

MEETING MINUTES
The Bloor East Neighbourhood Association (BENA)
Annual General Meeting

Thursday, October 26, 2017 – 7 pm - 9 pm
333 Bloor Street East (Rogers Building, Sub-basement, Overflow Room)

Introductions

Speaker: Linda Brett, BENA President

- Welcome
- Acknowledgment of invited guests, Rogers' staff and Rogers for providing the meeting space, EN Consulting Group facilitator and notetaker, elected officials and their staff, other residents'/neighbourhood associations and BENA Executive members and building representatives present and absent from the meeting.
- Linda Brett noted that Christine Inglis, elected to the BENA Board of Directors in 2016 had left the neighbourhood partway through the year.
- Kelly Slather of the Ward 28 Office (the other municipal ward in which part of BENA's territory is located) sent her regrets.
- Brett acknowledged the passing away of long-time Ward 28 Councillor Pam McConnell in the summer and noted that BENA had made a charitable donation in her memory to a charity indicated by her family.
- Brett also acknowledged the passing of valued former Executive Committee Member and strong advocate for the residents of 77 Huntley, Julie Greenbaum, after a long battle with cancer.

BUSINESS MEETING

Declaration of Service of Notice and Call to Order

Bill Rankin

Minutes of Meetings of Previous Annual General Meeting (Tuesday, October 25 2016)

Motion to waive the reading and approval of the previous minutes

Mover: Mara Epstein

Seconder: Paul Wong

Motion carried.

Presentation of Financial Statements

Presenter: Mara Epstein

As part of her remarks Mara Epstein echoed Linda Brett's earlier remarks in mentioning the charitable

contribution BENA made in memoriam of the late Councillor Pam McConnell and Epstein's plans to work with the Association's bankers to invest funds in preparation for any larger expenses.

She noted that the Membership Dues in the Revenue section of the Statement of Revenue and Expenditures had decreased in 2017 from 2016. Epstein explained that this decrease was due to the implementation of Condo building fee cap of the \$2 per unit membership being billed a maximum of \$500.

She also welcomed two new BENA members, St. Paul's Bloor Church and the X2 Condominium on Charles Street.

Motion to Waive Appointment of Auditors

Mover: William Rankin

Secunder: John Burt

Motion carried.

Election of Directors

Facilitator: Edward Nixon of EN Consulting Group (<http://www.enconsulting.ca>)

The floor was opened to the nomination of three directors. There was a question from the floor about what is involved in being a director. The question was answered by Linda Brett who said that the duties of BENA Executive members are almost wholly confined to their involvement in the Operations Committee, which meets monthly. Two Board of Directors` meetings are required yearly by the BENA bylaws and take place during regular Operations Committee meetings.

Incumbent directors (Linda Brett, President; William Rankin, Secretary and Mara Epstein, Treasurer) self-nominated.

The only nominations presented were for Linda Brett, William Rankin and Mara Epstein.

Motion to Close Nominations

Mover: John Burt

Secunder: Paul Wong

Motion carried.

Appointment of Directors

The BENA Directors (Linda Brett, William Rankin and Mara Epstein) were appointed by acclamation.

President's Report

Presenter: Linda Brett, BENA President

Linda Brett tabled BENA's latest (October 2017) Activities and Monitoring Report

Ms. Brett urged BENA members to continue to undertake 311 Reporting as this must be an ongoing effort.

She mentioned that BENA had sent a letter to the Mayor's office in reference to Rosedale Valley Ravine issues. BENA has received a response from the Mayor and will discuss at its next Operations Committee meeting whether and how to respond to this letter. Brett thanked Councillor Wong Tam for her efforts to get maintenance and clean-up services for the Ravine.

Current Significant Projects: Ms. Brett spoke of BENA's registration as a participant in the Ward Boundary appeal (to represent a downtown ward perspective), BENA's involvement in advocacy around legislation around short-stay rentals, and its continued collaboration with other community associations. She urged attendees to read more about each of these items in the Activities and Monitoring Report.

