making process to the exclusion of public input and transparency. They are ignoring community-planning policies and are not supportive of important water quality initiatives. They are yet to address the tax burden.

1.2) **Question:** 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?

Answer: Any perceived successes by Council have been over shadowed by recent events and the response by the Mayor. While some will look at recent developments in Port Severn as their legacy, others question the need and expenses especially in light of continued increases in taxation. The words accountability and transparency have lost meaning to this Council

1.3) **Question:** How do you think Council and the Township should be run to overcome these shortcomings?

Answer: The operations of the Township and the true role of the Mayor needs to return to their original intent. A Chief Administration Officer (CAO) needs to hired to manage Township Administration and the Procedural Policy needs to be revised to reduce the powers of the Mayor.

1.4) **Question:** 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)?

Answer: After every Council/Committee meeting, I will issue a short E-mail to all organizations within the Gibson/Freeman Wards highlighting any significant discussions and decisions. Secondly, I will commit to meet with all organizations in these Wards each summer to discuss Council performance and upcoming budgetary issues. This is in addition to responding to all communications that I receive from any organization or member of the public.

NOTES:

2.0) Administration

2.1) **Question:** 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?

Answer: Council should hire a CAO and that individual would run the day-to-day operations of the Township and be directly accountable to Council. The CAO is the only staff member that can be directly dismissed by Council. However, Council should be consulted on any Department Head hiring and any staff discipline. Council members should have direct access to the CAO and Section Heads. Any action resulting from these discussions should go through the CAO.

2.1) **Question:** How would you safeguard against possible abuse of public trust by members of Council or staff?

Answer: All Councillors, the Mayor, the CAO and all Section Heads should sign a Code of Conduct and be held accountable for their actions. Wrongdoing should be made public.

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

Answer: Under a CAO, there needs to be Section Heads for Planning, Building Inspection, Treasury, Corporate Services, Roads and the Fire Chief. The number of staff under each of these positions needs to be reviewed but in general staff levels should not exceed 30 in total. I will be asking for a review of the Planning Department (may be under staffed) and the continued need of the Community Services Department.

2.3) **Question:** 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?

Answer: The first thing is to hire a CAO and make them accountable to Council. The qualifications of this individual should be an attitude of an open policy. This attitude needs to filter down to the Section Head level and Council needs to be abreast of significant public inquires (i.e. a running list of requests and time to complete). I would even agree to create a public liaison individual if the workload was warranted.

NOTES:

3.0) Township finances

3.1) **Question:** 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?

Answer: In my experience on Council, surpluses were mainly related to budget savings, work not completed and staff vacancies. The last two issues need to be addressed by Council each year. Annual surpluses should be directed towards tax savings in the coming year. This would be in the form of lower Administration costs. Infrastructure projects need to be budgeted and depreciated as planned.

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

Answer: Besides the annual meeting with the local organizations as mentioned above, I will propose to my fellow Councillors a annual grant program that would allow any organization in the Township to request funding on a 50/50 bases for capital projects or special events. These grants would not be available for routine organization expenses. Within the budgetary schedule, there needs to be sufficient time for public review.

NOTES:

4.0) Planning

- 4.1) **Question:** 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?

Answer: During my term as President of the Six Mile Lake Cottagers' Association in the late 1990's, I co-ordinated the development of the SML Official Plan and Zoning By-laws. Therefore, I am well aware of the importance of community plans. As a Councillor, I will respect and uphold the intent and spirit of these plans across the cottage community. In fact, I will request that the Planning Department spend more time on finalizing and integrating these plans even to the point of contracting out the work if necessary.

- 4.2) **Question:** 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?

Answer: As a member of the COA, I will apply the "heartship" principal to all my decisions. There has to be a compelling reason to approve a variance especially if it relates to a Community Plan. Too many approvals are granted based on the lack of public/Cottage Association concerns, architectural design or personal preference. I will encourage Associations to get involved in commenting on variances and respect their input. Although individuals have rights, they must show an effort to work within the planning regulations.

- 4.3) **Question:** 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?

Answer: Open space can relate to private or Township lands. It is for conservation, recreation or park purposes only. No structures or accommodations are permitted on these lands.

- 4.4) **Question:** 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?

