

Harbord Village Residents' Association Board Meeting

June 16, 2020, 7.00 pm

by Zoom call

FINAL MINUTES

In Attendance: Gina Buonaguro, Simon Coleman, Sue Dexter, Anne Fleming, Susan McDonald, Cathy Merkley, Gail Misra, Lena Mortensen, Christian Mueller, Carolee Orme, Andrea Poptsis, Nick Provart, Jane Perdue, Regine Schmid, Nicole Schulman, Gus Sinclair, Merrill Swain, Robert Stambula

Meeting called to order at 7:05 pm by Gail.

- 1. Chair's Welcome:** Gail called the meeting to order and noted the continued strange circumstances under which we find ourselves. It may be a while before we are able to resume in person meetings, particularly at Kensington Gardens, so this is the new normal until further notice.
- 2. Approval of Agenda:** The oversized garage item (Sussex Mews) was added to the agenda. Carolee added an update on 225 Brunswick. The Chair also noted that it is a very full agenda for tonight's meeting so people should be brief. Gus moved adoption of the agenda as presented; seconded by Nicole. Agenda adopted.
- 3. Approval of April minutes:** Gus moved approval of the April minutes; Simon seconded; minutes approved.
- 4. Other Business**

a) Update from the Councillor (Sue / Bob)

Sue and Bob met with Councillor Layton earlier this week to discuss a number of HVRA files that have been stalled. It was noted anecdotally that our Annex Residents' Association colleagues have had a similar experience. It seems that even when council votes to support items that have been put forward on our behalf, there usually isn't any budget allocated to the items which makes implementation challenging.

Shared Streets, an item that several board members went to considerable effort to put a proposal together for the Councillor at his urgent request, is one item in particular that has been dropped of late. The Shared Streets proposal is similar in content to the pilot project that TOCore had approval to proceed with in the Harbord Village. A recent meeting with TOCore with our new Shared Streets proposal was met with great enthusiasm; however, support for the initiative seems to have faltered after a subsequent conversation with the

Councillor. Bob added there has been similar stalling on the follow up from the city on the sidewalk snow removal pilot.

The general consensus from board members was that it was quite disheartening to work on initiatives where nothing seems to come of our efforts and where support from the Councillor is hard to ascertain. Sue suggested that we focus our efforts more on what we can do for Harbord Village and become less reliant on the Councillor's efforts to move our initiatives forward. The NetZero Committee is an example of a committee with positive momentum that has very little involvement of the Councillor.

Inviting the Councillor to one of our HVRA meetings was discussed; he hasn't been to a board meeting since immediately following his election in late 2018. Nicole suggested that if we are going to write the Councillor to express our frustration that we should be specific as to where the Councillor has dropped the ball on HVRA business and that we remind him that our projects do not only serve HV residents, but rather have implications city wide.

Sue put forward the following motion: *The Board of HVRA wishes to express to the Councillor its concern and dismay on his report of projects we have undertaken which have been delayed, deferred or lost.*

After considerable discussion, Gail suggested that Sue and Gus work together to amend the motion based on the feedback that was received from the Board. A revised motion will be sent out and voted on via email at a later date. Gail thanked Sue and Bob for their efforts to follow up with the Councillor to find out why our projects have stalled.

b) King Edward Yard Revitalization (Bob)

Bob met with Corinne Promislow, Principal of King Edward, and Dee Williams, co-chair of the Parent Council today. Bob expressed that he was happy to show support for the yard revitalization project at a high level but was concerned with some of the TDSB's previous actions with regard to publicly funded lands (e.g. Central Tech). He proposed that we make sure that the *status quo* public access is preserved at King Edward after the yard revitalization.

There are two key concerns with the proposed design – the outdoor classroom and the outdoor gathering place – both which indirectly create gathering places for unintended use at unintended times. The Councillor has indicated that he has identified \$137K of s.37 funds for this project.

Bob expressed that the HVRA is supportive of the school's proposal, provided agreement can be reached on shared use and that considerations are taken for the two design elements that are undesirable for the community as noted above. The school wants to know what the funding envelope is by September so they can ensure the project is undertaken in 2021 (it has been a 5 year ordeal to try to move this project forward on their part).

It was noted that the Councillor will have to put a motion to city council asking for these funds to be allocated to this project. There might be only one more community council meeting and one council meeting before council breaks for the summer therefore there is a sense of urgency associated with this and **the Councillor will need to put a motion forward in the next few weeks.**

Bob put forward the following motion:

Our local schools are an important and valued part of our neighborhood. We support them and we support the general concept of the KE Yard Revitalization Project. As KEPS seeks public financial support for this project from the City of Toronto, we would like to partner with KEPS/TDSB and the City in both design elements and in securing public access to the KEPS facilities during non-school times to ensure public access to the yard is preserved.

