

Responses from Questions Asked by Havelock-Belmont-Methuen Conference of Lake Associations to Candidates Running in the October 25, 2010 Municipal Election for a Seat on the H-B-M Council

The following are questions the Havelock-Belmont-Methuen Conference of lake associations asked each candidate to respond to in May, 2010.

1. There is a view, widely held in lake country that HBM Council meetings and/or deliberations are not as transparent and open as they should be. What would you do if elected, re-elected, to change this perception?
2. The tax burden in the Municipality is, by a wide margin, borne by waterfront property owners. This is due in part to the market value assessment policy. How would you propose to either reduce this tax burden or provide more value added services to cottage owners?
3. It seems that certain Municipal building by-laws are enforced in an inconsistent manner, or in some glaring cases not enforced at all. What would you do to ensure a more consistent and focused enforcement environment?
4. What is your view of Lake Plans that are approved by a vote of the members of the Cottagers Associations and how do you see them fitting in with the Official Plan and Zoning By-laws?
5. What are your 3 key priorities that the new council should be focused on?
6. In what ways do you see Lake Associations helping Council?

From Sue Cushing - Candidate for Councilor at Large:

1. I agree that Council meetings/deliberations are not transparent for most citizens. I believe that part of the problem stems from lack of notification by Council of new special meetings dealing with citizen concerns. Notice in a newspaper of a meeting a week in advance that is just published and distributed on the Friday before the meeting is a good example of the problem. Many lake country citizens have no access to the paper or need more notice to arrange schedules in order to attend these meetings. If elected I would encourage Council adopt lengthier notification periods for special meetings and also insist proper notification using the Township website. I would encourage citizens check the website frequently to watch for coming discussions. For any issues under discussion directly affecting our lakes I would insist that the Lake Presidents, FOCA and the HBM Conference of lake associations Committee be notified well in advance. I have established a website at www.suecushing.com and I will use it to keep taxpayers apprised of the issues, meetings and events. I want to encourage all taxpayers to bring concerns to me that I will share with Council. If taxpayers cannot attend a meeting that will deal with an important issue to them, they can count on me to raise their concerns.
2. This is a very large issue and the responsibility needs to include discussion with Council and the taxpayers. Market Value Assessment has affected all of us and we need to continue to work with and support WRAFT and CAPTR to change this. I believe that the Township needs to reduce spending by careful planning and organization and should not raise the mill rate outside the Town. All taxpayers should share the burden equally and receive value added services equally. I think that we can work together to add services for the lakes in areas of water quality, land use planning, assistance with applications for grants for waterfront restoral projects, forest fire and brush removal planning, sewage removal costs especially if we see changes from the Ministry of the Environment affecting septic systems, assistance with control of illegal camping and hunting and finally consulting by listening to lakefront representatives about their concerns and what assistance they need.
3. If elected, I will question and follow up on any inconsistencies I discover or am informed of. I will encourage citizens to let Council know about bylaws not being enforced at all so we can confront the perpetrator. I like the proposed letter and brochure as discussed with the HBM Conference of lake associations and would ensure they were designed, printed and used.

4. I think all of us have a responsibility to our earth to be the stewards for our future generations. Working with Cottagers who have the best stewardship intentions as part of their official plans will be a pleasure for me and to make sure their plan objectives to do with the environment and preservation of biodiversity are included in our Official Plan I see as part of my mandate.

5. Reduce administrative spending
Meet with citizens to determine what their concerns are and plan together to solve them.
Bring new business to the Township
Review the Official Plan and bylaws and discuss changes with H-B-M citizens.

6. Communicating together is always the best way to bring meaningful change. Understanding each other, the Municipal Act, specific concerns related to the Township and educating each other to bring consistency and equality are goals I would like to reach for. We will need to rely on each other and work closely together to preserve our beautiful waters and our wonderful landscape. I would like to encourage cottagers to participate in Government and help all of us to view the Township as a whole instead of smaller parts. Lake Associations are so important in shaping direction and actions and I hope I am elected to help make this meaningful for everyone.

