

The Madawaska Valley Current

OCTOBER ELECTION ISSUE, 2018

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Positive Community Partnerships spells win for Madawaska Valley

DANIELLE PAUL
MADAWASKA VALLEY

The Township of Madawaska Valley received a 5 Blooms rating and a special mention for Positive Community Partnerships on September 29 during the 2018 National/International Communities in Bloom Symposium and Awards Ceremonies in Strathcona County, Alberta. Madawaska Valley participated in the 1,501–5,000 population category. MV was judged during the summer by trained volunteer Communities in Bloom (CiB) judges on tidiness, environmental action, heritage conservation, urban forestry, landscape and floral displays.

Following their evaluation of Madawaska Valley, volunteer judges Lorna McLroy and Gaétan Deschênes wrote:

“The 2001 amalgamation of Wilno, Barry’s Bay and Combermere, forming the Township of Madawaska Valley, has been successful as the result of positive partnerships. Similarly, partnerships have helped the Communities in Bloom initiative succeed and prosper. The CiB (a Committee of Council), Business Improvement Association, the Greening Committee, the Madawaska Valley Horticultural Society, the Wilno Heritage Society, the Legion, Lions Club, the Opeongo Seniors and youth groups all work together to achieve their goals. Partnerships allowed this community to survive and prosper after the 2006 Combermere tornado and last year’s flood. To quote the CiB committee, ‘Together, we’re bloomin’ good!’”

Madawaska Valley CiB Co-Chairs Debbie Marshall and Elser Lee Archer were excited about the 2018 result. Archer, who attended the Symposium in Alberta, said Madawaska Valley was recognized for its community involve-



Valley Manor garden.

ment among national and international program participants from Italy, Hungary, Spain, Ireland, the United Kingdom, Slovenia and others.

She said, “This honour was several years in the making. While the Township of Madawaska Valley has had some contentious issues during the past few years a decision was made to focus on one our greatest assets... ‘A spirit of community service.’” Acknowledging the many community members and organization who contributed, she said, “I hope that our unified strength together reminds us as we move forward that we can build and accomplish even greater intrinsic rewards in good times and bad.”

Marshall said, “Since registering for the Communities in Bloom program in 2016, we’ve come a long way thanks to residents and businesses in the Madawaska Valley. To achieve the highest level of 5 Blooms provincially in 2017 and be invited to participate in the National CiB is truly an honour. Then to go on and achieve a 5 Bloom Award with

special mention for Positive Community Partnerships is something we should all be proud of. We have community spirit! We live in an area that is second to none in beauty. Sometimes we take this for granted, we should take a few moments now and then to appreciate our countryside and all the great things we have at our doorstep.”

She thanked Elser Lee Faith Archer for attending the CiB National Symposium last week in Strathcona County, Alberta to promote the Valley not only within Canada, but to the U.S. and Europe as well. Marshall also added her thanks to many community members whose work is sometimes unrecognized such as the Barry’s Bay BIA, Madawaska Valley Township staff, especially summer students Reily Luckovitch and Chrissy Dombroskie, Peter Fright and representatives from the Combermere & Area Recreation Committee, Madawaska Valley Public Library, Valley Manor, St. Francis Valley Healthcare Foundation, Water Tower Lodge and Zurakowski Park. *This article has been abridged for print.*

OPINION

MV Residents deserve better

MARK WOERMKE
BARRY'S BAY

A recent correspondent to the Valley Gazette challenged candidates to release specific platforms so voters can “hold their feet to the fire.”

For ten months *The Madawaska Valley Current* has been doing just that—holding the feet of the Mayor and Council to the fire by reporting and commenting on issues like councillors’ micromanagement, the Railway Station, the abrupt departure of CAO Robertson, Integrity Commissioner Rosien’s breach of contract suit, councillor outbursts, the Mayor’s handling of conduct issues, and Integrity Commissioner Giorno’s report on a complaint against a councillor.

Elected officials promise accountability and transparency in campaigns but forget that public scrutiny, criticism, and tough questions from electors—and the news media—are the means by which these are measured.

Before casting their ballots voters should take into account how incumbent candidates have respected their promises of accountability and transparency not just during their terms but also during the campaign itself. To do this electors must ask if incumbent candidates allowed their records to be put under a microscope. If incumbents want second chances, they must prove they made the best use of their first ones.

As a public service media outlets help candidates communicate their messages. The Madawaska Valley Current has had a comprehensive election strategy including:

- publishing candidate interviews,
- providing an innovative online forum for candidates to respond to voters’ questions, and
- co-sponsoring a meet-and-greet for the candidates and voters.

Although all candidates were invited, only one of the three mayoral candidates, Elser Lee Faith Archer and three of five council candidates Carl Brom-

wich, David Shulist and Mark Wilmer—agreed to be interviewed by *The Current*. These four and mayoral candidate Andrey Kaminski participated in the online forum although all candidates had the opportunity.

