

COMMUNIQUÉ - THE MMRA'S E-LETTER - VOL 5.2 (NOVEMBER 2010)

Hello to all our readers,

The chill of late fall is here, and as seasons change so does our municipal environment: 2010 has seen a change in the voting system, a change in the composition of Council, and, for our part too, a change in the future of this e-letter.

Internet voting – poor technology or poor planning?

It's true. The internet voting system overloaded during the final hours of the election, causing grief for many last-minute voters. Is the technology at fault? Well, maybe. But more likely it's how well (or poorly) the service provider planned for the peak demand. Unfortunately the broadcast media, including the CBC, pretty much ignored any election news coverage that wasn't Ottawa-specific, EXCEPT for the bad news about 11th hour voter dissatisfaction in Mississippi Mills. Too bad really, because there were a lot of diligent staff hours put into the planning, only to be let down by the service provider. With lessons learned, perhaps the next time an electronic election comes around specific service levels can be included in the contract. The bad news is that this will probably cost us taxpayers a whole lot more.

A Mayor's race

So here we are, the voters of Mississippi Mills having spoken. The Mayor's race came down to a two-way sprint, with John Levi taking it by just 199 votes (2128) over Brenda Hurrle (1929). Clearly Mr. Levi's influence in Almonte and Ramsay was more than enough to compensate for his second place showing in his native Pakenham. Hurrle won Pakenham handily, but was about 149 votes off the mark in Ramsay Ward. Jane Torrance's bid for the top job was surprisingly unsuccessful, as she lost in all Wards, polling just 745/2188 in her own Ward of Almonte. Many people I have spoken to felt that this signifies that the era of Almonte-centric mayoral candidates is now gone for good in Mississippi Mills.

Overall, then, Mayor-elect Levi is to be congratulated on his win. There is little doubt that he will bring a refreshing change to the tempo and texture of Council. And there are some "watch" items:

- *staff will be concerned about their futures*, as Mr. Levi promotes his review of administrative operations.
- *rural wards will be watching for their role and influence* in Council decisions depending on the results of Mr. Levi's Council Structure Review.
- *property taxpayers will pay attention to subsidizing* developers through eliminated development charges according to Mr. Levi's incentives for new construction, purportedly to provide for residential units.

You can read more of the published material of elected Council members at the MMRA website's Communications page: <http://www.mmra.ca/communications.htm>.

Re-stating our vision for Effective Governance

In the February 2010 edition of the Communiqué we listed 6 principles we would like to see our Council adopt. Here they are in summary:

- a) Transparency is an obligation due the taxpayers of Mississippi Mills
- b) Entrepreneurship drives the economic well-being of our community
- c) Property rights of individual property owners must be respected
- d) Two consecutive term limit for elected representatives
- e) Wider consultation and collaboration with the community
- f) Financially responsible decision making is a key driver for prosperity

To see the underlying detail please read the February Communiqué at http://www.mmra.ca/archives/vol4.4_2009-10.pdf

Councillors 60:40

The upcoming Council term will be made up of 10 ward representatives, 40% of which are “new” to Council. Both Pakenham (1-1) and Ramsay (2-2) are evenly split for old-new Councillors, whereas Almonte Ward retains a 3-1 ratio. Only one out of four women candidates was successful, resulting in a drop in representation from 4/11 (36%) to 1/11 (9%).

The six tried and true “old guard” who were elected through the grace of their voting public include Pakenham Councillor Ferguson, Almonte Councillors Dalgity, Minnille and Gillis, and Ramsay Councillors Edwards and Wilkinson. The four “new kids on the block”, include Councillors-elect Duncan Abbott (Pakenham), Bernard Cameron (Almonte), Paul Watters (Ramsay) and Shaun McLaughlin (Ramsay). Election stats can be found on the Town site at: <http://www.mississippimills.ca/news.cfm?newsid=1028>.

On another note: Please attend the inauguration of the new Council on December 6, 7:00 pm in the Council Chambers. Some new council members have committed to keeping residents informed. Councillor-elect Shaun McLaughlin, for example, has a website /blog (<http://www.shaunoncouncil.ca/>) where you can sign-up for email updates or simply follow his blog postings. Perhaps Twitter will also be in his future. Connect to these sources, as well as to the MMRA’s Yahoo Discussion Group, to stay informed on Council goings-on.

