

Community AGM: Taking Stock and Moving Ahead

By John Dance

Discussion of a new dog park, a new community centre, development issues, daycare legislation and construction vibrations, as well as wine, fresh apple cider, delicious food were all part of the joint annual general meeting of the Community Activities Group of Old Ottawa East (CAG) and the Old Ottawa East Community Association (OOECA) held Tuesday, November 14 at the Church of the Ascension on Echo Drive.

The wide-ranging discussion was led by CAG's Past-Chair Mélanie Gilbert and OOECA President Phyllis Odenbach Sutton. City Councillor David Chernushenko and Mainstreeter Board Chair Steven Begg were guests.

The highlights of CAG's recreation, sports and cultural programs and events for the past year included: progress towards a new community centre, an initiative led by CAG Chair Don Stephenson; the highly successful first year Old Town Hall program with CAG taking over program as well as facility management from the City; achievement of targeted growth in programming and participation; summer BBQs and four free community events, - including the Main Event and Main Street Re-Opening Celebration, back on our "new" Main Street.

The new year poses several challenges for CAG. The 22 percent increase in the minimum wage will result in increased program fees. And new licensing requirements for kindergarten care programs have a number of implications and challenges, but through its current survey CAG will determine how to proceed.

Highlights of OOECA's year included: the official opening of Main Street as a complete street, new Main Street artwork of Main² and the Queensway underpass mural, the relocated, restored and rededicated Brantwood Gates, the return of the Farmers' Market, the new perennial garden, the sesquicentennial events celebrating Canada's prime ministers and the circumnavigation of Rideau Island, considerable progress on the Rideau River Western Pathway, beginning of construction of the Canal footbridge, the first residents moving into Greystone Village, reopening and naturalization of the nature trail and walking path along the riverfront of Greystone Village.

Next year the community association will be looking forward to the final sessions of the prime ministers celebration, completion of the Rideau River Western Pathway, substantial progress on the footbridge including the selection of its name, more new residents in Greystone and Corners on Main as both developments continue to add new dwellings, public consultations on the reconstruction of the north end of Main, Greenfield and Hawthorne, the opening of the LRT and Lees station as well as the new multi-use pathway alongside, and, at long last, the reopening of the Queensway East ramp on Lees.

Councillor Chernushenko complimented the community on the attendance at the AGM (even greater than Glebe's he noted), and provided additional details on the city's many projects that are affecting Old Ottawa East. He also noted that his advisor Ian Grabina - who lives on Main Street - is looking at possible city properties that could serve as an off-leash area for dogs.

One resident noted that there is a greater need for such an area with the community's growing population and the loss of the Oblates as an area where dogs had been off-leash. Community members who are interested in this issue should contact Ian.

In the questions and answers portion of the meeting, a great range of topics were raised including "extremely disruptive" LRT construction vibrations, some cyclists not having lights at nights and going the wrong way on the Main Street cycle tracks, pedestrians using the cycle tracks as a sidewalk, catch basins clogged with leaves, and drivers going the wrong way and ignoring turning restrictions on Rosemere.

A social hour followed with residents nibbling, sipping and chatting about how the community has changed and what we need to do. The Church of the Ascension and Reverend Rhonda Waters were most accommodating in making the AGM a successful evening.