

## Seguin Ward 1 and Ward 2 Candidates Meeting – Sept. 10<sup>th</sup>, 2022

### 5 Standard Questions for Candidates to Answer

#### **Question 1: Candidate Self Introduction on Your Vision, Values and Concrete Examples (3 minutes)**

##### **Part 1:**

What is your **specific** vision for Seguin Township and personal values that guide your priorities and decisions as a councilor?

##### **Part 2:**

What **specifically** do you hope to achieve in the next 4 years? What **specific** actions would you take and what **specific** strengths, skills and experience do you bring to the table?

##### **Part 3:**

Provide concrete examples of where **you specifically** made a difference in the past, that support your vision, values and hopes, as a past councilor (or other similar role), at work, as a volunteer and at your home/cottage.

#### **Question 2: Short-Term Rentals (3 minutes)**

**Background:** Short-term rentals (STRs), i.e., renting for less than 28 consecutive days, are an ongoing issue. There is pressure to allow STRs for example a day, a week, etc. and conversely there is pressure to keep Seguin's status quo of not permitting STRs in residential zones. The Township has already taken or threatened to take some STR operators to court for violating Bylaw 2006-125 and has settled out of court, resulting in these owners ending their STR rentals.

Seguin has not provided data on the impacts of the intense use of STRs on municipal services such as road maintenance, garbage disposal, community health services and enforcement of Bylaws. Permitting STRs could potentially negatively affect local hotels/resorts, increase noise levels/violations, impact septic system functioning and water quality as well as the maintenance and insurance costs for private road owners etc.

Seguin Township is conducting a survey which appears to be slanted in favour of permitting STRs. It's not clear how the survey results will be analyzed. Will the data be split into "those who are eligible to vote in Seguin Township" and "outsiders who are not"?

##### **Part 1:**

Are you for or against the legalization of short-term rentals in Seguin Township?

- If against, why? Do you think the current prohibition should be strengthened and what form should enforcement take? What sort of action will you advocate for?

- If for, why? What legalization mechanism (e.g., licensing, etc.) do you support? Should STR licensing fees cover the program's administration, inspection and by-law enforcement costs or should taxpayers cover a shortfall? While licensing fees may pay for the hard costs, what is the remedy and who pays for the soft costs relating to any negative impacts of environmental issues arising from short-term rentals, such as ongoing septic system overuse's impacts on water quality and lake water uses? Provide details on form and how this would be enforced and paid for.

### **Part 2:**

If the survey results indicate that the majority of your constituents are against short-term rentals in residential zones, does that change your view? What will be your position and why?

### **Question 3: The Environment and Species at Risk (3 minutes)**

**Background:** Seguin's Official Plan puts the Environment First. Provincial Legislation relating to the Environment and Species at Risk has been gutted and replaced with a "pay to slay" culture. Existing legislation puts the onus on landowners to keep informed of legal requirements, what steps need to be taken to obtain any permit, what environmental studies need to be done when developing near or in environmentally sensitive lands, wetlands and waters, etc. There are recent examples where Seguin Council has **NOT** put the Environment First, For example,

- 1) The Otter Lake causeway joining two pieces of one property, was approved by Seguin Council for a new owner (after not approving for several years a similar request from the previous owner), and built in a navigable bay of Otter Lake, over publicly owned lake bed enjoyed by many kayakers and canoeists. An environmental study which supported that the Blanding's turtle (species at risk) was likely in the area was disregarded.
- 2) The Oastler Hwy 400 oil spillage, resulting in contaminating the lake. The Oastler Lake Association informed the mayor and councilors of this environmental disaster. Seguin Council has not taken any known actions to date on how to address this issue, and there is still no information from any government agency on this spillage that occurred in early June 2022.

### **Part 1:**

Where do you rank the environment in terms of priorities? What measures have you taken in the past that has resulted in protecting the environment and/or

species at risk to a higher standard than today's? Provide past specific examples of actions you have taken that support your position.