Saying goodbye to Mr. Jim Lowry

Jim Lowry finally lost an election. Jim is a fine human being and well loved. He has served his community of Ramsay in an elected capacity for many years. In fact, in 2008 the Ontario Government conferred a 25-year long standing service award on Councillor Lowry. It was well deserved and a good signal to retire in the warm glow of public affection. Over 900 folks voted for Jim Lowry this time, but many, many more folks in and around Mississippi Mills want him to know that he continues to be remembered as much for his rustic wisdom and folksy stories as for his endurance. Happy retirement, Jim.

What is the MRPC?

In 1890 Dr. A.A. Metcalfe and his brothers built the first hydroelectric generating plant in Almonte and operated it as the Almonte Electric Light Company. In 1901 the Town bought out the light company and its plant and created the Almonte Electric Light Commission in 1908. In 1997, Almonte, Pakenham and Ramsay amalgamated to form Mississippi Mills and hence the name change to Mississippi Mills Public Utilities Commission (MMPUC). In 1998 the province split power generation from power distribution and the Mississippi River Power Corporation (MRPC), www.mississippiriverpower.com, was formed out of the MMPUC.

MRPC owns and operates the generating station in Almonte, with a view to expanding generation along the Mississippi River. The MRPC only services Almonte at present. The Town of Mississippi Mills is the sole shareholder of MRPC; it has appointed directors and a Council representative as a board – all Almonte Ward residents - to make operational and financial decisions. These are Des Houston (President), John Fraser (Secretary/Treasurer), Bill Chapman (Director), Paul Virgin (Director) and Garry Dalgity (Council Representative, Almonte Ward). Until recently these directors had unlimited terms, but this is to change in 2012. Directors are paid an honorarium of \$5,000 p.a. The Council rep position will be reviewed in early December; public interest for broader community representation has been growing. As of amalgamation all Town assets, including the MRPC, belong to all of MM and many residents think the mandate for representation should also reflect a whole-of-town approach.

Thank you to all our veterans

On Thursday, November 11, please encourage your friends, family and neighbours to pause a moment and reflect on the courage and strength of our soldiers past and present, and if possible, wear a poppy to show your pride.

Citizens' Strategic Visioning Group forming

Are you interested in joining in on an informal, non-political discussion about strategic opportunities and strengths to propel Mississippi Mills into the second decade of the millennium? A group of residents, business people, community builders and citizens is forming to meet and consider the future for our community. If you would like to be a founding participant, contact the interim moderator, Cliff Bennett at Bennett@magma.ca to receive information.

White Tail Ridge

Not even a show home is built as yet, with the site housing piles of gravel resembling a gravel pit.... Phoenix Homes' advertisement says "155 exclusive single family homes will be offered on this beautiful site. Lots are large in size: 88' x 200' and are fully serviced."

http://www.phoenixhomes.ca/communities/communities_future_overview.cfm?com=36

Signing off

The Communiqué is the MMRA Board's electronic newsletter. I began it as the President's Communiqué in late 2006 in order to provide information after the 2006 municipal elections. It also served to fill the gap left by the MMRA's hardcopy newsletter, The Watchdog, which ceased publication in 2005. Over the last four years it has been my privilege and pleasure to research, author and edit the content for The Communiqué from diverse input, under the auspices of the MMRA Board. With the Board's understanding, it has been planned for over a year now that, as I leave the Board, this post-election issue would be the last in the present series; the MMRA Board will decide if the Communiqué will continue, under whose direction and in what format.

To the 500 plus recipients who may have perhaps read the Communiqué's 28 editions over the last four years, I say thank you. To the many who have commented back, be it supportively or critically, I say thank you. To those who share my passion for our democratic values and the pursuit of political transparency, I say thank you. We elect our peers to provide peace, order and good government so that we may all enjoy the blessings of this wonderful community. As citizens, it is our privilege to elect representatives; but it is our obligation to ensure a visible and accountable Council continues during the time between elections. Please continue to do your part.

Sincerely,

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

Email: info@mmra.ca

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>