

BLUEWATER SHORELINE RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION



NEWSLETTER — August 2006

*This Newsletter is produced and distributed by the Bluewater Shoreline Residents' Association (BSRA), an umbrella group of residents/beach/cottage/subdivision associations, as a service to the shoreline residents in Hay West and Stanley West Wards. It is funded by the Member Associations, its Affiliate Associations and Individuals. For information on membership, please contact the Membership Secretary, **Jim Chapman**, at (519) 235-1644 or (519) 565-5303, or by e-mail at jchapmanca@yahoo.com. BSRA's Postal address is **BSRA, GMB #411, RR 2, Zurich ON N0M 2T0**. BSRA's web site is www.bsra.ca, and its e-mail address is info@bsra.ca.*

This is to remind you about the BSRA Annual General Meeting at 10:00 a.m. on Saturday, September 9, 2006 at St. Peter's Church Hall on Highway 21 North of St. Joseph. Please mark your calendar now and plan to attend. Although only the official delegates may vote, all residents of the shoreline wards of Stanley West and Hay West in Bluewater are invited to participate.

"It All Ends Up in the Lake" Conference

You are receiving this Newsletter early this time in order to provide you with information about this conference BSRA is helping to sponsor. The flyer accompanying this Newsletter gives details of speakers, sessions, displays, etc. Plan to attend!

Another Manure Spill Ends Up in Lake Huron!

As if to reinforce the nature of the conference noted above, and its concerns about manure spills, etc., causing pollution in Lake Huron, on July 10 pig manure was released into the St. Joseph's Drain, one of the most carefully and thoroughly studied ravine watercourses along the Lake Huron Shore. Although it was said to be an unintentional spill, the operator responsible did not notify the authorities as required by law. It was left to someone else who discovered the spill to do so.

Various reports indicate that on Monday, July 10, liquid manure being transferred from one tank to another spilled onto a field, but no one notified the authorities. A rain 2 days later moved the manure into the St. Joseph's Drain, and from there to the Lake. The spill was discovered at Bluewater Highway on Thursday by an ABCA employee, who raised the alarm and notified authorities. Meanwhile, the manure robbed the stream of its oxygen, and so all of the fish of every size, and all the other oxygen-dependent aquatic life, simply suffocated to death. Eventually, the manure reached the Lake and began to foul the beach.

Meanwhile, a glob of brownish guck and discoloured water began to accumulate in the lake itself. As well as the stench, the manure brought disease-causing pathogens which are capable of living in the sands at the lake's edge for up to a year or more, (depending on which pathogen it is), but which can be freed later by waves to infect swimmers and children playing in the water. Anxious to avoid further pollution of the Lake, some shoreline residents tried to keep the foul water from reaching the Lake, but were advised that such attempts to prevent pollution were illegal, so the beach was posted instead.

Concerns were expressed that manure spills seem to be more frequent than in the past, at least by the frequency of brown globs drifting by in the Lake. As Huron County has about one-fifth of all of the pigs in Ontario, there is understandable concern about pollution in Lake Huron, especially with a reluctance to report spills. As it is, Ontario is said to average about 5000 reported spills each year, (plus unreported spills?), and the majority are from manure. Concerns have also been expressed that the issue of manure spills, although noted frequently, seems not to have prompted effective Government action.

In the August 8 issue of the Ontario Farmer, an Ontario Pork spokesperson noted that out of 30,000 to 40,000 farms, "we average 20 to 21 manure spills reported per year". The article noted that in the first six months of 2006, ten spills had been reported to the Ministry of the Environment, only two of which were pig manure "incidents". It obviously depends on one's perspective as to whether 20 or 21 spills is a lot, or whether even one is too many. The problem appears to be that there is insufficient concern about the human health problems related to manures generally, not just pig manures, and apparently insufficient care taken in handling the product. For example, there seem to be no "fail-safe" or "back-up" mechanisms reported in place during manure transfer. There also appears to be insufficient plans in place to cope with these disasters, and insufficient moneys to handle them. A longer and more detailed report on this incident is planned for the Annual Meeting.

