

# BLUEWATER SHORELINE RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION



## NEWSLETTER — May, 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](mailto: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](http://www.bsra.ca), and its e-mail address is [info\(at\)bsra.ca](mailto:info(at)bsra.ca).*

**This is to remind you about the BSRA General Meeting at 10:00 a.m. on Saturday, June 17, 2006 at St. Peter's Church Hall on Highway 21 North of St. Joseph. Please mark your calendar now so that you can 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 attend and participate.**

### **Another Summer Season is Upon Us**

Much has happened since the last Newsletter, and we will try to include all of the important information for you in the Newsletters, although we may not be able to include all of the items of interest in this issue. Members of the BSRA Executive Committee have been diligently attending Council Meetings and Public Meetings on your behalf, and some detailed information is included below, and will be discussed at the June General Meeting noted above.

### **BSRA Executive Committee Resignation**

It was with some disappointment that the Board of Directors, (formerly the Executive Committee), learned that its Second Vice-President, Gary Rose, has found it necessary to resign because of the very heavy workload of his new job. He advised the Board that he is still very interested in BSRA and its objectives, and will help out where he can. Meanwhile, the Board following our Constitution and By-laws, is preparing for a replacement to commence duties quickly. With the resignation of a senior officer, it remains important to cover the various responsibilities as promptly as possible. An announcement will be made at the June meeting.

### **Water Rates Increase**

After a long study and much discussion, Bluewater Council has established new water rates across Bluewater. For those who have water supplied by the Municipality, but whose supply is not metered, the annual rate in Hay West and Stanley West for 2006 will be **\$289.00**, and the rate for 2007 will be **\$318.00**. For those whose supply is metered, the rate for 2006 will be **\$209.00 plus \$0.50 per cubic metre**, and the rate for 2007 will be **\$238.00 plus \$0.50 per cubic metre**. Water rates were also established for other areas being served by Bluewater based on costs, and sewer rates were also established for those served by a municipal sewer system.

### **On the Environmental Front**

BSRA is working with Bluewater, the Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority and the Huron County Health Unit agencies to plan a water quality plan for 2006, but discussions have not yet finalized a plan at the time of writing, and so will be reported when ready. The Environment Committee will be meeting again soon for detailed planning and action.

### **Assessment Issues**

Most BSRA members feel that they have a serious problem with sharply increased assessments, as assessments attempt to reflect market values by using formulae and sales prices. While the local office of the Municipal Property Assessment Corporation in Goderich has been found by most landowners to be helpful where they can, across the Province there has been considerable concern and anger raised by the assessment increases and the consequent increased taxes.

Efforts to deal with the problem have been made in different ways. For example, the Waterfront Residents After Fair Taxation (WRAFT) organization, to which BSRA and many of its members belong, has amalgamated with other organizations to provide a greater united front in common efforts, as well as a stronger base for seeking redress. The prevailing wisdom is that a cap should be placed on annual increases in assessment, in order to even out the increase over time. Efforts have reached the provincial level. You can find more information at [www.wraft.com](http://www.wraft.com).

On another front, the Ontario Ombudsman acted on several complaints, and investigated how the Municipal Property Assessment Corporation [MPAC] deals with property owners. Here is a summary of the news release on his report.

"Following a five-month investigation, [the Ombudsman] presented 22 recommendations... The Ministry of Finance and the and MPAC pledged to implement 18 of the recommendations immediately, and to consider implementation of the remaining four after study. MPAC has agreed to report back to the Ombudsman within six months time on its progress in implementing the Report's recommendations. The Ombudsman recommended increasing taxpayer access to MPAC's information, improving the accuracy and consistency of property assessments, and improving the fairness and integrity of the appeal process by requiring MPAC to recognize and carry forward assessment reductions after appeal unless there are legitimate reasons why the assessment is no longer valid. Finally the Ombudsman recommended removing the onus from the taxpayer and shifting the burden to MPAC to justify the accuracy of its assessments if the property owner challenges the assessment before the Assessment Review Board." Further information is available at [www.ombudsman.on.ca](http://www.ombudsman.on.ca).

### **Taxes, Taxes, Taxes**

This is just to remind you that there is now a new option for Bluewater residents re tax payments. As you were notified previously, you may now make application to have automatic withdrawal of tax payments from a designated bank account in seven payments instead of four, making each payment lower, although the total at the end of the year will be the same. Check with the Municipal Office for details and an application form. An application form can also be downloaded from the Bluewater website, [www.town.bluewater.on.ca](http://www.town.bluewater.on.ca), where you will also find other information of interest.

