

# Swansea Area Ratepayers' Association

*Reflecting the interests of the Swansea Community*



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## Swansea Area Ratepayers' Group

### Annual General Meeting Minutes

Wednesday May 13, 2015

- Call to Order:** John Meijer at 7:40 pm.  
**Present:** Nick Singh, David Fleming, Kate Lawson, John Meijer, Bill Roberts, Brian O'Rourke, Elizabeth Elson, Sybil Wilkinson, Louis Gris, Ian McIsaac, Veronica Wynne  
**Regrets:** Keith Dicks, Sydney Reimer  
**Guests:** Edith George  
Caleb Chua for Peggy Nash, MP  
Sarah Doucette, Councillor Ward 13

John Meijer opened the meeting.

- Approval of Agenda: Bill Roberts motioned approval. The motion was seconded by Nick Singh and carried.  
Approval of Minutes from 2014: Bill Roberts motioned approval. The motion was seconded by Elizabeth Elson seconded and carried.  
Membership Report: John Meijer read the report. Ian McIssac motioned approval. The motion was seconded by Elizabeth Elson and carried  
Treasurers Report: Sybil Wilkinson motioned approval. The motion was seconded by Ian McIssac and carried.

#### **Presidents Report:**

The overriding issue in Swansea and Bloor West Village over the past year has been the development proposal for 2265 Bloor Street at Durie. It became a rallying point for the community, a major issue in the municipal election campaign at both the Councillor and Mayoral level, and spurred what I believe are two important developments at the community level – the first being the high levels of resident participation in local planning matters and the second being the strengthening of the working relationship between the four area resident's associations – High Park Residents Association, Bloor West Village Residents Association, the Old Mill Community Association and us, the Swansea Area Ratepayers Association.

To see how resident's asserted themselves in the past year you only need to look at the Etobicoke York Committee Council meeting of early last August which saw over 50 residents give deputations via email and several community members speak to the motion on the planning Staff Report on 2265 Bloor. This was sufficient pressure to have council motion seeking adjournment of the OMB hearing in favour of first completing an Area Study for Bloor. Further, City planning, in its Staff Report, had put forth barely lukewarm opposition to the original 2265 plan objecting only to the proposal in quote "its current form", and raising very few substantive concerns, not even on height. This kind of planning is not at all community reflective, and needed a strong community response. And again when 2265 was finally heard at OMB in early January, there were over 110 people who took the time to attend the Hearing and present themselves for participant status. This shows to me how dedicated and passionate are the people who live in this community. It must have made a strong impression on the OMB Member hearing the case, and also on the applicant, and I would think helped strengthen our position in the ensuing mediation.

But residents do not always mobilize themselves without some direction and leadership, and this is where I feel the second important community development comes up – that this was a year of continued strong and effective collaboration between the four west end ratepayer groups under the Save Our Village banner. As four united organizations, we were able to tap into legal and architectural expertise and a broad range of knowledge and experience from a variety of individuals, and present a strong voice at the City and the OMB. I would like to acknowledge the great work of the Save Our Village working group, and in particular the Bloor West Village Resident's association for the superb fundraising organization they spearheaded, including prodding SARA to get up to speed technologically for fundraising, of which I will touch on shortly.

The same west end ratepayers groups involved in 2265 were those that originally collaborated on the Heritage Conservation District nomination for Bloor West, which was submitted about a year and a half ago, and during the past year we found out that it was selected - from among 16 nominations submitted – as one of two districts up for study in 2016.

In addition to the Heritage district, we are also advocating for an Area Study to be conducted in tandem - to help control development along Bloor Street. Main streets that still serve as the central retail focus for their communities should be preserved, we believe.

I would like to thank Councillor Doucette for her work back in February to help restore the staffing levels at planning and heritage. With the help of residents who wrote to the Executive Committee, she was able to save eight Planning staff, including four Heritage staff, from being cut from the 2015 Budget.

SARA remains a member in CORRA, the Confederation of Resident and Ratepayers' Associations, and actively participates in CORRA issues which this year included appeals of the new consolidated Zoning By-Law, and also the Eglinton-Connects Official Plan amendment proposal.

We have filed an appeal to the OMB on the new Zoning ByLaw 569-13 primarily over concerns about certain exemptions, and also over clarity of wording. We have also filed an appeal on the Official Plan amendments being proposed for Eglinton Connects pertaining to mid-rise and Avenues, since it may set precedent for the approach to Bloor Street West where we do not believe mid-rise guidelines should apply. Specifically the Eglinton Official Plan amendment :

- calls for laneways behind properties on Eglinton Avenue where they currently do not exist and typically where residential neighbourhoods abut;
- introduces concepts such Neighbourhood Transition Areas and Focus Areas as pilot projects, which we fear may migrate to other parts of the Eglinton Avenue and other Avenues or arterials in the City;
- re-designates lands from Neighbourhoods and Apartment Neighbourhoods (meant to be stable) to Mixed Use Areas; and
- recommends the sale of parkland (not permitted in the OP) to Metrolinx for transit purposes)

Other CORRA issues we have been involved with include the Local Appeal Body for the City of Toronto, Heritage Policies, and the Island Airport.

SARA continues to advocate for appropriate development, both residential and commercial (along Bloor St West, Southport Plaza, and the Lakeshore in particular). Veronica will be providing an update on these three condo developments next in the Agenda.

