

Woodfield Community Association Annual General Meeting

Tuesday April 16th, 2024, 6:30pm

Lord Roberts School

Board attendance:

Barry Francis (chair)

Kate Rapson (former chair)

Jean Hewitt (treasurer)

Laura Wherry (secretary)

Leif Harmsan (web/communications chair & acting membership chair)

Stephanie Bergman (planning chair)

Rod McDowell (current member at large, proposed newsletter chair)

Sandra Black Evans (current member at large, proposed merchandise chair)

Dawn-Marie Deagle (member at large)

Mandy McDowell (member at large)

Tim Turner (member at large)

General audience attendance number:

20

Welcome

Motion to approve minutes from the 2023 meeting

- Motion to approve – Kate Rapson
- Second – Leif Harmsan
- All in favour

Summary of 2023 (Stephanie)

- Plant Sale May 2023
 - o First time having additional vendors
 - o Thank you to Try Recycling for the mulch and compost and Springtime Garden Centre for the annuals
- Harvest Fest November 2023
 - o Thank you to Justin from BVR for mc-ing and all the volunteers who helped
 - o Over 100 neighbours in attendance
- Tree Sale
 - o Thanks to Variety Cafe and the vendors
 - o Struggled to raise enough money to make this a sustainable event
 - o Hoping to replace with another holiday event
- Heather McKay
 - o We unfortunately lost one of our board members, vice-president Heather McKay passed away unexpectedly in the Fall
 - o Heather was a board member for 4 years and put many hours into the WCA and events

Presentation from Indwell Housing (Julie Ryan)

- Indwell operates properties across Ontario
- Charity organization
- Creates affordable housing communities
- Located in cities across Ontario
 - o 1200 plus tenants across province
 - o 92% housing stability rates
- Provide on-site supports for healthcare, housing, food security, life skills training, recreation, addiction support, etc.
- 600 people are living unsheltered (tents, doorways)
- 2000 people homeless (living in shelters, hotels, couch surfing, etc)
- 200 people died last year because of homelessness
- Woodfield Gate – 356 Dundas Street
 - o Opened 2019
 - o 66 apartments
 - o 35 people were cycling through the hospital and healthcare system before attaining housing at this building
- Embassy Commons – 740 Dundas Street
 - o Opened November 2022
 - o 72 units
 - o Commercial spaces on ground level including Edgar and Joes café, Squeaky Wheel Bike Coop
- Thompson Road Apartments – 403 Thompson Road
 - o Opened October 2023
 - o 44 studio apartments
 - o Operates in partnership with the City of London
- Vision Soho Alliance – in progress
 - o Former grounds of the former Victoria Hospital
 - o 6 non-profit developers
 - o 680 plus units for half market rent and half affordable rent
- New building also coming in Manor Park/The Coves area
- How can we help?
 - o Always looking for volunteers for programs, facilities, maintenance, and fund raising
 - o Can also give monetary donations directly
- Contact information:
 - o indwell.ca
 - o jryan@indwell.ca
 - o 519-286-1390 x 364
- Questions from the audience:
 - o How is rent determined?
 - A proportion of their Ontario Works or Ontario Disability Support Program put towards rent (approximately 50%)
 - o Is there food available to those who cannot cook for themselves?
 - Common meal is served at some facilities daily

- Also help with grocery shopping, food bank, cooking classes
- Have there been any concerns with trespassers, loitering?
 - Policies and practices are in place to deter unwanted activity and crime and at times police are involved

Presentation form Councillor for Ward 13 (David Ferreira)

- Neighbouring communities have lost their own community associations
 - David is working hard to help communities like SOHO redevelop their own community associations
 - Important to keep associations like the WCA going
- New multi-year budget in progress
 - Looking for engaged feedback from citizens
 - In the past not many have stepped forward to provide feedback, questions, and express concerns
 - David is hoping that the mayor's office will provide a document to outline the major parts of the upcoming budget so that people can become engaged ahead of time
 - New legislation and process means that the budget comes directly from the mayor's office (based on new Provincial "Strong Mayor" powers)
- Voter turnout on last election was approximately 25%
- Questions and comments from the audience:
 - How does the "Strong Mayor" legislation change how we should be voting?
 - Counsellors have lost the ability to advocate and change things the way they used to
 - Community members worry that "Strong Mayor" powers further discourage people from voting
 - Requires change on local and provincial levels
 - Counsellors still act as advocates
 - Mayors still have some choice in acting on "Strong Mayor" legislation
 - May impact some level of funding
 - Loss of business and stores, etc. on Richmond Row, Dundas Place, etc. not directly in Woodfield but impacts our community
 - Loss of businesses but also lots of new businesses opening
 - Downtown Master Plan brought forward by David to revitalize the area, create boundaries, encourage amenities and services
 - Are their rules/restrictions to buildings in the downtown area that require residential buildings to have groceries stores, etc. (like cities such as Toronto)
 - Not currently
 - Status of vacant property tax
 - A motion has been put together by David and another counsellor to propose
 - Not sure yet if it will combine both commercial and residential properties
 - Concerns from developers that new projects get held up in the application process
 - Some applications are processed but never go through, can hold up the process for everyone