In response to this most recent episode, (echoed by another spill in Huron County the following week), The BSRA Board of Directors formed a Committee to prepare a plan to deal with the issue of this manure spill and manure spills generally, and has already begun to implement some of the plan. It should be noted that the continuing monitoring of ravines and beaches for pollution in Bluewater consistently shows much greater pollution than is considered safe, and Associations are encouraged to post a BSRA sign warning against swimming or playing in ravine water. (See contact information above.)

Proposed Amendments to the BSRA Constitution and By-law No. 1

It has been of some concern to the Board of Directors that BSRA's Annual General Meeting has been held after Labour Day, and attendance has been a problem for some of the Delegates from the Member Associations. After discussion, it was suggested that beginning in 2007 that the Annual General Meeting be held on the Saturday prior to the Labour Day weekend, but some flexibility might still be needed. Such a change necessitates a change to the fiscal year, and the Board recommended that BSRA revert to having the fiscal year the same as the calendar year, as in the past.

One minor recommendation was prompted by a confusion about which Committee Chairpersons were Members of the Board of Directors, and which were not. This is planned to be rectified by changing the title of the Communications Chairperson to Communications Director, and the Membership Chairperson to Membership Director. A few other minor changes are recommended where clarification of the intent of the wording seemed needed, and where changes in wording meant to be made in the last revision, (September 2005), were missed at that time.

In those portions of the BSRA Constitution and By-law No. 1 where changes are recommended, the proposed deletions are ~~stricken out~~ and the proposed additions are double-underlined in the relevant sections which are printed below. For a full comparison, and to see the proposed changes in context, check with www.bsra.ca.

Proposed amendments to the BSRA Constitution:

E. General Meetings

1. An Annual General Meeting of the Association shall be fixed by the Executive Committee of the Association within the period of the last two weeks of August through the first ~~three~~ two weeks of each September, to be held within the Municipality of Bluewater

at a place and time fixed by the ~~Executive Committee~~ Board of Directors, and shall be open to all members of the Constituent Associations with one vote per Association through its Delegate. Members of Affiliate Associations and Affiliate Individual Members may also attend and take part in discussions, but do not have voting privileges. Other General Meetings may be held at the call of the ~~Executive Committee~~ Board of Directors.

2. Delegates to General Meetings shall be elected or appointed by their respective Associations, who shall report the Delegate's name annually in writing to the Secretary of this Association (BSRA).

G. Officers

1. The Officers of the Association shall be a Past President, a President, a First Vice President, a Second Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer, Communications ~~Chairperson~~ Director and Membership ~~Chairperson~~ Director, (who shall constitute the ~~Executive Committee~~ Board of Directors). All Officers of BSRA shall be *ex officio* voting members of the BSRA Board of Directors and of BSRA.

2. ~~The Each~~ Officers shall be elected from among the *bona fide* members of a Constituent Association or be an Affiliate Member, and shall hold office for one year, or until such time as a successor is elected. ...

Proposed Amendments to By-law No. 1

3. **CORPORATE STRUCTURE** - Bluewater Shoreline Residents' Association (BSRA) is an umbrella group of independent residents/beach/cottage/subdivision associations in Hay West and Stanley West Wards of the municipality of Bluewater in Huron County in the Province of Ontario. ...

4. **MEMBERSHIP** - ... Affiliate individuals may attend meetings of the corporation and participate in discussions, but without the right to move motions or vote, but are eligible to be appointed to Committees or be elected to Office.

5. **HONORARY MEMBERS** - The Corporation may elect Honorary Members of the Corporation upon recommendation of the ~~Executive Committee~~ Board of Directors. The duties and privileges of Honorary Members shall be specified by the Board of Directors.

22. **ANNUAL AND OTHER MEETINGS OF MEMBERS** - ... The Board Members may consider and transact any business either special or general without any notice thereof at any meeting of the members. ...

26. **FINANCIAL YEAR** - Unless otherwise ordered by the Board of Directors for urgent reasons, beginning with the calendar year 2007, the fiscal year of the Corporation shall end on ~~August~~ December 31 in each year.