Candidates Love, Maika and Peplinski’s disdain for *The Current* is no secret, but it is important for politicians to avoid giving the impression that they will only allow their messages to be disseminated through friendly media (the Fox/Trump syndrome). *The Current* has fastidiously strived to ensure that MV residents read things that other media outlets won’t print and that take the Council to task for its actions, especially lack of transparency and accountability.

Candidates Love, Maika and Peplinski have reacted to *The Current* with what is best described as extreme petulance. Letters sent inviting their comments on Council’s actions about various matters have all been ignored. Press releases distributed to other media sources have omitted *The Current*, suggesting an embargo against it.

Most egregious, however, is their refusal to respond to readers’ questions on the online forum about matters of public concern relevant to their records and platforms. In a letter to *The Current* former councillor Linda Neuman highlighted this disregard of voters when she asked “WHY THE BOYCOTT?” and

offered the following advice:

“Step up to the plate, put aside your differences, be responsible and use every opportunity to express your views and opinions so that we, the electorate, can make an informed decision in the coming election. Show us that you will represent the WHOLE of the municipality.”

Sadly, days before election day, citizens who posed questions to all the candidates, have not received responses from Love, Maika and Peplinski. Their concerns have not been addressed and they have been ignored by their elected representatives. This kind of disrespect for the electors is a far cry from the “respectful, inclusive, open and trustworthy” council that Mayor Love spoke about in her inaugural address on December 1, 2014.

Madawaska Valley residents deserve better.



First to declare: Carl Bromwich

MARK WOERMKE
MADAWASKA VALLEY

On June 20, Carl Bromwich, Councillor for the Township of Madawaska Valley, was first to register as a candidate for the 2018 municipal election.

A POSITIVE AND SELF-FUNDED CAMPAIGN

First and foremost, Bromwich wants voters to know the nature of his campaign. "I am going to run a positive campaign focussing on the good things that I have tried to accomplish, and the good things I hope to work on for citizens as a councillor in the next municipal government," he says.

Bromwich also emphasizes he will pay for his campaign out of his own pocket. "I will accept no donations to my campaign because, if I am going to effectively serve the community, I cannot be obligated to anyone or any special interest group."

STRATEGIC PLAN AND ROADS NEEDS REPORT

When asked about his platform, Bromwich referred to a comment he often hears from constituents: "Taxpayers often say, Carl, I wish the Township had a plan. Well it does. It has two actually."

The first is the municipality's strategic plan, **The Path Forward**, which I intend to make my playbook, and the second is the **Roads Needs Report** which should serve as the guideline for all road repairs. These are the core of my platform."

More specifically, according to Bromwich's campaign literature, he is committed to

- treating every resident equally;
- listening to front line workers for their expertise;
- working with local businesses to ensure MV doesn't lose any economic development opportunities;
- making MV the Number One tourist destination in Renfrew County;

- respecting the heritages of the communities within the Township;
- encouraging arts and culture;
- re-investing in the Railway Station and its programs;
- developing the Fitness Centre as a sustainable initiative;
- supporting the needs of first responders;
- investing in recreation programs;
- promoting our trail systems as a four-seasons destination; and
- co-operating with neighbouring municipalities for mutual benefit.

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The Madawaska Valley
Current

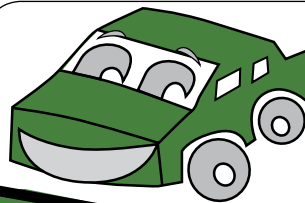
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and Friday October 19
6 pm to 9:30 pm**

Combermere Rec
Centre, upstairs

1095A Farmers Rd,
off Hwy 62, Home
Hardware on the corner.

—continued from page 3



Carl Bromwich

WARD SYSTEM ENSURES BASIC DEMOCRACY

One of the key points in his platform is his promise that, if re-elected, he will work to reinstate a ward system in the Township of Madawaska Valley. He says, “You know, back in 2004, before I was on Council, I spent three days at Ontario Municipal Board hearings fighting against the elimination of our ward system along with two other Madawaska Valley residents, Ray Pastway and Brian Mizzen. I said it then, and I say it now, a ward system is the only way to ensure basic democracy.”

This is not just Bromwich’s personal view. He points out that the ward system was actually suggested as a means to ensure voter confidence in municipal government on page 13 of the Township’s own strategic plan.

ACCOUNTABILITY AND TRANSPARENCY

When it was pointed out to Bromwich that an analysis of the minutes of regular council meetings has revealed that during the current council’s mandate there has only been one declaration of

pecuniary interest and it was him, the Councillor responded that he “respects the Ontario Municipal Act to a T.” He adds, “As a councillor, I signed a Code of Conduct which I adhere to, and I will continue to do so.”

If elected, he would also like to work to reducing the number of closed meetings and in camera sessions, and he would like to see more information posted to the municipal website and the site itself made more user-friendly.

