



Greenspace Alliance of Canada's Capital

Greenspace Watch

Annual Report 2016

May 2015 – April 2016

The Greenspace Alliance of Canada's Capital remains a leading advocate of greenspace preservation and expansion in the National Capital area. This year we again undertook a number of activities, continuing the trend of the last several years to engage more “upstream,” on policy matters, although specific development proposals were among our major files as well.

Our Main Activities are grouped under some 30 headings or subheadings. Major involvements were with the aftermath of the Comprehensive Official Plan review (OPA 150) and related files; KNL's "overall benefit" application and other development proposals in Kanata; protecting the Central Experimental Farm; and several files related to trees and forests. It was also a busy year for Ontario policy and legislative reviews.

As a result of increased effort to encourage renewals, our membership numbers have increased but remain modest. It has been a good year for donations. Our mailing service continues to average two postings a day. Our networking with other groups remains extensive.

Members of the Board in 2015-16 were: Erwin Dreessen (Co-Chair, Treasurer and Secretary), Nicole DesRoches (Co-Chair), Amy Kempster, Sol Shuster, Jason Kania (web master), Juan Pedro Unger and Paul Johanis. Bruce Lindsay remained our Membership Chair.

Main Activities

Comprehensive Ottawa Official Plan Amendment (OPA 150)

Following the pre-hearing conference of April 7-8, 2015, the Ontario Municipal Board, on August 6, held a hearing on a Motion by Taggart and Walton. The Motion argued that the Council had not fulfilled its legal obligations when it approved the Comprehensive Official Plan Amendment in December 2013. It asked that the Board allow the appeal of Official Plan Amendments 150, 140 and 141 in their entirety and order the City to expand the planning horizon to 2036, complete the [LEAR review](#) and the [Employment Lands study](#), and do so on or before August 2017. Six and a half months later, on February 23, the Board (R.G.M. Makuch) issued its [Decision](#). It did not allow the appeals-in-their-entirety (as that “would not be in the public interest”) but in effect gave Taggart and Walton everything they wanted: It adjourned the hearings on the appeals until such time as the City has completed the LEAR review and the Employment Lands study and also admonished the City to “review its adoption of a 2031 as opposed to 2036 planning horizon to ensure consistency with the PPS 2014.”

Another point Taggart/Walton had raised was whether OPA 150 went outside the bounds of what an Official Plan should contain (section 16 of the *Planning Act*). On this the Board said this matter should be subject to a full hearing, opening the door to potential wholesale deletions from OPA 150.

Finally, Taggart/Walton had argued that, because OPAs 140 and 141 were corrections to OPA 150, they should have been subject to the more stringent notification and public meeting requirements of a Comprehensive Review (section 26) rather than of an ordinary OPA (section 17). On this point too, the Board agreed with Taggart/Walton.

The Decision did not assess the arguments on either side to any substantive degree. It spent three pages on explaining what the motion argued, one page on what the City counter-argued (essentially simply copying what the Notices of Motion & Response said) and then just two pages on “Findings.” There would appear to be big holes in the assertions made in these Findings. For example, the Decision asserts that the Employment Lands and LEAR studies are “required” under section 26. Not so: section 26 says that the City needs to ensure that the agricultural and employment land policies are “confirmed or amended.” This the City did, finding that there was no pressing need to amend either of them. Similarly, the Board found that determination and updating of agricultural land designations is “critical to the adjudication of the debate over the expansion of the urban boundary” but there is no such debate because OPA 150 did not expand the urban boundary and that determination is not appealable.

We wrote a strong letter to Council, arguing that this Decision should be appealed as it appears to contain errors in law and in effect cedes the agenda for land use planning to the development industry, with possibly more abrogation of Council's authority to come when the appeals of OPA 150 finally get under way. We briefed Councillor Leiper at his request and forwarded our letter to the media. No appeal was filed, a decision that was not even brought to Council. There was no media coverage.

Employment lands study

We were accepted as stakeholders in this process and attended the presentation of draft results by Hemson Consulting, Urban Strategies and Stantec on 20 January. A key conclusion was that Ottawa is endowed with enough supply of employment land until 2041 and beyond. This takes away one pressure to expand the urban boundary at the next Official Plan review. A final draft report became available in May 2016 and is expected to come before Planning Committee in the fall.

LEAR review

We had identified two concerns about this review of agricultural land in Ottawa: (1) is the review being conducted on a sound scientific basis? (2) how could the Advisory Committee be more balanced? With the assistance of Dr. Clarke Topp, Erwin met with two scientists at the Central Experimental Farm who assured us that the Province's competence in this review is of the highest caliber. On the second point we were able to induce Just Foods to request representation on the Committee and this was agreed; Dr. Phil Mount is now a member.

