



Greenspace Alliance of Canada's Capital
Alliance pour les espaces verts dans la capitale du Canada

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Greenspace Alliance of Canada's Capital Greenspace Watch

Annual Report 2013 May 2012 - April 2013

The Greenspace Alliance of Canada's Capital remains a leading advocate of greenspace preservation and expansion in the National Capital region. This year we undertook a number of activities to help preserve significant greenspace in the capital and provided input on planning policy, tree protection, urban boundary expansion and other issues.

Members of the Board in 2012-13 were: Amy Kempster (Chair), Sol Shuster (Vice-Chair interim), Elina Elnione (Secretary), Erwin Dreessen (Treasurer), Jason Kania, Martin Callsen and Juan Pedro Unger.

Main Activities

Ottawa Official Plan - Urban Boundary Appeal Hearings

Led by Erwin, the Alliance was a Party to the hearing on appeals of OPA 76 regarding the urban boundary, including its Phase 2B. Leading up to this phase of the hearing, the City lost a motion that would have confirmed that Fernbank's 163 ha were part of staff's recommended 850 ha expansion. Then, on June 26, Planning Committee rejected staff's recommendation not to develop Area 2 as well as its recommendation on how to break a tie in the scores. As a result, at the start of the hearing on July 3rd, the City put forward a motion that all the lands that scored 48 or higher be included in the urban boundary; the Board agreed. Given the decision by Council and our failure to get staff on record regarding the erroneous scoring for wastewater service of Area 2, it was decided to withdraw our participation in the hearing. Only two parcels remained to be considered by the Board; it allowed one in and not the other. Erwin has written a report about

the Urban Boundary issue, how it came to be that an original decision by Council to expand the urban area by 230 ha ended up as a 1,104 ha expansion (see *Trail and Landscape* Jan. -Mar. 2013 issue).

Emerald Ash Borer

The Alliance formed a Working Group on the EAB issue and tried over a period of months to convince the City to change its strategy to include treating many more Ash trees. Letters were sent to Mayor Watson and the Chair of the City's Environment Committee as well as other members of Council, and a meeting with the City forester and staff was held. Members of the Working Group also met with Councillor Peter Hume and issued a number of media releases to let the public know that infestation was spreading much more quickly than anticipated and that more resources were needed to respond to this problem. At a crucial time when decisions on actions should have been taken, the City's Environment Committee meeting ignored our advice and did not even deal with the issue. Issues were also raised about a very large pile of infested Ash trees at the Trail Road dump site. We thought that our pressure on the City, local electronic and print media coverage and heightened public concern had finally paid off when the City announced that it would allocate an additional \$1 million for treatment and replanting that year. Unfortunately, the City's plans were shrouded in secrecy so we were never able to obtain specifics on how many additional Ash trees would be treated. It appears however, that the City failed to take this opportunity to include a fundamental reorientation towards treatment and public involvement as we had hoped. We will continue to try saving Ash trees this coming year but many trees have already been lost. The year 2013 is likely the final year that significant numbers of Ash trees can be saved. Please see more on EAB under "FCA Environment Committee" and "Ottawa Forests" below.

Carp River Restoration

Starting in 2004, the Alliance, as part of the Carp River Coalition, spent a lot of energy to put the Carp River restoration and Kanata West development onto the right path. We succeeded in having the Minister impose a number of conditions. Planning Committee on June 26 considered a Zoning and Official Plan amendment. The last page of the staff report provided the following consultation details: "Four comments were received." Neither the comments nor the staff responses were made available. Considering this continued stonewalling by staff and consultants, and that appeals require planning grounds -- technical reasons not being sufficient -- it was decided not to take further action.

Tunney's Pasture

Public Works Canada presented a Master Plan for the federal Tunney's Pasture complex as part of the public consultation process. The Alliance submitted a comment that the consultation process was unacceptable, that it supported expansion of the pathway system and 'thickening' of the greenspace towards Champlain Park, and that the proposed development does not represent mixed-use development or show integration with the future light rail system such as exploitation of air rights over the station. Amy wrote a column for the Champlain Park Community Association web site.

Review of the Provincial Policy Statement

The Alliance created a PPS working group in order to produce comments on the September 2012 draft PPS. Comments and proposals made by other organizations were also researched. A 10-page, 86-comment submission was made on November 23 and copies were forwarded to all members of Council and three senior staff, with ten key comments highlighted in the cover note. The comments were forwarded to F.U.N. (Archie Campbell), Gravel Watch Ontario, the Planning for Sustainability group (incl. EcoJustice, CELA), and Ontario Nature.

OPA – Natural Heritage Features, Cumberland Karst and Wetlands

We let Council know that we supported the designation of the Lester Road Wetland Complex and Kizell Wetland as 'Significant Wetland' and the Cardinal Creek Karst as an Earth Science ANSI. We also supported the adoption of Overlay Schedules L1, L2 and L3 indicating Natural Heritage Features. These Schedules were a result of an OMB Decision following a hearing in which the Alliance was a Party. This gave us an opportunity to comment, along with Ken McRae, that the Schedules should be properly referenced as to the source of data and their vintage, and provide more clarity by colour-coding the different elements of the natural heritage system; we will continue to suggest this improvement in the current round of Official Plan review. No appeals were filed against these OPAs so they came into effect on November 29.