From Larry Ellis - Candidate for Township Councilor (Incumbent)

1. I think that we are in an era of changing times. The increased retiring lake property owners who spend more time at their lake residents now look to Council in a more detailed requirement. There is more interest from lake property owners in how their Council functions which is good. In the past Council have communicated by way of media and Web-site, relying on residents to follow it and participate. Lake front property owners, in the past have not shown a great deal of interest unless it was for a personal issue. Going forward, with increased communication and participation from the HBM Conference Representatives and Lake Associations, I believe there can be an improvement in addressing the issues of lake property owners. As a lake front property owner myself, I feel it is important that the HBM Conference represent all lake associations concerns assuring that all lake property owners views are expressed. As your Township Council Representative, I will always be alert to lake property issues.

2. As a lake front property owner I am well aware how much our tax dollars contribute and how the market value assessment works. As retired senior production manager of the auto industry where time is money, I have always promoted cost efficiency strategies looking at new ways of doing business to get the best value for the tax dollars spent.

As for added services, Council has looked at an integrated waste service. It requires input and buy-in from most of the Townships in the County as well as the County itself. There are great possibilities for cost savings and possible opportunities of offering waste pickup in some areas of the lakes. However, some private roads prevent this from happening in all areas. I ask to have this topic reviewed at our last Council meeting when the County CAO and Warden Jones presented their budget draft. Also, Council will continue to keep Municipal roads at a top standard, and do improvements yearly through our roads needs program.

As you are aware your Municipal Council has the heavy burden of downloaded Provincial cost for services such as policing. However, we will continue to do our best operating and maintaining our municipality with minimal increases and lobby the Province to take back these downloaded costs.

3. As Council indicated at our meeting with the HBM Lake Conference we have been going through a period of new employees in the building department. To assure requirements are being met I would commit and support staff to ensure the new employees get the best training possible and attain the updates of new building codes. Municipal by-laws, County Official Plans, HBM Official Plans the Municipal Act, and Site Plans, we have to follow but in doing so I think as an environmentalist it is imperative that we consider the environment when doing so.
4. I think Lake Plans play an important role in maintaining the quality of our lakes water but there must be a collaborative and cooperative approach. Small steps in the approach for change sometimes are the best method. As was stated at our meeting with the HBM Lake Conference Representatives your information and communication of the issues will be important in making any change.
5. a. For the waterfront property owners the new Council should focus on:

Meetings with HBM Conference issues which could reflect a change in the Official Plan. Look at improving services possibly waste/recycle

pickup) Continue to look at eliminating safety issues by improving our roads.

b. For the all residents in the Township, including the lake property owners, I would focus on:

Efficiency strategies for cost savings and the best value for the tax dollars spent which would have a direct influence at budget taxation time. Focus on getting our medical center back functioning as it was with Nurse Practitioner and a full time Doctor in support of our aging community. Support economic development. In the past three years HBM has enjoyed the arrival of Tim Horton's, the Ethanol plant, reopening the old 3M mines quarry, a new bake shop, new restaurants and more to come. Support Municipal Government in the effort to have the Province take back many of the downloaded costs burdening our taxpayers.

c. I hope to see a new long term care facility in Havelock.

6. Going forward the HBM Lake Conference Association who have shown interest in being part of Municipal Councils Official Plan review and improving its relationship, have the opportunity to play an important role in change. Change in planning and change in the issues which effect the environment. It will be a process of education and communication.

Again, I think we are in a changing era of retiring lake front property owners who are becoming more involved and concerned. It is important for Council to hear from the HBM Conference Representatives feeding information from those property owners to Council. We cannot always do all the things requested BUT change will never happen without this communication and working together is the key. Thank you for allowing me to express my views. Have a great summer!

