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Sent: April 24, 2008 9:36 PM
To: mmra@sympatico.ca
Subject: [Springext] Communiqué - the MMRA's e-letter. Vol 2.6 (April 2008)
 Hello to all, particularly our new subscribers,

Time flies! The Spring Peepers are getting louder in harmony with the cresting waters of the Mississippi River. So what's been happening in our Town?

Celebrating Earth Day, MM style: On Earth Day, April 22 2008, the Mississippi Mills Council distinguished itself by again rejecting the recommendations of its own Environmental Advisory Committee (EAC) and the will of the majority of residents: Council failed to approve the bylaw for the regulation of the cosmetic use of pesticides. Not surprisingly our Mayor Lunney, as well as councillors Ferguson, Lowry, Hurrle and Dalgity voted the Committee's recommendation "off the island," (since Councillor Minnelli was not present, a tie vote is a lost vote). The \$10,000 committed to Pesticides' Education and the ardent effort by two successive EACs cannot purge this dishonourable dismissal of the community's wishes by most of Council. Oh sure, you'll hear our visionaries say that they have been overcome by events such as the Province of Ontario's "pending legislation," making a municipal bylaw unnecessary. This is an example of a directionless Council apparently subdued by its own dullness and the blather of property rights lobbyists out of touch with our environment... and Earth Day!

Tax bills are going up: Also on April 22. Finance Committee Chair, Councillor Dalgity announced a 9.36% increase in municipal taxes. I'm not sure if Mr. Dalgity was wearing new shoes, but his budget speech concluded that "with a municipal increase of 9.36%, a county increase of 5.97%, a 0% increase to the Education tax and a 2.7% increase to the Waste Management charge the average ratepayer will see an overall tax increase for 2008 of 5.72% or \$153.26 for the year." Read it all at <http://www.mississippimills.ca/Documents/244/Budget%20Speech%202008.pdf?CFID=855028&CFTOKEN=59306977>.

Lessons learned on planning? Heck no! The Spring St. developer wanted to extend the lot coverage (building footprint) from 30% to 45% of the lot size - a 50% increase. He referenced an illegitimate memo from a previous planner who "granted" this to another development without Council approval. Despite some public alarm as to due process, Council seemed totally unconcerned by this surprising request at the March public meeting. More worrying, the Mayor, eager to let the developer just develop indicated that more discussion was unnecessary, saying "this has been going on long enough and it's time to put this to a vote." Later, eating humble pie (sorta), Mayor Lunney stated, on the MMRA's online discussion group, that "the process that was followed, caused much concern to all" Ha! An understatement! Then, to make matters worse, Council proposes consent to pass the contentious lot coverage motion (i.e. without debate) at the last Council meeting. As one Spring St. resident wrote in an open letter to Council, "the motion reinforces the legitimacy of a six year old arbitrary and possibly illegal decision made by a staff member." He concludes "if you are going to amend the bylaw or grant a blanket variance please have the integrity to state explicitly what it is you are permitting and not hide behind an obscure document that has no validity."

So here's the thing... the MMRA have been saying for years now that the Town's planning processes are not rigorous enough, often arise through exceptions made for developers, are subject to inadequate oversight and, where they exist, are not always respected by Council. Check out White Tail Ridge, the Mall, Spring Street, Appletex Mill, the agricultural buffer and Sadler Estates as candidates. When people come out to Council meetings they are sometimes derided as troublemakers. When people don't come out to meetings they are derided as disinterested. What do you think?

Who decided on the name "Riverside Estates"? The developer! Yes, the developer has started to use the tag "Riverside Estates" on the Spring Street subdivision. I suppose consulting the community on naming the 'burb was not necessary. Still, it's kind of ironic, really, or perhaps mischievous even, since the neighbourhood is trying to be a watchdog for the riverside as public space, not private estates!

The MMRA's Annual General Meeting: Speaking about watchdogs, it's time for MMRA members and all interested residents to nominate candidates and choose a new Board of Directors for the Association. Up to 8 positions are available to be filled on the Board. Come out and express an opinion, nominate a neighbour (or yourself), or just come and relax with a coffee and listen to our two neighbourhood speakers on the topic of "Community Update: What works and what doesn't." This really is a great Town, with distinguished artists, educators, musicians, writers, entrepreneurs, heritage developers, environmentalists and dedicated volunteers at every corner. As luck would have it, many of these superb individuals have directly and indirectly influenced the

growth and direction of the MMRA over the last five years. From Clayton to Appleton, from Pakenham to Blakeney, in rural Ramsay and urban Almonte, it is this quality of community that sustains the Association as a valuable and intrinsic part of the civic landscape in Mississippi Mills. Please put the AGM date in your calendar: Wednesday May 28, 7:00 pm at The Groundz, 78 Mill St. in downtown Almonte.

The Town's theme supplied by the 5-Man Electrical Band? A reader has come to the defence of George Turcotte, a talented musician and a new business owner in Mississippi Mills. The Mississippi Mills Music Works opened late last fall across from the Home Hardware. The building is not entirely finished or landscaped so the business owner placed a temporary sign out front (along Ottawa Street) to increase exposure until such time as a permanent sign post is erected. The Town has told him that he must remove the sign immediately or face a fine of \$80 per day until the sign is removed. How crazy is that?!! "Sign, sign, everywhere a sign?" Nope! Just one sign to locate the MM Music Works but no sign of discretion in bylaw enforcement! So tuck yer hair up under yer hat and come in and find out why at the "Save the Sign" party on May 3rd at the store.
<http://www.mississippimillsmusicworks.com/>

Some more thoughts on Public Transportation: With regards to my thoughts on Public (Commuter) Transportation in the last Communiqué (generally supportive of a Lanark County commuter service), a reader noted that my "comment on public transit appears to entirely miss the point: you can't seriously get existing commuters off the road without putting in place an effective inter urban public transit system which would then have the effect of spurring population growth in MM." True, to a point. I certainly wouldn't advocate (more) urban sprawl. But failure to broker a middle-ground may well see a depletion of MM's population as working families move back to the city in droves. Today's high price for gas is 127.9. So those that must drive for work need alternatives to single-occupancy commuting – if not for the environmental sense then for the dollars and cents.

Shaping Canada's Communities: Dr. Ann Dale and her university research team are conducting a Canadian study to understand how communities shape the way in which we live. Please consider adding your name to the growing list of Canadians who have already participated in shaping the thinking of our decision makers, now and in the future, by visiting www.crcresearch.org/survey.htm.

Shaping community is not just the subject of a research study. It's about our life and our choices in Mississippi Mills: The Chamber of Commerce's MAAP group works very hard for your support of our downtown businesses in Pakenham and Almonte. The Almonte and District General Hospital works very hard for your financial support to build excellence in health care in our Town. The area's farmers are working very hard to get quality food to us for our 100 km diet. These are just some examples of how you strive to shape our community day in and day out. Here's to you!

Sincerely,

Arnie Francis
 President
 Mississippi Mills Residents' Association (MMRA)
"Striving to promote a shared vision for Mississippi Mills"
www.mmra.ca

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