To that end, HRVA urges Councillor Layton to convene a meeting with KEPS/TDSB Officials and HVRA representatives to find agreement on design details, negotiate public access, and if successful, identify/release City funds to support the King Edward Public School Yard Revitalization Project.

Jane seconded the motion; Andrea abstained. Motion carried.

Sue suggested that if s.37 monies are involved in the project, that some sort of public consultation should be conducted.

c) Central Tech track closure (Nicole)

Nicole reported that many people in the neighbourhood are upset about the lack of access to the track at Central Tech. The concrete area on Central Tech is well used while the track remains under lock and key. Gus contacted Razor and they claim they cannot take down the dome at this time (not until October at which time it will likely remain up for the winter season) and that there are liability issues associated with opening the track. As per the terms of settlement reached at the OMB regarding the Central Tech dome, the public is supposed to have access to the track. Nicole proposed that we should not be passive about this issue despite the fact that Razor is going to do what they are going to do. Razor's business model is predicated on the fact that the public are supportive of their business model. She suggested that this effort needs a champion in the community to take it up with Razor, if not someone on the Board/Community Liaison Committee, then someone in the community who is passionate about access. She proposed Robert Hanks, her spouse.

Gail suggested that we do not have the ability to make Razor do anything. Carolee suggested that we already have a mechanism whereby community interests are presented at the Community Liaison Committee to convey our concerns to Razor. Gina suggested that Robert could put together a petition to garner support for community access and the HVRA could consider supporting it. Bob suggested that we remind Razor about the community use requirements in the minutes of settlement. Andrea suggested that if the terms of reference for the Community Liaison Committee permit it that we consider putting a person on it to represent community interests that is not an HVRA board member but who is someone committed to advocating for the public access that was agreed to by Razor. Merrill suggested that we have a potential champion who is willing to take this on (Robert Hanks) and that we should encourage him to take this on for the community.

Nicole put forward a motion to confirm that the HVRA negotiated with Razor in good faith and Razor is obliged to give the community the access that was mandated by the minutes of settlement. Further, that the Board support efforts to lobby for the community access that

has been promised as per the minutes of settlement and will support Robert Hanks in his willingness to stand up for the community's interests. Nicole proposed that the HVRA write a letter to support the efforts of the community member Robert Hanks in his efforts to negotiate with Razor and the TDSB to see if they can deliver on the community access that was promised in the minutes of settlement. Simon seconded the motion. 8 votes in favour; 5 opposed. Motion carried. Nicole will draft a letter to be reviewed by the Board prior to sending.

A special meeting of the Board was held on June 22nd to address the issue of community access to the Central Tech field. It was agreed that Gus was mandated to go back to Razor Management to advocate again for community access to the CTS field. He will try to get our TDSB School Trustee, Chris Moise, and our Councillor, Mike Layton, to support our efforts, in order to add strength to our ask. He will be pointing out that TDSB fields are now supposed to be open, and as we move into Phase 2 in Toronto as of Wednesday, access to the field should be more possible than it may have been before.

Nick was going to provide Gus with the name of a company that he knows took down a slightly smaller tennis dome in the city during the shutdown. This too will be added information for Gus to take to Razor and/or the Facilities Management and Community Liaison Team. Gus will report back to the Board as soon as he has any new information on this subject.

It was agreed that while the Board wished Gus well in his endeavours, should there be no success, we can hold another special board meeting to discuss next steps, should that be needed in advance of the July Board meeting.

d) Café / 104 Harbord / Proliferation of Cannabis shops (Andrea)

Andrea provided an update on the status of Café at 104 Harbord which continues to operate as an illegal, unlicensed cannabis retailer. Efforts to reach Pat Burke of MLS went unanswered. The Councillor was asked for an update and he tried to follow up with Pat Burke as well and had the same outcome. Emily Wong indicated that the Councillor would try to connect with Burke for an update on the City's efforts to deal with this illegal operation. Andrea also updated that Councillor Bailao wrote a letter to the Province conveying the concern of her constituents with the proliferation of licensed cannabis shops in her ward. This is a growing issue in downtown Toronto. Our Councillor was asked if he would write a letter to the Province and he expressed that letter writing was not effective. He indicated he would support a motion if Bailao was going to put one forward (she isn't). Unclear what if anything our Councillor is prepared to do to support constituents with concerns about cannabis shops. Sue suggested Andrea write a letter to the Councillor asking him for his thoughts on how to deal with this illegal unlicensed business operating in flagrant disregard of the laws. Subsequent to the meeting, Andrea contacted the Councillor's office to no avail.