“Audio transcripts of meetings should be easy to find. Right now you gotta go pretty deep to access these, and there should be a big button for complaint forms,” he explains.

EXPERIENCE AFFECTS DECISION MAKING

Bromwich, who moved to the area 45 years ago, built a home in Wilno for his wife and family by himself. He says learned a lot from his father-in-law, Vincent Borutski, the long-serving postmaster in Wilno.

“He taught me the importance of life lessons,” says Bromwich. “Over the years, I have worked hundreds of jobs.

Everything from dishwasher to truck driver to salesman to working for a multi-national corporation. All of these experiences taught me things that will determine how I respond to situations at the Council table.”

In addition to life lessons from a range of jobs, Bromwich has five-and-a-half years of Council under his belt. During that time he has served as Chair of Recreation Culture and Heritage for two terms, Chair of Fire and Prevention, Chair of the Community Policing Advisory Committee, Vice-Chair of Emergency Services and Prevention, Chair of Economic Development for one term and Acting Mayor for the last year.

DETERMINATION AND A SENSE OF HUMOUR

Carl Bromwich doesn’t give up easily. Once in the 1980s, and again in the 1990s, he ran unsuccessfully for a position on the Sherwood, Jones and Burns council. After amalgamation he ran unsuccessfully for the Township of Madawaska Valley. Then after the resignation of a councillor, the Municipality sought resumé’s from interested individuals and a special meeting was held at the arena to select a replacement on August 23, 2013. Bromwich thought he would “take a fourth crack at it.” He reminisces about his official entrance into politics:

“There were seven of us including Kim Love, Elser Lee Archer and Bill Schweig who had put our names in. We all gave our speeches and then I went out for a cigarette while the councillors voted. When I came back in, I learned that I had tied with Love. So, they literally put our names in a hat—and it was a “Cat in the Hat” hat to be exact—while I went out for another smoke. When I came back in everyone started clapping because my name had been drawn. That’s how I got appointed to Council.”

ELECTION 2018

While his entrance into municipal government may owe something to The Cat in the Hat, Carl Bromwich hopes to be the cat who comes back for another term to serve the citizens of the Madawaska Valley. Bromwich vows to “represent the residents and the corporation equally” and promises to “be available to hear residents’ concerns, answer their questions and listen to their vision for the community.”

Shulist proposes MV-wide business association

DANIELLE PAUL
MADAWASKA VALLEY

The Current spoke with former mayor David Shulist about his bid to rejoin MV Council – this time as a Councillor. Our first question, of course, was why would he return to the political arena after a break of four years?

Shulist explained how he had enjoyed his time out from council. But when Elser Lee Faith Archer decided to vacate her council position to run for mayor, he saw an opening on council that he could readily fill. He said, “I don’t think there’s going to be much of a learning curve or [anyone would] have to hold my hand. So with that experience why don’t I put my name in? If people vote for me, fine. If not, I’ll respect that.”

Why not seek the more familiar role of Mayor? Shulist explained that in the last 20 years when he was heavily involved in community matters, his family lost out in a lot of activities. “Sometimes I had to say Yes to township and No to family. So now I want to spend more time with the family on the weekend.”

Shulist provided a summary of his platform to *The Current*. Top of the list is promotion of the Madawaska Valley at local, national and international levels. He specified “year-round tourism as vital to improving our commercial status and economic viability.”

He refused to comment on the performance of the present Council in this respect saying it is a tough job, but he offered an opinion on staffing for tourism promotion: “It’s not the job of councillors or mayor to do that—it’s definitely someone that’s knowledgeable [has] to do it. If you’re going to promote you need to have qualified people to do it.”

Another issue dear to Shulist’s heart is economic and social development throughout the Madawaska Valley. He acknowledged that “there’s a friction out there and I don’t know why there’s a friction out there, but there is. I think we have to unite.... I want to try and bring us together and promote us that way.”

He referred again to the summary of his platform: “We have got to be promoting ourselves as one yet still have our individuality because each town

is still unique in its own way... What I want to encourage more than anything is that we need to come together and promote ourselves for our uniqueness. And each one of us is unique. Diverse. This is what makes our township truly Canadian.”

Shulist talked specifically about the business community in the Valley. He referred to bringing them in as part of the discussion and said that having them under one umbrella would make it easier. “If you’re going to do some promotion, I feel all the businesses should be somewhat involved. So why not a Madawaska Valley Business Association? It only makes sense, working together.”

He acknowledged that during his term as mayor there was a lot of discussion on Council about a Code of Conduct. He said Council has to follow the procedural by-law and the Code of Conduct. But he also pointed out that a lot of it is common sense and comes down to dignity in the council chambers. In his view transparency is really about letting the people know what is important to them, so if they don’t attend meetings or read the minutes sometimes it has to be spelled out to ensure the public is aware.