From David Gerow - Candidate for Councilor, Village Ward (Incumbent)

1. HBM council has a legal responsibility, legislated by the government that they must abide by, under the Municipal Act when it comes to behind closed door meetings. When it comes to the security of municipal property or the protection of the identity of identifiable individuals, they are all protected under the Municipal Act. Therefore these matters are not discussed in open council. All other matters are dealt with/discussed in open council meetings, to which the public has always had access, if they are interested in attending. All council meeting dates are on preset dates throughout the year and any changes are published in the paper 2 weeks prior to the date change/location and are on the website. I have spoken

with many ratepayers and have never had the impression that there was a perception of non-transparency. Perhaps those who do have this misperception could attend the council meetings in order to have a more educated opinion of what council does.

2. First of all, I do not agree with the statement that waterfront property owners are bearing the burden of the taxes in HBM. MPAC has their own formula that they go by when establishing property value. A vast majority of the waterfront properties are not cottages anymore but 3 season residences or permanent homes. Are taxes for everyone in HBM too high? Yes. With every service there comes a fee and that must be paid for through taxes. Higher taxes, in part, are also due to the downloading to the municipalities from the provincial government. That is why your council has passed a resolution that was approved by County Council, requesting that the Ontario Government take back this downloading.

3. As we are a legally legislated society, there is much more time and paper work to do in order to process any complaint. Though it would be wonderful to address each complaint as we see it, to do that we would need a staff of no less than 5 to process the by-law issues, thereby once again causing taxes to rise. Council must come to a balance and that is why those people, who feel that Municipal building by-laws are not being enforced in a consistent manner, should come forth to Council to have their concerns addressed.

4. The Township has to look at any lake plan as to how we can address it for the purposes of planning. We also need consistency, as we would find it difficult if we had to impose different regulations on different lakes. Having no less than 10 lakes in the Township, we need that consistency or once again staffing would be an issue. We are in the midst of updating our Official Plan and our zoning by-laws and are moving forward as quickly as possible, but with caution, as any decision we make will impact the entire community for years to come.

5. Three key priorities for the municipality of Havelock-Belmont-Methuen for me are:

1. Economic development
2. Water quality
3. Taxes

6. Council has always welcomed any input from the Lake Association, as with any other association within the township, which will have an impact for the betterment of the whole of our municipality. Council will continue to appreciate any input.

From Ron Gerow - Candidate for Reeve (Incumbent)

1. Council is underway with a process to re-do our web page to better serve the ratepayers, with more notice of meetings and agendas. Perhaps a corner that better explains “what’s happening in HBM” could be included, as well as perhaps notices to the HBM Conference to keep folks better informed.

2. Property taxes are at an all time high. I am currently bringing forward to the Township Council, as well as the County Council, a resolution to ask the Minister of Finance and the Government of Ontario to form a tax reform commission with all stakeholders to review property taxes with the ultimate goal of removing things from the property tax bill that have no relevance to core services and that municipalities have no input on like police contracts, Children’s Aid, Ontario Works. This would be done through AMO.

3. We have hired more staff as well as replaced the chief building official in the past year. We need to continue with more training to ensure up to date codes are being enforced.

4. I believe lake plans can play an important role in the update of the Township Official Plan and zoning bylaw updates. All lakes have various unique things that can and should be considered for inclusion in these processes.

5. There are many key issues for waterfront property owners. I believe water quality and quantity are high on the list.

The environment and development of waterfront is most important to everyone and are high important issues as well.

Property taxes are also major concerns and I will continue to work on this. The issues at the top of the list for the whole Township are property taxes, ability to increase property tax base in the designated areas for development creating new housing mainly in the fringe area around the Village Ward and creating new job opportunities in the area.

I also want to see a new long-term care facility built here in Havelock.

6. I see Lake Associations continuing to work with council on the Official Plan and zoning bylaw updates. Perhaps a change to the makeup of the planning advisory committee and/or the committee of adjustment to include 2 or 3 lake association members can be considered. Quarterly meetings with the HBM Conference may as well serve for better communication.

