

OLRA October 13th

Present : Boyd Waites, Anya Dunning, Trudy Murray, Bob Laughlin, George Niblock, Amanda Holden, Tom Pugsley, Simon Palmer, Clemens van Zeyl, Chris Coderre

Regrets :

Marcia Todd

Approval of Minutes from last meeting:

Minutes arrived late and minor corrections were made at the start of the meeting. Including corrections a motion to approve was proposed by Tom, seconded by Bob and carried.

Treasurer's Report

Balance at Sept 30th \$5,342.68

Trudy asked who should receive the cheque book while she is away. George will take it and Boyd will pre-sign cheques and some bills can wait.

Membership, Newsletter, Web site

Membership: A full report on numbers will follow, membership is loaded in the database. A fair number have expired and not renewed and Amanda is thinking of an email communication.

Communications: Mail distribution service has been set up and linked to the membership database. Facebook page is up (facebook.com/OakvilleLakesideRA), and will be mentioned in the next newsletter, and links have been added in the email template. Amanda and Simon discussed a LinkedIn entry and a Wikipedia page. E-mail communications automatically go out to Facebook, it's a good platform for communication, probably better than the web site. We should all contribute to the Facebook page, Amanda asked for fresh pictures if we wouldn't mind sharing.

Amanda has not managed to do too much with the web site, more to follow in subsequent meetings.

Simon suggested a Wikipedia page, which Amanda thinks would be a good idea and called for volunteers. Boyd suggested we call on older members to contribute to it and some names were put forward, including past chairmen. Simon volunteered to get the page started with Amanda and then we will call for content.

Clem asked how we catch new residents. There isn't a formal mechanism it's mostly word of mouth or in response to the newsletter hitting the doorstep, which has a membership list and form. Spring newsletter had a membership drive; fall newsletter has a list too and the sign-up form and contact details. The intention is to re-send an invitation to expired members.

Newsletter: We are running a bit behind on timelines and consequently have pushed out distribution by at least week to Nov 9-13 (we were targeting Nov 1). If all articles can be in this week it would be good Amanda can start to mock up this week. Materials will be flowing in this week and next, any additional events would be welcome as events tend to go stale if we slip dates.

Bob suggested a note to thank Lisa for her help with the board, which was generally supported.

Boyd suggested we could include a summary of the results of the Residents survey, although he only has a hard copy. OLRA represented 28% of respondents. George noted that a common feature was access to waterfront, which may have been biased by survey question design.

Greenspace

Nothing new has happened about the private tree by-law, Bob will follow up. Clem noted that it seems possible to “prune” 30% of a tree canopy per year, which is a way round the tree rules. Bob said he would find out more as he wasn’t aware of that. Fines are very small for tree removal, but restricted by provincial rules.

Today the OMB hearing started on the Saw Whet development lands (see previous minutes - being held at the Trafalgar Room at the Town Hall). Oakville web site has a page where updates are being posted, Bob will circulate the link. Parties are Town of Oakville, Halton District, Halton Conservation and HDSB. Bob is awaiting an indication when to get involved. Zoning is O2, which is not zoned for residential. Bronte Green (owner) circumvented the town and are arguing on the basis of the expansion needs of the region.

The proposals continue to have widespread opposition.

Planning & Heritage

Cultural hub: Boyd presented to town last Monday along with the other RAs, the content of which was previously circulated. There were two main themes, the survey results, and what the RAs did and did not support of the proposals. There were many other delegations in attendance, RAs BIAs etc. and many different stories. The council picked up on our survey because it gives them information from public which town staff can’t get. The town web site had 58 contributions, survey had more than 500 respondents, so we represent a much richer seam of public opinion.

Staff were asking for approval of a distributed services plan. Our survey suggested our members (ward 3) don’t completely agree with all the solutions proposed nor do they know enough about it. Also, given these are the flagship facilities for the town the rest of Oakville, residents had not been adequately engaged. This was well received by Council.

The aim is to move the plans forward, but it has to have broad support from the rest of Oakville and not just our wards. Town did not approve the plan as presented but deferred to have more time for collaboration.

