

ELEVENTH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

AINSLIE WOOD/WESTDALE COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION OF RESIDENT HOMEOWNERS INC.

SEPT. 22, 2009

DALEWOOD SCHOOL AUDITORIUM

President John Wigle called the meeting to order at 7:15 p.m., welcomed everyone, and presented his report.

President's Report (John Wigle)

Welcome to the eleventh annual general meeting of the Ainslie Wood/Westdale Community Association of Resident Home Owners Inc., and welcome to our guests who once again braved questions from the audience in the question and answer session that preceded the formal part of our meeting. In particular I welcome the following people:

- Gord Arbeau, associate director, public relations, McMaster University
- Vishal Tiwari, president, McMaster Students Union
- Chris Martin, vice president education, McMaster Students Union
- Andrew Caterine, vice president finance, McMaster Students Union
- Sergeant Jo-ann Savoie, Hamilton Police Service
- Kelly Barnett, City of Hamilton bylaw department
- Frank Biancucci, deputy chief, fire prevention
- Laura Stevens, director, Student Community Support Network, McMaster

If I have inadvertently omitted anyone, my apologies. Please remind me and I will acknowledge you later in the evening.

Also, thank you to a key sponsor, Fortino's on Main Street West, which once again donated bottled water for the meeting. Many thanks to Lucy and Robert at the store.

And thanks to those of you who brought food donations for the Mission Services Food Bank, a worthy cause in our city.

In this age of President Barack Obama, those of us who dare to stand on a public stage to speak to fellow citizens must have either great content or brevity. Tonight I choose brevity. The great content will come from the presenters on our panel.

The AWWCA now has almost 600 members, making us the largest community association in Hamilton. I remind all of us that, unlike the Hamilton Police Service, the city's bylaw department, and McMaster University, the AWWCA does not have legal power. Rather, the association has "soft" power, the power of influence. As a result,

- developers proposing purpose-built student housing ask to attend our board meetings to outline their ideas for projects and to obtain our input
- some restaurant and tavern owners make the same request
- HPS and bylaw officers attend our board meetings and work with our directors and volunteers to make our neighbourhoods cleaner, quieter, safer and more livable

- Rob Payne, past president of the AWWCA, and I sit on McMaster's President's Advisory Committee on Community Relations, PACCR for short, and work with Gord Arbeau, Roger Trull, vice-president of university advancement, and their colleagues regarding issues of mutual concern
- Shelli Eisenberg, an AWWCA board member and our student liaison, works with the MSU and other McMaster student organizations on such worthy events as the PJ parade and food drives

The AWWCA has this "soft" power for several reasons:

1. My predecessors had the foresight and the determination to create this organization 11 years ago in order to deal with the challenges and opportunities presented by the growth of our post-secondary educational institutions.
2. Non-board members have volunteered countless hours on many projects, such as the Walkability Study by Alice Sabourin and her team and the annual Rail Trail cleanup organized by Ken Sherman, who has been a community activist in the finest tradition. Regrettably Ken will be moving away for family reasons. We will greatly miss him. Ken, well done!
3. Janet Woodward and her team (Chris Harvey, Carolyn Kinsley, and Malcolm Horsnell) put out a wonderful newsletter twice a year.
4. Roger, Gord, and their colleagues recognize that the neighbourhoods that encircle McMaster matter, and they want to make PACCR work.
5. The board is determined to always engage in dialogue with the McMaster administration, the MSU, the city, the HPS, and our provincial MPP.

There have been strong disagreements in the past between the AWWCA and other stakeholders, such as the dispute over the truck bylaw a year ago, and there will be strong disagreements in the future. Nonetheless, the board and, we hope, the majority of our members do not engage in personal attacks on other community stakeholders. Rather, we participate in a spirited and occasionally heated dialogue. We listen, respond politely but firmly, and as a result are heard. That is "soft" power.

I wish to recognize the following persons' contributions during the past 12 months:

- Sgt. Savoie, who has worked hard as our West Town Crime Manager
- Police Constable Steve Wowk, who has been one of our beat officers.
- Lisa Dodds, the board member who has been our police liaison for the past two years; she is stepping down to enjoy a well deserved rest and retirement
- Jay Parlar and Ira Rosen, who contributed their indispensable audiovisual-technology abilities tonight

The AWWCA is only as strong as the commitment of its members, all of whom are volunteers. I urge you to become active or more active, as the case may be. We welcome and need your support. Thank you for your attention.

Presentation of Last Year's Minutes (Angela Tirone)

Linda Kisko made the motion to accept the minutes from the 2008 annual general meeting. Betty Bechtel seconded the motion. It was carried with none opposed and no abstentions.