Shulist is particularly proud that during his term, Council brought in an asset management plan for Madawaska Valley Township. He referred especially to the Road Needs Study, which was pro-

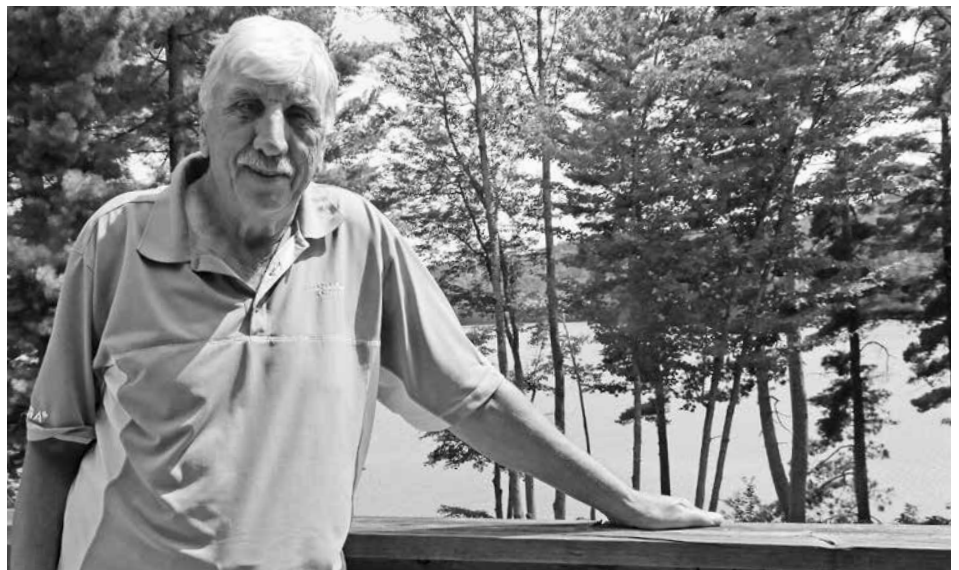
duced by road construction specialists from an independent engineering firm.

Shulist said this kind of plan addresses any concerns about conflicts of interest: “When you have the Study done, you’re not part of it now. You’re not part of that decision; the engineers did it. So when the time comes to do, let’s say, my road and I happen to be mayor or councillor, it’s nothing to do with the table at all. It’s done [because] it needed to be done.”

This, Shulist explained, “takes the politics out of it.”

“See the politics, it all depends on what you promised out there.... That document ... does mean something. It should be followed. I don’t like that kind of politics. It’s like favouritism. Whenever you do a favour for someone, somebody else is losing. [for example] If it’s not in the schedule.”

When it comes to the 2018 election, Shulist made it clear that he did not have all the answers or even knew all the issues. Instead he intends to campaign door-to-door and speak to as many residents as he can to learn firsthand about their concerns. As for the other candidates, Shulist says apart from one candidate he does not know very well, “They are all qualified to do the job and all have council experience. It’ll be up to the people to say who do I want sitting at my table and I’m hoping I’m going to be one of them.”



David Shulist

Archer promises zero-tolerance for disrupted meetings

ROGER PAUL
MADAWASKA VALLEY

If elected mayor, Elser Lee Faith Archer says she will call upon her governmental and council experience to provide leadership aimed at improving efficiency and harmony at the council table. She says the solution begins with strict compliance with Roberts Rules of Order.

"If I'm mayor and someone on council is disruptive I'm going to ask them to leave. If I was working in a corporation, it wouldn't be tolerated. That's where I'm at. So let's cut it off at the pass. It stops people from continuing in that vein."

Archer was interviewed by *The Current* in her office at Access Work Services where she is an Employment Consultant. Unsurprisingly, given her background as a mediator, Archer is focused on bringing a collaborative approach to municipal governance. As a recent example she pointed to Communities in Bloom as being a "microcosm of collaboration." This is because she believes it was the epitome of teamwork as it involved unpaid volunteers, municipal staff, political staff, the business community and other organizations like the Madawaska Valley Horticultural Society.

The challenges the community faces because of the high percentage of senior residents are of vital concern to her. Archer feels this problem would benefit from a similar approach. Some residents have to leave because they cannot physically manage their lives and because there is a lack of suitable affordable accommodation. She is proud of her role in bringing the Personal Support Worker training program to the Valley, despite opposition.

Archer also has some firm views on **economic development**. She would like to see a staff member appointed with primary responsibility, and the expertise to go with it, for economic development in the community. "...Because the expertise that you're looking for may not lie with someone who's got great experience doing rec programs."

She goes on, "...then what you're going to have is someone who has experience, someone who has been building that network at different government levels, and someone who can apply their knowledge and experience to the benefit of the municipality.

She is also proud of her contribution to the perennial problem of asset management. She says what the municipality needs is a financial plan. She referred to her role in drafting an MV resolution asking the province to provide its own staff and training for municipal staff to compile asset management programs. She had noticed that every municipality had a different customized asset management plan. Archer said, "Everyone that lives anywhere has some kind of financial plan. ...A financial plan is not cheap... but something I saw as important was that we need them [the province] to compensate us for doing this work."

