

Notes made at a Meeting of the General Membership of the Harmony Residents Group Inc. in the evening of Wednesday, February 10, 2010, in the Virgil Arena Mary Snider Room.

This meeting began at 7:10 PM with 16 people present including 4 members of the Group Board of Directors.

R.Busbridge distributed a summary of the January 13 meeting results, entitled "Onghara Natural Heritage Park", then explained that this workshop would consider educational and recreational facilities that might be provided on the site.

This was a brainstorming session, so ideas were offered at random, such as the sale of trees to be planted on site, bird watching, animal sanctuary, viticulture technology, photography, wetlands, painting, hiking, cross country skiing, snow shoeing, fishing, camping, roller blading, ice skating, kite flying, wind surfing, kayaking, leash free dog exercise area, etc.

Many of these ideas were considered impractical for this area, due to the limitations of climate or because they are contrary to the principles adopted by the Group on January 13, the foremost being to preserve and enhance the natural habitat.

Members were asked to prioritize their preferred recreations and hiking/walking scored 10, non motorized water sports 7, picnicking 6 and bird watching 5. Some of these, such as picnicking, create a need for the provision of a water supply, garbage and sewage disposal, and supervision to ensure that the natural amenities of the area are not compromised such as happens now, according to some Parks Canada personnel, in Niagara Shores Park at the extreme west end of this property. Others such as hiking/walking, photography, landscape painting, bird watching, non motorized water sports, have little or no impact on the natural environment. A cycling path is considered an unnecessary duplication of alternate routes through the town, as is an area to exercise dogs.

Some members mentioned the facilities for lectures and demonstrations, which will be provided in the community centre under construction, and the lack of a need to duplicate these in any building in the park. A suggestion was that any decision regarding such a building be deferred until all interested and potential support groups were consulted, although it seemed to be agreed that any building should reflect the early history of the area, perhaps in the form of a 19th century farm house. Another suggestion was that the Waste Water Treatment Plant, to be rebuilt in the near future, incorporate a section to educate the public about the process and perhaps another section to demonstrate viticulture technology. A part of the site should be used to demonstrate the proven feasibility of the ability of structured wetlands to treat waste water in a cold climate.

Some general comments of interest were that the hazardous nature of the area may be greatly exaggerated since, for many years, local children have played on it, people have exercised their dogs and the Militia have camped on it without incident. Any hazard may be associated only with deep excavations and, in any case, it would be unnecessary to sweep clean the entire area, but only that for designated paths, which would be posted with signs to discourage random wandering.

The March meeting will address the research necessary to accumulate factual information about the site and the Group plans for any amenities to be provided and recreations to be encouraged on it.

R.Busbridge advised that Doug Draper, a columnist with the Niagara This Week newspaper, has a computer website, www.niagaraatlarge.com which members may wish to consult

This meeting adjourned at 8:50 PM.

C.James.