**Part 2:**

For each of the examples provided above, what was your position, as a councilor or private citizen if not a councilor? Why?

**Part 3:**

Do you agree that the rights of one property owner overrides the rights of other taxpayers, such as found in Example #1?

-If yes, then why?

-If no, then why?

**Question 4: Minister's Zoning Order (MZO) (3 minutes)**

**Background:** An MZO is part of Ontario's Planning Act and allows the Municipal Affairs and Housing Minister to make a ruling on how a piece of land is to be used in the province, with no chance of appeal by municipalities, citizens or environmental groups. An MZO overrides local planning authority to approve development without engaging the usual expert analysis, legislative approvals or public participation.

MZOs have traditionally been used by the provincial government in emergencies, or to quickly advance a major initiative of provincial significance. Examples include allowing a new grocery store to open in Elliott Lake when their only other one caved in, and when the Lake Simcoe Protection Plan was launched to help address water quality in the lake.

However, in just over a year, the Minister for the current government has issued over 33 new MZOs, which is many more than what the past government did during their entire 15 years in office. In 2020, 14 MZOs were issued for Residential/mixed commercial residential projects, and another 6 for industrial/commercial/logistics projects.

Some of these MZOs – like those that fast-track public, supportive housing in existing neighborhoods and the one that is allowing Toronto restaurants turning motor vehicle parking spaces into COVID-safe open-air patios – are appropriate uses of the tool.

More often, however, MZOs are being abused to force through projects that should not and *could not* otherwise be approved, like sprawl development on farmland or wetlands. Or they are used simply as a convenient way to get zoning changes on specific pieces of property ahead of the release of new municipal official plans.

Seguin has submitted an MZO to develop about 300 ha of land adjacent to Parry Sound's border - <https://letsconnectseguin.ca/mzo-application>, with the emphasis on "attainable housing". Parry Sound is not in support of Seguin's MZO application since there are several studies that the town wants to see completed first - an economic impact study, feasibility study, financial framework and forecast for housing, retail, and commercial development. In addition, the Town does not have any additional capacity in its water, sewer and stormwater infrastructure to support additional development.

The lands covered by the MZO fall totally within the area of the Georgian Bay Biosphere Mnidoo Gamii, a UNESCO Reserve, however the Biosphere has no legislative authority to provide for the protection of these lands. The provincial government has substantially reduced environmental protection legislation and severely reduced the numbers of environmental staff which has led environmentalists to coin the phrase "pay to slay" legislation leaving endangered species and important natural features unprotected and harming the ability to deal with environmental disasters (e.g. gas spillages, climate change impacts, etc.).

Seguin Township has one of the most extensive natural heritage landscapes in Ontario with numerous, forests, wetlands, unique features and habitats for endangered species. Current provincial and federal environmental legislation falls well short of ensuring that these special resources will be protected for future generations and the effects of climate change will further jeopardize efforts to sustain these sensitive resources into the future.

Mayor Ann MacDiarmid has gone on record, at for example the 2022 Otter Lake Ratepayers' Association Annual General Meeting, to say that there will **NOT** be any tax increases to cover costs relating to the implementation of the MZO. She confirmed that all costs would be paid by developers.

### **Part 1:**

Do you support Seguin Township's MZO application?

-If yes, then why? Do you support the existing plan which includes upwards of 2,500 new dwellings with the potential for upwards of 6,000 people? Again, if yes, now that Parry Sound Council has declined to work with the Township, do you support Seguin Township developing this property on their own with existing plans of 2,500 plus dwellings?

- If no, then why? How would you address the shortage of "attainable housing"?

### **Part 2:**

In your opinion, have there been sufficient environmental studies done to support this development?

-If yes, will you go on record as saying that this development will not negatively affect the natural environment, species at risk, air quality and water quality in lakes, watersheds, Parry Sound Harbour and the 30,000 Islands?

-If no, what additional environmental work is needed to ensure that Seguin Township “puts the Environment first” and exceeds existing legislative requirements, given that existing legislation has been gutted.