Work by Albert Dugal and Clarke Topp on behalf of the Greenbelt Coalition, demonstrating that the Lester Road Wetland is larger than what is now designated as a PSW, is ongoing.

Lansdowne

We supported the proposal for a 'heritage tree orchard' at Lansdowne. The issue of toxic soil could be seen as an obstacle for the implementation of the orchard. We suggested that non-fruit bearing trees could be planted instead.

Cooperation with Ecology Ottawa

Over the last year a dialogue with Ecology Ottawa was established about potential cooperation to meet common goals. Ecology Ottawa suggested ways to cooperate with the Alliance's short, medium and long term goals. However, many issues that the Alliance is working on are of an unpredictable (reactive) nature with short deadlines that cannot be defined in advance. Areas identified for potential cooperation include: on Trees, esp. grass-roots Ash Borer action through their Community Network; and issues arising in the Official Plan 2014 review.

Community Design Plan for Rockcliffe Air Base

After the closing of the Rockcliffe Air Base (including vacating of the housing units), the lands were turned over to the Canada Lands Corporation (CLC). Al Crosby and Erwin met with CLC's Don Schultz for a preliminary discussion of development plans for the former Canadian Forces air base. The discussion revolved about the governance model and the public consultation process. The Alliance emphasized that the process should be open and transparent and that Technical Advisory Committee meetings should be accessible.

Al is now on the Public Advisory Group consisting of neighboring community representatives as no other region-wide groups appear to have come forward yet. Reports of the November 26 Ideas Fair and of the first meeting of the PAG are now on the project's web site, <http://www.clcrockcliffe.ca/>. More information is available on our web site.

FCA Environment Committee

The Federation of Citizens' Associations is considering forming an Environment Committee. Amy was involved in organizing another EAB Forum (held successfully on May 13, 2013); Elina designed the poster for this event.

Ottawa Official Plan review

In 2013 the City of Ottawa began its review of the strategic documents that guide development of the city. They include the Official Plan, Transportation Master Plan, Infrastructure Master Plan, Cycling Plan and Pedestrian Plan. The absence of any public process with regard to the Development Charges review (due early 2014) was noted, recognizing, however that it must follow the updates of the transportation and infrastructure master plans.

On substance, apart from the DC review, three issues identified were:

- 1- implement the results of the City's current natural corridors study (committed to as part of the Alliance's settlement in the OMB urban boundary hearings, Phase 2A), including amending the Annex that describes the methodology for identifying new urban areas;
- 2- modify the definition of "significant woodlands" so as to not require a "surface or ground water feature," as this has the potential to miss valuable woodland;
- 3- continued watch on country lot estates policy and urban expansion plans if any.

Staff's proposals, presented at a public meeting on January 29, included prohibition of country lot subdivisions. In response to a question, Councillor Hume also committed to implementing the results of the City's mapping and identification of natural linkages.

The Alliance has scheduled a "connectivity forum" for June 8, where the NCC, the Nature Conservancy and the City will present and discuss the findings of their recent or current studies. Adam Caldwell is coordinating the June 8 event, with the help of several volunteers. At a workshop on March 27, attended by Amy, Erwin and Chris Busby, the City explained how it plans to go about identifying natural linkages and that it plans to amend Schedules L1, L2 and L3 to reflect the results.

Further points of concern raised to date with staff and Council:

- Zoning By-law should take cognizance of Rural Natural Features.
- colour-coding and sourcing Schedules L1, L2 and L3, as noted above.

We are also monitoring the LEAR review and the Aggregate Resources review.

On country lot estates, we learned that, in the early round of comments, the Alliance was the only intervenor having expressed support for the City's proposal to prohibit them; many comments in opposition were received. Bettina Henkelman initiated an Azaaz petition that in short order garnered 222 signatures. The Mayor replied, affirming Council's intent to proceed with prohibition.

Ottawa Budget 2013

The result of Erwin's enquiries regarding the Environmental Resources Acquisition Fund and budget allocations related to the Emerald Ash Borer issue were posted to the GA List on 13 January 2013. In brief, (a) in 2011, the Fund received \$4.4 million out of surplus "sinking funds," followed by \$1.8

million in 2012; it is expected that \$1.3 million will be transferred in 2013; (b) in 2012 \$1 million was transferred to assist in the EAB campaign and \$4.9 million was used to acquire two Urban Natural Areas (UNAs) in Riverside South; (c) the 2013 Budget papers offer just one piece of information about the EAB campaign in 2012 (1,512 trees treated) and for 2013 reference EAB in three different places without providing specifics; it is not possible to say how much money in total is being allocated nor how the additional \$1 million allocated in July 2012 has been spent; (d) over \$1 million in the tree replacement program was neither spent nor committed in 2012; (e) Forestry Services' budget increased by \$1.5 million to \$14.6 million and its FTEs increased by 5.58 to 87.18, with 2 of the additional FTEs allocated to Council's Strategic Initiative to increase forest cover.

