|  |
| --- |
| **Candidates for Position of Deputy Mayor Election 2022** |
|  |
|  | **Questions** | **Responses from John Becker** | **Responses from Alwyn Vanden Berg** |
| **1.** | **On Offer**. What unique qualifications and/or qualities do you have for office in terms of past experience, education, employment positions, expertise and talent that make you the best candidate to vote for in this election?  | I have been on the Bluewater Council for 19 years, representing the Hay East Ward. I have resided in Bluewater, living in Dashwood all my life. I live on thefamily farm with my wife Mary, where we raised our five children. Three of our children continue to live in Bluewater as well. And am a proud Papa to 8grandchildren. I graduated from South Huron District High School in Exeter and continued my career with the family business Becker Farm Equipment in Dashwood & Exeter from 1970-2000. I then worked for Canada Post - Dashwood as a Rural Route Mail Carrier from 2000-2018. In 2018 I made the decision to retire and continue to work on the family farmI grew up with my father leading a Political career in different positions such as Hay Township Councillor, Deputy Reeve and Reeve.I have been a part of Council now since 2003 and have worked along with Provincial and Federal levels of Government to assist in community funding for local & major projects with groups such as the Bluewater Rest Home.Very involved in Community Organizations such as; Bluewater Rest Home - Treasurer, Zurich Lions Club - President, South Huron Fire Department Dashwood - Volunteer Fireman for 50 years, Zurich Ag Society – Past President. And Huron County Plowmen's Association - Past President. As well as working with some County Committees such as the Chip Program and Home & Farm Safety. | So in my past 4 years as a Councillor for Hay West and for Bluewater plus my years as a police officer I bring forward these following qualities. Municipal life is a people oriented business and that as a Councillor one must engage in a wide variety of relationships and problems with constituents, town staff and other elected officials. This can also include other government agencies or even community groups. Not all relationships are easy going and conflicts can arise. My career background to find solutions and finding collaborative common ground is essential. This has been a success in the past 4 years. |
|  |  |  |  |
| **2.**  | **Road Grants.** Where do you stand on: increasing road grants by 35% to compensate for the increasing costs of snow plowing - by the contractors - all along the shoreline? Other road grant related costs on the increase include grass cutting - and dust control, grading and gravel applications where roads are not paved. | I understand the need to add and build support around this issue. But overall will be a final decision made by Council going forward, as all costs have increased. Is 35% too high or too low? I’m not sure right now, but will continue to look further into more information. | Yes road grants should be increased. I know this first hand through my own Lakeshore Association costings to maintain the roads throughout the year. At the same time road grants should be increased by the cost of living. If our own Municipal Budget is based on the cost of living every year then road grants should reflect that every year too. So in essence it could be a yearly increase based on the cost of living. |
| **3.**  | **Conflicts on the Beach**. The spectre of increasing conflicts on the beach due to misunderstandings between Shoreline Residents and non-resident visitors about beach access rights and ownership, parking requirements for non-residents using the beach, refuse cleanup by residents that often is the result of non-residents – including STR’s – using the beach, and noise – including due to fireworks – that disturbs Shoreline Residents after the sun goes down. What confli ct avoidance ideas do you have as a potential member of Council to address the problems noted above before such misunderstandings result in a serious incident? | Conflict on the Beach has been a discussion for some time. Council has come up with a supportive agreement with the OPP. Although with the specialrequirements for this such service, I don’t know if a By-Law Enforcement Officer has enough power to handle such situations, before involving the OPP. | It comes down to education and respecting other property owners rights or enjoyment of life. It property owners are renting out their homes they need to be mindful who they are renting out their homes to. Screen their potential clients better. Inform them of the local rules of the Municipality or the local rules of the associations. In same cases where Bluewater owns the rights of ways or easements some signage could be provided. Beach and deeded access rights are complex. I know BSRA would like to help in this matter with an information session which is a great idea. Possibly Bluewater Staff could be part of this education.  To avoid a conflict or a dispute in the heat of the moment call the police.  We don’t want matters to escalate! |
|  |  |  |  |
| **4.** | **Council Budgeting Process.** Early each year, the MOB - led by Staff - undertakes a very thorough process over several weeks to vet and approve the Municipality’s budget for the year. What is your level of understanding – your familiarity - with the mechanics and technical elements (ie. accounting) of that process? And, in particular – what is your understanding of how the transfers to and from reserves and reserve funds works, and do you agree that Council should use such transfers as a lever both for levy control and as a “rainy day” fund? | Over the years on Council, I have thoroughly worked though the Budget. Also from running my own farm and as the Treasurer for the local Rest Home, Ifully follow numbers very well. Staff works along with Council over a number of meetings, to present a fair level of tax increase/decrease pending new growth within the Municipality. When reviewing Reserve Money, it is to be used to support certain projects. It is required to pay back those reserves, to help cover r occurrence.costs if there is ever a major occurrence. | I always compare the previous budgets to the current one presented. In the 2022 budget I found a discrepancy with numbers on a line item. After Staff investigated the matter further it was discovered that it was a $500,00.00 saving for the tax payer. So I like to do my due diligence when it comes to your money. In regards to reserves and reserve funds yes it should be used for that “ rainy day” especially if that reserve fund has not been used for a number of years. We are dealing with high inflation numbers for 2023. We need to reduce the levy. |