From Jim Martin - Candidate for Councilor at Large (Incumbent)

1. HBM like all other Municipal Governments work under the Municipal Act when it comes to the daily operation of business matters. We hold our public meetings on the 1st and 3rd Tuesday of every month, this has never changed. Unfortunately, not many people take advantage of these meetings. These are what keep everyone informed on what is happening, or could be happening in their township. Even at the yearly budget meetings, when you would think that people would be most concerned, the most people I have seen at these meetings are usually 2 to 4 people max. If council has a matter that is of more interest or concern for the waterfront community, we try to make sure that this is advertised when the majority of the waterfront residents are in the area, usually between May and October. We are revamping our Website which will help, but I feel you can't make fair judgement calls on the issues facing waterfront fairly from just reading the minutes of the meetings, as they are merely highlights and resolutions of decisions.

If something of interest is on the agenda or posted in the minutes, and needs further clarification, a member of council or staff should be contacted to get the full explanation or details of the deliberations. Between Public meetings, the media, and the revamped Website, the public misconception of transparent and non-open meetings would hopefully be eliminated.

2. Between Market Value assessment and the downloaded responsibilities placed on the municipalities, it has been a great challenge to keep taxes at a reasonable rate. I have worked with groups and organizations over the years and feel I am always available to discuss suggestions of how to keep things in check. We are always open for suggestions and ideas.

The tax burden in the municipality is spread across all property owners in HBM, and although all we can control is our municipal portion, we will continue to pressure our provincial and federal government to do their part when it comes to responsibility; and to remember there is only one tax payer....us!

When it comes to services, garbage pickup is one issue that has been on the table. Other issues are waste site hours, fire service, and roads to name a few. The area rating of the taxes in the village of Havelock continues to keep the cost of sidewalks, streetlights, water and sewer segregated away from the township. One thing that has always been a contention for cottager's, are the school board taxes. This is just one of the costs that we need to continue to address along with MPAC and how they do business.

3. We have been addressing by-law enforcement and the consistency but with such a big area to cover, our staff does the best they can. We have added staff to our building/by-law department, and I have been following where we are at with bylaw enforcement and it appears to be getting better. This is a very time consuming and labour intensive task for our staff, and many hours of the bylaw enforcement department is spent in court.

You can never get all the violators, to do so would mean hiring more staff, but this comes at a cost. I am open to suggestions but do feel we are getting a handle on the bylaw and building enforcement.

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4. .Lake Plans are a great tool for councils to work with. Ideally, I would like to make sure they are consistent and manageable across the township and put through the public process when the official plan is updated.

5. All voters are treated as a whole, we will continue to work with ratepayers and Lake Associations with their ongoing issues and concerns with camping, ice fishing and water levels. The main priority I would like improved for the waterfront/seasonal owners is communication, which should be addressed with the new website the municipality has in the works. A priority for the whole township is another strategic planning process to give the new council direction for the next term and beyond.

6. Lake Associations have always helped council by bringing forward broader issues or concerns specific to their lakes that the individual ratepayer might not. Council could then work with the associations to try and come up with a solution to their problems. The Belmont Methuen Conference seems to be a little more politically driven branch of the lake associations. Their interest might be more into bylaws, zoning, and Lake Plans etc for the particular lake associations they represent.

Until the conference is fully established and recognized, I would expect any resolutions they bring forward, would be directed from the individual lake associations they are representing.

From Andy Sharpe - Candidate for Deputy Reeve (Incumbent)

Question 1. The meetings are regulated by the procedure bylaw for HBM, the municipal act and the planning act. Council takes procedure very serious and follows all rules. All our meetings the Clerk or CAO are present to guide us if a question of procedure arises. Council is only able to go into a closed meeting for property matters, legal matters, and personal matters.

Our regular Council meetings are the 1st and 3rd Tuesdays of each month at 7pm .The agendas are on the township web site as well as minutes from meetings.

