

## Communiqué - The MMRA's e-letter - Vol 4.4 (February 2010)

Greetings residents of Mississippi Mills,

As with all things of the volunteer persuasion, it is hard to find the time, energy and content to produce a regular newsletter. But convergence has occurred! So here's our take on the world of Mississippi Mills, as of February 2010!

We'd like to beg your indulgence on three items in this edition of the Communiqué:

1. Sleepy-ville: Why Almonters won't be more engaged with their municipal issues?
2. Septage-ville: How is this fair taxation?
3. Stick-it-to-'em-ville: When will we elect the Council we need?

### 1. Sleepyville

There is a growing notion circulating in Mississippi Mills that – generally speaking - the good folk of the extended Almonte area (including people in Greystone Estates who are technically Ramsay ward residents) have little concern or care about current municipal issues. That councillors could vote for a cow to be sacrificed on the steps of the Almonte Old Town Hall and not a single soul in Almonte ward would notice the carcass rotting. "Another festival, eh?"

After almost 8 years defending the possibility of a shared vision for community, attending countless meetings and reading thousands of pages of minutes, the Board of the MMRA would like to believe t'aint so! So we ask (rhetorically perhaps), what MATTERS to you, Almonte?

- de-amalgamation (Almonte separating from Mississippi Mills) ?
- sharing Almonte Hydro revenues with Ramsay and Pakenham ward ?
- keeping increases in municipal taxes /user fees under 10% pa? How about 25%? Maybe 30% ?
- balancing commercial/retail development like Ottawa Street with more modest downtown renewal initiatives?
- paying for sewage treatment capacity for future residential developments ?
- encouraging more residential subdivisions, or better infill development?
- supporting better roads and more through traffic or walkable neighbourhoods and bike paths?
- a two-term limit for councillors or "I-know-that-name" voting bingo ?
- other ?

Our Yahoo Discussion Board: <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/MissMillsResidents/> and our Facebook Group:<http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=86444027774&ref=mf#/group.php?gid=86444027774&ref=mf> are available for a stimulating online discussion. Please don't leave us hanging !

### 2. Septage-ville

Attend the Town's public meeting, ask questions, and give your opinion. Thursday February 18, 2010 at 7:00 PM, Almonte Old Town Hall. See the flyer on our website at [www.mmra.ca/septage18Feb10.pdf](http://www.mmra.ca/septage18Feb10.pdf) .

**Project Details:** The Town wants to add a septage treatment facility to the new Almonte waste water treatment plant. Septage (not to be confused with sewage) is the waste from septic tanks that all rural residents have to privately pay for to be dug, emptied and maintained. The estimated cost of this addition is \$1,932,000. Rural taxpayers are expected to pay one-third of that (\$644,000) plus annual operating costs and yet the septage treatment portion is not needed and does not serve rural residents in any way. Currently rural residents pay septage haulers to empty their tanks and it is then up to the hauler to dispose of the septage in a legally compliant manner. Why then is the town trying to charge us to treat the septage when clearly this will only benefit the haulers?

**Phantom Profit Forecasting:** You may hear about the profit to be had by inviting haulers to bring their loads of septage to the Almonte treatment facility and to subsequently charge a tipping fee, but this only holds water if the haulers get a good deal on the tipping rates. If the fee is too high, they won't use it. If the fee is too low, we taxpayers will have to make up the difference. In addition some haulers choose not to take their loads to treatment plants at all as they are not regulated to do so. This is phantom profit forecasting that does not justify charging residents for any portion of the capital costs of the septage treatment portion.

**Non-regulated enthusiasm to spend our money:** The Ontario government has no regulation that requires the Town to treat septic tank content and the Environment Minister has told the mayor that the Province does not plan such a regulation in the near future. So why do it?

**Greenwashing:** The Town says septage treatment is good for the environment. How good? Maybe not much. Today haulers spread untreated septage on farm fields. Treated septage may still end up being spread on fields or be stored in Almonte's sewage lagoons! Sewage and septage contain heavy metals. Treating them does not remove those toxic compounds. So where's the benefit?

Whether you are an urban dweller living in Almonte ward, or a rural resident of Ramsay or Pakenham wards, when the town decides to embark on unneeded projects and to spend our hard earned money to do it; it affects us all. Inform yourself. Come to the Public Meeting!

### **3. Stick-it-to-'em Ville**

Every FOUR years municipal elections are held in Ontario. The next election is on October 25th, this year. Here are some suggested "principles" and action plans developed by some forward thinking Mississippi Millions. Sure, it's easy to pick these statements apart, but candidates and voters alike need a vision for effective governance. "One must either take an interest in the human situation or else parade before the void." Jean Rostand (French Historian and Biologist, 1894-1977).

#### **a) Transparency is an obligation due the taxpayers of Mississippi Mills:**

- Support a more comprehensive Conflict of Interest policy beyond the current Disclosure of Pecuniary Interest
- Support the use of technical measures and solutions to facilitate the maintenance of a detailed voting record for councillors
- Support the podcast of Council meetings.

#### **b) Entrepreneurship drives the economic well-being of our community:**

- Support downtown-centric re-development strategies
- Provide incentives for downtown building upgrades, infrastructure and aesthetic improvements

- Focus on re-building a live-work-play core in our downtowns

**c) Property rights of individual property owners must be respected:**

- Encourage consultation with property owners prior to developing policies and by-laws
- Await legislative rationale prior to considering mandatory rural septage treatment taxes, levies or capital cost apportionment.

**d) Two consecutive term limit for elected representatives:**

- Institute measures for a two-term limit

**e) Wider consultation and collaboration with the community:**

- Support more staged consultation processes for Official Plan Review, development, environment, etc
- Formalize processes to collaborate on input and action plans with local associations, community agencies and individual residents.
- Facilitate and recognize the contribution of volunteers at every opportunity

**f) Financially responsible decision making is key driver for prosperity:**

- Seek public approval when debt financing measures are proposed
- Create and promote a true development vision for the Town that addresses sustainable development in rural and urban areas
- Encourage the development of safe, user-centric pedestrian and bicycle pathways throughout the Town.
- Encourage community support organizations to propose collective and collaborative strategies to address the needs of vulnerable and disadvantaged residents.

We welcome your feedback. Visit our website, post a comment on our discussion board, give your opinion on our Facebook page or send an email to [info@mmra.ca](mailto:info@mmra.ca).

The Board of the MMRA  
Mississippi Mills Residents' Association (MMRA)  
"Striving to promote a shared vision for Mississippi Mills"

Website: [www.mmra.ca](http://www.mmra.ca)

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