

CABBAGETOWN RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION MEETING MINUTES

Date: June 16, 2016

Time: 8 p.m.

Location: Pear Tree Restaurant Parliament Street

Directors in Attendance: James Wood, Phil Frei, Keith Lawrance, Marc Simmons, Shawna Pereira, Evelyn Sommers, Kelley Teahen, Tina Card, Carolyn Jarman

Regrets: Tyler Fleming

Review of May minutes by previous board directors: Motion to approve by Keith Lawrance, seconded by Phil Frei, and carried.

Phil Frei as president opened the meeting and welcomed the new directors and invited everyone to describe their interests and how they would like to volunteer to support the association

Kelley Teahen gave a summary of activities of the Winchester Park Residents' Association, which has become active in the past year, largely dealing with Toronto Community Housing properties on Winchester Street, the conversion of a run-down property into a residence for Covenant House on Prospect Street, and monitoring recent use of five homes on Bleeker Street as "absentee owner" short-term rental / hotel-style accommodations. The WPRA does not charge membership but has successfully gathered 800 emails for its mail list, both from residents and from parents of students at Winchester Park P.S., which has a positive impact when they deal with city hall and TCH. The WPRA has also drawn members from the Hugh Garner Housing Co-operative on Ontario Street and was working on an arrangement with the Diane Frankling Co-op on Bleeker Street. Given that there is now such an active group covering the previously uncovered Winchester-Parliament-Wellesley-Bleeker block, all agreed that the Cabbagetown Residents Association can leave the lead on issues in this geographic area to WPRA; in previous years, CRA assisted residents in this area when they did not have association representation.

MEMBERSHIP DISCUSSION

Within the geographic boundaries set for the CRA, there are 2,000 households (approximately 4,000 people). As of June 2016, the CRA has 162 paid membership households representing 217 paid members. A total of 548 receive the monthly newsletter – paid-up members, expired members, and some who sign up for newsletter without joining, including residents, other community groups executive members and Councillor McConnell's office. Keith Lawrance reports those numbers are down from 2015.

After discussion, the directors agreed we need to make concerted efforts to get more members, noting that people are often confused by the fact there is the CRA, the CPA (Cabbagetown Preservation Association) and the Cabbagetown BIA. Few are clear who does what. "I'm baffled, to be honest," said Sam Richardson. "We should have double this number of households." The CRA would benefit with more members because:

- We can advocate more strongly with the city and other groups with the argument we represent more people in the neighbourhood;
- The funds raised through memberships can allow us to invest more in the community and in projects to benefit Cabbagetown.

James Wood says we need to engage residents and Phil suggested it might be time to do another survey (the last was in 2013) to identify residents' concerns.

Phil updated the new board directors on previous areas of focus for the association such as:

- Security in the neighbourhood: CRA developed an email alert for crimes and liaises with 51 Division but could devote more attention to crime prevention assistance for residence with volunteer help.

- Tree canopy: For three years, CRA has donated to ReLeaf and its work with tree canopy but it is moving away from a Cabbagetown focus. Phil suggested that we need to engage people to plant large trees (there is an upgrade program available through the city for front-yard plantings) and take advantage of city programs that assist residents with tree care. Evelyn Sommers offered to connect with ReLeaf and look into what else CRA can connect with to promote tree care and planting.
- City advocacy: The CRA has re-established good connections to Councillor McConnell's office and will expand its work taking neighbourhood issues to the city. Kelley Teahen also has been representing CRA at the Future of Downtown / TO Core community consultations and briefed the directors on a proposal to have a unified response on some feedback to the city jointly from Cabbagetown South Residents Association, Cabbagetown BIA and CPA. This will be finalized via group email over the summer.
- Succession planning: in 2015-16, Marc Simmons shadowed outgoing treasurer Trish Finkelstein and now-board-member Shawna Pereira shadowed Trish's organization of the Forsythia Festival. Phil pointed out Keith Lawrance carries a heavy load maintaining website, blog, social media and responding to emails and would like to see his work supported by more volunteers.

BRANDING AND RECOGNITION

The association needs to do a better job at branding the work it does, said James: "There's often no recognition it's a CRA initiative". Carolyn Jarman agreed, saying it's easier to pull in members if people know what you've done. This led to a discussion about whether the group's logo and other materials need a refresh, with a commitment made that this year's Pumpkin Walk needs promotional material and signage that clearly is branded as a CRA initiative (current design has no mention of the CRA). Kelley offered to get the brand guidelines for the relatively new Cabbagetown BIA visual identity and to be involved in any visual rebranding initiative in future.

Carolyn suggested the CRA could support street parties, with a how-to guide and branded serviettes or plates donated to interested residents, although it was pointed out that the CRA involvement might be problematic as rules around official street closures are complex and more-spontaneous local gathering of neighbours flies under official radar.

Several other ideas for promoting recognition followed, including:

- Springing off the idea of providing residents with leaf bags (something a local realtor already does), Shawna Pereira suggested branded poop bags provided free at Wellesley and Riverdale Parks and possibly other locations.
- Street captains (Tina Card)
- Booth at the Cabbagetown Festival (Kelley Teahen) – this idea was discussed and rejected as being ineffective (too many non-Cabbagetowners at the Festival) for the person-power it would require.
- Branded paper bags distributed Saturday morning of the Cabbagetown Festival to residents holding yard sales that are an informal part of the Festival (Sam Richardson). This idea took fire and Sam agreed to source costs for such bags – whether imprinted with a logo or with a logo sticker to attach to them – and report back to the group via email about costs and a plan for distributing them the morning of Sept. 10. The bags themselves would promote the association but more importantly it would allow the directors and other volunteers to open up conversations about joining the CRA with householders who are having yard sales.

Finally, the board discussed what days and times are convenient for the new board configuration; Mondays and Thursdays do not work for some new directors and others requested an 8 p.m. start time to accommodate children's bedtime schedules at their homes. The group agreed to meet Tuesday, Aug. 30, 8 p.m. and then figure out the fall schedule at that time.

ADJOURNED: Moved by Phil, seconded by Keith, the meeting adjourned at 9:46 p.m.