### **Question 5: Seguin Official Plan Review, Recreational Carrying Capacity (2 minutes)**

**Background:** All lakes in Seguin Township can be harmed by over development. All lakes in Seguin are currently protected by the Recreational Carrying Capacity (RCC) policy except for small lakes under 40 ha which were exempted. However, such small lakes can arguably be more susceptible to over development than medium and large lakes.

Some lakes in Seguin, (i.e. Otter Lake, Clear Lake and others) are in a rare category of lakes representing about 1% of Ontario lakes. They have high water quality, with low nutrient levels in the lake, resulting in limited growth of algae. They support aquatic species that require well-oxygenated, cold waters in particular its indigenous lake trout. Low nutrient content means having an exceptionally low total phosphorus concentration (less than 0.01 mg/l).

Phosphorus is a nutrient, that occurs in septic systems, fertilizers, animal wastes, and which can cause algal blooms and reductions in dissolved oxygen levels in lakes. While lakes have a natural ability to deal with some naturally occurring phosphorus loadings, any human activity resulting in more phosphorus loading can promote algae blooms, threaten an indigenous lake trout population, harm human health and harm other aquatic life. This is why many lake associations and Seguin do yearly sampling for phosphorus and in some cases, for oxygen too.

The Recreational Carrying Capacity (RCC) policy requires assessing the lake capacity for development using a Recreational Water Quality Model, a science-based model developed, tested and used over the course of over 35 years. It has been widely adopted as a key planning and management tool by municipalities across the province. To develop the model, scientists used data from almost 2,000 lakes on the Precambrian Shield, using water chemistry data, lake/watershed characteristics and detailed land use information.

The model predicts the maximum number of shoreline lots that can be developed on a lake without causing a decline in water quality, specifically total phosphorus, dissolved oxygen and lake trout habitat.

In calculating the maximum number of shoreline lots that can be created, the model considers all possible sources/input of phosphorus, including inputs of natural phosphorus (from wetlands for example), septic systems, residential/commercial land uses in the lake's watershed and inputs of phosphorus from other lakes upstream (for example Salmon Lake is upstream of Otter Lake and Otter Lake is upstream of Oastler Lake and Georgian Bay).

By using the Recreational Water Quality Model, the RCC policy can show justification for freezing the number of lots on a lake to protect it from over development *This is why maintaining the existing policy of determining RCC in Seguin's Official Plan is so important.* Such justification has been successfully used to turn down development on Oastler Lake at an Ontario Municipal Board (OMB) hearing.

*A key input value for the model is the estimation of phosphorus loading from septic systems around the lake.* The model uses different phosphorus loading values for each land use: permanent residences, seasonal residences, resorts, campgrounds, etc. These are based on assumptions of number of household residents, dishwashers/washers and the length of time out of the year the use occurs. Clearly if the number of people using residences or the length of time, they use them increases, this will result in an overloading of the lake capacity, similar to allowing additional lots to be created.

The Recreational Water Quality Model is only one tool that should be used to determine how much development to allow on a lake. It does not consider several other factors that could also further limit the capacity of the lake to accommodate development, such as:

- other sources of pollution such as contaminants - mercury, oils, pesticides, road salt, etc.
- removal of shoreline vegetation resulting in loading of silt
- increase in the lot area occupied by impervious surfaces (dwellings, driveways, etc)
- climate change

## **Part 1**

The Seguin Official Plan is being reviewed and updated now. Will you be supporting maintaining the current Seguin Recreational Carrying Capacity (RCC) policy which protects lakes from over development and was upheld by the Ontario Municipal Board (OMB)? Are you in favour of removing the RCC exemption for small lakes under 40 ha?

-If yes, then why?  
-If no, then why?

## Part 2

- How do you reconcile your position on RCC with that of short-term rentals which risk septic bed overuse and phosphorus loading into lakes, potentially harming water quality, human health and lake aquatic life including lake trout populations.