

TBM needs to review the value of the Grey County fiscal relationship.

By the Budget Review Committee

(Terry Thompson, John Leckie, Ritchie Baird, Al Fraser, Janet Findlay, Michael Seguin)

The Town of the Blue Mountains (TBM) sends \$13 million to the County each year, which represents approximately 25% of the County's annual operating Budget. For a Town that represents only 7% of Grey County's population, what are the TBM ratepayers getting in return for this huge contribution?

The Committee, on behalf of the BMRA, is proposing that in early 2014 the TBM undertake a review of existing Grey County services and address how TBM might obtain better value for these services in the future. The need for this review is highlighted by the growing importance of tourism in our County, which is placing heavy demands on our infrastructure and institutions, e.g. the OPP. While the County update was an agenda item of the October 7th Council meeting and the issue was discussed; we do not feel it received the attention it deserved.

On October 7th, 2013, several residents attended Council to hear Lance Thurston, CAO for Grey County, provide an update on activity/services throughout Grey County and more importantly, in the Town of the Blue Mountains. We were disappointed that the presentation was dominated by Deputy Mayor/Warden McKinlay and we heard little from Lance Thurston.

Therefore, the Committee decided it was necessary to request that another meeting be set up that would allow both the County CAO and TBM CAO provide a brief that would examine how we can get better value for County services. The Public Meeting should allow questions from residents, either in writing or orally. These 2 CAOs have a lot of knowledge to share about our changing economic and demographic base and we need to hear their views.

For example let's examine in more detail several specific issues raised by TBM Councillors at the October 7th meeting:

Councillor Bob Gamble asked if 25% flows out of TBM to the County, why can't something closer to 25% flow back? Which begs the question: how much does in fact flow back?

Councillor Michael Martin wanted to hear some "options" with respect to TBM and the County. Councillor Martin noted there is an inequity between Grey County municipalities, and questioned if the County has investigated legislative requirements regarding the inequity argument, further noting this is not going away. He also stated that many Counties have special statutes and questioned if the County has undertaken research of these statutes. Duncan McKinlay noted that he will seek clarification on this matter for Councillor Martin; that response from Staff should be part of this CAO presentation.

Another option would be to send a representative to County who is less conflicted with a leadership title. Currently our County rep wears two hats as Mayor/Deputy Mayor plus being our County rep. In

other words simply send a Councillor, chosen by Council for 4 years only, who would act more like a steward of OUR money. The conflict gets even worse if our Mayor/Deputy Mayor happens to be the Warden too.

Could there be a bigger role for seniors' housing in TBM? Councillor Gail Ardiel touched on this with her question about the role of the Georgian Village Campus in The Town of Penetanguishene?

Councillor John McKean questioned why in TBM is there just 10Kms of roads to receive upgrades.

Given a new 6 month trial transit project in the TBM, Lance Thurston hinted that there may be funding opportunities available to the County regarding regional transportation? Has the County explored other transit funding opportunities with regard to gas tax monies and the Sustainable Path program? It is critical that we make every effort to make this pilot transit project succeed.

The Committee is hoping that TBM Council will provide a forum for the TBM ratepayers to glean more information with a goal of achieving more value for our tax dollars. Moreover, we need a forum to finally give TBM Councillors a greater opportunity to debate what are clearly some healthy differences of opinion amongst them on how we should proceed within these changing economic and demographic circumstances.

No doubt, the County funding allocation/model needs to be a 2014 election issue. Getting our ratepayers properly informed of the issues early in the election season is in everyone's interests.