Property Assessment and Taxes

The present property tax system based on Current Value Assessment reflects neither ability to pay or services provided. At the June General Meeting, an analysis was presented demonstrating both the significant increase in the total taxes paid by shoreline residents and the dramatic shift in the overall tax burden from the balance of the municipality to the Wards of Hay West and Stanley West over the past 3 years (see www.bsra.ca for complete details). Residential properties now represent 84.1% of tax revenues, farmlands 8.8% and all other tax classes including industrial and commercial only 7%. Our 2 shoreline wards represent 48.4% of all residential taxes and 40.4% of total tax revenues. In 2006, residential taxes per elector will average \$1,755 for the shoreline wards; however, the average per elector in the 4 wards east of Highway 21 range from a low of \$599 to a high of only \$828. Simply put, shoreline residents are paying a disproportionate share of the overall tax burden as a result of the effect of the current value assessment system on lakefront property values.

On July 20, BSRA, as part of a delegation representing the entire shoreline within the Huron-Bruce riding, discussed this issue with Finance Minister Sorbara and Huron-Bruce MPP Carol Mitchell. It was stressed that the expectation of waterfront property owners is that their government will demonstrate prior to the next election both an understanding of, and a commitment to correct, the obvious inequities caused by the present system. The importance of finding a solution to this issue was also emphasized to the Premier when he visited Bayfield on August 1.

When your final 2006 tax bill arrives in the near future, each shoreline resident should review it and compare both your property assessment and total tax with that of the 2002 tax year. If you are concerned about the effect of the three reassessments done during this period (based on values in 2001, 2003, and 2005), send a letter to Carol Mitchell (copy to Finance Minister), showing the comparison from 2002 to 2006 and the effect it has had on your personal financial situation. Unless they know of your concern, nothing will improve – in fact, if the assessment freeze is removed without change to the system, expect the existing shift to continue and your share of the total tax burden to continue to increase.

2006 Municipal Election

The quality of our elected representatives is vital to Bluewater as a whole and for shoreline residents in particular. The Wards of Hay West and Stanley West represent the voting power to ensure the election of competent candidates who demonstrate an understanding of issues of concern to shoreline residents – but **only if we all vote. Your vote is important** – in a close election, we can make the difference. The week the ballots are mailed, BSRA will be sending each shoreline elector a letter, recommending candidates for one or more of the at-large positions. When you receive your ballot, consider the BSRA recommendations, complete your ballot carefully (following the instructions re envelope insertion to ensure your ballot is not rejected), and **return your ballot immediately**.

Reminiscences

It was 18 years ago this summer that your intrepid Newsletter Editor called the Presidents of several Lakefront Subdivision Associations together to meet with the President of the Federation of Ontario Cottagers' Associations about mutual concerns along the Shoreline. By the end of the meeting, several issues were identified as needing attention, and it was agreed to meet again to make plans to address the issues. At the next meeting of the group, a couple of weeks later, it was agreed to form an "umbrella" group to serve the needs and interests of the shoreline Associations and their members. A structure was agreed upon, the name Stanley Township Cottagers' Association was chosen, and Jim Chapman was elected the President. The next year, when your Editor was President, he decided that a Newsletter was needed to communicate with the Shoreline residents, so this Newsletter was created 16 years ago, with the same Editor up to now.

Over the years, the area of "Shoreline" activity has expanded with amalgamation to include the shoreline portion of the former Hay Township, and STCA has become BSRA. The services provided to the general membership have increased, (the insurance program being only one example), and the number of areas of concern have also increased, as has the level of involvement of BSRA in issues of concern. The reaction to the St. Joseph's Drain manure spill last month has galvanized further BSRA activity in response to the increasing number of lake-polluting episodes and the inaction of government agencies, etc., although the Municipality of Bluewater has been supportive, as you will hear at the Annual Meeting.

Nonetheless, in spite of all of the wonderfully interesting ongoing and new activities, I have decided to retire from the Board of Directors and from the position of Communications Chairperson, including that of Newsletter Editor. I feel that it is in the best interests of any organization, including BSRA, to keep bringing new people into it to ensure its healthy survival. I will continue to be very interested in BSRA and its activities, and will do what I can to be of service. At this time, I want to give a very hearty "thanks for a job well done" to all those who distribute the Newsletters. Without them BSRA would have difficulty communicating with its membership, so they are an essential link.

My long-time colleague in BSRA, Jim Chapman, has also indicated his impending retirement, for much the same reasons. We wish our successors, the Members of BSRA, and the Board of Directors the very best for the future!