The audience had no questions regarding the President's Report.

Motion to Close Business Meeting

Mover: John Burt

Seconder: Sandra Seaborn

Motion carried.

365 Bloor Street East Update

Linda Brett highlighted that Aroma at 365 Bloor Street East are hosting Saturday afternoon live jazz sessions for the community.

Rogers' Welcome and Remarks

Chris Ostiguy, the Director of Facilities and National Projects for Rogers Communications, welcomed BENA to the Rogers Building.

She spoke about exterior renovation work underway at Rogers on its front planter bed, which had experienced sinking, and inside of the Rogers building itself which was undergoing demolition and construction on its fifth floor.

Question: The questioner mentioned noise and disruption from materials (metal and bricks) being dumped and from inside work taking place on Rogers' premises at and after 8 pm.

Answer: Chris Ostiguy said that the renovations were currently in the demolition stage but that demolition would soon be over. She said that meanwhile Rogers was extremely aware of and trying to adhere to the City's noise bylaw.

Introduction to BENA's Newest Member, St. Paul's Bloor

Bill Rankin, BENA's Membership Recruiter, introduced Sandra Seaborn, Associate Priest at St. Paul's Bloor Street (<http://www.stpaulsbloor.org/>), one of the largest Anglican churches in Canada and BENA's newest members.

Rev. Seaborn gave an introduction to the church and its involvement in and services to community. She noted that St. Paul's celebrated 175 years in existence this year.

Seaborn said that an increasing number of the church's congregants are coming from the local neighbourhood. She said that a notable feature of these parishioners is that they are ``vertical dwellers` living in small spaces. As such St. Paul's has been tailoring its community work to respond to the need in the neighbourhood for a sense of community and to combat feelings of isolation and detachment.

St. Paul's services she mentioned included food collection, groups for parents and children, a financial literacy course, grief and crisis care programmes, divorce care, exercise and music classes, sewing and knitting clubs and an ESL Cafe. She said that St. Paul's is especially reaching out to younger people and those from diverse backgrounds.

Seaborn issued an invitation to those present to visit St. Paul's Bloor Street during the annual Doors Open Toronto (<http://www.doorsopenontario.on.ca/Events/Toronto.aspx>) and Open Streets TO (<https://www.openstreetsto.org/>) events, in which the church participates, and expressed enthusiasm about St. Paul's membership in BENA.

GUEST SPEAKER PRESENTATIONS

Police Services Update

The update was given by PC John Tanner, Neighbourhood Resource Officer, 53 Division and PC Dave Smith, Community Response Officer, Toronto Police Services, 51 Division (<http://www.torontopolice.on.ca/d53/> and <http://www.torontopolice.on.ca/d51/>)

Officer Smith introduced himself as a fifteen year veteran of the Toronto Police Service with ten of those years spent in 51 Division.

He noted that Bloor Street East divides 51 and 53 Divisions with 53 Division beginning on its north side and 51 on its south side.

Smith spoke of big changes to policing afoot in the Divisions instituted by the Toronto Police Service's Transitional Task Force. He said that the police in both divisions now would focus on intelligence gathering and implement new technology. 51 Division would also introduce a Neighbourhood Officers' Programme that will see twelve dedicated officers (four police persons in each area) redeployed to Regent Park, Moss Park and in the Church-Wellesley Corridor.

Officer John Tanner introduced himself (as having been with 53 Division for thirteen years) and

explained that the Neighbourhood Officers' Programme personnel would move through the neighbourhoods on foot for the most part and would concentrate on taking complaints from the public in an effort to establish a good relationship with the community.

Tanner said that the crimes that occur in 53 Division tend to be "crimes of opportunity," such as break and enter, snatching cellphones and purses, and theft from unlocked locations. He noted that not much violent crime takes place in the Division. Tanner urged resident to stay vigilant.

Questions and Answers

Question: Are you going to enforce bylaws with cyclists on sidewalks?