## Telephone Directory Addresses

Our two phone companies in Bluewater will soon be letting you know that time is running out to make changes to your directory listing in the new phone book. Have you noticed that some listings for your neighbours list the Rural Route Number, some the subdivision and others list the new municipal (911) address? It is your choice what appears. If you have the Rural Route number and would like the 911 address or your subdivision name instead, contact your phone company: Hay Communications at (519) 236-4333 or Tuckersmith at (519) 263-2211. Both Hay and Tuckersmith will process this change without charge. However, there is a charge for other changes, such as for changing your name. There is only a limited time between the time this Newsletter is delivered and the close of directory changes in July, so we encourage anyone contemplating a change to contact their telephone office as soon as possible. If there is a large volume of requests, your request may not get processed until next year.

## 2006 Municipal Election – Questions & Answers.

### Q. *Why is this election important for shoreline residents?*

A. There are a number of issues of major interest to shoreline residents, including the quality of water entering Lake Huron, inequity of municipal services provided to shoreline wards, and long-range planning for our community, to name a few.

Another major concern is the dramatic increase in property taxes over the last several years. Property reassessment has shifted the municipal tax burden to lakefront properties from the balance of the municipality. Bluewater pays a larger share of Huron County taxes than any other municipality. Hay West and Stanley West wards contribute the largest portion of Bluewater property taxes. This means that the taxes paid by our shoreline residents represent the largest portion of county, municipal and education taxes of any group or area within Huron County.

### Q. *What does Bluewater Council do?*

A. The responsibilities of our Bluewater Council include developing the vision and long-range plan for our community; establishing municipal policies and practices through its by-laws; determining the level and equity of services provided across the community; planning and approving long-term capital projects; and approving the expenditures which ratepayers finance through their property taxes. In addition, Council determines the response to concerns of shoreline residents that are brought to its attention through BSRA.

Three members of Bluewater Council (Mayor, Deputy-Mayor, Councillor-at-large) also serve on the Huron County Council. County taxes represent the largest portion of shoreline residents' property taxes.

### Q. *What are the Council positions for which shoreline electors can vote?*

A. Shoreline electors can vote for 5 of the 10 Council seats: Ward Councillors (Hay West or Stanley West), Councillor-at-large, Deputy-Mayor, and Mayor. The other five Councillors (Bayfield, Hay East, Hensall, Stanley East, Zurich) are determined by the electors resident in those wards.

### Q. *Can shoreline residents affect the outcome of this municipal election?*

A. Shoreline residents are the largest single group of electors in Bluewater. The weight of this vote could determine the election for the positions of Mayor, Deputy-Mayor, and Councillor-at-large. In addition, shoreline residents will elect the 2 Councillors representing their own wards (Hay West or Stanley West).

### Q. *What are the qualities expected in our elected representatives?*

A. The qualities necessary to effectively fulfill the responsibilities of elected municipal office would include:

1. a vision of what Bluewater could become, and a plan to achieve it;
2. an awareness and understanding of a broad range of issues vital to the health and prosperity of our community as a whole;
3. the ability to look beyond the parochial interests of one ward; sense of fairness and equity, and a lack of bias;
4. analytical skills, sound judgement, and fiscal responsibility;
5. an understanding of the respective roles of elected and administrative officials.

### Q. *What role will BSRA play in this election?*

A. For **incumbents seeking re-election**, the BSRA *Political Action Committee* will assess the degree to which each has demonstrated the above qualities, and, in particular, their track records with respect to knowledge and support of shoreline residents' issues as reflected in presentations, questions, public comments, debate and voting record. (*Note: BSRA representatives attend virtually all Council meetings.*)

A decision will be made as to whether or not individual incumbents should be supported in their bids for re-election. Where incumbents cannot be endorsed, other residents demonstrating the desired qualities will be encouraged to contest those positions on Bluewater Council. After the close of nominations, shoreline electors will be mailed a list of those individuals whose candidacy is endorsed.

Direct assistance will be provided in the election campaigns of **recommended** candidates.

### Q. *What should I do as an individual shoreline elector?*

A. Study the BSRA recommendations re endorsed candidates; encourage all your neighbours to be sure to vote; and complete and return your own ballot as soon as it is received in the mail. This is being urged in the knowledge that in one Ward in a recent by-election, a quarter of the mail-in ballots returned were invalid because the personal information was returned in the same envelope as the ballot, thus making it a non-secret ballot and thereby rendering it invalid. **Remember, every vote counts!**

## Subdivision Association Meetings.

As indicated above, the approaching municipal election is of vital importance to our community as a whole, and for the interests of the shoreline residents in particular. It is important that all shoreline residents understand the importance of voting this Fall to ensure the highest quality elected representatives for the next three years.

Our "Political Action" Committee is currently developing detailed plans for Association involvement in the election. We anticipate having one person within each subdivision work with us to coordinate election activities in your community. We wish to share these plans with all our shoreline residents through a brief presentation at a meeting of your subdivision association before September.

Remember, any resident of Hay West or Stanley West Wards whose property is not within a subdivision that is a BSRA Member Association is welcome and encouraged to become an Associate Member of BSRA. The annual fee is only \$5.