This is a file we continue to watch closely. We have recruited a summer student to perform some research to assist Phil. A key question to be decided is the scale of points awarded in relation to parcel size.

Consolidated hearing for Sunset Lakes' appeal

Sunset Lakes was the only appellant to explicitly appeal the prohibition of future country lot subdivisions (a.k.a. CLEs). Following the April 2015 pre-hearing, the Board ordered a consolidated hearing of Sunset Lakes' appeals, including outstanding items related to pending applications for expansion of the Village of Greely. This hearing took place on Oct. 19-23.

We met with the President of Sunset Lakes and with their solicitor, and prepared a *pro bono* expert witness to help defend Council's decision on CLEs. However, on September 29, Sunset Lakes announced that it would withdraw its appeal of the CLE prohibition. We therefore did not participate in the hearing but observed it and [tweeted a daily summary of the proceedings](#). A Decision on expansion of Greely's boundaries has not yet been issued. The application primarily turns on water and wastewater issues, Greely being the only "large" village that does not have piped services.

Sunset's withdrawal leaves the door open for the three parties that appealed "everything" to yet argue against the prohibition of future country lot subdivisions.

Toward a new Ottawa Official Plan in 2019

We reached out to [Citizens Academy](#) and [1125@Carleton](#) to see if a partnership could be formed to promote the idea of a fresh start for the next Official Plan review (theoretically to be completed in 2019, although that schedule is now in doubt, in light of the OMB Decision on OPA 150). Our aim is, instead of further amendments to the 2003 Plan, to prepare a "new" Official Plan for Ottawa that springs from a renewed Vision and genuine and ongoing public engagement; and that will be shorter, less ambiguous, and avoid duplication. We argue that the groundwork for that Vision has been done, and can be found in the tripartite [Choosing Our Future](#) reports of 2012. Neither institution appeared willing to take such a project on at this time.

Other City of Ottawa matters

City-wide issues

Aftermath of the 2014 Development Charges By-law

Following the approval of what became OPA 150 and its supporting Infrastructure and Transportation Master Plans by the end of 2013, the City proceeded with the revision of the Development Charges By-law, to be completed by June 2014 as prescribed by the *Development Charges Act*. The public was excluded from this process, despite a joint effort by the Alliance, the Federation of Citizens' Associations (FCA) and the Healthy Transportation Coalition ([media release](#) of 31 March 2014). At the last minute the City provided some [responses](#) to our questions. We made a [submission](#) to Planning Committee. Council duly approved a new by-law by the deadline but there were several appeals to the OMB. In October 2015 a proposed settlement of two appeals (by GOHBA and BOMA) was approved by Council. There was no media coverage of this and we became aware of it only thanks to research by Neil Kabesh in early 2016.

This settlement (which has not yet been brought to the OMB for endorsement) provides for: (1) substantially reduced charges for the road component (annual revenue loss of \$6.5 million); (2) an amendment to the By-law in 2017 which will, as the *DC Act* post-Bill 73 now requires, increase the

charges on account of transit but further decrease road charges following a review of "standards"; (3) no new projects in the 2017 amendment unless the appellants agree.

Three Councillors dissented when Council came out of *camera* and voted on the settlement -- Councillors Nussbaum, McKenney and Chiarelli. Councillor Nussbaum wrote a [blog post](#) explaining why.

Three other appeals have been heard and two Decisions have been issued. Presumably the City is waiting for these appeals to be completed before presenting the settlement to the Board.

Council Priorities

In June and July after an election the Standing Committees and Council consider their Priorities for the Term of Council. The experience of 2011 had taught us that if a priority is not listed in that document, one has a hard time being heard for the next four years. This is a largely bureaucracy-driven exercise but in 2015, as a result of Councillor initiatives, three small advances were made regarding environmental protection: (1) Councillor Leiper succeeded in elevating the Urban Forest Management Strategy to a Priority, though that did not come with additional resources; (2) staff was directed to produce a report on options regarding protection of environmentally sensitive lands; and (3) a [motion](#) by Councillors Qadri and Wilkinson called for the acquisition of three Urban Natural Areas (identified in a 2013 report as in danger of being lost) as a Priority and directed staff to explore funding options and report back by Q3 2016.

At its September meeting the FCA obtained feedback from members about Council's priorities. To them, the number one priority far above all others was "Improved Public Engagement in Planning Matters" (Priority #56). More on that below.