Answer: (PC Dave Smith) That function has been downgraded to the City. We are negotiating with them to get more bylaw enforcement officers in place to enforce the bylaws. 51 Division is extremely busy. We get a lot of calls. If we see infractions we will engage.

Question: Why are the bicycles on the sidewalks without lights, banging into cars? They have no insurance. How can they be taken care of?

Answer: (PC Dave Smith) That is a question for the politicians. We don't have the resources to stop everyone.

Question: I am part of 51 Division. How do we increase your presence Church-Wellesley you are looking at? Yonge-Wellesley is terrible – where I live near Sanctuary is terrible.

Answer: (PC Dave Smith) You will see an increased presence in those areas by officers.

Question: I live on the north side of Bloor Street. Who do I talk to about the Ravine drug users and fires being set in the winter time.

Answer: (PC John Tanner) Residents should call the Division and speak to a Staff Sergeant. We are trying to do intelligence-based policing. We can't do policing without the cooperation of residents.

PC Dave Smith added that complaints can also be submitted at <http://www.torontopolice.on.ca> on the Community Complaints tab. He said that in this way the police can look after the complaints and track them appropriately.

Question: I'm on the north side of Bloor. What is the official policy on people setting up camp in the middle of the street?

Answer: (PC John Tanner) Make a complaint. I have personally taken them [encampments] down. They do go back up. Just let us know and we will investigate.

Question: What does community involvement mean?

Answer: (PC Dave Smith) Use the Toronto Police website, come up to us, approach us. Please talk to us. Tell us what the problems are and we will try to solve them. This lets my boss know I am doing

my job and it allows more resources to be allocated.

Kristyn Wong-Tam, City Councillor, Ward 27 Toronto Centre-Rosedale

Councillor Wong-Tam briefly introduced staffer Edward LaRusic (edward.larusic@toronto.ca), her office's liaison for the Bloor East neighbourhood.

She noted the large turnout and thanked BENA for inviting her. She acknowledged the work of the Toronto Police Services and asked for a round of applause for them.

Councillor Wong-Tam noted that her office would be hosting a Healthy Neighbourhood Summit. She said that 51 is the busiest Division (with 53 Division also being very busy) in Toronto's Ward 27 which consists of fourteen residence and neighbourhood associations out of twenty-seven. She described the area's geography and talked about how Ward 27 includes three police divisions which the Councillor works.

Councillor Wong-Tam noted that BENA is one of the few residence associations that works with two police divisions; most associations only deal with one Division.

The Councillor said that she has been doing significant work on the Rosedale Ravine to keep development shadows off of it – so there is sunlight and has been working with BENA on ravine management and safety.

She mentioned that a ravine strategy designed to help manage this green asset put before City Council had just passed. Councillor Wong-Tam said that praise was due to BENA for working hard to see that strategy through.

Now she said advocacy is needed in order to secure funding for ecological support, replanting and built infrastructure, for example, for the Lower Don Trail; for wayfinding and public art. She mentioned that massive flooding and storms due to climate change damaged ravine infrastructure, now in need of replacement and repair.

Councillor Wong-Tam emphasized the need for money for infrastructure investment and in order to control the human impact on the ravine.

She noted that the number of encampments has increased in the ward and in the city. Councillor Wong-Tam said that the encampment issue is not limited to the downtown core. She underscored that it is linked to mental health issues, trauma and stress, drugs and addictions, and the lack of a safety net for many vulnerable people.

Wong-Tam said that we see people on the street and in the ravines at the end of a process and that it is important to intervene with people who are mentally ill or living with addictions, upstream, before they get to that point.

She said that for the situation to get better it is necessary for all three orders of government working together. Councillor Wong-Tam noted that mental health counseling and supports are primarily a provincial responsibility.

If the police are going to download responsibilities to the City, then the City needs to have more resources to deal with this.

Policing is only one part of a multi-pronged solution, she said.

Councillor Wong-Tam emphasized the need to collect data and base community responses on research.

