

Town of Mahone Bay Candidate Responses

Housing IS a Municipal Election Issue



<http://sshac.ca>

Town of Mahone Bay: Candidate Responses



The South Shore Housing Action Coalition invited candidates to respond to questions about housing, if elected to municipal council.

Candidates were provided the opportunity to respond to our questions via email or complete an online questionnaire. Candidates who completed the questionnaire had the opportunity to provide responses to additional questions.

Question 1: If elected, what action(s) will you take to address housing in your community?

Suzanne Lohnes-Croft Candidate for Mayor	I would ask that Housing insecurity be placed on the agenda for the strategic plan discussions that take place following a general election with Council. I would ask for staff to update new members to Council on the Town's MOU with the Mahone Bay Community Land Co-operative.
Bryan Palfreyman Candidate for Council	As you are no doubt aware, Mahone Bay is a small town with only about 1,000 residents and very limited room for new development. In addition property tax rates and utility bills have sharply risen in recent years. As a Councillor I will focus on stabilizing and hopefully reducing this tax burden thereby improving affordability.
Penny Carver Candidate for Council	<p>I have supported and will continue to support the collaboration between the Town of Mahone Bay and the Mahone Bay Land Trust Co-operative in their shared project of assessing environmental issues on a parcel of Town-owned land. If the land is determined to be suitable for human habitation, I will advocate for Council to consider issuing Requests for Proposals from non-profit developers to build affordable housing on the property.</p> <p>I will consider any development proposal with a housing affordability lens.</p>

Question 2: In your opinion, what are the housing needs of people living in your district or municipal unit?

Suzanne Lohnes-Croft Candidate for Mayor	Affordable rentals for seniors downsizing, upgrading the current seniors' housing which the province has taken over, affordable housing for young people. Educating the public that housing is everyone's issue.(we seem to have a small but vocal group who "don't want that kind of housing."
Bryan Palfreyman Candidate for Council	It is no secret that in many regions of Canada housing supply is not meeting demand. That said there are a number of properties for sale in Mahone Bay, so some supply is there but the cost of ownership is high. Federal immigration policies and inflation fighting interest rates controlled by the Bank of Canada have been major factors in price escalation and high mortgage carrying costs.
Penny Carver Candidate for Council	There is a great need for rental housing that is affordable based on 30% of local wages and incomes. Currently 1-2 bedroom apartments are renting in Mahone Bay at \$2000 and more. People living with modest incomes cannot afford these rents and are forced to move out of town or they become homeless. Businesses cannot find staff because there are no affordable accommodations. The integrity of the whole community is threatened without an adequate supply of affordable rental housing.

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Question 3: What role do you think municipal government can play in addressing those needs?

Suzanne Lohnes-Croft Candidate for Mayor	Negotiate land swaps with developers, encourage developers to include affordable units in their builds, continue. Continue to provide Property Tax relief for low income homeowners. Continue offering budget plans for utilities. Promote heat rebate programs to citizens.
Bryan Palfreyman Candidate for Council	As you know housing is not a municipal responsibility. However, if elected as a Councillor, I would pursue options to expand municipal water and sewer services to adjacent communities in the municipality of the district of Lunenburg. This would facilitate denser development and more efficient land use together with opening up less expensive land for development. This ought to translate into more and lower cost housing.
Penny Carver Candidate for Council	Municipal government can minimize red tape and create incentives for affordable housing such as tax incentives for buildings converted to apartments. Mahone Bay has included many policies that can support affordable housing in its 2024 Municipal Planning Strategy update including provisions for more multiple unit buildings, allowance of mobile homes, limits on the short term rental units, provisions for secondary suites and for grouped housing.

Question 4: If elected, what are you willing to do to ensure that your council addresses the issue of housing in your community?

Suzanne Lohnes-Croft Candidate for Mayor	Continue to circulate the monthly reports from SSHAC to Council and encourage discussion. Encourage Council to keep up to date with new ideas for affordable and attend local workshops and information sessions. Keep up to date with government programs/grants that address housing insecurity. Review policies/bylaws to see if some need updating to encourage multi use dwellings, co-habitation. Bring awareness to the community about housing insecurity.
Bryan Palfreyman Candidate for Council	See above
Penny Carver Candidate for Council	<p>a. Volunteer to represent Council at SSHAC where I've been involved since 2012.</p> <p>b. Constantly advocate for decisions that support the development of affordable rental units.</p>

Question 5: If you have identified other opportunities for action on housing, please share them with us here.

No candidates that responded to the questions/questionnaire provided a response to this question.

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Question 6: What are your questions or comments about housing?

Suzanne Lohnes-Croft Candidate for Mayor	Does SSHAC offer community sessions to promote addressing Housing insecurity.
Bryan Palfreyman Candidate for Council	<p>Landlords are clearly incentivized to rent out vacant properties and there is obviously demand. As such it is not clear what a registration process would achieve. The same applies for vacant property taxes.</p> <p>And later on, Mahone Bay already has a housing plan and strategy via the LUB. It includes limiting air b&b's to owner occupied premises. So no new action needed here.</p> <p>The second multi question section is also a little confusing. Affordable housing is not a municipal responsibility. And if it was MB's budget is already challenged and could not subsidize building costs to make housing affordable.</p> <p>As mentioned, Mahone Bay is a small community with little land available for development and many residents that are already suffering from inflationary increases in taxes. As such there is little opportunity for any significant action on the housing shortage. That said recent Land Use Bylaw changes do allow for some dividing up of large old properties for multi use, although such attempts at conversions might face building code challenges.</p>
Penny Carver Candidate for Council	<p>a. How can we ensure that the federal and provincial governments increase their funding to support the development of affordable rental units?</p> <p>b. Can the federal government re-enact the kind of mass home construction that took place after WWII when up to a million Victory Houses, as they came to be known, were pre-fabricated and constructed across Canada between 1946 and 1960? Why not? We are in a housing crisis.</p>

Additional Questions from Candidate Questionnaire

Question 7: Which of the opportunities for municipalities to address housing needs in your community would you consider?

Vacant Property Registration	Penny Carver
Vacant Property Taxes	Penny Carver
Incentives for Renting Out	Penny Carver
Registration of Tourist Accommodations	Bryan Palfreyman Penny Carver
Elimination of Non-Owner-Occupied Tourist Accommodations	Bryan Palfreyman Penny Carver
Landlord Licensing/Registration	Bryan Palfreyman Penny Carver
Developing a Municipal Housing Plan/Strategy	Penny Carver
Initiatives to Support Energy Efficiency for Homeowners and Renters	Penny Carver

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Additional Questions from Candidate Questionnaire

Question 8: Which actions will you commit to doing, as a member of Council, with respect to supporting community housing needs?

Adopting a Municipal affordable housing plan that increases the support of safe, affordable housing that meets peoples' needs.	
Championing the role of Municipal Government in addressing issues related to housing	Penny Carver
Ensuring local policies reflect the vision of Federal and Provincial Housing Policies	Bryan Palfreyman
Engaging with local agencies, NGO's and stakeholders in creating a community driven action plan	Penny Carver
Ensuring local agencies are heard by funders and government stakeholders	Penny Carver
Ensuring local businesses are supported in the effort to make a living wage the baseline for all employee compensation	