

Communiqué - The MMRA's e-letter - Vol 4.5 (April 2010)

Hello to all our new and regular readers!

Our last issue was in February (Vol 4.4), so now that Spring has sprung, so must we...

Your opinion matters – municipal election issues:

The MMRA wants to know what you think the election issues are. So the MMRA has sponsored an online survey for Mississippi Mills residents. The short 10-question survey takes just 5-10 minutes to complete. You can click here to take the survey, <http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/2GNWV8> or go to our website www.mmra.ca and click on the survey link. The results will be published at the close of the survey period, ending May 31, 2010.

Feedback from our last Communiqué

Our "Sleepyville" item (http://www.mmra.ca/archives/vol4.4_2009-10.pdf) about civic participation by Almonte residents received two comments: One reader noted "that Almonters are no different from other huge parts of Canada, in that we've dropped the ball on this democracy." Maybe just the "participative" part?

And another Almonte reader had had it to the gills: "I have heard enough about your critical sit back and complain attitude. Get involved. Get on Council. Do something but don't bore me with your petty complaints unless you are willing to do something about it." Sss-s-s-sizzle!! Other than the irony of the comment, (in that the Sleepyville item was suggesting exactly this..."get involved"), the MMRA itself is very active in our community! We go to Council meetings, we pore through reams of minutes, we maintain an updated website, an online discussion group and a Facebook Group, we publish this newsletter, we bring folks to public meetings when the Town fails to and we generally bring issues to taxpayers' notice when we discover them (septage, hydro revenues, etc). We also sponsor lectures, support environmental initiatives and promote our town at every occasion. And this is by way of volunteer effort, too! But since that particular reader asked to be taken off the subscription list, he will continue to be ill-informed!

To be fair though, there are many folk (e.g. hundreds on this e-letter's distribution list) who are observers, quietly watching and assessing from the sidelines. That's OK too - until there's a need for action. Many Councillors will tell you that the gallery was empty when crucial votes came in. Apathy? Or trust in elected officials? Many of the decisions taken in the late 1990's on development in Almonte and elsewhere are evident now: the ugliness of Ottawa Street, the emptiness of Mill St, Appleton's environment worries, development plans for Ramsay's White Tail Ridge, and so on. The "should've...would've...could've" paradigm, perhaps?

One rural resident gave a thoughtful response to the "Septage-Ville" item, saying "...we all benefit from being a part of Almonte and share in its various amenities and should be expected to make a contribution. However, this should not mean that the rural resident is simply seen at different times as both an asset and a liability." Can't say it better than that!

On "Stick-it-to-'em Ville" another reader had an interesting perspective..." I doubt that council is financially irresponsible. Their main problem is incompetence They are really trying their best." Ouch!!

Internet Voting is here!

It seems that in the upcoming municipal elections it will be as easy as clicking your computer mouse, or picking up the telephone, to cast your vote. The mail-in ballot is likely a thing of the past, as are "polling

stations” – now explain THAT ONE to your grandkids! Trivia: 56% of MM eligible voters cast a “mail-in” ballot in 2006.

A thumbnail of the 2010 Budget:

\$15.3 million (operating and capital) expenditures.

5.5% increase in tax levy, or increase of approx \$300,000 in tax revenues.

There is no budget shortfall because municipal budgets MUST be balanced by provincial statute.

Almonte service allocations: White Tail Ridge 48 sewer units (for 2010-2011) and 75 building permits, and Riverfront Estates gets 20 more (total 50 for 2010).

Sharing Hydro Revenues:

Here is an “intersecting” rural AND urban issue: Rural residents feel that if an unwanted rural service (septage treatment) has to be paid for, then an unused urban benefit (Almonte hydro revenues) should be shared by all residents. This came up in a letter to the newspapers in March (see <http://www.yourottawaregion.com/opinion/letters/article/651902--use-hydro-revenue-to-offset-costs>) which concludes that despite the protests of some Almonte councillors and the Mayor, the amalgamation of Mississippi Mills - codified in law under the Municipal Act by an Order-in-Council in June of 1997 - nowhere states that hydro revenues were to be assigned solely to Almonte Ward. All assets of the then public utility commission (now Mississippi River Power Corporation) were transferred to the new town at amalgamation. And the subsequent restructuring proposal, dated February 1997, on which the Order is based, does not mention hydro revenues. Councillor Edwards’ motion to discuss (having a meeting about?) the sharing of hydro revenues is slated for May 27, 2010. Please attend to see if procedural manoeuvres facilitate or suppress this important discussion.

Who will the MMRA endorse?

The MMRA has never formally endorsed specific candidates in previous municipal elections and is unlikely to do so for the 2010 elections. Unlike the Lanark Landowners Association, which endorsed specific candidates in the 2006 election (to the chagrin of some), the MMRA think the issues should speak for themselves. We have our considered opinions and we’re not afraid to share them! Check out our “thumbs up-thumbs down” bead on our website... <http://www.mmra.ca/communications.htm>. We caution, though, that this is only a guide and relates to existing Councillors. Voters should take time to meet and greet their candidates when candidates declare themselves and get to know their individual positions on key issues.

What can you do to get informed over the summer?

- Organize a Kitchen Table event for your ward candidates to attend. Send out personal invitations to your friends and neighbours to have 15 – 20 people available to meet the candidates. Let us know how we can help. Mail info@mmra.ca
- Attend a “Town Hall meeting” (to be organized) where candidates will field questions on specific ward- and town-related issues.
- Attend an All Candidates Meeting. These are fun and good for political sport, but hard to get a serious focus on individual candidates.
- Visit our website panel, titled “Election News” (<http://www.mmra.ca/>) to keep up to date on election information.

Recycling in Mississippi Mills

Many people have asked about where they can find information about recycling options in Mississippi Mills. Unfortunately – until now – this type of information has been fairly fragmented and hard to find.

Long-time environmentalist, and MMRA Board member, George Yaremchuk has put in yeoman effort to compile a repository of current recycling tips, contacts and resources. We have constructed a website page around this information. Simply go to <http://www.mmra.ca/recyclinginmm.htm> to see this valuable compendium of recycling information. But the job is not finished yet. We want to make this a collaborative page, where you can add your own tips and discoveries. We have not yet found how best to do that, but we're working on it. So please bear with us. Suggestions are welcome.

One final, reminder... ***please take the Election Issues survey***, <http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/2GNWFV8>. The results will be published, so we are hoping residents will take this opportunity to register an opinion.

We welcome your comments about municipal governance in our fine Town. Join in at our Yahoo discussion group, post a comment on our Facebook group (see below for links) or send an email to 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

Yahoo Discussion Board: <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/MissMillsResidents/>

Facebook Group:

<http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=86444027774&ref=mf#/group.php?gid=86444027774&ref=mf>

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