Conversation with Councillors

On November 17 four Board members met with Councillors Chernushenko and Chiarelli to discuss better ways of influencing City decisions. Out of this conversation came the idea of formulating Inquiries to staff in order to obtain information that is not otherwise being reported.

Site alteration by-law

True to candidate mayor Watson's promise at the Ecology Ottawa debate during the 2014 municipal election, work on a site alteration by-law has started. In April, Iola Price, Erwin and four representatives of downtown and suburban community associations formed an ad hoc committee to provide feedback to staff.

In the Fall we had sponsored a 4th year student in Carleton's Geography and Environmental Studies program for a 10-week Practicum to research site alteration by-laws of other Ontario municipalities.

Water rate structure review

In May the Environment Committee had before it a long awaited [staff report](#) proposing a review of the rate structure for water, wastewater and stormwater services. Such a review had been called for as long ago as the 2008 report of the City's Auditor General. We made a [submission](#) and appeared at

Committee, welcoming the review and noting that many studies in other jurisdictions (in Ontario and elsewhere) demonstrate that a) providing stormwater management capacity through low-impact development is highly cost-effective; and b) it is quite feasible to provide incentives for residents and businesses to minimize run-off by making their properties more permeable. We urged staff to take advantage of the considerable expertise and interest by members of the community in order to help it in conducting its analysis. We suggested that distance from the water or wastewater treatment facilities should play a role in setting rates. We concluded that the first order of business should be minimizing demand for the services, the second should be how to minimize cost, the third and only the third how to finance the necessary provisioning and maintenance. The report seemed to put the cart before the horse.

Erwin participated in a [webinar](#) from *The Umbrella* that discussed incentives to reduce stormwater runoff in three Canadian cities and reported that the Waterloo example was particularly attractive: Following significant work at the regional level, the municipality went from adoption in principle to implementation in just over a year. Its credit system, implemented two years later, has seen good uptake.

An op-ed penned by Erwin with much input from GA List subscribers, [Stormwater fees: Principles, Facts and Prescriptions](#) (March 2016), was distributed through our networks and published in various online media and weekly papers. Public consultations on the City's proposals took place in March and April. Controversy over proposed stormwater fees drowned out almost everything else, especially in the rural consultations. It became clear that the proposals had not fully come to grips with the actual challenges and opportunities that this review offers. A planned return to Environment Committee in May 2016 has been postponed to September.

Protocol for Wildlife Protection during Construction

We [commented](#) on a revised draft of the Protocol, a revision that drastically weakened its significance. Like with the development of the Wildlife Strategy (2010-2013), the forces that had caused this revision remain opaque. The staff report spent a mere one-and-a-half pages on consultations. We sent a submission to Planning Committee and Agriculture & Rural Affairs Committee but did not appear out of protest of the failure to report on and respond to the input received during consultations. The Protocol was approved by Council on October 14.

The Coalition for Landfill Accountability (COLA) comprises 14 community organizations to be the citizens' voice for concerns about the Carp landfill extension. On December 18 we co-signed, along with the Ottawa-Carleton Wildlife Centre, their [letter](#) to Council requesting that adherence to the recently approved Protocol for Wildlife Protection during Construction be made a requirement in the Host Municipal Responsibility Agreement that is under negotiation with Waste Management. City staff rebuffed the suggestion. COLA decided to contact Waste Management directly.

City consultation on "significant woodlands"

The 2014 version of the Provincial Policy Statement obliges municipalities to adopt the criteria set out in the Ministry's Natural Heritage Reference Manual to determine whether a woodland is "significant" and thus part of the Natural Heritage System. Erwin and Owen Clarkin attended a stakeholder consultation meeting called by the City's senior environmental planner; other attendees were the Conservation Partners, the NCC and Ecology Ottawa. The meeting was to prepare him for a meeting with the Ministry's staff on the fine points of interpretation of the Manual. In a welcome gesture of openness,

the minutes of both [our meeting](#) and of the [discussion with staff](#) were made available. A key point is that "significant" woodlots are to be identified in both urban and rural areas.

Urban Forest Management Plan

The City's Urban Forest Management Plan was launched on National Tree Day, 23 September, at Lansdowne's Horticultural Building and a stakeholder and public consultation followed on November 24. We joined a "Tree Task Force" led by Tree Ottawa (Ecology Ottawa) which prepared an excellent <brief>. Its key point was that there is ample opportunity for early action and that is how the citizenry can become involved. Naturally, the Alliance endorsed this brief and added some [comments](#) of its own, including asking clarification of the consultants' deliverables and a request that cooperation be sought with the NCC. On the latter point, Tree Ottawa received a letter from the NCC's CEO dated January 29, which stated: "The NCC is collaborating with the City of Ottawa on the current development of the City's Urban Forest Management Strategy. The NCC has recently initiated its own Tree and Forest Management Strategy."

