

Georgian Bay Vote 2010

List of Questions



Responses by SUZY BURTENSHAW, 2010 candidate for Ward 3 (Baxter) Area Councillor

I would like to sit on Council because politics have always interested me. At this point in my life, based on my past accomplishments and experiences pertinent to better community, I feel qualified.

If elected I would like to “See Things Through” to better the Township.

I would like to be a part of the next Council because I am both excited about the future but also frustrated in many areas with Georgian Bay Township.

The past council has had tremendous forward movement but also disappointments.

The obvious successes have been the new park development in Port Severn, Trail initiatives and the new community services building. The shortcomings of the past council differ depending on who you ask but in general communication, team work and trust building can always be improved upon in local government. The central location of the new park is beneficial to promote the whole area.

I look forward to being able to represent the entire constituency because I love the ward 3 area and know it quite well. I love to travel around and I am very observant of my surroundings. I like people and will be easily accessible. I will encourage input wherever I go. I will keep in touch with my constituents if elected because I like to know what is going on, and presumably they do to.

Admin

As someone new to Council I would need to learn procedure before I could make an informed answer but common sense tell me that some supervision and accountability is necessary.

Council should be involved with staff in a large degree, setting rules and guidelines.

I would safeguard against abuse of public trust by being very “discerning” while in office. I give my word of utmost honesty and expect the same in return.

Optimal level of staffing is lean with both a loose, tight management style, for optimum performance.

To address the incidents of poor decision making, I would need the specific complaints before I could make an informed answer.

I feel all accusations should be investigated and that every resident counts. It is important to validate areas of complaint before making a response.

If elected I would be a Customer Service asset to the Township. I have 30 years experience in this area, and I genuinely like people. I would apply the same principle of customer service that I have learned in business to Council.

Finances

All of the information would be presented (at budget time) and every year would differ. Tax Surplus that has been brought forth would be analyzed and decided upon at the time.

Generally speaking, I would support paying down debt, investing and infrastructure projects.

There is nothing more frustrating to enthusiastic constituents than to be told "Sorry, that's not in the budget this year" so I feel strongly that good communication should lead up to budget time, giving the public the best opportunity to come forward in a timely and organized manner. Educating people as to the best way to go about getting their wishes across is something that I personally would be happy to do if elected.

Planning

Community plans stem from current policies based on the official plan, and are very relevant to our community. I am a firm believer of the statement "you can't know where you are going if you don't know where you've been". I would protect the integrity of existing community plans through continuity.

As a property owner myself I respect peoples rights with regard to their property. However, as stewards of our land I feel we must also care about our community as a whole. This area is home to many diverse users so attitudes of "Not in my backyard" are going to lead to people being diametrically opposed.

I would handle such situations by stressing that both sides have a right to our democratic process and that this right must first and foremost be respected. There are very few issues that cannot be solved though compromise and I feel I would be a good facilitator. If compromise is not feasible, for example, on environmental issues, educating both parties would be necessary.

People are sometimes fearful of what they do not understand, making reliable, factual information very important in our community.

"Open Space"

By-law 91-19....my understanding is parkland, no structures, passive recreation...open space.

Growth and development

Growth and development is the area of township that I feel strongly about and want to be part of the leadership for.

The population of the GTA is set to increase by 20 % in the next 25 years which means an increase in land based users to our area. Growth and overdevelopment could threaten areas

already fragile in this Township. Now is the time to look into the future and make provisions to safeguard what we all cherish about this area. Federal Parkland must be controlled to some degree by the township in key areas. I feel strongly about this. It is our community and we must have some control so residents, day visitors and tourists can be best served. I plan to be very active on this topic if elected.

Controlled, responsible development is the only way to accomplish this and leadership must come from the residents themselves.

Organization is of paramount importance as we face the future. Now is the time to be a part of the planning process. Our Township has many concerned citizens, which I feel is very positive. Strategic Master Planning is going on right now so time is of the essence.

The future of marinas in key locations is a very important issue for the next Council. As generational properties start to change hands, we need to safeguard access for island residents. I support an immediate plan into protecting this right for water access tax payers. Tax incentives may have to be studied.

The township must work diligently with environmental groups to stay informed, at the same time having a practical approach to the economic needs of the area.

Federal and provincial grants for protecting areas and species are available for the environment and an effective town council is well prepared in advance for these opportunities. The best action the township could take is a strong approach to protecting areas of particular concern.

I agree that neighbouring property owners should receive notice of proposed amendments.

Water quality

The Muskoka Assessment Plan (MAP) revealed the obvious, "the water is the economy". All decisions must reflect from that statement. Some money must be allocated for water testing.

Emergency response

I would be in favour of a helicopter support system along with our existing boat and fire boat rescue.

Council Performance

As a responsible councillor, I would need statistically factual information from a reliable source regarding the alleged dysfunction. From there I would be glad to make proper recommendations. This first statement needs to be elaborated on for me to answer properly.

I would support a process of study to how best to structure Public Advisory Committees. I stated previously, input must come from residents on a regular basis, for effective community planning. This could be an important issue so a structural review would have to take place to see if COA change should occur. From there the group would make recommendation to see how best selected members of the public could be effective. I would support the change only if I felt satisfied after proper review.

I feel it is important to follow Parliamentary Process, and I would be worried about presetting a meeting by allowing open discussion right before. I would however support a discussion period immediately following the end of a meeting.

Township council absolutely should host an annual meeting of the organizations and I would strive to implement this if elected. I would also promote regular "walk-about" with Council and "executives" of associations in the individual areas, to get better understanding than just discussion. I think it is important to see and feel issues, not just hear them.

Garbage

This area of the Township is one of the most challenging and must be constantly addressed. My research reveals some are happy, some are unhappy. Personally I do not like the Honey harbour rd. location because it is at the entrance to the village, and is abused. Island cottagers have different needs and we all must start to think before we buy..."Where will this end up?".