

MONO MULMUR CITIZENS' COALITION
SEPT. 16, 2018
QUESTIONS FOR COUNCIL CANDIDATES

1. Why are you running for office? What vision for our community drives your participation in municipal politics? What do you think you can contribute to our municipality?

I feel very strongly that nobody should run for public office unopposed. The interests of the citizen body cannot be served by a representative who holds office by default, rather than through a mandate from the Citizenry. I believe that everyone who benefits from living in a free and democratic society should find ways that they can serve and support that society. Municipal government is the level of government that has the most impact on the lives of people as they are lived day to day and this makes standing for municipal government an excellent way to serve the community.

The current town council supports preserving what has gone before and this has worked very well in the past but there are changing requirements driving what is good for Mono. This necessitates a change in direction. Maintenance of old practices has led to missed opportunities and hindered the growth of small business. A change is required to make sure that all the citizens of Mono are served and equally represented in the future.

My participation is driven by an image of Mono as a place where small businesses can thrive in Mono's unique natural and rural setting. Mono should be a place where people want to live, raise families and build robust lives. The town's role should be to support citizens in their achievement of their diverse goals.

I view the town as a corporation that provides services and opportunity for its citizens. The town council is its board of directors, responsible to the citizen who are the shareholders. It is the job of the Board of Directors to gather the shareholders requirements and deliver a vision based on those requirements in a financially responsible manner that benefits the shareholders.

That business approach with the attention to financial management is often missing at all levels of government. My background in delivering solutions to complex problems in the business world with a focus on financial responsibility will allow me to provide leadership and act as an advocate for the community.

Mr. Stephen Unwin – Candidate for Mayor, Town of Mono

2. Do you subscribe to the theory that increased residential development will reduce the tax burden on residents, and if so what would you do to encourage such development in our community? What about other types of development: industrial, commercial, etc.?

An increased number of tax payers increases the tax base, but it also increases the cost of services that must be provided so net gain is not straight forward to project. Prior to any development being considered a cost-benefit analysis would need to be undertaken along with an assessment of the overall impact to the community. Cities can support high density development and use that to reduce overall tax burden but that is not necessarily the case in rural areas where resources must be balanced carefully.

In addition, any development needs to be sustainable, support the character of the community, must be designed to protect our natural resources and architecturally must be designed to fit in with the natural areas. Residents of Mono have chosen to live in a lower population density rural area and it is the responsibility of the council to where ever possible maintain that character within the community.

I believe that development of small business in the area, in keeping with the rural nature of the community, is of benefit to the town. For example, I would support agribusiness development in rural areas to encourage sustainable high yield crops. I would support service-based businesses catering to residents of the area. I would promote eco-tourism-based businesses that take advantage of the natural aspect of Mono. Within reason, I would support commercial development in areas zoned for these activities, but again they must be balanced against the needs of the community as a whole. Mono is a unique natural area. This natural beauty needs to be protected as one of Mono's greatest assets. All development proposals, either residential or commercial would need to be in keeping with this shared vision.

3. What would be your approach to maintaining municipal services while keeping taxes stable?

The town needs to look at existing assets that are under utilized. We need to look at the operational side of the budget to see if we can find efficiencies. We need to review past decisions to ensure that they are still in the best interests of the Town. This would include soliciting resident feedback during budget development.

Mr. Stephen Unwin – Candidate for Mayor, Town of Mono

4. Aggregate mining is a major industry in Dufferin County, including in our communities. How would you propose to limit the expansion of aggregate mining?

Decisions regarding aggregate mining have now been taken to a level of government beyond the town. I support the current approach the town has taken in this battle as a first step. However, I believe that through partnership with neighboring towns and community engagement, we can apply pressure at the provincial level to affect outcomes in our favor. In order to accomplish this we have to take an active role to engage citizens of Mono and the surrounding areas through media campaigns and other public forums. We must publicize the danger to the rivers and tributaries of “headwaters” and clearly illustrate the cost to the community. Strip mining of aggregates has large scale impact to the surrounding ecosystem that does not stop at the borders of the pits and only through cohesive citizen action will we gain the attention of the higher-level governments.

5. We live in “Headwaters” communities and ground water is our most important resource. What steps do you feel the council should take to ensure the protection of our water?

Protection of groundwater begins with limiting development to ensure that there is no risk to the existing watershed. We need to block the wholesale of our natural resources for corporate profit and look at the entire water system as a whole when decisions are made. Many residents of Mono are dependent on wells for our water, our agricultural businesses are dependent on water for success, and the natural beauty of the area is closely tied to the health of its waterways. It is the job of the council to ensure that new development, corporate wholesale, or unsafe practices is not allowed to impact the integrity of the water supply in the area.

6. What are your plans to manage the ongoing problem of noise pollution in our community?

We need to look at the bi-laws and provide a consistent platform in keeping with the character of the community. However, Bi-laws need to be enforceable to be effective. For this reason, it will be necessary revisit and do cost analysis on implementing bi-law enforcement at an increased return to the current agreements.

Mr. Stephen Unwin – Candidate for Mayor, Town of Mono

7. The dumping of contaminated landfill is an increasingly serious problem for our area. What will be your approach to addressing the fill dumping issue?

We need to look at the current bi-laws and assess how they can be better tailored to confront this issue and prosecute offenders. We need to have a strong set of concrete, enforceable rules set up that recognize that contaminated soil represents a significant risk to a rural community.

8. How do you propose to increase citizen engagement and participation in council business? How can the council improve transparency? Will you support continuing with regularly scheduled town hall meetings? Do you support the creation of and full support for effective council committees (eg: clear mandates, regular reports to and interaction with council, etc.)? What other forums for transparency and citizen involvement do you foresee?

Community collaboration and engagement will be essential if we are to confront higher levels of government on issues key to the area. As a result, we must define strategies to allow for more open dialogue and take action on suggestions from the community. While the continuation of town halls and open council sessions are very important, community engagement needs to be two sided. For the community to invest its time in the town it needs to be clear that the council will act based on feedback from the community.

We need to better use non-traditional media streams to remain engaged and in contact with the citizen body. The web site needs to be simplified and stream lined. We need to build relationships with public broadcast media as a way to promote the town and educate surrounding area on issues occurring in Mono that will impact the larger community.

The town council needs to have quarterly reviews open to citizens where the ongoing status of projects and the financial run rates and projections for the remainder of the year are presented to ensure open transparency of where and how tax dollars are being spent. We need to review the budget process to allow for input from residents prior to finalization.

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9. Our communities have Codes of Conduct which aim to ensure dignity and respect for participants in the municipal government process. What do you feel could be done to improve the current Code of Conduct?

The existing Code of Conduct is a reasonably standard document that is not unlike corporate codes. However, as this is a municipal Code of Conduct I think that it needs to clearly state the rules for what activities should be conducted in public and what is appropriate only to be conducted “in camera”. While it is critical that council respect legal and privacy boundaries on the disclosure of information, failure to clearly articulate the rules for closed versus public forums can lead to a lack of transparency in issues that should be conducted in the public eye.

10. For Mayor and Deputy Mayor candidates: you will be our representative on County Council. Will your actions on County Council be directed by the instructions of your local council? What will you do when county needs and priorities conflict with your municipality?

As an elected official it is my responsibility to carry forward the priorities of the community that elected me. It is the role of an elected official to fairly and equitably represent the citizens that elected them in all forums and on all issues, even if the needs of the community conflict with the needs of that official. If there are items being reviewed by the county that conflict with the priorities of Mono but would benefit the region as a whole, decisions would be brought back for open review within council to allow the citizens to have their opinions heard and to direct the council on the appropriate path forward.