

CARLINGTON COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

May 9, 2006

The nice thing about being president is that I get to say thank you to a lot of wonderful people. Everyone I'll mention in this report deserves a big hug and a round of applause for all they have done to contribute to our Association. And a lot of people who can't be named merit our thanks as well.

This Board of Directors was a new team. Jerry and Linda carried on from the previous Board and Frances had been much involved earlier but Sue, Glenn and I were rookies. We were sorry that Donna Gordon decided not to continue with us. Past President Jim MacLean has also been absent since August due to health concerns. However, the rest of us carried on and, with our different strengths and abilities focused on a common goal soon turned into a very good team. Frances and Glenn have an eye for politics, Sue and Linda like organizing events, Jerry and I have management experience and it all came together pretty well.

The first thing for our team to do get to know the community's friends and neighbours.

1. City Councillor Maria McRae, with her trusty assistants Pat Murphy and Bonnie Conlon, have worked hard to keep us informed, listen to our concerns and follow up on our questions. I know from my contacts with other community associations that we are lucky to have a Councillor who pays so much attention to our interests - it isn't necessarily the case in other wards. Very special thanks to Maria and her team.
- Jan Davis, Director of the Alexander Community Centre, welcomed us kindly and introduced us to the Bellevue Manor group, wonderful people who tackle the challenges of Ottawa Housing up around Caldwell.
- At the Carlington Resource Centre, Michael Birmingham and his team provide an amazing range of services.
- In January, Riley Brockington gave us an up-date from the School Board and promised to keep in touch with further news.
- For the city-wide view, we joined the Federation of Citizens' Associations (the FCA) and find it very useful for information about such arcane matters as zoning and for contacts with other community groups.
- On the other side of Fisher, the Central Experimental Farm is every Carlingtonian's favourite neighbour. In November, Doug Shouldice, acting President of the Friends of the Farm to give us an up-date on plans there.

ISSUES

Why do we have a community association? Well, sometimes there is a hot issue - perhaps a controversial re-zoning request like we had last year - and the association becomes a forum for discussion, perhaps taking a lead role. Membership increases. In quieter times, we deal with easier issues, develop a project or two and organize the occasional event so we can get acquainted. Then, when another hot issue comes up, the Association is there to deal with it.

Hot issues may increase membership but blessed is the community that doesn't have any. This year, issues raised were relatively minor - height of kerbs, traffic violations, security - and Councillor McRae took prompt action on them. The City's pesticide ban proposal gave rise to a lot of discussion but is shelved for now. Increases in property tax assessments is a hot topic at the provincial level - but we're not alone in having concerns about that.

There were no controversial re-zoning requests this year. However, from information that I got just last week at an FCA meeting it appears that the status of Merivale Road between Carling and Caldwell may be an issue for the near future. We need to look into that and consider what kind of a street we would like Merivale to be.

From time to time, the City sets up a citizens consultation group for some specific topic. This year, two of our members volunteered to represent us on such groups

- Wendy for the light rail transportation committee, and
 - Gina (a new member) for the committee on the future of the Ottawa Public Library.
- Special thanks to both for taking on this extra activity.

ACTIVITIES

Part of our mandate is to develop a sense of community and, as I mentioned, we're lucky to have some of our members - Sue, Linda, Gail, Lisa, Deirdre and Wendy among others - who enjoy organizing events.

- At the invitation of Jan Davis, we participated in the Alexander Community Centre's Winter Carnival on February 4. Sleigh rides and refreshments had already been planned so our team organized some nifty games for added fun. It went very well - and I can assure you that, if you've never played mini-golf in a wading pool packed with snow, your sports career just isn't complete!
- Wendy registered a Carlington team for Municipal Clean-up Day on April 29. Four of us (all from Viscount Avenue) spent that sunny spring morning, raking the grass triangle kitty-corner from Westgate and then continuing north on Merivale past the Hydro set-up. In two hours we filled about ten garbage bags with trash.
- We've announced an area Garage Sale for Saturday, June 3 - more effective than street-by-street sales. Lana (a pro at this) will arrange publicity. Just put your stuff out and sell, sell, sell. Let's hope for good weather.