| **5.**  | **Tax Distribution by Ward**. Where do you stand on providing transparency to residents of Bluewater regarding how much tax is paid by each Bluewater Ward? We understand that certain members of Council have asked that Staff, who can produce the information, be instructed to provide the Hay and Stanley West Wards with such information – but that Staff was instructed not to compile the information. | Transparency is provided to residents regarding taxes by wards. Yes, some Council Members have asked for this in the past. Over the last couple years with covid and staff shortages, they could not get all the numbers from MPAC and separate them by ward. As we move forward with more staff that are trained for these matters, we look to get the answers needed to provide. I don’t feel that the staff were instructed ‘not’ to give the information to Council and Residents. | Yes, tax distribution by ward should be transparent and displayed for the public to see. |
|  |  |  |  |
| **6.** | **Garbage Pickup**. Garbage disposal and related costs are a 5 going to 10-star issue not only in Bluewater but throughout Southwestern Ontario and elsewhere, as well. Where do you stand on assessing a move to green bins and user pay along the Shoreline? Green bins would reduce the volume of garbage going to the landfill by an estimated 10-15%, and user pay would compensate Shoreline Residents who do not live in Bluewater throughout the year for the 3-5 months when they do not leave any garbage out for pickup.   | Green bins are a great idea! But looking into them, we will need to come up with a location and means to pick up and take the product. Council wouldhave to view the numbers and costs to provide this service, as it would be passed and added to the taxpayer bracket.As for the garbage and blue box bins, this cost was calculated to all residents. I understand about residents who reside seasonally, but then it would addmore cost to those that reside year round. | Yes green bins could be introduced and Bluewater Recycling Association has introduced that program for municipalities to use this year. Cost could range from $40 to $60 per house hold. There are also other things to consider.  Everyone would receive a green wheelie bin and it would be collected every week. The waste and recycling bin would be collected biweekly (alternating week 1 organic/waste, week 2 organic/recycling). The same trucks would be used. |
| **7.** | **Outlook**. What are the most pressing issues along the Shoreline that you will be focusing on over the next four (4) years, if elected? In essence – why are you running, what are your priorities? | Shoreline Protection is a major concern in Bluewater and Short Term Rentals (STR) is right up there as well. I fully support the residents of Bluewater and would like to see proper information and press to speed up the process to get the shoreline protection put in place. STR are a concern in Bayfield and some subdivisions within the Municipality. Licences or permits should help, but the By Law Officer also needs to support the neighbours. Parking has become an ongoing issue with STR. I hope the Council will continue to review and work towards finding solutions to help solve these issues. |  I think the biggest concern moving forward for everyone along the lakeshore and in Bluewater is the cost of living and inflation. How will that be reflective in property tax? We know that MPAC will be doing a property assessment in 2023. How will that impact us in the years to come? Property values have increased immensely since the last assessment in 2016. Bluewater has to show restraint in their budget. We know a vast majority of residents along the lakeshore are in their retirement years with a limited budget. This would also be the case at Huron County Council where I would be your representative. People can not absorb a huge tax hike. Too add further in a different direction how will a new Master Rec Plan impact the shoreline in the next 5 to 15 years? We need to be mindful of the current restrictions along the lake when it comes to the residents enjoyment. |
| **8.** | **Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority**. ABCA now appears to be under attack by Shoreline Residents and others throughout Bluewater. Issues include inconsistent rulings regarding permitting for septic systems and development along the bank of the shoreline. What is your view of ABCA and its mandate – and what do you think Council can and should be doing to improve the ABCA/Council relationship as one step towards remedying the complaints arising from the residents it is charged with serving?  | ABCA needs to review and change their mandate, as an authority to give residents the proper information and get the job done. In order to satisfy thoseof their needs and in a more efficient manner. | I think the current makeup of the ABCA Board has no idea of the challenges of the lakeshore or don’t seem to care. It seems their priorities are more inland from the lake. I know Mr Irvin is doing his best to represent our Bluewater interests. Maybe ABCA staff are being perceived as being hard to deal with untimely decisions or extra costings for residents. Maybe ABCA Staff or the Board Chair should be in front of Council more often to address the concerns the lakeshore residents have voiced. We pay a fair share to ABCA so they should be tasked to hear the concerns and rectify the problems. Don’t ignore us! |
| **9.** | **Political Representation**. Presently, there are two (2) Shoreline Wards and five (5) other Bluewater Wards. The Shoreline Wards’ population and development have grown considerably over the past 4 years as has the total residential taxes that they pay. Setting Bayfield aside – the Shoreline represents a tax cash cow for Bluewater producing more funds for Bluewater’s treasury than the other 4 Wards combined. That fact notwithstanding, the Shoreline’s Councillors are outnumbered two (2) to one (1)! Where do you stand on working to remedy the lack of balance, in terms of political representation on Council, between the two (2) Shoreline Wards and the other four (4) Wards.  | To change the numbers of representatives on Council, will take some serious consideration and looking into. This would mean more people on Council andadd more costs to the residents. The numbers of residents in a certain ward, does not dictate more representation at Council. | It would be great to see a more balanced approach on ward representation in Bluewater.That could include a ward representation based on population numbers and not just on taxation numbers. I do not want to see an increase in Council members. That would just mean more costing.  Could boundaries be redefined? Council should be an odd number. I am open to explore better representation for Lakeshore residents. Consultation with residents and Staff input could make this happen. I am prepared to push this forward for the 2026 municipal election. |