Your SARA Executive worked very hard for the community over the past year and for that I would like to thank them. Issues over the past year were time-consuming and not always easy to deal with.

I have had someone comment to me that SARA is quote: "widely recognized as one of the better run residents associations", and that is in part to the efforts of each individual member of the Board.

On the technology side, we have moved into the 21st century. I mentioned earlier that we bolstered our fundraising capability, doing so by moving our old website to a new Wordpress blog with the capability of accepting memberships and donations electronically and with payment processing via Paypal. Also, we have for the first time moved to electronic mail communications with Veronica taking on the task of setting up our MailChimp distribution lists.

Finally I want to mention an exciting event we will be participating in this September. You may know that this year represents the 400th anniversary of the trip, in 1615, by the French explorer Etienne Brule - with the help of first nations guides - down the Humber River to Lake Ontario in what is now part of the former Village of Swansea.

We are in contact with the City to hold an event on September 13th around Lucy Maude Montgomery Park off Riverside Drive, so mark the date on your calendar and stay tuned for more details.

This should give you a taste of the kind of year it's been for the association. If you have received the Newsletter then you may already know some of this information, and more. If not, there are newsletters available, and they include membership application forms for those seeking to join or renew.

Also we would remind you not to forget our annual fundraiser at the Village Playhouse which will be held on Thursday Nov 5, the play being called "MURDER IN GREEN MEADOWS". Tickets should become available in the upcoming months.

### **Community Developments:**

Veronica Wynne presented information about the three major developments in the area, Southport Plaza, 1926 Lakeshore Blvd, and 2265 to 2279 Bloor Street West. She described the negotiations, concessions and wins for the neighbourhood around Southport Plaza, 2265 to 2279 Bloor, and concerns around large developments in the area.

### **Election of the Board of Directors for 2015-2016 presented by Jack Slaughter:**

The candidates for election are:

President:	John Meijer (Membership Chair)
Past President:	Nick Singh (Director)
Vice Presidents:	Ian McIssac, Sybil Wilkinson
Secretary:	David Fleming
Treasurer:	Kate Lawson
Directors:	Bill Roberts
	Keith Dicks
	Gared Daniel
	Elizabeth Elson
	Brian O'Rourke
	Keith Dicks
	Sydney Reimer
	Veronica Wynne
	Nick Singh

Bill Roberts asked for further nominations for the Board of Directors. There were none. Bill Roberts moved the nominations be closed. The motion was seconded by Councillor Doucette carried. The nominees were elected by acclamation. Brian O'Rourke motioned to close the election. The motion was seconded by Nick Singh and carried. Nick Singh motioned that the Executive be allowed to fill vacancies as required over the year. The motion was seconded by David Fleming and carried.

**Councillor Sarah Doucette:** Thanked SARA and discussed CoA and the process and thanked SARA for their community involvement in order to maintain the character of the neighbourhood.

**Caleb Chua from Peggy Nash's Office:** Sent regrets from Peggy Nash. He described the newsletter that was brought and will stay to answer questions after the meeting.

**Guest Speaker Introduction:** John Meijer introduced Edith George, a "tree-hugging Torontonian", according to Inside Toronto. She is a graduate of Humber College, 1973, and is currently an online columnist with Metroland Media, an Advisor to the Ontario Urban Forest Council and Cabbagetown ReLeaf, as well as a consultant to various Environmental Groups in Ontario and a non-profit advisor. Edith is also a former Director of the Weston Historical Society. She states that she combines her passions of local history and conservation in her presentations. Her goal is to have heritage trees recognized in the Amalgamated City of Toronto as these trees are part of our natural history. She has researched heritage trees, and can talk about trees that are markers for the Toronto Carrying Place Trail. She also has knowledge of Etienne Brule who saw Lake Ontario 400 years ago in 1615, in what is now part of our Village of Swansea. Edith speaks widely before audiences across Ontario from resident associations to horticultural associations, museums, churches, historical societies and many other organizations including the Royal Canadian Legion! Everyone loves her talks, and she is described as a powerhouse voice for the urban forest.

**Guest Speaker – Edith George:**

Edith George showed us her illustrated talk, “Heritage Tree – Preserving Our Natural Roots”, describing trees that should be considered a heritage tree...beech, white oaks. She inspired us with her presentation on our natural heritage especially the Nicholas Family Red Oak tree at 76 Coral Gable Drive in North York. This tree has stood the test of time here for about 250 years. The home is now up for sale and Edith's worry is that the new owner will not appreciate the majesty of the tree and cut it down. Experts have estimated that this magnificent red oak was born around 1765, nearly 100 years before confederation. It is a marker on the Carrying Place Trail, used by First Nations, explorers like Etienne Brule, Jean de Brebeuf, and Simcoe. The property it stands on was owned by the Matthew Griffith brothers who joined the Loyalists in the 1837 Mackenzie Rebellion and Ontario's first lieutenant-governor, John Graves Simcoe, scouting a route in 1793. It was owned by the Gardiners, the philanthropic family who established the Gardiner Museum. She wove other historical references important to Torontonians into the presentation.

She described The Heritage Tree Toolkit that helps individuals and community groups find ways to protect and how to improve the heritage trees survivability in the Urban Forest. This valuable tool helps communities identify, research, nominate, evaluate and designate trees with heritage value, like the St Lucie Drive Red Oak and the Nicholas Family Red Oak Tree.

After the presentation, she took questions from the audience.

**Adjournment:** The meeting was adjourned after the question period.