- Working on a potential clause that will force development that puts a timeline on when development must happen after planning application
- With pressures to create more housing, will there be an impact on things like heritage bylaws
 - Not currently
 - Other community associations are also very passionate about this topic
 - Depends on votes from all counsellors, not just those representing heritage neighbourhoods
 - Need to encourage appreciation of heritage buildings and history amongst all of London

Planning report (Stephanie)

- 300 and 306 Princess Ave official plan and zoning bylaw amendments
 - Currently these buildings are boarded up
 - Designated heritage properties
 - WCA reached out to developers to have a conversation about proposals
 - 3 story addition to back of properties (current height)
 - Increasing number of units on property
 - No plans to impact heritage aesthetic
 - WCA is supporting this kind of development and density to encourage growth
- ReThink Zoning – comprehensive zoning bylaw review
 - Still underway
 - Impacts every property in the city
 - Complete overhaul of the zoning bylaws
 - WCA plans to review and provide input on behalf of community
 - City has a website dedicated to this with a way to provide input

Treasurers report (Jean)

- Treasurers report available at meeting in hard copy
- Current balance is 5,167.06
 - Up from 4186.29 last year
- Motion to approve – Gill Warren
 - Second – Rod McDowell
 - All approve

Membership update and new database website (Leif)

- New website and membership database
- Online shop also available
- historicwoodfield.ca
- All new memberships can now go through website for ease of paying, renewals, etc.

Woodfield merchandise and new cookbooks – request for recipes (Sandra)

- Selling history books, cookbooks, and matching apron at events as well as at local retailers such as Museum London

- Some of the proceeds from sales were donated to local woman's shelter (Karen's Place) to help purchase a picnic table
- New project is a new edition of the Woodfield Cooks cookbook
 - o Looking for more international recipes as well as though catering to dietary restrictions
 - o recipes@historicwoodfield.ca
- Concerns brought forward from community regarding Woodfield motto "residential to the core" and the connotation of "residential"
 - o Changing motto to "community to the core"

Revisions to constitution and bylaws (Stephanie)

- Proposed edits:
 - o All members of the executive committee, including "members at large" can be voting member
 - o Changes to board member titles
 - Eliminated social chair, flyer distribution chair, heritage chair
 - Added web/communications chair, merchandise chair
- Always looking for more volunteers to take on roles, help with events
- Motion to adopt changes to constitution – Sandra Black Evans
 - o Second - Shane O'Neil
 - o All in favour
- Change to position on WCA position on zoning bylaws and planning applications
 - o Proposing modernization of position on development
- Motion to adapt changes to our constitution as above – Jean Hewitt
 - o Second – Dawn-Marie Deagle
 - o All in favour

Comments and questions from the membership

- Lord Roberts has requested neighbours not let dogs run around in yard

Confirmation of slate and nominations

Chair – Barry Francis

Vice Chair – Vacant

Past Chair – Kate Rapson

Secretary – Laura Wherry

Treasurer – Jean Hewitt

Planning Chair – Stephanie Bergman

Web/Communications – Leif Harmsen

Membership Chair – Tricia Mohan

Merchandise Chair – Sandra Black-Evans

Newsletter Chair – Rod McDowell

Members at Large – Mandy McDowell, Dawn-Marie Deagle, Judith Warren

- Motion to accept for term of two years – Tim Turner
 - o Second – Jeff Carson

- Shane O'Neil has stepped forward as a volunteer for Vice Chair

Upcoming events

- London Clean and Green
 - o Friday April 19 – 20 minute clean
- Plant Sale – May 11 – please note new weekend this year
 - o Looking for volunteers
 - o Will have snacks/café
 - o Trees for Woodfield
 - o Will also be selling garden tools
 - o Also open to vendors if anyone interested
- New Garden Walk – June 9 or June 23 – details TBD
 - o Will be outdoor only
 - o Looking for volunteers to show gardens and help out

Motion to adjourn – Burton Moon