e) 666 Spadina / Robert St geothermal update (Nick)

Nick provided an update on the progress of the project. Issues are being addressed. There is a lot of dust that is being generated from the project at 666 Spadina which seems to have no solution. Time will be the solution since the project won't last forever!

f) 79 Harbord / Sussex Mews (Gus)

There is an oversized garage that was built in Sussex Mews. Gus has spoken to the CoA about this and was advised that there are plans to connect the garage to the main building through a catwalk. Once the catwalk is erected the structure will be legal. Sue suggested that we write a letter on this. Gus agreed.

g) 225 Brunswick Ave (Carolee)

Carolee provided an update on the building on the corner of Sussex and Brunswick. An application has been submitted to convert the building to 7 apartments, adding one storey to the building. No date at CoA yet but a letter has gone out to neighbours to alert them to the proposed change.

h) Chair to Vice Chair Succession (Gail / Anne)

Gail reported that she has sold her house and it is due to close in late August. Anne, Gus and Gail will have a discussion to determine next steps for the transition to Anne as the new Chair.

i) HVRA Gratitude Challenge debrief (Andrea)

Andrea reported that the inaugural Gratitude Challenge raised over \$16,000 for the Scott Mission and the Fort York Food Bank. It was great to see such deep support in the community and from a handful of HVRA board members who provided over \$6,000 in matching gifts. Both organizations expressed their immense gratitude to the HV for this incredible support. Gail thanked Andrea for her efforts to spearhead and promote this initiative into the great success that it was.

j) Russell St. naming issue (Gina)

Due to issues with the alleged anti-abolitionist sentiments of Peter Russell, after whom Russell Street is named, there is a movement to rename the street. The U of T portion of the street (east of Spadina) will be renamed for Ursula Franklin. It is not clear if this renaming will extend to the west of Spadina part of Russell St. Gina asked if this is an issue that the HVRA would weigh in on. Gus responded yes and referenced the very successful laneway naming process that we were involved with some years ago. The HV can petition to have our side named something other than Ursula Franklin (U of T has gone through the process with Franklin already). Sue researched Russell and can't corroborate the claims that he was involved with the anti abolitionist movement. Andrea noted that it will look odd if we don't rename our section after the eastern section is being changed.

Since there are many streets in the city that have issues associated with their namesakes, the Board decided that we would wait for the city to take the lead in terms of how it will address controversial historical figures for whom streets have been named. Gail will get back to Richard Longley to advise him that we will wait to see what direction the City is going in on the larger issue of street renaming, and then will work with the community based on the historical research and community wishes.

k) Fall Fair (Anne)

Anne reported that Margaret Fairley Park remains shut even though it should have been reopened. The City will send someone to address reopening the park although the playground equipment will continue to be taped off.

Anne noted that it is unclear whether we will be able to have a Fall Fair gathering at all. Permits for events have been cancelled for events over 250 people until the end of July, and until the end of August for events over 2000. We have an annual permit that we renew every year (submitted in the fall of 2019). Typically, 8 weeks before the event, we get a confirmation and have to submit the final paperwork; it's not clear we would get a permit for the event this year. Things start to pick up on planning in mid July. The City is reviewing the situation monthly so we would expect to hear about August and September events soon, but until then the permit is in limbo.

The Board discussed how hard it would be to stage the Fair given the constraints around gathering, the risks associated with food handling, and the extent to which local businesses, donors to the Silent Auction, have had their businesses negatively impacted by COVID-19. Christian suggested we need to make a decision on a go / no go now because they need to know before the next board meeting.

Andrea suggested that it is not appropriate to go forward with the Fall Fair as we know it but that maybe a more informal gathering (without food and a silent auction) might be possible. Simon suggested that any kind of community gathering that is deemed safe could be tied to a celebration of local businesses to thank them for their support of the Fall Fair and to give them a bit of a boost. Gus suggested that we do a hiatus on the Fall Fair this year as many other events have been cancelled well into the fall / winter.

Anne offered to strike a sub committee to find alternative ways to celebrate in lieu of the Fall Fair. Christian volunteered to be a part of that. A call out was made to the Board to see if anyone else is interested.