She says she got a "huge amount of support for her resolution" from various municipalities. The province is going to cover those costs and she says as mayor there is even more opportunity for her to make progress with this. "That's the only way we're going to get the money we need."

Archer acknowledged that compliance with obligations of **Accountability and Transparency** is fundamental to good municipal governance. She pointed to the forthcoming amendments to the Municipal Act in relation to Codes of Conduct and the role of the Integrity Commissioner as being important. She was asked whether she thought it odd that during the entirety of this Council's term, so far as records show, only one declaration of pecuniary interest by a councillor had been recorded. She refused to be drawn on whether she believes that there should have been more.

Instead, she pointed out that when she worked in both Toronto and provincial governments, she always attended training sessions so that she would "understand intimately" where there is a conflict of interest.



Elser Lee Faith Archer

Does she agree that there is "inter-village friction" as stated in the municipality's strategic plan, *The Path Forward*? Archer declined to answer the question directly, instead saying that it was "the community itself, that identified that inter-village friction." She added, "Each community is a gem for different reasons... What is the point of working against each other? It's a time waster. Because what we do now is get entrenched on different sides, instead of seeing the forest through the trees. To me it just is a waste of time when you are so much richer collectively."

Finally, Archer addressed the topic of the role of Council. She says that she does not believe in micromanagement. The key is to have experienced staff and a strong CAO and let them get on with it. "I don't believe that we need to nit-pick about a pint of milk in an office or if we don't understand that you need a special grade of paint for a heritage structure."

She confessed to having become quite disillusioned earlier this year and even thought about resigning. However, Archer says she is not a "quitter" and was able to pass through this phase and in fact become motivated to seek the mayoral position because she believes that it has helped her to become better-equipped to handle that job.

Avoiding post-election blisters

ROGER PAUL
MADAWASKA VALLEY

In the 2014 municipal election, 62.76 percent of Madawaska Valley voters participated. This compares to the provincial average which, according to Wikipedia, was 43.12 percent. This demonstrated a commendable commitment to the electoral process on the part of this community but it begs the question, will there be a similarly impressive turnout this time around?

In 2014 there were thirteen candidates for council and two candidates for mayor. That degree of involvement and competition inevitably increased interest with more signage, more promotion, more knocking on doors, etc. There was also a spirited, well-attended all candidates meeting. This time around, however, there are only five competing for the four places on council and three candidates for mayor. This creates the risk that there will be less interest and involvement, but I sincerely

hope not. There are still local issues and challenges no less serious than those faced by voters in 2014.

There may be fewer candidates this time, but voters still have questions. To keep the conversation flowing, *The Current* provides an online forum—a virtual “Town Hall” if you will.

This way you can submit questions or points of view to the candidates, individually or collectively, inviting their

public response. Questions and responses can be viewed online at www.madvalleycurrent.com Municipal election “Town Hall” forum.

Let us hope that voter participation in the Madawaska Valley remains high. As Abraham Lincoln famously said, “Elections belong to the people. It’s their decision. If they turn their back on the fire and burn their behinds, they will just have to sit on their blisters.”

Haven’t voted yet?

DANIELLE PAUL
MADAWASKA VALLEY

Although it’s too late to return your Vote By Mail ballot, you can drop it off in person at the Township Office during business hours up to October 19 or bring it in person to the Township Office between 10 a.m. and 8 p.m. on October 22.

If your Vote By Mail kit did not arrive, visit the Township Office or call 613-756-2747 to speak with the Returning Officer or designate for a replacement ballot, before Oct. 22 if possible.

Yes, you may vote strategically. Vote only for those candidates you prefer, up to a maximum of four councillor candidates and one mayor candidate. For example, if you select just one or two names on the ballot, it does not mean that your ballot is spoiled.



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If you are responding to an online article in *The Current*, please note that you can comment in the “Reply” box following the article. We monitor all comments to ensure these guidelines are followed. Due to volume, we cannot print every letter or respond to individual letters. Please keep your letter short, preferably 200 words or fewer. Be civil, even if you are writing to disagree with someone. We look forward to hearing your voice.

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OPINION

Next Council must up the game on economic development

JOHN HILDEBRANDT
BARRY'S BAY

The 2018 municipal election campaign is well under way. I am glad to see the signs in the community. The ones on private property show that citizens are getting involved and thinking about the important questions.

Speaking of questions, I think *The Madawaska Valley Current's* online election forum is providing a very useful service by letting voters field questions that concern them and by allowing the candidates who are participating a chance to explain their views and visions to the citizens of the Madawaska Valley. It makes it easier to vote for someone if you know what he or she stands for.

As a former mayor and businessman, I am particularly interested in the economic development of the Township of Madawaska Valley. Hearing about the sale of Madawaska Doors motivated me to write this piece. In the Eganville Leader, Mayor Love is quoted as saying **"there is going to be plenty of work here"** due to three high-end housing developments.

