

Minutes of a General Meeting of the Harmony Residents Group on Wednesday, June 10 at 7 PM in the Virgil Arena large meeting room.

R.Busbridge began this meeting at 7:16 PM with a report of the recent activities of the Board of Directors. 24 members were present but no one from the media. R.Busbridge will be interviewed by the St.Catharines Standard newspaper people on June 12.

He spoke of the need to develop the Group concept of an EcoPark for the Lakeshore Road federal government lands coveted by the promoters of the Project Niagara music festival . The Group EcoPark mission should stress its conformance with Ontario Greenbelt legislation, to protect the forest, shoreline, wetlands, battlefield site and to provide an information centre about these items and aboriginal history. A financial assessment of the cost of an EcoPark is needed as well as a visual illustration of its plan. Environmental groups will be contacted for assistance and the availability of grants investigated. Jack Custers will obtain information at a Workshop at the Centre for Conservation at Ball's Falls on June 15.

The Traffic Study done by Delcan, but paid for and directed by the National Arts Centre, a chief proponent of the music festival, provided no terms of reference at the May 27 Open House and the information provided was totally inadequate with respect to the times when the study was done and the roads considered. The Board sent Delcan 25 questions, asking for answers, and will advise both the Town and Region of the Group opinion that the manner in which this study is being done is unethical as well as inadequate.

The Canadian Environmental Assessment Act requires that assessments be done for all sites where federal government land is being considered for a purpose which would change its existing state, so that the traffic study now in progress is premature. Ministers of the federal government departments of Culture and the Environment will be contacted for their response to what appears to be a contravention of their own legislation and will be reminded of a recent poll indicating that 32% of the public want a reduction in government spending in cultural activities.

An Open House at the Anderson Lane Firehall on June 10 provided information about a Municipal Class Environmental Assessment for the Niagara-on-the-Lake Wastewater Treatment Plant Expansion and an opportunity for public comment by June 29, 2009. All of the Class Environment Assessment Phase 1 requirements and Phase 2 identification potential alternative solutions were completed during the Northeast Area Wastewater Servicing Study Master Plan (2008), which recommended that Phase 2 requirements pertaining to detailed evaluations of the alternative solutions should be studied in more detail during the Schedule C Class Environment Assessment undertaking, so this current study has been undertaken to fulfill the remaining requirements of Phase 2 and to complete Phases 3 and 4. The Board will study the available information, then formulate and provide their comments by the specified date.

A May meeting attended by Parks Canada personnel did not provide answers to the Group's questions about the music festival proposal for the Lakeshore Road property, nor did Parks Canada appear to have any plan of their own for this site. Douglas Stewart, a senior Parks Canada official, apologized for the lack of information provided and offered his assurance that answers would be forthcoming.

Kari Cullen, hired to promote the music festival proposed by Project Niagara, has become an employee of the National Arts Centre. She has failed to answer a list of questions given to her in February and has avoided attending general meetings of the Group, promising to provide answers during a public meeting in July.

Group members were requested to write to the Ministers of the federal government departments of Culture and the Environment, and to our MP Rob Nicholson, to counter the lobbying being done by the local Chamber of Commerce and by the few supporters of the music festival.

Following the presentation by R.Busbridge there was a period of questions and comments.

K.Morrison asked members to continue to canvass residents and to solicit signatures to a petition opposing the use of the Lakeshore Road federal government land for the Project Niagara music festival. R.Busbridge said that the canvass last Autumn yielded encouraging results but that it is necessary to increase the number of responses obtained.

R.Busbridge announced that Anita Hardison has volunteered to be Treasurer for the Group.

There was discussion of the heavy traffic in the Old Town today, the lack of space to park an automobile close to the commercial area, and how to cope with the great increase in traffic which would result from a music festival.

R.Busbridge commented that an adequate traffic study, which has not been done, must address these issues. A comment was that the object of town merchants should be to get more people into their stores, not just more traffic into the town.

In reply to a question regarding the sewage lagoons, R.Busbridge said that they are owned by the Region in perpetuity so long as they continue in that use, otherwise they revert to Parks Canada (federal government) ownership. The remainder of the property occupied by the sewage treatment plant is leased by the Region from Parks Canada.

R.Busbridge stated the intention to replace the current Group website <harmonyresidentsgroup.blog.com>, which is considered to be too restrictive, and to create a new website by August which will be kept current.

D.Eke complimented R.Busbridge on his recent presentation to Town Council and suggested that the Group should stress to the Chamber of Commerce, Town and Regional Councils the positive results that could be expected from the creation of an EcoPark on the Lakeshore Road property.

Next general Group meeting: Wednesday, July 8, 2009, at 7 PM in the Virgil Aena large meeting room.

Adjournment: 8:04 PM.

Cliff James, Secretary.