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Town News

THE BLUE MOUNTAINS NEWSLETTER

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Ontario's Best Tasting Water

For the second time in six years, the Town of The Blue Mountains has been recognized by the Ontario Water Works Association (OWWA) as having "Ontario's Best Tasting Water". The Town last won this award in 2019 and returned to the top of the podium at the OWWA's Annual Conference and Tradeshow in early May of this year.

The OWWA Conference is attended by water professionals from across the province. Water utilities are encouraged to submit a water sample to be entered into a blind taste test. The participants at the conference taste the various samples and vote on the best tasting water.

"A piece of this award is shared by every member of our Water Division," said Allison

Kershaw, Manager of Water and Wastewater Services. "Our team works tirelessly to ensure the Town's drinking water system is maintained to the highest possible standards, and I'm extremely happy to see them rewarded for their work."

The Town of The Blue Mountains' water distribution system consists of approximately 120 kms of water main ranging in size up to 400 millimetres. The Town's Water Treatment Plant is located in Thornbury and draws water from an intake in Georgian Bay located half a kilometer offshore and 35 feet below the surface. The water is treated with free chlorine gas at the intake and undergoes membrane filtration, followed by ultraviolet disinfection to ensure it's properly treated and safe when it arrives at the taps of residents.

IN THIS ISSUE

Open Fields Continues To Grow 03

Additional Residential Units: A Path to Affordable Housing 04

The Blue Mountains OPP Detachment Board and Its Role in Community Safety 06

Staff Spotlight: Getting to Know TBM Staff Diana Livingston 07

The Blue Mountains receives \$25.3M in Infrastructure Funding from the Ontario Government 08

Community Events 08

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www.thebluemountains.ca/news



Message from the Mayor

As the vibrant fall colours fade and we gear up for a winter filled with outdoor fun, I'm excited to share key updates on Town initiatives and programs as we approach the end of the year.

Site preparation work has started for the Town's new Fire Hall on Grey Road 19 in Craigleith. Localized site clearing, preparation and drilling work has been completed and construction will start soon. The new fire hall will better serve and meet the needs of the expanding population and growth in tourism activity within the Craigleith area. The existing fire hall building is planned to be retrofitted as a satellite operations centre to support the Town's Parks and Trails, and Roads and Drainage Divisions.

Work is also underway to develop the Town's first Tourism Strategy with a strong emphasis on industry collaboration to help formulate the plan. The strategy aims to address local pressures and opportunities for industry members, operators, businesses, and residents. With an estimated three million visitors each year, tourism is an important economic driver for our local economy, and the work of this strategy is central to supporting an industry with more than 1,780 employees across 160+ businesses.

Lastly, at the end of October, the recent public survey results from the Joint Multi-Use Recreation Feasibility Assessment were presented at a special meeting between the Town of The Blue Mountains and the Town of Collingwood. The survey received over 3,500 responses and provides a strong framework for the next phase of the study process which includes further feasibility assessments that aim to review and assess current and future recreational facility needs of residents from both communities.

In closing, remember to check the Town's website for detailed project information and status updates. Enjoy the outdoors and have a holiday filled with friends and family.

Andrea Matrosos

Open Fields Continues to Grow

The 2nd Annual Open Fields Farm Tour was held on Saturday, October 5, welcoming thousands of visitors to five sites across the area.

Visitors were able to take tours of local farms where they learned about modern agriculture practices, viewed equipment, and met the owners and producers who devote their careers to the agriculture industry. Sites also featured live music, entertainment, workshops and demonstrations to further educate and inform the public.

Attendees were able to visit an apple orchard at Ardiel Acres, a dairy farm at Dreamfield Holsteins, a sheep farm at Kimber Valley Farms, a distillery at Spy Cider, and a packing facility at Blue Mountain Fruit Company, providing a wide variety of experiences.

The Town of The Blue Mountains would like to thank the host locations for their participation in Open Fields and all the volunteers who helped welcome guests across the Town.

If you own or operate a farm in The Blue Mountains and are interested in being a host location for Open Fields in 2025, please contact:

Allan Gibbons
Communications & Economic Development Coordinator
agibbons@thebluemoorntains.ca
(519) 599-3131 ext. 266



Additional Residential Units (ARUs): A Path to Affordable Housing

In September 2024, the Town declared a housing crisis, sparking conversations about the urgent need for diverse and affordable housing options within the community – but how do we get there?

