

## **Minutes of a General Meeting of the Harmony Residents Group Inc. In the evening of December 9, 2009 in the Virgil Arena large meeting room.**

This meeting began at 7:10 PM with 23 people present including 4 members of the Group Board of Directors.

Parks Canada (PC) people present were Joel Lafrance, Manager of Niagara Historic Sites, Robert Andrews, Manager for Project Niagara (PN) communications, Jeanette Brindle, Manager of south-west Ontario sites, and Valerie Valetta (?) and Kimberly Baird (?) technical experts, which 2 ladies made presentations, described by Ms. Brindle as an overview of environmental assessments (EA) in PC.

Ms. Valetta (?) described the EA process saying that it applies to all departments of the federal government but that other regulations must be considered also, such as the Species at Risk Act (SARA), Canada National Parks Act and Regulations, PC management directives etc., the specific project requirement determining the regulations to be considered. An EA cannot commence unless there is a project and an initiative (trigger) to start such as federal funds given to the project or the transfer of land out of PC. An EA is not intended as a study of the impact on past conditions but the effect on future conditions. If the start date of an EA has been determined, then PC has a maximum of 14 days to post a notice of its start and a minimum of 15 days to post the authority's decision about it. After the start notice, a notice of public participations is required which includes its scope. The key components of an EA are the project description and the identification and understanding of all its aspects that will impact the environment and it should consider all elements of the eco system, scientific, social, cultural and economic, and the changes that will affect the physical nature of the site, the health and socio/economic conditions of residents, cultural heritage, current use of the land and the mitigating measures to be taken to reduce and control adverse effects, including restitution. At the screening stage, public participation is at the direction of the responsible authority and ministerial guidance is the criterion to determine when it is appropriate.

Ms. Baird (?) spoke about SARA which applies to species in trouble, provides a framework to protect them or assist in their recovery and specifies penalties. There is also a provincial Endangered Species Act of 2006. A committee determines what species are at risk, followed by a legal listing of those species and measures to protect and help them recover. Such species found on PC land are posted on the SARA public registry along with managerial plans and legal time lines. SARA prohibits killing, harming or harassing Extirpated, Endangered or Threatened species or destruction of their habitat. Once a SARA prohibition is in effect, everyone must be licensed to do anything in that area and any activity must be only for scientific purposes. EA and SARA permits can be combined and licence holders must meet the requirements of both.

A period of questions and answers followed.

Q. Who is the responsible authority?

A. PC and may be other federal agencies.

Q. How is the EA initiated (triggered) and when? (with regard to PN and the PC land)

A. It has not been initiated because there is no proposal for a project.

Q. Would PC consider other proposals?

A. PC has an interim understanding with PN to explore and awaits a proposal. Others would be considered if they conformed to the PC mandate but not until a proposal is received from PN. PC must have a reason to become interested.

Q. Is there a process by which PC considers proposals?

A. Consult PC website for details.

- Q. What is the PC incentive to bring another 1/4 Million visitors to this town when the present 2½ Million annually has not resulted in public access to the Lakeshore?
- A. The PC south-west Ontario unit has 13 historic sites, 7 of them in Niagara-on-the-Lake and 6 other sites but limited funds, so has concentrated on Fort George. The Lakeshore site would be very expensive to improve and other sites yield quicker results at less expense, so it has not had high priority if costs must be paid from the PC budget, but the War of 1812 Bicentennial has provided a reason to think again about this site.
- Q. A statement was made that a proposal is needed to initiate a EA but another was that a species risk assessment is in progress. This seems contradictory. Why?
- A. The impending Bicentennial provided a reason and the study in progress will be incorporated in the SARA assessment. The Waste Water Treatment Plant is a separate consideration because it will involve some provincial EAs also.
- Q. What is PC doing to assess PN impact on local residents, noise, traffic etc.
- A. Health Canada will be concerned with noise levels.

This part of the evening ended at 8:40 PM with thanks to PC people for their attendance and information.

R. Busbridge explained briefly the Group Board strategy and thoughts about the new traffic study proposed by PN, to be made in cooperation with townspeople if PN can obtain more than \$25 Million from the federal government to pay for it and start their project.

This meeting adjourned at 8:47 PM.

Cliff James, Secretary