That is all well and good, but the next council needs a plan and a vision to act on these projects effectively. Quite frankly, in the last four years, I have seen little positive council action on several existing and potential projects that would definitely benefit our municipality.

Here are my thoughts on several economic development issues. I would like voters and candidates to think about what could be done for each of these. I hope the mayor and councillors who are elected on October 22 will work proactively to bring ideas, investment, jobs, young people and tourists to our community.

400 ACRES

Do voters know that the Township owns 400 acres of vacant land near the Bark



Caption.

Lake Dam? We need a plan for this land. The simplest thing a council could do would be to harvest the mature timber on it, but that is a short-term project. The next council should solicit proposals from the general public for ways to use this land which is adjacent to the Madawaska Kanu Camp. Perhaps hiking or mountain biking trails could be established there. What about yurts for camping? What about a solar power project on those south-facing hillsides? What about an RV park? The next council should seek ideas and partnerships to make this land work for the citizens and to provide jobs.

REAL ESTATE DEVELOPMENTS

Little Bark Bay seems to be moving along nicely and building continues on Sandhill Drive, but I haven't heard much about the Chippawa Lodge development lately. Is Council doing everything it can to keep this project moving along?

Lakewood Developments on Bark Lake has been in the works for almost twenty years. I don't think many people in the municipality are aware of the economic effect that a project of this magnitude could have. How can

the new council bring this product to a successful conclusion which, if realized, will provide hundreds of jobs in the municipality?

Finally, you might remember that there is a large property on Kamaniskeg across from the hospital which was purchased years ago for a condominium development geared to seniors. The developer still owns this land and would like to sell it. What could a new council do to promote this property to potential developers?

Speaking of seniors, perhaps we could embark on a promotional campaign like the town of Elliot Lake in northern Ontario. Take a look at their advertising; we have all the same things they offer for a retirement lifestyle:

"Breathtaking scenery, sunlit beaches, golf, hiking, canoeing, and an abundance of arts and cultural pursuits... in a safe, clean, friendly community."

We could actually do better because we have greater proximity to major centres like Ottawa and Toronto. We just need a plan and the will to carry out that plan. A new council could prepare and distribute promotional packages or take a team to Elliott Lake to see what they are doing. *Continued on page 9—*

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TOURISM AND RECREATION

Everyone knows that tourism is the major industry in the Township of Madawaska Valley. Every day in the summer season hundreds of RVs pass through Barry's Bay, Combermere and Wilno. Sadly, that is exactly what they do—pass through—because (to the best of my knowledge) there is no motor home trailer park in the entire municipality. Yet we have under-utilized vacant properties—some are near water and others even have water and sewage hookups. Perhaps the new council could encourage an entrepreneur or partner with a group to develop a facility like this which would encourage passers-by to become visitors who stay a night or a few days and spend their money in our community.

Then there is the former Mount Madawaska. The ski hill has potential, but for various reasons this has not been realized for the last two decades. The current owners, I am told, are interested in selling. Our Council should be promoting this actively to buyers. In addition to alpine skiing, there is sufficient land for cross-country skiing in the winter; and in the summer there are other uses that could be found for the trails. Perhaps it could be a space to host a large motorcycle rally. The lodge itself could become a desirable venue for events. Council has to help developers see the potential in this and every property in the Township.

DEVELOPMENT OR DESOLATION

I saw a comment on *The Current's* election forum expressing a concern that we would become the next Muskoka with high, unaffordable taxes. I also heard from a friend that people on Facebook were expressing their pleasure that the tourists were leaving the community on Labour Day weekend and the community would be "quiet" again. With attitudes like this, our community will stagnate and die.

We need jobs to keep our young people here; we need jobs to attract young families; we need to encourage new businesses; we need to promote the Township of Madawaska Valley as the best place to live and invest; and we need to do whatever is necessary to make it the best place for these activities. The next council has a lot of work to do.

We have to keep things moving

MARK WOERMKE
MADAWASKA VALLEY

Council candidate Mark Willmer sees great potential for the Township of Madawaska Valley. He recently spoke with *The Madawaska Valley Current* at his home overlooking Lake Kamaniskog about his vision and campaign.

"The Township of Madawaska Valley is a great place to live and work, and it has a lot of possibilities, but we have to keep things moving. We can't miss any chance to improve governance, actively search for economic opportunities, and find creative ways to retain services and keep taxes as low as possible."

Willmer has extensive municipal experience as a councillor and a municipal employee having served as councillor for the town of Arnprior for 21 years and having worked for other municipalities for 30 years. He started as the pool manager in Arnprior; moved on to the former City of Nepean to co-ordinate arts, special events and recreation facilities; and eventually retired from the City of Ottawa in the role of strategic analyst in the city manager's office. He feels these experiences, the knowledge he has gained and his common-sense approach are relevant. He would like to put them to work for all the citizens of MV.