Additional Residential Units (ARUs) have quickly emerged as a popular option for homeowners to help alleviate local housing challenges while generating rental income that may help ease some of the financial burdens of homeownership. As a result, many residents have contacted the Town with questions about ARUs and the path to building one on their property. This article will answer some commonly asked questions about ARUs at a general level. If you are interested in learning more, please get in touch with the Town's Building Services Department.

WHAT IS AN ARU?

An ARU is an Additional Residential Unit, previously defined by the Town as an Accessory Apartment Unit. An ARU is a legally constructed permanent or semi-permanent dwelling unit that can safely accommodate residents year-round.

All ARUs must be located on the same property as the primary residential unit and have their own living space, including a kitchen, bathroom, sleeping area, and access to laundry facilities. In addition, based on the Town's Zoning By-law, ARUs cannot have more than two bedrooms per unit.

WHY AN ARU?

In November 2022, the Government of Ontario passed Bill 23—*The More Homes Built Faster Plan*—aiming to add 1.5 million new homes in Ontario by 2031 by facilitating small-scale residential development. Through this plan, the government has updated the Planning Act to strengthen the additional residential unit framework, allowing a maximum of three residential units on most residential-zoned land without requiring a municipal By-law or Official Plan amendment.

HOW CAN THE TOWN SUPPORT MY ARU PROJECT?

While the *More Homes Built Faster Plan* has undoubtedly removed barriers to building ARUs,

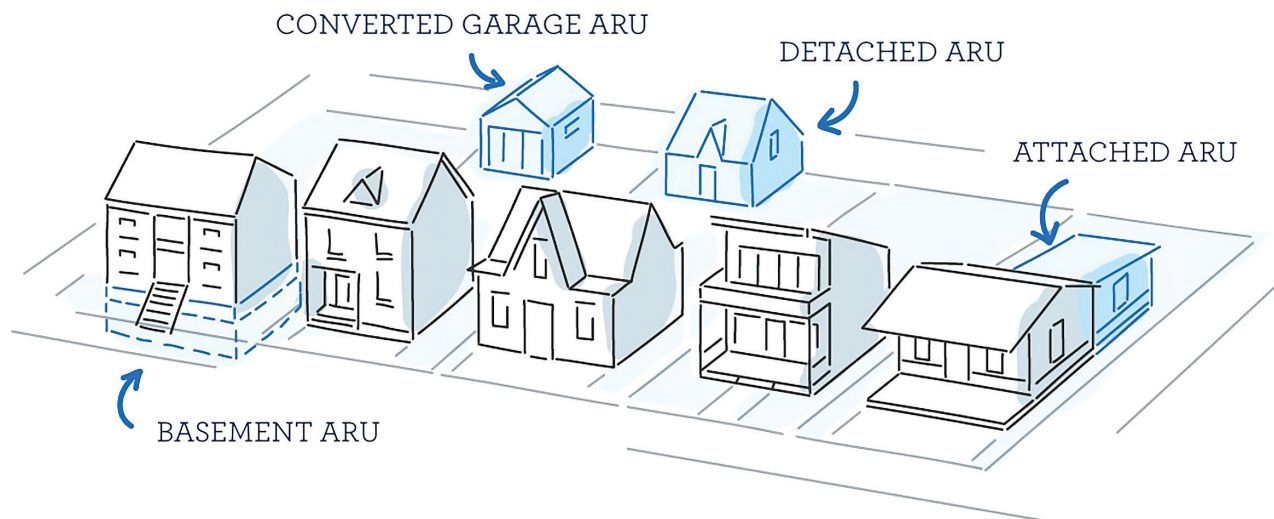
navigating the planning/building process and the time and financial investments can make the path toward an ARU still seem daunting and complex. Fear not – The Town's Building Department is here to provide guidance and support throughout the process, including:

- **Collaborative Consultation:** Building and Planning Services staff understand the crucial role ARU projects play in the local housing market and are dedicated to partnering with residents to clarify requirements and identify efficiencies to ensure a streamlined ARU creation process.
- **Exempt from Development Charges:** Currently, ARUs are exempt from Town and County Development Charges.
- **Grants and Loans:** The Housing Within Reach Community Improvement Plan's Additional Residential Unit Program provides financial assistance to improve, convert, legalize or construct new attainable dwelling units that may otherwise be cost-prohibitive. To learn more about the program and how to apply, visit www.thebluemountains.ca/CIP

WHO CAN HAVE AN ARU?