Membership Report (Loreen Jerome)

On Aug. 31 we had 567 paid-up members, including 15 Friends of the AWWCA. There were 17 overdue memberships. Assisting Loreen in membership collection were Betty Bechtel, Earl Jerome, Barb Mansfield, and Janet Woodward.

In the past year we welcomed 49 new members to our association. Between newsletters we communicate with 86 per cent of our members by e-mail, an increase of 4 per cent over last year. Our block representatives delivered over 3,000 invitations to tonight's meeting. Loreen thanked those in attendance as well as Murray Babb, Earl Jerome, Linda Kisko, and Cathy Mansfield for delivering invitations to blocks without representatives or where representatives were unable to deliver.

Loreen asked all to consider volunteering as a block representative since it is a small commitment of time but a big help to our association and community.

Treasurer's Report (Barb Mansfield)

On Aug. 31 we had a combined bank balance of \$3,377.00, which included \$591 in our TD operating account and \$2,786 in our ING savings account. Copies of our Statement of Operations for the year ended Aug. 31, 2009, were available at the front of the stage.

Barb noted that the board made two donations on behalf of the membership at large: In November 2008, we donated \$100 to McMaster University for the Brandon Hall Fire Relief Fund, and during the summer of 2009 we donated \$100 to St. George's Cenotaph Memory Garden. The volunteers on this project also contributed many hours of hard labour, and Barb thanked them for their efforts to help us remember those who sacrificed their lives in two world wars. We also purchased the projector that was used during the AGM.

Barb was pleased to report that at the end of her first and very busy year, we are able to continue without any increases in our membership fees. This is largely due to Chris Harvey, who generously donated his time and expertise in designing and laying out two fabulous newsletters.

Guest Speakers: John Wigle introduced Al Fletcher, Brian McHattie, Jason Thompson, and Lavinia Welsh

Al Fletcher is a McMaster graduate in urban geography and has worked on the city's Official Plan; he is the manager of strategic projects in the planning and economic-development department for the City of Hamilton. Jason Thompson also holds a degree in geography from McMaster; he is the senior project manager for the planning division in the same department. Vinnie Welsh, a native Hamiltonian who has lived in this area for 16 years, is the second vice-president for the AWWCA and deals with land-use issues. Brian McHattie is our Ward 1 councillor.

The community-planning and design section of the city manages cultural and natural-heritage planning, urban design, and several facets of community planning, including secondary plans, neighbourhood plans, and special projects. The scope of work ranges from broad-ranging policy and bylaw development to handling individual development and permit applications. Several provincial and municipal-policy documents guide the planning process. The main policy documents for this area include Provincial Places to Grow, City of Hamilton GRIDS (Growth Related Integrated Development System), the Official Plan, secondary plans, bylaws, and zoning.

Current issues include the transition to high levels of student rentals in our area, along with the accompanying need for increased police and bylaw services. Currently 56 per cent of housing in

Ainslie Wood North is student housing. Several purpose-built student-housing projects are being proposed. It is hoped that student homes in the neighbourhood will return to families, but there is little knowledge of the long-term impact on the neighbourhood. It appears that the number of professional investors is decreasing; the trend is that more parents are buying homes for their student children. There is a need to look at how to accomplish the transition of homes to family use. There is a lack of information from McMaster regarding their strategic plan for undergraduate enrolment in the next five to 10 years. The intensification along Main Street as envisaged by the secondary plan has not occurred as expected. How do we create incentives for this type of development?

Changes are made in three ways for new development:

1. Permission under the existing zoning.
2. Application for minor variance through the committee of adjustment
3. Application for rezoning/Official Plan amendment.

Zoning is determined by the use of the land, the size of the building, and its location. Anyone can apply to rezone a property. Neighbouring property owners are informed of the application. The variance required for changes to a building is a public process as per the Planning Act.

Our secondary plan plays a part in that it provides more detail for the goals and vision of our community, including guidance for the protection of green space. Main Street is planned as a primary corridor, with buildings with commercial uses on the first floor and five to six residential floors above. To date this has not happened, so we may need to look at rezoning on Main Street.

Purpose-built student housing is a relatively new concept; it began in Waterloo five to six years ago. The buildings are strategically placed in an area that will have the least impact on the neighbourhood. Here there is one in operation on the former CNIB site, West Village Suites. Mr. McHattie outlined the current status of proposed projects in this area:

1. 69 Sanders Blvd., site of the former Colin McDonald School, has been approved for 50 students. A resident of Ainslie Wood appealed the decision but rescinded it. Alterations to the building are being done only on the interior. It should be operational by September 2010.
2. 17 Ewen Rd. is currently on hold. Cadbury is concerned that the noise of their candy factory will be a cause for complaints from the residents. The application for a zoning change has been tabled until the conversations with Cadbury are over. This building would house 550 students. The AWWCA is opposed to the height of the building.
3. Carling Street, near the Metro grocery store, is already zoned for a 10-storey building. Effort Trust sold the property to NINCO Construction. There is an application before the committee of adjustment to increase the number of units from 40 to 49; it would then house 210 students. Approval should be given soon, allowing it to be operational by September 2011.
4. At the former site of the Swackhammer Funeral Home, the owners of West Village Suites have shown an interest, but have not approached the city yet.