She said that she has been meeting with the 51 Division Unit Commander and with other neighbourhood associations.

From her discussions with the Unit Commander she reported that dedicated officers deployed to would cover Church and Wellesley, St. Jamestown, Parliament, Carlton, Isabella, Yonge and Sherbourne.

She underscored that officer allocation would be driven by community needs and complaints. She said that the dedicated officers would not be new to the Division, but instead were being pulled away from general work to the aforementioned specific beats.

Wong-Tam touched on the Bloorcape Improvement Area, mentioning that it is slated for construction in 2019.

Councillor Wong-Tam said that she is chagrined by the issues with cycling on sidewalks that residents are experiencing but that there are not the resources to post either police or bylaw officers to enforce the rules.

Instead, she expects that when the Bloor Street East Improvement Project (slated for 2019) takes place and bicycle lanes are put into place that the problems will abate. This is the longer-term solution.

Councillor Wong-Tam said that everything on the BENA President's list is on the list in her office.

She urged residents to call the City's 311 number with issues and complaints as data is what drives service.

Councillor Wong-Tam said that she would be launching a campaign just before the 2018 budget process (just around the corner) to build capacity and interest in Toronto's downtown. The downtown facilities are heavily used, the area is densely populated and seeing more social disorder. She said that she does not mind some of the services that police used to do being downloaded to the City as long as more money can be allocated for additional bylaw officers and garbage and maintenance services.

Councillor Wong-Tam says that Ward 27 also carries the lion's share of social services.

She said that given the extent of its use and utility to the region that downtown Toronto should be

treated differently from other areas of the city and should receive additional funding accordingly. Councillor Wong-Tam said that downtown should not receive the same budgetary allocations as parts of Toronto that are more lightly used.

Councillor Wong-Tam noted that Ward 27 features around 90,000 people at night, but that number balloons to about 400,000 during the day.

Instead, downtown and Ward 27, specifically, should receive funding based on population density, use of its facilities and infrastructure and profitability.

She said that six of Toronto's biggest Business Improvement Areas (BIAs) – two of which are in Ward 27 - were coming together behind this idea. Right now, Wong-Tam said, the BIAs supplement city services but that this is an unsustainable model.

She said it is time that Ward 27 gets its fair share and asked for BENA's support for the campaign.

Questions and Answers

Question: The roadway between Church and Parliament is in a state of disrepair and the posted speed is 40 but drivers exceed it. What can be done in terms of patrolling to treat it as a residential road and not an extension of the DVP?

Answer: (PC Dave Smith) We always encourage traffic safety. Put in a traffic complaints. They will be taken over to the Traffic Services. There are Traffic Enforcement officers. We do our best.

Question: I understand that bicycles want bicycle lanes but why would they not have to have licenses so that they can be monitored and why don't they have insurance? Is there a reason that bikes don't have licenses and have insurance?

Answer: (Councillor Wong-Tam) The City has reviewed this issue four times. It is not feasible. This may be because of cost. I can send you the old reports. The issue has been professionally studied.

Question: Notifications for when things that will go ahead that exceed the bylaws the problem is that with condo owners we don't get notification. It's sent to managers of condos but not referred so we can't react to these problems. Has any progress been made? I pay a lot of taxes but don't find out about important things.

Answer: (Councillor Wong-Tam) Notification for rezoning or planning goes to postal boxes. Notifications about signage variances will go to the main building address. We've tried to have that adjusted and this problem should have been fixed. You should now be getting individual notifications. Sometimes the buildings block bulk mailings, so please tell your building management that you want to receive bulk mailings.

(Linda Brett) Canada Post is now unblocking all mailboxes, so this shouldn't be a problem going forward.

Toronto Ravine Revitalization Study (TRRS) Presentation (with focus on the Rosedale Ravines)

Presenters: Anqi Dong (Masters of Forest Conservation, University of Toronto, Faculty of Forestry, 2015) and Catherine Berka (South Rosedale Residents' Association, Trees and Parks Committee) and the Toronto Ravine Revitalization Study team, Faculty of Forestry.

