

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

Keith Lowry for Deputy Mayor

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 am running for Deputy Mayor to add my leadership to the work of Council. I believe in Mulmur and want to ensure we are able to keep the best of our township's values and attributes as the future develops. My skills in team building, leadership and communication have been developed and expanded throughout my careers, and I can contribute my experience with policy development, fiscal alignment, and proactive planning to the decision-making process Council will need to manage over the next term.

My vision for Mulmur remains as I wrote in the 2013 Strategic Plan: thriving agricultural and small business opportunities in our rural community, a scenic destination for visitors and a home of natural beauty for residents, a model of community engagement, and an effective partner with our community organizations and the other levels of government.

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.?

Mulmur has a significant advantage with respect to all development. In our current Official Plan, finalized when I was Chair of the Planning Advisory Committee, we locked in key values for residential development and identified locations – the Primrose Business Park- for intensive commercial and light industrial development. We also maintained in our Comprehensive Zoning Bylaw the ability for residents to establish farm-gate businesses, home industries, and site-specific small businesses and services. The bulk of our residential development is tilted towards our settlement areas, but we allow for rural residential development as well. Any intensive development will generate additional servicing costs as well as increased tax revenues, and that balance will require careful planning and management by Council.

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

On my website lowryformulmur.ca I have a longer description of the complex interaction among external service costs like OPP and garbage collection, internal service costs like road maintenance and snow removal, MPAC assessment, and property taxes. “Stable taxes” does not necessarily mean no increase, but it does require a planned and transparent budgeting model which involves citizen input as well as staff work and Council decision. Setting clear priorities is the first step.

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?

As long as the Aggregate Resources Act is allowed to hold primacy in this issue the role of the municipal Council will be limited to negotiating the best deal reasonable with the proponent. In the case of the Arbor Farms application, we at Planning Advisory Committee won agreement on hours of operation, noise attenuation with tree planting and retention, visual impact reduction with roadside berming and tree planting, off-road truck marshalling, a written guarantee of well water protection for neighbours, and a full-time real-time water monitoring system. Community groups negotiated some road use constraints in a parallel process. It was not easy, but it was civil, and successful to a greater extent than possible without persistent communication and fact-based planning and negotiating. At the OMB, we gained assurance that the elements we negotiated were included on the formal licence to operate the pit, and would bind not only the present owner but also any future owners as well.

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?

I continue my support of Mulmur’s very successful agreement and protocol with the Nottawasaga Valley Conservation Authority that ensures their expertise is a fundamental element in the identification and development of Source Water Protection Areas by our Planner and Director of Public Works. As Deputy Mayor I will confirm our support of the Dufferin Farmers Association as it informs, educates and supports our farmers in current best practices of water use and management. We are vigilant because we choose to be.

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

The main source of noise concerns has been motorcycle riders more intent on pushing the envelope of their machine and their skill to the detriment of enjoying the natural beauty of our forests, rivers, hills and valleys. I will move to ensure that those offenders are now more closely observed by continual review and reinforcement of the speed reduction strategy Council approved, using targeted OPP enforcement and resident complaint-driven deployment measures.

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?

Mulmur developed and adopted a Fill Bylaw that is worthy of being a model for other municipalities. I will publish to our community action measures that can be taken by residents to inform Council of unauthorized dumping, and follow-up by our Bylaw Enforcement Officer.

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?

This question answers itself in large part. Our first Town Hall was a key event in my work as Chair of the Mulmur Strategic Plan Working Group, and its success led to Council's continuing the model. In this next term we will need to review our committee structure and meeting schedule to ensure we have the community input opportunities we will need as the events of the next four years arise. It became apparent during the development of the Economic Development Strategic Plan that focused, thematic roundtables are highly effective for gathering empirical as well as anecdotal input. My intention would be to convene "Hamlet Conversations" regularly as a two-way informal communication model.

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?

Our Code has been tested, and proven. When specific complaints were made by one member of a previous Council, the subsequent review of the process by lawyers engaged to report on the issue found that the Code met the standard required. To our further benefit we have a highly qualified, widely experienced Integrity Commissioner to work with us on any emergent issue.

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 Deputy Mayor I will be an articulate, fact-based, passionate advocate for the values and interests of Mulmur Township. My belief, supported by my experience over this term, is that Mulmur's interests will always be served when council decisions, at both county and township levels, are informed by community input, supported by facts, refined through discussion, and finally decided at the Council meeting. I will ensure that my actions respect the standard set in our Code of Conduct for members of Council. At County, I see the process as a negotiation. I will work to understand the various positions and reasons being put forward, there, provide interactive communication with our Council members and our residents, look for common ground and for coalitions with like-minded municipalities, work to find creative solutions to disputes, build the strongest possible case for Mulmur's interests, and then vote.