

Deputation re Process of Official Plan, Aug18,2014

Summary:

The Blue Mountain Ratepayers' Association is seeking a delay in Council approval of the draft Official Plan (OP). The BMRA (along with other Ratepayer Groups contacted below) believes that the public has not had sufficient time to review and discuss the increased density provisions. We are calling on Council to hold a public meeting on the issue of OP density so that we can benefit from Councillors' insights. As well, we feel that a new Council should approve the OP as it will have a true mandate to implement the changes proposed.

Our request for this Deputation has to do with the actual process of the Official Plan and that process is critical when dealing with something as difficult to grasp as density.

Jim Dymont is obviously very competent. However, he is an "interim" Planner who has placed substantive changes into the OP. That OP has never been discussed by Council in an open forum for the public to hear Council's rational and insights for either supporting or not supporting issues; particularly density taking a huge leap from 2.5 per hectare to 20 as proposed by an interim Planner.

The text of the OP did not come out until mid-June. Not enough time for either Council or the public to digest before the deadline of July 9th. Moreover, residents/ratepayers have still not yet heard from Council as to how these changes influence Council's thinking on the course of development in TBM. So how can ratepayers be expected to make informed comments on the OP? This is a question of both fairness and protocol.

The OP is calling for 20 units per net hectare in the Thornbury-Clarksburg area and 10 units per net hectare for lands designated residential/recreational area.

The public should be informed about how densities of 10 units or 20 units per hectare actually appear in built form. We need an image of that. Example comes to mind: 1st Street's new development in Collingwood. Is that what we are looking

at? Do we really understand density? Density benchmarks should be appropriate for OUR community and should not be drawn from other municipalities, although we can benchmark best practices as we see fit. Density benchmarks should also be easy to envision. The public doesn't think in terms of hectares. Again, we need images of what the Plan has in store for us. Finally the whole concept of intensification may be applicable to Toronto where the infrastructure is already there. But Clarksburg is on septic. Again, the optimum infrastructure/density ratio needs to be defined on a local basis and we rely on input from our elected representatives to guide us on where they think that ratio should go.

Also the public should be made aware of the role of the Ontario Municipal Board. The OMB will often rubber stamp a developer's request, and if the Town adopts a policy of 20 units to the net hectare, it can't roll back the density if it does not agree with how a developer plans to build it out. Going to the OMB is expensive for both the TBM and Developers. But costs are simply prohibitive for ratepayer groups. Therefore we want to be careful not to carve in stone a ratio of 20 to 1 that we can never roll back from OMB judgments.

We recognize that the Official Plan is not the final say on planning and development matters in the Town. However, we are not convinced that zoning by-laws, and design guidelines, provide sufficient protection in the event that the community is dissatisfied with a proposal. Maybe we have been protected in recent years because financing for speculative real estate development has dried up. But cycles change and if the flood gates of financing open up we could get inundated with projects moving ahead.

Delaying the OP renewal until we hear from existing Councillors (and perhaps even newly elected Councillors after October) is not unreasonable considering the delays in the process to date. As well, it can be argued that the mandate of the current Council has de facto expired for long-term matters such as this 5 year-term OP. The new Council (i.e. post October election) should analyze, communicate to the public and approve their OP as that new Council will have a true mandate to implement the changes they propose. Additionally, delaying the OP renewal until after a public meeting will allow a new full-time Planning Director to hear from

the public and to be accountable to the public on the implementation of the Official Plan.

We thank interim Planner Jim Dymont for squeezing some time in with us but again, upon reflection of that discussion, we (and probably Council for that matter) need to better understand his observations that 6000 applications have piled up over the years and that one of the reasons the 2.5 ratio needs to be pumped up to 20 is to recognize a practice of de facto purchasing extra units for \$2000 per hectare. How has this purchase been accounted for in the past? Also, we understand a previous attempt by the former Planner to get a 5 to 1 ratio approved by Council was turned down. What changed?

Again, we thank you for your willingness to hear us out and we stress that our goal is to glean from Council their knowledge and understanding of how these changes would impact TBM for the better. We look forward to an open dialogue on these questions from Council in a public meeting.

John Leckie, Director, on behalf of the Blue Mountain Ratepayer Association with input and support from other Associations:

Georgian View Estates Ratepayers

Brian Nelson a member of Napier/Telfer group.

Castle Glenn Ratepayers Association

Historic Snowbridge Residents Association