Communication is very important, and I support the upgrades to the township website as this is kept up to date with township meetings and minutes. As well the HBM Conference has been re established, and the township has direct contacts for this group for things that may deal with the lakes. As well I am available by phone 778-7584 or by email 2andysharpe@gmail.com for any issues , concerns in the township.

Question 2. Waterfront taxes certainly are a large component to the township budget. Market value assessment is not about to change in the near future according to the Province. HBM has lobbied for changes to MPAC over the last four year term with no success.

One of the new services in the township is the development of the high speed internet towers in the rural lake areas. The service is not perfect for all, but continued enhancement through technology will continue. County of Peterborough is the lead for Broadband in our township, with significant investment in the system.

Ambulance service is provided by Peterborough County. Continued enhancements like a new base in Apsley, and Norwood shorten response time for our rural areas. This saves money on cross boarder billing from other areas servicing HBM.

In the next term I would like to see some type of plan put into place for rural recycling, garbage pickup. The ministry is continuing to put closure dates for rural land fill, and alternatives need to be focused on. Possibly an integrated plan for neighbouring townships could be developed to better service a larger area.

Question 3. Building by-law enforcement is a priority for the township. Council recently passed a by-law to double the permit fees for building without a permit. As well we have 2 staff in the building dept to deal with all building, in the past we had 1 inspector. Council and staff get very frustrated when an issue is taken to provincial court, and it continues to be delayed by the court backlogs. Some of the issues take years, and may appear we are not doing anything. As well when it becomes a legal issue it is in closed session and is not in public minutes. If something is going on in the township, please call for the Building Dept, or Council.

Question 4. Lake plans are being worked on by several lakes in the Township. I support the concept of Lake Plans for the future. I believe they will be important in the education, stewardship, planning of our lakes. Next year 2011 will start an update of the O.P, and the by-laws. I look forward to what will be presented for implementation to the township update within the boundaries of the Planning act.

Question 5. There are so many things for council to focus on in a 4 year term. Early in the new term a strategic plan for the township will need to be finalized. This document will continue to lead the township in the right direction for things like economic development, Beautification, Tourism etc. There will be many short and long term goals to work towards.

A well run council that co-operates and contributes moves us forward. It is a priority for me to see this happen. The 4 year term shows the successes of a "working" council.

Financial accountability. Continued focus on budgets, at Peterborough County, as well as at the Township. Efficiencies, like the Ambulance service need to be looked at for better service, reduced cost.

Question 6. I hope the HBM Conference continues in the future. The group representing the lake associations can play an important role within the township. Impute for the OP will be important, as they will represent all lake associations, just as one example.

I look forward to another 4 year term as your Deputy Reeve for Havelock Belmont Methuen , Please contact me at any time at (705)778-7584 Or 2andysharpe@gmail.com

From Joe McGowan - Candidate for Township Councilor

Question 1. Council have meetings on regular bases.

If I was elected I would try to get more people out to meetings by inviting them to the meetings, by ads in the local paper, so they can learn what needs to be discussed at the meeting.

Question 2 . Tax burden in the municipal is a major problem being very high. I feel that property taxes should be reviewed by Impac. The province needs to take back some cost that was down loaded onto the municipals.

Question 3. HBM hired staff for building bylaw department and more training will improve the enforcement department.
I feel if citizens see a bylaw not be followed to contact HBM.

Question 4. As all of us are people living in HBM. We all have the responsibility to look after our lakes in the area.
For council when maintaining water quality in our lakes.

Question 5. . I believe top 4 issues are: a) property taxes b)environment keeping waterfronts clean, garbage out of the water and upgrading cottage septic tanks. c)water quality d) the big issue is to meet with the cottagers associations to see their concerns and issues are met. They pay a large chunk of taxes and should have input on matters

Question 6 . Lake associations continuing to work with council on issues so therefore matters will run smooth. Work with council for official plan and zoning bylaws, changer or updates. To let other individuals know of any special meetings.