Any property zoned for Residential Use under the Town's Zoning By-law is eligible for an ARU. However, the specific permissions for your ARU may vary depending on your property's location within the





Town. The Town's Official Plan classifies residential parcels as considered either urban or rural, which can affect permitted ARUs. Additionally, lots designated under the Niagara Escarpment Plan (NEP) may be subject to further restrictions. Let's take a deeper look:

- **Urban Parcels:** Urban parcels are located within an area where residential use is permitted by By-law and are serviced by municipal sewage works and a municipal drinking water system. Urban residential properties allow for up to three residential units, including the main building (primary residential unit) and **two ARUs** inside the main building and/or in an accessory building on the property.
- **Rural Parcels:** Rural parcels are located within an area where residential use is permitted by By-law and are **not** serviced by municipal sewage works or a municipal drinking water system. Rural residential properties allow for up to two residential units, including the main building (primary residential unit) and **one ARU** either inside the main building or in an accessory building on the property.
- **Niagara Escarpment Plan (NEP):** Regardless of whether you have an Urban or Rural parcel, lots designated under the NEP are permitted a maximum of two residential units, including the main building (primary residential unit) and **one ARU** that **must** be located within the main building. Further inquiries regarding the NEP policy should be directed to the Niagara Escarpment Commission.

WHAT ARE THE SIZE REQUIREMENTS FOR AN ARU?

For ARUs located inside the main building, the maximum floor area per unit cannot exceed 50% of the primary residential unit or 100 square metres, whichever is greater. For lots designated under the NEP, the maximum gross floor area of the ARU must be less than the primary residential unit.

If your ARU is in a detached accessory building, it can take up 5% more lot coverage on the property than is usually allowed for other accessory buildings. The ARU must be within 50 metres of the main building and shall comply with the property's minimum setback requirements, with the exception of a minimum rear yard setback of 1.2 metres. The maximum height for a detached ARU is 5 metres but can be up to 8 metres if located above another space with a use other than an ARU, such as a garage.

CAN I RENT OUT MY PRIMARY RESIDENTIAL UNIT AND MY ARUS?

Yes! The primary residential unit and any ARU may be used as a long-term rental, meaning for periods longer than 30 consecutive days. Short-term accommodation uses (e.g., Airbnb) are not permitted in residential zones.

WHERE CAN I FIND MORE INFORMATION ABOUT ARUS?

To learn more, consult the Town's Zoning By-law, contact the Town of The Blue Mountains, Building Services Division at (519) 599-3131 ext. 290 or visit www.thebluemountains.ca/ARU

The Blue Mountains OPP Detachment Board and Its Role in Community Safety

Community safety is an essential part of a healthy and vibrant Town, and The Blue Mountains OPP Detachment Board enhances this by bringing community members and Council together to guide policing in our area. The implementation of the Community Safety and Policing Act (CSPA) in April 2024 changed how the Board provides input regarding policing in the community, but its impact on community well-being and safety is no less significant. Let's explore the changes introduced by the CSPA this past spring:

- An increase in members, from three to five, including the Mayor, one Councillor, two members of the public (appointed by Council), and one provincial volunteer appointee. The inclusion of community members on Council Committees and Boards brings diverse perspectives from community members with a wealth of experience and interests that reflect local needs;
- A requirement to prepare annual budget estimates in collaboration with Town staff to present to Council for approval;
- Mandatory training for Board members to familiarize themselves with the new Act, OPP policing, police oversight, human rights, systemic racism, cultural diversity, and Indigenous Peoples' rights and cultures.

The responsibilities of the Board under the CSPA aim to enhance the effectiveness and accountability of local law enforcement. Some of these functions include:

- **Setting Objectives and Priorities:** In consultation with the Detachment Commander and community stakeholders, including Council, the Board establishes objectives and priorities that align with the OPP strategic plan.
- **Selection of Detachment Commander:** The board consults with the Commissioner or their designate to select the Detachment Commander, actively participating in the selection process.
- **Advisory Role:** The Board provides advice and input regarding policing strategies within the community.