Answer: Community Plans should specify what, if any, commercial development is allowed within the boundaries of their plans. MacTier, Port Severn and Honey Harbour are the growth centres within the Township and any commercial facilities should be encouraged to locate in these centres. Both seasonal and permanent communities should have some say as to what commercial development is permitted in their neighbourhoods.

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

Answer: Any sale or redevelopment of marina lands (i.e. condos, resorts, etc.) should have some guarantee that sufficient boat slips remain within the development or near by marinas to service existing customers. The boat access community should not be penalized in the name of progress.

4.6) **Question:** 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?

Answer: The management of crown lands within the Township is the responsibility of the Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR). The Township should work with the MNR to regulate uses of these lands as it relates to camping, logging, trails, ATV's, snowmobiles, protection of wetlands and endangered species and general recreational usage. We live in a shared environment, but there needs to be some controls over appropriate usage of crown lands. Development should not encroach on wetlands.

4.7) **Question:** 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.

Answer: The Township Planning Department should use all available means to communicate with the community on significant planning proposals including its web site. Zoning changes and variance requests should be circulated, by mail, to all interested parties including affected residences and organizations. In turn, organizations should review the Township web site on a regular basis to ensure that they are aware of pending changes. All Associations should review and comment, were appropriate, on all variances going to the COA.

NOTES:

5.0) Water quality

5.1) **Question:** Water quality is of paramount importance to waterfront property owners. How would you ensure the protection of the water assets in the Township?

Answer: As an Aquatic Biologist, I understand the importance of water quality and the impact it has on cottage enjoyment. For the last 6 years, I have conducted water quality studies (temp. /oxygen depth profiles, conductivity and total phosphorous above and below the thermocline) on 8 inland lakes – Severn River, Gloucester Pool, Baxter Lake, Six Mile Lake, Gibson Lake, Go Home Lake, Galla Lake and Stewart Lake. It has been a constant battle for funding from Township Council. I will request the preparation of a policy that will entrench the approval for an annual “baseline” water quality program across the Township. I will also encourage Planning Staff to use the results of these and other studies in their assessments.

NOTES:

6.0) Emergency response

- 6.1) **Question:** For non-road access property owners how would you help them with emergency response?

Answer: I am aware on the emergency/fire boat in Honey Harbour, a fire boat on Go Home Lake and Township fire pumps around many of the lakes. Any further emergency response capability should be a topic of a conference with Georgian Bay and inland lake associations in the near future.

NOTES:

7.0) Council performance

- 7.1) **Question:** 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?

Answer: Much of this concern is related to leadership and the policies in place. New leadership and a new supportive Council are required. The Procedural Policy, Purchasing Policy and staffing issues all need to be addressed.

- 7.2) **Question:** 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?

Answer: Public Advisory Committees should be used on an ad hoc bases on issues that require in-depth review such as waste management, camping, water quality, etc. At least two Councillors should sit on each ad hoc committee. All Councillors should sit on Committees of a routine nature such as Committee of the Whole and possibly the COA.

- 7.3) **Question:** 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?

Answer: In my experience, much of the interaction with the public revolved around the Official Plan and Zoning By-laws. It is imperative that all Councilors learn about the OP and the best way is being on the COA. I also believe that when the public comes to the COA, they want to talk to their elected representatives. This is one of the few ways that Councilors can interact with the public. That being said, I am open to other arguments for public involvement in the COA process but as long as the work load in manageable, I would tend towards an all Council COA.

- 7.4) **Question:** 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?

Answer: In my last term on Council, I interacted with the attending public at all our meetings, before and during breaks, since it is one of the few times this interaction can occur. However, this access cannot be seen as anything but informal and should not be a substitute for decision making. I will encourage the public, in my area, to meet with me anytime on any issue of Township importance.

- 7.5) **Question:** 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?

Answer: Not only should the Township organize an annual conference to have an open and frank discussion of performance and issues, I intend to have my own meeting with the organizations in my Wards each summer.

NOTES:

8.0) Garbage

8.1) **Question:** What do you propose to do to ensure convenient access to garbage and recycling bins for those taxpayers who don't have curbside pickup?

Answer: The Waste Management Committee needs to continue its work to provide garbage and recycling at an affordable cost. Associations that have concerns need to be on the Committee or work with the Committee to resolve outstanding issues. The Six Mile Lake Cottagers' Association worked both with the Committee and its own lake membership to save one of our bin sites and curb the abuse. Bin sites are affordable when they are not abused.

NOTES: