

R. Tipping

May 11, 2021

Attn: Mayor and Council

Re: Attainable Housing - Gateway Project

Dear: Mayor and Councillors

As I have previously stated, I fully support attainable housing. I believe we, as a society, have a responsibility to ensure that everyone has adequate housing but I have found the development process unstructured and extremely flawed. The messaging is contradictory, confusing and in a constant state of flux. I question why both the Mayor and Councillor Sampson, the primary proponents, find it necessary to suppress and denigrate residents who dare to question any aspect of this initiative rather than providing fact based responses to justify their decisions.

The 2018 South Georgian Bay Tourism Study identified affordable housing as one of several major impediments to regional labour supply. The consultant's (NBLC) disclaimer states in part that they cannot guarantee the accuracy of the data and the report is not to be relied upon or used for any other purposes or by any other party. The study also provides both population and employment growth forecasts to 2031 for the area municipalities. TBM forecasts indicate minimum growth in both areas compared to Collingwood, Wasaga Beach and Clearview.

The cautionary messaging in the disclaimer, the minimal population and employment growth projections do not provide adequate information or data to support an attainable housing initiative. Minimal growth results in minimal increases in revenue streams. Fiscal restraint is recommended and basic services and infrastructure replacement and upgrades must be the first priority. Service increases, new ventures must be thoroughly evaluated on need, direct benefits to the entire community and financial viability.

Both the SGB Study and the mayor's and councillor Sampson's "Attainable Blue" plan recommend a partnering between the Municipality, the Employer and a Developer. The "A.B." plan specifies the Municipality will provide surplus land, financial incentives and zoning amendments to permit higher densities. The Employer, BM Resort to provide assignable rental occupancy guarantee for any of the special higher density attainable housing rental category. The developer will design, build and manage. It should be noted that the majority, if not all, of the financial risk is assumed by both the Municipality (the rate-payers) and the developer.

Q1. Given the Study's disclaimer, how does this Mayor and Councillor justify supporting and promoting "Attainable Blue" as a viable plan to the electorate prior to the election? Clearly "Attainable Blue" is nothing more than a rebranding of

- the study's recommendations and provides no additional substance, strategies or direction?
- Q2. Without a developer partner responsible for providing design/build expertise, how does the Mayor and Councillor justify moving the project forward? Why was a developer not attracted to participate in the project?
- Q3. Clearly, the S.G.B Study does not provide nearly enough accurate data to justify this initiative. As a first step, why did this Mayor and Councillor choose not to initiate a feasibility study to substantiate a local need and provide a solid basis for a comprehensive and implementable plan?
- Q4. How does this mayor and councillor justify the creation of the BMAHC and the resulting financial costs? This was never identified in Attainable Blue and may have been preventable if a feasibility study had been implemented. This is just another example of a burgeoning bureaucracy.
- Q5. Without the expertise of the developer's preliminary building design and suggested site requirements, how does this Mayor and councillor justify the purchase of the Foodland site. Given the Mayor and Councillor Sampson wear two hats in this process, I think it's safe to assume they were the proponents and the movers.
- Q6. How does this Mayor and councillor justify the inclusion of at market rental units and commercial space that will be in direct competition with the private sector?
- Q7. Given the current economy and the significant cost increases in construction materials and services and your fiscal responsibilities, how do you justify moving this project forward at this time.
- Q8. Will this project accommodate only those single individuals, couples, young families and retiring seniors employed by Thornbury businesses?
- Q9. How does this Mayor and Councillor justify dedicating significant resources to support private sector interests, when property owners who have faithfully supported the Town over years through their property taxes are assessed significant construction costs for the installation of what many consider basic services, water and sewage, resulting in significant financial hardship?
- Q10. When it comes to small proposed in-fill developments within the settlement area, where is the will to protect adjacent residents from the impacts of increased densities or housing types that alter the character of our neighbourhoods? Staff and Council quote standards but there is no suggestion that zoning amendments or standards be amended to address these concerns.
- Q11. Has the Board's Executive Director thoroughly vetted prospective housing candidates before posting on A.H. site to ensure eligibility criteria or is this just another political ploy to mislead the public? Remember these are real people, real lives and should not be used as political pawns.
- Q12. Will this Mayor and Councillor assure the public that the Gateway facility **will not** provide accommodations for any part-time and seasonal workers? After all, I don't believe the majority of residents will approve a one wants a Tyrolean party house at the entrance to Town.

To summarize:

- Clearly “Attainable Blue” was never a plan. For some this might suggest this a deliberate tactic to mislead the public into believing the candidates had developed a viable plan just to garner votes.
- The SGB Study made no recommendations for a Thornbury facility and the mayor and this councillor never implemented a feasibility study to justify this initiative.
- The “Attainable Blue” plan commits to the successful partnering between the Municipality, the Employer and a Developer. Without the expertise and financial commitment, it is financially irresponsible to move this project forward. I suggest this may constitute a breach in public trust and negates Council’s mandate for this initiative.
- Without a real plan and the expertise of the developer, the Foodland purchase was premature, ill-advised and imprudent.
- From the beginning, the mayor has assured the public that the project would be self-sustaining and would not require financial assistance but the financial support for the BMAHC continues to increase at an alarming rate. These false assurances may also constitute a breach of public trust or at the very least spreading mis-information.
- The Mayor and Councillor Sampson have repeatedly promoted project for not only workers, young families and seniors but doctors, nurses, teachers and police officers , etc., as candidates. Given the uncertainty of any significant demand from the last four groups, this message is rather unrealistic justification.
- What concerns me the most is the constant presence of the BMR and the BMVA and the political influence it seems to exert over some of our political officials. During a 2017 meeting (video is on-line) between the BMR and suite owners regarding the renewal of the rental management agreement, Mr. Dan Skelton (president BMR) suggested if the owners vote as a block, it was possible to influence the next municipal election. Very disturbing! People we are talking about the influence of Corporate America in our Town.
- This Mayor and Councillor have implemented this process without a feasibility study, without a viable plan, without the vital expertise of a developer partner, created an unnecessary Board, hired staff and made an inappropriate property purchase. I’m confident the public can decide if the Mayor and Councillor have acted in the best interests of all residents.

In closing, I continue to believe the majority of Councillors are well intentioned and have the best interests of the community at heart but I cannot support this Mayor, this Councillor or this project as it stands. It continues to create distrust, dissension and divisiveness within the community and brings to question Council’s ability to prioritize and act in the best interests of the residents. I strongly suggest, this initiative be put on hold and an independent review be initiated. Rather than adopting the “Whistler model,” I suggest a more imaginative and productive approach and develop a model specific to our local housing needs, the “TBM model” or “Thornbury model”.

Respectfully

Rick Tipping