Dong and Berka presented information about the status of the Rosedale Valley Ravine and steps that can be taken to conserve and revitalize ravine ecosystems.

Anqi Dong detailed the studies done in Toronto's ravines and in the Rosedale Ravine in particular. She spoke of the history of ravine studies, beginning in the 1970s and started up again in the summer of 2015.

The study begun in 2015 was seeking to evaluate the ravines from the perspective of ecological integrity and this standard has been adopted this year by City Council for use in the ravines.

The research has shown that there has been a significant decline in the ecological integrity of Toronto's ravines.

Native species have declined in the ravines. In their place the flora in the ravine is increasingly comprised of invasive species, namely Japanese knotweed and Norway maple. This is particularly the case in the Rosedale Valley Ravine.

Native species, such as various species of ash are critically endangered by infestation and disease and in decline.

While non-native plants can absorb carbon dioxide they cannot sustain native fauna, block light and so do not allow for undergrowth, and do not do a good job of erosion control.

If these trends continue, the ravines will become ``green deserts`` Dong said.

Dumping has also been a significant issue in the ravines. Anqi mentioned that Councillor Wong-Tam put forward legislation that was adopted by Council to stop ravine dumping.

Dong said that ravines are not English or Japanese gardens, structured or manicured green space. They are instead the last refuges for wildlife and native plants and should be conserved as such.

Catherine Berka spoke about not allowing the ravines to decline further. She said that Norway maples should no longer be planted along the streets and should no longer be sold in the city. She noted that there is invasive species legislation but that it goes unenforced.

Catherine Berka spoke of the heavy and varied human use of the ravines and that increased use and uniformed planning will significantly and negatively impact the health of the ravine.

Berka spoke of the importance of ravine stewardship and mentioned some potential partners a plan to

remediate Rosedale Valley Road eg. Branksome Hall school, Manulife, the South Rosedale Resident's Association (SSRA) and Rogers. Rogers has contributed to the Toronto Ravine Revitalization Study.

Berka urged residents to get involved in volunteering to care for and maintain the Ravines, as well as for fundraising, research, information dissemination, and advocacy.

More information on the TRRS efforts and study can be found at <http://www.torontoravines.org>.

Questions and Answers

Question: How do you kill knotweed?

Answer: (Catherine Berka) You can use an herbicide but you do have to be careful and judicious as it can affect species in the water. I had it on my property and I spent about four years getting rid of it. Hand-pulling does work but it does not work immediately. You need to keep pulling to exhaust the root system.

Question: Why can't the City lobby to build a walking bridge at Bayview at the base of the Rosedale Valley to connect the Ravine? I have written letters about this, including to John Tory.

Answer and Remarks: (Councillor Wong-Tam) I don't have a response right now but will bring it through staff to see whether it is feasible.

I thought that Catherine raised some good points. I have been taking copious notes along with Edward here. I will also look into banning the sale of Norway maple. I was aware of the invasive species but not that they were actually still being sold in the city. I will speak to staff to see if we can do something about it. It makes no sense to sell or replant invasive species. Here, I meant that they were still planted as street trees. (However, I noticed that the latest street tree plantings did not include Norway Maple, but you can still buy them in nurseries.)

I would encourage dialogue. We do have conversations with the South Rosedale Residence Association on a need to know basis, when they let us know and this is probably the most fulsome presentation or request that I've heard from the SSRA. It has not been detailed in such a fashion. Usually it's about stop the St. Jamestown Development and shadows on the Ravine. And of course that ship has now sailed but no one from South Rosedale has even come close to articulating such a fulsome presentation to me. I will come talk to you. You can come and talk to me. I want to get a copy of both your presentations because they were excellent – extremely fulsome and informative. If we can do more from the City then we certainly should. There is no reason why we shouldn't be working together. So, thank you.

Closing

Linda Brett thanked attendees and speakers for coming.