"I would like to do the best job I can for the community. I love living here and I feel I can help by providing new ideas and new perspectives. I am a positive, people-person and I am committed to meeting people and hearing what they have to say."

Given his political and work experience, Willmer understands the importance of good governance: "Council governs and staff run the day-to-day operations. Staff have the expertise council needs and an effective and positive working relationship is essential." Willmer is glad to see that a new CAO whom he thinks understands these separate roles and how they mesh for the good of the municipality, is settling in to her important role. "That guidance will make things easier for the new councillors and especially for the next mayor," he said.

Willmer also feels careful decisions must be made around the issue of closed



meetings. While some items which are sensitive and private must be discussed in camera, others are best dealt with publicly. "It might be easier to discuss them in a closed session, but so many problems can be avoided, and public trust can be enhanced, if the public receives as much information as possible."

Mark Willmer feels MV's strengths—its people, its beautiful natural environment, and its unique culture—provide for a great quality of life. Planning for the future is essential to maintain this. Specifically he feels that MV must find a way to check the outflow of young people, bring new residents to the community and promote the area as tourist destination and a place for business.

"Eco-tourism and eco-industry are two things we should be promoting, but we also have to recruit medical professionals, young people and families, and encourage people to work in trades and services."

Willmer maintains that the quality of life in MV is a delicate balance, but the municipality must seek and take advantage of opportunities. Fiscal responsibility is important, and basic services are a start, but he wants to find ways to bring people here and keep them here.

"I am offering my time, experience in strategic planning, knowledge of municipal affairs and roles, team-building strategies and positive attitude to represent everyone in the municipality. I love living on Mask Island, it's nice to be close to Barry's Bay, but when people ask me where I live I always say 'I live in the Madawaska Valley' because that is my community."

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RE-ELECT

CARL BROMWICH

COUNCILLOR

Township of Madawaska Valley

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"for a better tomorrow."

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OPINION

Mayor resorts to alternative facts about Railway Station

MARK WOERMKE
BARRY'S BAY

Anyone following the election campaign knows the Barry's Bay Railway Station remains a hot issue. All candidates have addressed it in their literature and interviews, but when incumbent mayoral candidate Kim Love spoke about it recently in an interview with *The Eganville Leader*, she presented a version of the story that does not match the facts. These inaccuracies should not be attributed to *The Eganville Leader* but to Love's selective memory since she did not seek a correction.

A review of annual reports and presentations to Council by Station staff and insights from the Railway Station's former manager Anya Gansterer also reveal facts not mentioned by the Mayor. *The Current* brought these to her attention and asked for a response or comment on them. No response was received.

BUSIEST TOURISM CENTRE IN RENFREW COUNTY

According to the Love interview, the Station operated "mainly as a tourism information centre" and at one time was the busiest of all centres in Renfrew County. Strangely, Love omits that the success of the visitor centre was the result of a municipal policy which valued the leadership and work of a director/curator who also worked for the municipality co-ordinating tourism and marketing — policy which she dismantled.

Reports show that the Station became the busiest of all visitor centres after 2004 when a director/curator was hired by the municipality to manage the visitor centre, museum and South of 60 gallery. The visitor centre had received fewer than 1000 visitors in 2002 and 2003, but after a significant increase in numbers in 2004, the municipality agreed to fund the position again in 2005 and visitor numbers rose to more

than 6000. In 2009 the Station attracted more than 10,000 visitors and by 2015 the visitor numbers were at 13,500. Applying the Ontario Tourism Regional Economic Impact Model to this number allows us to determine the impact on the local economy. Based on that model, the total economic impact from those 13,500 visitors was \$4,768,124.00.

GALLERY SALES NOT COST-EFFECTIVE

Another inaccurate statement from the Love interview is "Later, the South of 60 Arts Centre was established in the station and it gave artists from a wide area a place to display and sell their works." Gansterer's response to Love's statement is clear: "This... sums up one of the biggest falsehoods around the Railway Station controversy. The purpose of the gallery in the Railway Station was not to give artists a place to sell and display work. It was an exhibition space to tell the stories of MV (and others) through art and heritage exhibitions. The sale of art and merchandise was a side-benefit to subsidize the cost of running the gallery."

According to the interview Love also said "staff had identified that the accounting/auditing costs of selling merchandise at the station were far higher than the sales revenue being generated and so the arrangement with the arts people was discontinued." Those statements are problematic on several levels. First, the sale of art and merchandise was never a primary purpose of the Railway Station. Second, the Railway Station staff managed the sale of merchandise. While on sick leave Gansterer offered to answer any questions about these matters, but the Township refused to communicate with her. Consequently, staff at the township office encountered difficulties because they had no firsthand knowledge of the merchandise or the multiple artisans involved.



