

**Notes made during a General Meeting of the Harmony Residents Group Inc. (HRG) on Wednesday, August 10, 2011 in the Virgil Arena Mary Snider Room.**

This meeting began at 7:10 PM with 22 people including 4 members of the HRG Board of Directors and 3 guests.

R. Busbridge introduced the guests who are members of the Niagara Bruce Trail Club, Merle Richards, president and speaker this evening, Trudy Sanasi, past president, and Derek Richards.

There are 9 Bruce Trail Clubs which have volunteers responsible for maintaining, stewarding and promoting the Trail. The Bruce Trail Conservancy (BTC), formerly the Bruce Trail Association, is a charitable organization committed to the establishment of a conservation corridor containing a public foot path, along the Niagara Escarpment, a UNESCO World Biosphere Reserve. About ½ of the BTC budget for trail development, maintenance, land stewardship, public education and local club activities comes from membership fees which are \$50 annually, eligible for a charitable tax receipt. The fee is for membership in both the BTC and the local club.

The BTC has about 8700 members (500 in the Niagara club) and 1000 volunteers from the 9 clubs. The idea for an escarpment trail originated in 1960 in Niagara, and the first hike was in 1962, while now the Trail has 400,000 visitors annually. The BTC owns only ½ of the land through which the Trail passes but it is actively attempting to buy the remainder and spent over \$1 Million for that purpose in 2010. Most financial support comes from individuals, planned giving and annual fundraising. In winter, the Niagara Club organizes walks through Niagara-on-the-Lake.

The formal talk ended at 7:28 PM and was followed by a period of questions until 7:49 PM. There were questions about the BTC relationship with other conservation groups, the Niagara Land Trust and public liability. BTC cooperates with all conservation authorities and groups, buys land only for the Trail route while the Land Trust buys for other purposes, assumes responsibility for liability and has been sued but never successfully. BTC supports the HRG proposal for the Parks Canada (PC) Lakeshore property.

R. Busbridge thanked the speaker and the other Club members present who were applauded enthusiastically by those present. Brochures available were the Niagara Escarpment Explorer, BTC information, the Niagara Club summer hiking schedule, Hiking Made Easy and the Ontario Heritage Trust 2011 booklet.

R. Busbridge reviewed the HRG Board of Directors activities since the last General Meeting on May 13, and provided a copy of his report which is attached. He mentioned that Shirley Sparrow has agreed to be Treasurer and that the current bank balance is \$2,728. Also that Thomas Busbridge has agreed to be Membership Coordinator. He responded to a number of questions and comments from Gracia Jaynes and others about the principal barrier to the implementation of the HRG proposal for the PC property, the importance of the inclusion in it of the history of local agriculture and the status of the environmental assessment of the PC land. He replied that bureaucracy within PC, with which a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) or Agreement is being discussed, is the chief impediment, that area MPs have been contacted to help with it but that the active support of our local MP is essential, that a Peace, Community or Native Plant Garden is part of the HRG proposal, and that the environmental assessments are essentially complete. He mentioned the various organizations that have been approached for support but that a provincially sponsored health organization, the Southern Ontario Aboriginal Diabetes Initiative (SOADI) is the only one that has indicated possible financial support. People experienced in such matters suggest that it may take 10 years to establish a new park, so that patience and persistence are necessary to the success of HRG efforts which began in 2008.

Peter Harvey circulated interesting aerial photographs of the PC Lakeshore property taken recently and in the 1930s, which demonstrated the extensive shoreline erosion that has occurred. Further information is available on the Google Earth website.

**Next General Meeting: Wednesday, November 9, 2011, 7:00 PM, Virgil Arena.**

**Adjournment: At 8:27 PM.**

C.James, Secretary