Earlier, the Alliance had come out in support of an additional environmental planner to improve follow-up, monitoring and enforcement of Environmental Impact Statements. This was a staff recommendation along with the adoption of the revised EIS Guidelines. This was achieved through a re-organization later that year, when a second environmental planner was added to the Development Review group.

Ottawa Forests | Forêts d'Ottawa

Heather Hamilton and other former members of the now defunct Ottawa Forests and Greenspace Advisory Committee met on November 1, inviting several others including Amy and Erwin (representing the Alliance), and Sol (representing the Greenbelt Coalition). Other participants included Ecology Ottawa, the South March Highlands group, the Ottawa Field-Naturalists Club and Hidden Harvest. A new environmental group called "Ottawa Forests|Forêts d'Ottawa" was formed and mandate, structure, and potential projects and activities were discussed.

At a subsequent meeting on March 20 a key conclusion from a discussion of the EAB issue was that a "lessons learned" should be developed, reflecting on last year's EAB activities. The group is looking at the issue from a wider perspective, estimating that other insects will come along attacking other species.

Hintonburg Statement

As a member of FCA the Alliance was asked to support a statement on Planning issues produced by the Hintonburg Community Association (Jay Balz). We agreed to support in particular the statement that zoning by-laws should be kept better up to date with Official Plan amendments, e.g. the recently

designated Provincially Significant Wetlands.

Ottawa Environmental Conference

Juan Pedro presented his proposal for an Ottawa Environmental Council, a "consultative forum for environmental organizations in Ottawa to network, discuss and coordinate activities." It is a process rather than a body, modeled after a long-functioning international conference on migration. There would be quarterly meetings with a rotating coordinator and a small technical secretariat; JP has two volunteers lined up for the latter. About eight groups could form the core of the network.

The proposal was positively received. It was suggested, and JP agreed, that "Conference" might be a more appropriate name than "Council" as it emphasizes more the process aspect. Whether individuals could have a role was unresolved, as was the minimum number of groups to have on board to consider the Conference in existence. A first conference is expected to be held in September 2013.

Greenhouse Gas Roundtable

Martin attended a Feb 25 strategy meeting called by Ecology Ottawa in anticipation of this event on March 23. The "greenspace" contribution to the discussion includes the role of greenspace as carbon sinks, applying intensification principles to the sea of parking lots, and the role of urban and rural sprawl (urban boundary expansion, country lot subdivisions). Capacity attendance for the Roundtable was reached within a week. Several Directors made it on the list of invitees. While an updated plan for the City on the topic was promised, there was some doubt about resources to produce this.

NCC Greenbelt and Urban Lands Master Plans

The Alliance continued its participation in the Review of the Greenbelt Master Plan as a member of the NCC's Public Advisory Committee and the Greenbelt Coalition of Canada's Capital Region. The revised Master Plan contained a number of improved elements such as giving the highest priority role to the natural environment and adding parts of Leitrim Wetland back into the Greenbelt. However, its 50-year vision of the Greenbelt boundaries was very limited. Furthermore, great concern was expressed regarding the proposals resulting from the joint City-NCC Cumulative Transportation Impact Study in which 30 road projects were identified. This would greatly increase fragmentation in the already road-fragmented Greenbelt. Despite the Coalition's objections, the NCC Board approved staff's proposals at its April 24th meeting.

In addition to the Greenbelt Master Plan, the Alliance will be seeking opportunities to participate in the forthcoming NCC's Urban Lands Master Plan. Mediation of an NCC appeal of the 2003 Official Plan concerning four parcels remains suspended awaiting completion of this Master Plan.

Organizational

Transition to new Not-for-profit corporations Act

Effective 11 October 2011, "Greenspace Watch" was granted a Certificate of Continuance under the new federal *Not-for-profit Corporations Act*.

Membership Renewal

We agreed to set a fixed term (from AGM to AGM) as a renewal date for Greenspace Alliance memberships. Members joining partway through the year will pay a pro-rated amount, to be added to a full-year membership starting at the next AGM.

Fund raising

Our thanks go again to Janice Seline for organizing the "Rare and Unusual" plant sale at the Experiment Farm on Mother's Day 2013. Contributions were received from Albert Dugal, Gert Dreessen and Christine Woodward, the latter on behalf of the Poets' Pathway Committee which will receive part of the proceeds. Michael Mack's help on the day of the sale was once again invaluable.

Web site and Listserv

Jason remained our web master and list "owner" and is in the process of housing us on a dedicated server to allow better control and customization. Juan Pedro and Erwin continued as List moderators. Subscriptions to the list have remained stable, between 80 and 90. One can now subscribe to the List via the web site and there is a protocol to screen and welcome new members.

Content additions to the web site have remained largely a function of Erwin's available time, though Elina, Lorne Peterson and Al Crosby have also published material.

To all who helped us fight the good fight, once again our heartfelt thanks!