



StandOurGround.ca NEWSLETTER

Issue 014 - August 2026

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**Save our
Communities
from Urban
Sprawl!!**

Councillor Jamie Laurin Raises Questions about the Process for Resident's Questions

Russell Township Councillor Laurin has asked **StandOurGround** for clarification about the process used to review and publish questions submitted by residents to candidates, as well as the candidates' responses, during the upcoming municipal election.

Below see the Councillor's questions and **StandOurGround**'s answers.

The Councilor has asked **StandOurGround** to clarify:

1. *Who is responsible for moderating or reviewing the questions submitted by residents?* **(Questions are taken as submitted.)**
2. *Are questions submitted by residents being edited, consolidated, reformulated or otherwise modified before being presented to candidates?* **(No)**
3. *If questions are being modified, will the original question submitted by the resident also be made available to the candidates?* **(N/A)**
4. *What process is being used to verify that questions are genuinely submitted by residents and accurately reflect their concerns?* **(We know who they are.)**
5. *Who is responsible for reviewing the candidates' responses before publication?* **(Candidates themselves)**
6. *Are responses being fact-checked or otherwise reviewed for accuracy and context? If so, what process is being followed?* **(Candidates are responsible for their own fact-checking, we may ask for proof of claims and/or follow up.)**

The Councilor also expressed concerns about what he described as some statements and responses published in **StandOurGround**'s July newsletter that in Councillor Laurin's view "*appear to be incomplete, inaccurate or potentially misleading in their presentation of certain issues. Given that, I would hope that the same level of due diligence expected of candidates is also applied to the questions and responses before they are published*".

The questions we publish are questions submitted by residents. Our purpose is to give residents an opportunity to raise the issues that are important to them and to give all candidates an opportunity to respond.

The candidates' responses are their own responses. We do not change the wording of a candidate's answer or alter the substance of their response before publication. We publish the responses as provided to us.

Candidate's Responses

This October, residents will head to the polls for the Municipal Election. In our July #12 **StandOurGround** Newsletter we prepared four questions for those seeking elected office. We invited candidates to provide written responses to these questions. **Councillor Charles Armstrong** has responded to these questions and below we are providing his answers.



Q1. With infrastructure and other township expenditures at an all-time high, what is the projected tax increase for next year?

A1. *Next year's tax increase is hard to precisely predict before the budget sessions begin after the elections. That said, one can predict some of the pressures that will drive an increase in 2027.*

To outline the Township finances our 2026 budget includes \$21.6M in tax revenues and \$34.5M in user fees/ other revenues, for a total of \$56.1M in revenues. Russell Township residents receive the second highest tax bills of all eight municipalities in the United Counties of Prescott-Russell because of the total services provided to residents.

Hard pressures on the 2027 budget include:

- a. Inflation, a figure I can't predict at this time. Note that inflation for municipalities is not that reported in the news as the "Consumer Price Index". Municipalities consume other goods and services that the average household, consequently the inflation index felt by municipalities is different from household consumers;*
- b. A scheduled 1% tax increase to finance the construction of the new recreation complex; and*
- c. The new recreation complex is also expected to require an extra injection of tax money in 2027 of \$875,000 as it's expanded facilities and services are more expensive to operate than the facilities and services it replaces. This constitutes a 4% tax increase.*

There is much debate within the public and Council about the future of the two existing arenas, outdoor pool, and community centre, all being replaced by the new recreation complex. If it is decided to retain the existing facilities, repurposed, they will demand additional tax money. This year about \$600K of tax money is going into the operation of these facilities, but we have not been putting the necessary \$1.2M into the reserve (asset management) fund for future repairs, so this will be required. The total tax money to retain the facilities could reach \$1.8M, representing an 8.3% tax increase. We must carefully consider the future of these four facilities.

Containing the 2026 budget increase to 3.9% required the deferral of several required expenses to future years. These expenses, related to many services such as fire protection and asset management, will soon become due. Council will also have to decide when we will add these back into the budgets and some may be inserted into the 2027 budget as additional increases.