Since then the town agreed with staff to do survey of the whole town and a communication plan so residents are more aware of what's happening. Acceptance was therefore postponed until March for that purpose. We have a survey developed and platform, which we can offer up, but the town is likely to develop their own. Town is evaluating a phone survey or web survey and how they would find and contact respondents to make the base as broad as possible.

We are trying to get other RAs involved, but most RA's don't show up to the group meetings. Boyd suggests that our group of RAs officially contact all the other RAs to bring them in.

Anya asked about the money for the new performing arts centre. Boyd noted that there was no explicit mention of it, although there was a breakdown of spend in the original proposal document (300 pages). So far 1.2M spent on consultants and looking for 1M for the next phase. A gasp went round the room...

Chris noted that residents north of QEW are not as bothered about the plans. Boyd thinks we need to engage them and get them using the facilities. Oakville residents from N of QEW visit ~1/year. George asked how the population splits N and S, nobody was sure, although obviously more people live N, and how council splits. Council splits 4/8 which means S is over-represented per capita.

Who pays is the big question. Our survey said no to a tax levy very clearly. One reason for asking for continuation was to provide money for partnering with professional organizations able to present business cases for the proposals. Boyd is strongly in favor of this approach and has been arguing for it for some time. Parking is a good example where conflicting plans were presented in the past.

Chris remarked that parking is a common complaint. Parking is aggressively controlled downtown and there is rumour that businesses may be closing downtown in favour of locations on Cornwall Rd as a result. The rationale which sees a lower income as a loss needs to be turned around because the primary reason is to drive people into businesses and facilities and provide a service. However, Boyd points out that Bronte is completely free, although it's not clear why. The business case for parking could easily be made by a professional company. Chris points out that the trouble with a PPP is that the provider will drive to maximize revenues whereas it should be a service.

The town owns surface lots, which have a very high real estate value and they have not been interested in selling them. The more Church Street gets developed the more the town may want to consider it.

George's opinion is that we should be looking at underground parking and above ground offices so we drive in-hours inhabitants.

The town has deferred the parking strategy until Nov 2nd.

Streetscape: At the same council meeting the preferred option from town was interim fixes to pavement on Lakeshore, and deferral of the build out of plan until 2019, with the same 2 year duration as previously noted. Chris asked whether they had already voted, they had, however it was just for the engineering. Consensus is that they should just get on with it and businesses are suffering from a lack of a firm date. This has also been deferred to Nov 2nd. Boyd suggests we should present.

BIAs seems to support the new plan just because it has a timeframe and has no immediate interruptions. However this is precisely what has happened for the last 12 years so it doesn't feel much like progress.

Chris asked whether it was being deferred as a tactic to remove it from the tenure of councilors or whether it was complexity of the proposals? Body remarked that they have never really voted other than to defer. BIAs have also not supported the options. It certainly appears to suffer from the vicissitudes of local politics.

Boyd will circulate the documentation so the board can have input, and volunteered to present at the next meeting. Clem said he would join him.

First and second street heritage district: Guidelines were brought to council to be received. Some members of public presented issues. We presented one item which had been brought to our attention by David Johnston, a resident of First Street, namely within the 2014 by-law provision 12, which used to have a gross floor area ratio for the lot as well as lot coverage ratios. Provision 12 had been removed and OLRA was involved in that decision, as were residents. However it is encouraging same size second storey as first storey buildings, which doesn't quite fit with heritage area where second storeys tend to be smaller. We suggested to have the gross floor area provision re-added.

474 Lakeshore Rd: The application for variance was supposed to be heard on the Sept 29th meeting of the committee of adjustment, but the application was withdrawn because they had to give the town 9' of front yard for road widening. This meant the lot was smaller and the severance doesn't make sense in its current form. There is no proposal for road widening but the city tends to take an option when such things arise. It is due to come back on October 20th. We will be there again, arguing against creation of flag lots and the forwarding of a proposal which will immediately need major variances. Also the local lot coverage is very low (19%) which creates the character of the locality and this would significantly alter that.

George suggested submitting our position in a letter so the CoA have some time to consider beforehand, Boyd and Bob agreed. Chances may not be high, but it's worth a try.

Meeting Schedule

10th November @ Amanda's (171 Robinson)

8th December @ O'Finn's

Those being all the issues, the meeting was closed. Thanks go to Anya for her generous hospitality.