Planned for this summer is a Potluck Picnic, date and details to be announced later. Stay tuned.....

We've identified two long-term activities.

- Several community residents are, in various ways, compiling material for a history of Carlington. New member, Kelley, (there's a street in Carlington named after her family) is going to follow up on this. At some point in the future, we may have a role to pull all this together into a publication, perhaps with funding from the City.
- Many of us in Carlington live in what are referred to as the "Vet Houses" - the little houses that were built around 1945/46 for the veterans returning from service during World War II. In the course of sixty year, there have been interesting renovations to many of these houses. We'd like to compile plans, drawings and photos of some of these as a first step which could lead to a lot of other possibilities. A Renovation Fair is one suggestion. A national association of veteran home owners with its own web-site is a more ambitious proposal. Another idea is to ask the federal government for some kind of memorial to the veterans who lived here. What we actually accomplish will depend largely on who volunteers to get involved and what they are able and willing to do. In the coming year, we should narrow down the focus to something specific and get started.

ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS

Regular meetings were held every month except July. After a little fiddling with the schedule to try to please everyone, we agreed to continue with the second Tuesday of the month. You may have noticed that agendas are cookie-cutter routine too - Councillor's Report, Issues, Activities, and Administrative Matters cover just about everything except the occasional guest speakers.

However, it was apparent that, in some respects, the existing by-laws did not reflect the way we actually function. There were some omissions and inconsistencies too. So we set up a committee - Jerry, Frances and myself - to produce a revised version. On the advice of the City, we combined the Charter and by-laws into one document. We referred to the by-laws of some other community organizations for ideas and wording. The final document was accepted by the Board and sent to all members in March for your consideration at this meeting.

Last year, the Carlington Community Association had proudly launched its Web-site, designed for us by Baytek. In the summer, I invited participation in a committee to review the web-site and consider how best to manage it. The committee, which turned out to be Michael, Melinda and I, came up with many new ideas for content, presentation and links with our neighbouring organizations. We found that the existing web-site design did not have the flexibility to accommodate these changes. There was another problem too. Baytek was charging us about \$185 to host it and \$70 per hour for any changes, up-dates or revisions. This is more than we can afford - and an unnecessary expense when we have qualified volunteers to do the work. So a new web-site has been designed. It will have

- a "title page" to say who we are and where we are (some people have never heard of

Carlington!) and to highlight what's new;

- click here for a map or perhaps an aerial view of Carlington;
- click here for minutes, by-laws, etc.
- click here for our City Councillor's page; and perhaps links with City Hall;
- click here for our School Board representative;
- perhaps pages for our federal and provincial MPs as well;
- links with the Alexander Community Centre, the Carlington Resource Centre and maybe our local schools;
- possible links with other community associations;
- Features such as a history page with quotes from old Carlington Summits, a garden page and whatever else our members are willing to produce
- Perhaps announcements of activities in which Carlington residents are participating, such as concerts or art shows
- and, most important, an e-mail address for the community association, accessible by whoever is president.

We need to define some general policies and management procedures and to decide, for example, whether we want to have advertising from local businesses. When we've determined some of those questions, the design can be completed. The new web-site could be up and running by the end of the summer. I hope it will prove to be a way of involving some of the younger members of the community and of celebrating the community of Carlington.

CONCLUSION

There's one event I haven't mentioned. Just a year ago, your past president, Jim MacLean, and I planted a tree together here at the Alexander Community Centre. It was a red oak, donated to the community to celebrate Ottawa's 150th anniversary. Well, the tree arrived, the site was marked and we had a couple of spades but the ground was very hard. Jan Davis fetched six boys to help us. They set to with a will, had the hole dug in no time, fetched water and, while they worked, asked us about the event and about the tree. Together we planted the oak and they are keeping an eye on it while it grows. The boys names are Gouhad, Mohammad, Omar, Liban, Shawn and Said. It is their community too.

A community association is there for all of us. It's a way to involve anyone who lives here and is willing and interested in helping in a spirit of friendship. Let's keep it going.

THANK YOU