In conclusion, the tax increase for 2027 will not be determined until the budget sessions of the next council.

Q2. Why did council for years allow ammonia from township sewage beds to pollute the Castor River in contravention of permits?

A2. *Our sewage lagoons are pumped into the Castor River in the spring and in the autumn. Our environmental approvals limit the concentration of ammonia in the effluent, and we have exceeded this limit several times. The Township has taken measures to reduce the concentration of ammonia, but it is obvious that the growth in population requires more substantive measures to improve the waste we pump into the Castor River. We have a wastewater plan that will see the construction of a wastewater treatment plant that will support the next 20 years of forecast population growth. It is the most expensive project in Township history, more expensive than the recreation complex. The Province of Ontario is accepting the high ammonia concentrations if we make acceptable progress to construct the wastewater treatment plant.*

We need to start budgeting for this plant in 2027. This plant financing will require increased sewer fees, perhaps as early as next year.

Q3. Why did township council appoint Mr. Tarnowski as Mayor instead of calling for a democratic vote?

A3. *I was not a member of council when Council decided to appoint Mr. Tarnowski as mayor. I was a member of Council when the Ontario Ombudsman issued a report on the decision. As a result of complaints, the Ombudsman investigated the decision-making process and found that Councillors “did report having one-on-one discussions over the phone with their fellow council members” prior to the meeting appointing Mr. Tarnowski as Mayor. The Ombudsman concluded that “Council for the Township of Russell did not contravene the Municipal Act, 2001 when council members had informal conversations pertaining to the filling of the vacant mayor’s seat ahead of the April 29, 2024 council meeting.”*

Q4. Will Council seek to prohibit demolition of heritage buildings in the township?

A4. *I remember a previous Council’s debates with respect to a proposed heritage conservation district in the Village of Russell. In the end, after heated debate, Council rejected the idea to create such a district. Council at the time did not debate whether some individual properties should be given a heritage designation. In my opinion, if a property owner wishes to protect their property with a heritage designation, then Council should review the proposal and support the designation where it is appropriate.*

Candidate’s Questions

We have prepared four additional questions for those seeking elected office. We invite our readers to submit their own questions for candidates. Questions can be sent by **email** or submitted through our **online form**. Candidates are encouraged to provide written responses to these questions. We will publish their replies in our newsletter to help residents make informed decisions before Election Day.

- 1** The population of the Township is expanding faster than the infrastructure and services to support it. Township kept the 2026 tax rate increase down to 3.9% from an estimated 9-10% increase by differing certain decisions until the 2027 budget meeting. We need a wastewater treatment center, an expanded fire department to include eight full-time paid fire fighters, an expanded water treatment plant, etc. Does the future Council think we taxpayers are going to afford these future high taxes?
- 2** Why did Russell Township Council wait until an election year to approve a buffer zone to protect adjacent residents traumatized by noise and light pollution from the vastly expanded industrial park?
- 3** Does Russell Township Council want to demolish the Embrun and Russell arenas and the Russell Centennial pool?
- 4** Why did Russell Township Council install stop signs at numerous road intersections only after the surge in vehicle traffic from new housing construction triggered a rash of serious accidents?

StandOurGround.ca welcomes your feedback, counterarguments, photographs, and written submissions for our Newsletter. Kindly inform us if you would like your Letter to the Editor to remain anonymous.

 standourground.ca

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Stand**Our**Ground presents

RUSSELL TOWNSHIP ALL-CANDIDATES BILINGUAL MUNICIPAL MEETING

Tuesday, September 15 • 6:30 p.m.
Russell Arena • 1084 Concession Street
*Meet the candidates • Hear their views •
Ask your questions*



Stand**Our**Ground présente

ASSEMBLÉE MUNICIPALE BILINGUE DE TOUS LES CANDIDATS DE LA MUNICIPALITÉ DE RUSSELL

Mardi, 15 septembre • 18 h 30
Aréna de Russell • 1084, rue Concession
*Rencontrez les candidats • Écoutez leurs
points de vue • Posez vos questions*