A report presented to Council in November 2015, which included MV's own budget summaries from 2007–2015, revealed that annual sales at the Station increased from \$515 to \$1391 per year, proving that sales were a side-benefit. More significantly, the 2017 MV Budget shows revenues at the Railway Station of \$35,600. Although this figure is not broken down to show art sales, and includes donations and sponsorships, it does provide an opportunity to consider the broader economic impact of the Station. The Conference Board of Canada estimates that for every dollar in income a cultural organization generates, \$1.84 goes back into the community in which that organization is located. Based on the 2017 figure, the economic spin-off of the Station in 2017 was valued at \$67,284.

ARRANGEMENT WITH ARTS PEOPLE

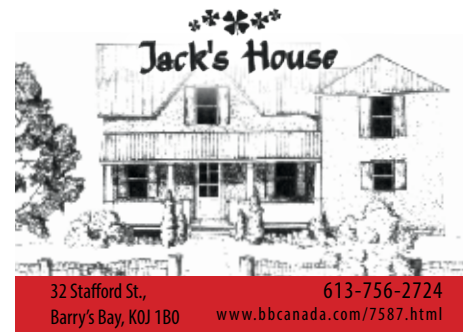
Love also referred to ending an “arrangement with the arts people.” Anya Gansterer explains there has not been such an arrangement since 2002–2003

when the Madawaska Valley Arts Council last rented gallery space from MV. She says, “Since 2004 the railway museum, visitor centre and gallery have all been owned and operated by MV.”

Then she adds, “It should be noted that South of 60 Arts Centre has never been an independent legal entity. It was simply the name of the gallery. In 2016 MV made the decision to drop the South of 60 name and re-name the facility The Railway Station Visitor Centre, Museum and Gallery.”

EXPERIENCE YOU CAN COUNT ON?

Love's comments in *The Eganville Leader* profile appear to be all about damage control. They are an attempt to distance herself from the vendetta against the Railway Station and its staff that she presided over commencing in 2014. All staff who were involved with the Station have been fired or resigned; volunteers are disillusioned and without direction; and economic spinoffs are being lost as you read this.



ELECT

**MARK
WILLMER**
TOWNSHIP OF MADAWASKA VALLEY
COUNCILLOR

**“I highly recommend
Mark Willmer as a councillor
for Madawaska Valley.**

Mark served 21 years on Arnprior Council and, having worked many years for the City of Ottawa, brings a wealth of knowledge, skill and thoughtful perspective to the council chamber.”

—Mayor David Reid, Town of Arnprior

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Heartwood Restaurant opens in Combermere

DANIELLE PAUL
MADAWASKA VALLEY

Two Valley sisters, Becky McPhee and Shanti Nordholt-McPhee, saw their dreams come true as they launched a family restaurant in Combermere on October 6, 2018.

Becky McPhee and Shanti Nordholt-McPhee realized their shared vision of a place to do all of the things they love—gathering people together, celebration, good music, delicious food, family, community and having a place that people can come to where they feel like it's home.

Becky and Shanti's mother, Posie Douthwright, said, "It's just a friendly place. A lot of people, when they retire, can get isolated—especially in winter. Where do you go? For people who live in Combermere, here it's intimate. We hope people will appreciate that and take advantage of it."

Heartwood is open for lunch and supper on weekdays, and for breakfast, lunch and supper on weekends. There is lots of live music with Shanti's musician husband, Schroeder Nordholt, on the piano frequently. Sundays are a family day providing an old-style home-cooked dinner with a Fam-Jam at 2:00 p.m. where anyone can join in on banjo, ukulele or whatever.

This is fantastic. It's nice to see this business with a whole new refreshed look and open again in the community.

— Mayor Kim Love

The sisters have filled notebooks with ideas for paint and craft nights, food art, seasonal décor and much more. and Shanti handle front-of-house themselves and currently have two part-time cooks. They have developed relationships with Valley farms to source as much as possible locally. So far, the likes of the Shulist Family Farm, Half Moon Farm, Seed and Stone Farmstead, and Two Trees Farm are on board with Heartwood.

Madawaska Valley Mayor Kim Love, a resident of Combermere, was on hand to perform the official ribbon-cutting and told *The Current*: "This is fantas-



From left: Becky McPhee, David Douthwright, Mayor Kim Love, Posie Douthwright, Shanti Nordholt-McPhee.



From left: Becky McPhee, Selina DeCarle, Solana Nordholt, David Douthwright, Megan DeCarle, Posie Douthwright, Luna Nordholt, Nadia DeCarle (beside sign), Trinity DeCarle, Shanti Nordholt-McPhee, Schroeder Nordholt .

tic. It's nice to see this business with a whole new refreshed look and open again in the community. There hasn't been anywhere to go for supper for a very long time and it's really nice to see a place where you can come. It's set up in a way that's very family-oriented [with] different sizes of tables. This is

going to be a great addition to the community. I'm very excited."

Heartwood Restaurant is located at 39280 Combermere Road, Combermere, ON. Visit the Heartwood Restaurant page on Facebook. The Heartwood telephone number is 613-756-9169.