Studies are needed to determine if these buildings will decrease the need for student housing in the neighbourhoods. Right now there appears to be an overcapacity of student housing.

The planning team is currently focusing on intensification. That will decrease the need to expand into suburban areas. The infrastructure is being closely examined to assure it will meet the needs of intensification, including roads, water, sewage, etc. There are innovative projects on the go, including a new comprehensive bylaw for the city. Some obstacles need to be removed for future development and must be studied carefully, as not all intensification and rezoning are good. The secondary plan does need to evolve over time with the changing needs of the community. There will be public information sessions in the new year as the secondary plan is reassessed. The planning department encourages the participation of the public. The zoning objectives include looking at why the mixed use is not working on Main Street. It appears that the market is not there, so new opportunities need to be created. Lots may not be deep enough, so there is a need

to explore the expansion of the properties. Mr. Fletcher suggested that a good start for engaging the public would be a walk through the neighbourhood with resident volunteers to point out the good and bad spots.

John thanked our speakers and moderated a question period:

1. Can properties be parceled together if one owner buys several houses?

Fletcher -The "monster home" bylaw is maintained, the planning department would evaluate, but if the zoning is for single-family homes it would be very difficult to change.

2. The secondary plan developed in 2006 is different from the talks surrounding purpose-built student housing. How does planning incorporate the vision of the secondary plan?

Fletcher –The new proposals were not previously envisioned in 2006, and as a result planning must look at what is best for the neighbourhood. The pros and cons must be weighed if we are trying to provide alternative housing for students outside the neighbourhoods.

Thompson – The applications are assessed from many angles, including traffic studies, shadowing, if the proposed building is on an arterial road, etc.

3. When a developer wants to make a change and applies for a zoning amendment, since the recommendations are going to be city driven, not community driven, what will happen in terms of process?

Fletcher – There will be a lot of opportunities for the public to give input through public information centres throughout the city, neighbourhood walks, showing maps to the community associations. Using Main West as an example, the regulations are outdated, and there are too many obstacles such as parking, but the light-rail system will alleviate the need for parking.

McHattie – Zoning needs to be put in place to decrease the need for amendments.

Thompson – The updated Official Plan will give guidance to the planning committee.

4. The best way to bring more families into the community is to make the streets safer for children. As a rule of thumb, if children can play road hockey, the street is safe enough to attract families. Would it be possible to shut Newton down to traffic and have planters at the end of the street to stop traffic?

McHattie – The traffic engineer did not like the planter idea. There will be a five-year review of the Master Transportation Plan, which is when traffic calming can be looked at.

Fletcher – Cutting a street off at one end may affect snow plows, fire trucks, and other emergency vehicles. We do encourage all ideas, since even if they may not seem viable they may spark an idea that is.

5. Is the goal not to promote single families living in a house?

Fletcher – We cannot use the term "family" in zoning. Do the occupants operate as one household with, for example, one kitchen? We cannot regulate who lives in the house, but we can regulate things such as parking and landscaping.

McHattie – "Single-dwelling unit, with eight habitable rooms," is the proper term, not "single-family home."

6. Another 50 students will be living at 69 Sanders Blvd. The address has been changed from Sanders to Main Street, and that is acceptable? How does the process allow another development in the Ainslie Wood North area, which is already saturated with 56 per cent student houses?

McHattie – The owners will block off Sanders so that the occupants will have to use Main Street as the entryway. Because of the high percentage of students in Ainslie Wood North, I created a task force to assess the issues specific to that area, and we've set up a website to give information. There will be a garage sale on Sept. 26 to foster good relations between residents and students. We need to take a look at traffic-calming devices and ways to make the area more attractive. I wish I had an answer regarding the conversion each year. We look at options based on what is happening in other university towns across Canada, and the best seems to be to concentrate on the number of habitable rooms in a dwelling. The home recently enlarged on Norfolk Street is actually a family home.

Fletcher – The developers created a plan to ensure the traffic is on Main Street. The concept is to have development on Main Street, although there may be family homes behind a proposed development, making it inappropriate.

Wigle – Another developer wanted to tear down the existing building and build townhouses; the AWWCA did not support this. The new owner is very responsible; he is not changing the footprint of the building. I supported this; some others on the board did not.

Councillor's Report (Brian McHattie)

Mr. McHattie noted that his report was essentially given in his responses throughout the evening.

John thanked all the participants and adjourned the meeting at 9:13 p.m.