Merrill put forward a motion to have the Fall Fair go on hiatus until 2021; Gus seconded. All in favour; motion carried. Anne suggested that we get creative and think outside of the box to find ways to celebrate our local businesses. This item will be added to the August board agenda.

5. Receipt of reports (acknowledgement of receipt of Committee and Area reports; identification of any new or pressing issues or clarifications)

Area Reports:

- **North East** (Nick/Carolee): Garbage cans have been installed along Bloor St. as the last step in revitalization. The parkettes are greening up nicely. Geothermal update - as of June 10th, 88 holes of 150 have been drilled on Robert St. field. Speeding dump trucks are an ongoing issue. Balcony restoration continues at 666 Spadina - replacement balcony fronts are starting to be installed on the east side. Dust is an ongoing issue.
- **North West** (Nicole/Christian): Central Tech track closure is a hot topic in the area. Sally Bird park has reopened. Installation work continues for the Brunswick Contraflow at

Harbord and at Bloor. Harbord/Bathurst intersection continues to be dangerous with many accidents. The abandoned house at 200 Brunswick was raided by the police after another presumed squatter was spotted using it. Harbord House has a new home (in the old Harvest Kitchen).

- **South Central** (Simon/Susan): Cultivation of lawns on Brunswick Ave. is ongoing. Traffic issues (wrong way drives) along Brunswick (between College and Ulster) due to signage confusion. Resurfacing of Brunswick is planned for July/August.
- **South East** (Cathy/Gina): Installation of a traffic light at Robert and Harbord continues but will be delayed to Fall 2020 at the earliest. The renaming of Russell Street is also becoming a hot topic for some in the South East.
- **South West** (Jane/Bob): NA. See King Edward Yard Revitalization item.

Webmaster Report (*Regine Schmid*)

All is well with the website however on June 7th, the main harbordvillage.com website, along with <http://harbordvillagehistory.ca/> was migrated to an upgraded server with the web hosting company WHC. This was done to address some ongoing email routing issues; the upgrade was done for free and a discount was negotiated resulting in a savings of \$257.50 per year. Many thanks to the webmaster and to our former webmaster Margaret Procter for their efforts to resolve this long saga!

Harbord Village Gardeners Report (*Margaret Procter*)

Current distribution list for the Gardeners' Group is up to 107 (up from 75 last year). The Gardeners' Group receives weekly eblasts and this year has resulted in an active exchange of garden material amongst members through "contactless" pickup. None of the activities this year has required any outlay of money (in large part since the annual plant fair had to be put on hiatus due to COVID-19). Funds accumulated by previous donations and kept by HVRA on the group's behalf can stay untouched until in-person events resume. Instead of group walks, the Gardeners have been submitting Sidewalk Stroll photos, an archive of which can be found at: <https://harbordvillage.com/projects/greening/hvgardeners/#strollphotos>.

Harbord Village Mutual Aid Network Report (*Margaret Procter*)

The Harbord Village Mutual Aid Network was set up in mid-March and quickly ballooned to over 40 volunteers. Only four requests for help were registered from before April 4. All asked for grocery pickup and delivery. Publicity was extensive. Volunteers distributed about 600 flyers to houses (but not apartments). Some volunteers on our list have expressed disappointment that their offers to help were not taken up. Once local stores put in seniors' hours and set up delivery services, many people were able to manage without outside help. Should something like this be undertaken again in future, we might want to think about how it is organized to maximize the benefit to residents in need.

(For example, ARA published volunteers' full contact information in an online list so residents could contact them directly. Because of privacy concerns, we relied mainly on a central hub to set up connections.) The city-wide Good Neighbour Project and Caremongering Toronto focus on at-risk groups such as those living in public housing or needing pickups from food banks. Our

help was open to all residents of Harbord Village without targeting issues of income or food insecurity. Resilience projects (e.g., <http://www.crewtoronto.ca/>) usually recommend small “pods” of people living near each other as the most conducive to truly mutual aid. We offered to connect residents with people they were unlikely to know personally, during a pandemic where “strangers” might seem potentially dangerous.

ACTION REQUEST: Margaret asked that someone on the Board write to the list of volunteers to express appreciation for their offers of help, perhaps mentioning that HVRA will need volunteer help for other projects and events in the future. (Margaret can supply an Excel file with volunteers’ names and email addresses).

6. Other Business:

There were no additional motions that were passed prior to the August meeting.

Nick put forward a motion to adjourn the meeting. Seconded by Gus. Meeting adjourned at 9:12 pm.

Minutes prepared by Andrea Poptsis, Secretary.