- **Performance Monitoring:** The Board monitors the performance of the Detachment Commander, ensuring accountability in leadership.
- **Report Review:** The Board reviews reports from the Detachment Commander about local policing efforts, assessing effectiveness and identifying areas for improvement.
- **Community Safety and Well-being Plan:** The Board is involved in formulating and considering the Community Safety and Well-being Plan for the Town of The Blue Mountains and Grey County.
- **Annual Reporting:** Each year, by June 30, the Board reports to Council on the state of policing in the community.

The current mandate of The Blue Mountains OPP Detachment Board runs until the end of 2026, during which time it will continue to play a significant role in ensuring effective policing and community safety.

OPP Detachment Board provided civilian Members:

Lynn Church - Retired from the RCMP after 34 years, Lynn is a proud resident of the Town of The Blue Mountains.

Donna Wilson - Served on the Collingwood Police Services Board from 2018 to 2022. She and her husband moved to their family farm in The Blue Mountains in summer 2022. Currently, she is a Canadian Armed Forces Reservist Chaplain at CFB Borden, assigned to the Military Police Academy.

Jim Oliver - With a 30-year career as a manager with Ontario conservation authorities, Jim also served 12 years as a Norfolk County councillor, including 5 years on the local OPP detachment police services board.

Want to learn more about Committees of Council, including opportunities to provide public feedback in the form of a Deputation, Correspondence or Public Comment? Visit www.thebluemountains.ca/committees

Getting to Know TBM Staff: Diana Livingston

In this ongoing series, Town Staff will be introduced to the public with a glimpse into their roles and how their service impacts the community.

Imagine that you just started a new career in emergency services and management, and within your 90-day probationary period, the unprecedented occurs: a provincial lockdown and the declaration of a global pandemic. This was the reality for Diana Livingston, Fire Department Administrator and CEMC (Community Emergency Management Coordinator) for the Town of The Blue Mountains.

Diana recalls that fateful day in 2020, "Although my background was in paramedic services, I was relatively new with the Town and was still getting settled into my new role."

Thanks to a supportive leadership team from the Fire Chief and Town's Chief Administrative Officer, coupled with a day-by-day approach to the unprecedented times, it was a navigable challenge for Livingston. Nonetheless, the phrase "trial by fire" feels fitting for the reality of the situation. In addition to providing administrative support to the Fire Chief and Fire Prevention Officers, the CEMC's role is to implement and maintain a Municipal Emergency Management Program - something that Diana had to do in her early days with the Town.



When Diana is not putting out figurative fires, she enjoys spending her lunch break along the waterfront in Thornbury, in the Village at Blue Mountain, or at restaurants around Thornbury. Although she lives outside of The Blue Mountains, she loves the supportive community and is proud of the staff and volunteer firefighters who represent the Town so well.

Life beyond the fire department for Diana is a lot less chaotic than those early pandemic days. Her free time is spent mostly outdoors, gardening, walking dogs, and with her family.



Overnight Winter Parking Restrictions

Overnight parking is prohibited on all Town streets from 2:00 a.m. to 7:00 a.m. These restrictions are in effect between November 1, 2024, to April 1, 2025.

The Blue Mountains receives \$25.3M in Infrastructure Funding from the Ontario Government

On September 23, 2024, Simcoe-Grey MPP Brian Saunderson visited Town Hall to announce that the Town of The Blue Mountains would be receiving \$25,397,523.99 through the province's Housing-Enabling Water Systems Fund.

"Simcoe-Grey is growing, and we know a major piece to responsible and sustainable growth is infrastructure," said MPP Saunderson. "This funding will allow the Town of The Blue Mountains to create critical housing for hundreds of families and people who want to make this beautiful part of Ontario home."

The funding has been received for the "Craigleith Sewage Lift Station, Mill Street Sewage Pumping Station and Bay Street Forcemain" project. This project includes upgrades to increase capacity at the Mill Street Sewage Pumping Station and Craigleith Sewage Lift Station, installation of a new sanitary forcemain along Bay Street East and Grey Street, replacement of end-of-life watermain and sanitary sewers on Bay Street East, addition of stormwater sewers on Bay



Street East, elimination of the Elgin Street Sewage Pumping Station, and reconstruction of Bay Street East and Grey Street.

This funding offers a vital opportunity to upgrade important water and wastewater infrastructure, ensuring the ongoing safety and functionality of the Town's wastewater and drinking water systems.

For ongoing updates regarding the funding and the project, please visit

www.thebluemountains.ca/BayStreetEast



For a complete listing of holiday events, visit: www.exploreblue.ca/events