Urban Tree Protection By-law enforcement

At Councillor Leiper's request, on 19 April staff reported to Environment Committee on enforcement of the Urban Tree Protection By-law -- the first ever public report since the By-law was enacted in 2009. Five delegations spoke, all sharing the view that the staff report was deeply inadequate. Suggestions were made on what a professional report would look like. The delegation from Champlain Park pointed out that amendments passed in 2012 were never implemented; they require that a Tree Disclosure Information Report be filed along with Building Permit or Committee of Adjustment applications.

Area-specific issues

KNL at South March Highlands

KNL's application for an "Overall Benefit" permit under the Ontario *Endangered Species Act* was posted to the EBR in January (012-6270 -- ref. section 17(2)(c) of the *Act*). It would allow KNL to harm or destroy the habitat of Blanding's Turtle, Butternut and Least Bittern provided that it would do certain things that are of overall benefit to the species. The information posted was vague but through a joint effort of Councillor Wilkinson and the Alliance much more information was made available and posted to [our web site](#). The comment period was extended. With the help of Neil Kabesh we alerted all our networks and were especially grateful to the Ottawa Field-Naturalists for spreading the word.

Our own [submission](#) argued that the notice should be withdrawn because of the process deficiencies; that the accounting of endangered species was incomplete, missing Whip-poor-will, Golden Winged Warbler and Olive Sided Flycatcher; and that the information provided for the species that were included failed to demonstrate that an overall benefit would be achieved.

In a follow-up [letter](#) to the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry we suggested that he make use of an alternative procedure (s. 17(2)(d)) that would require him to commission an independent report before making a decision. The Minister's [reply](#) was totally unresponsive. We await the outcome of this application and will eventually find out how effective our write-in campaign has been.

The other major hurdle KNL faces to implement its draft-approved Plan of Subdivision – an acceptable stormwater management plan – remains unresolved. Indirectly, in the additional information provided by the Ministry for the overall benefit application, some information about the options considered was revealed.

Kanata North Community Design Plan

Charges against Metcalfe Realty and an operator for the May 2014 tree cuts in woodlot S20 were withdrawn on July 23, 2015. The memo to Council from the City Solicitor gave no substantive reasons for the City Prosecutor's decision but did note that (a) the status of the woodlot had no bearing on the decision and (b) city staff had determined in May 2015 that S20 did not meet the criteria for significance and the Prosecutor was so advised.

Meanwhile the preparation of a Community Design Plan for "Area 1" continued -- involving 181 ha and about 3,000 housing units. We received reports about location of a stormwater pond in the adjacent rural area instead of inside the urban boundary and of City parks staff having opinions not to the liking of community and developer alike. Eventually, staff appears to have relented and is conforming better to the guidelines in the City's [Building Better and Smarter Suburbs](#) document.

As this report is being written, staff is calling for comments on the final draft CDP and the proposed Official Plan Amendment that would turn Area 1 into urban land, for a May 11, 2016 deadline.

"Area 2"

Richcraft, which owns this sliver of land between Terry Fox Drive Extension and the Carp River, continues preparations to develop it. Paul prepared an Inquiry to staff which Councillor Wilkinson brought forward at Planning Committee. The Inquiry pointed to section 3.11 of the Official Plan (brought in by OPA 76 and still in effect though it will be deleted when OPA 150 comes into force). Policy (2) of that section states that, before Urban Expansion land is to become Urban, the City must consider whether such is required to maintain a 10-year supply of urban land; and whether intensification targets have been met. In reply, staff gave an erroneous history of that policy and pointed out that it is working with landowners on other Expansion Lands as well – Areas 1, 2, 9, 10 and 11 (plus Area 8 – the Idone lands – which, like its neighbour, the former Remer lands, can go straight to Plan of Subdivision stage). It ignored the fact that the most recent Vacant Residential Land Survey estimated that Ottawa has a 24-year supply of Urban land outside the Greenbelt.

The fact that, in 2012, Area 2 was found eligible to become urban based on an erroneous wastewater readiness score, continued to gain no traction.

CFB Rockcliffe Redevelopment

Following Canada Lands Company's third public meeting in February 2014, CLC submitted a Community Design Plan, an Official Plan Amendment and a Secondary Plan to the City in October 2014; in March 2015 followed a draft Plan of Subdivision and Zoning By-law Amendment. CLC was prohibited from making these documents available on its web site. On June 1 the City posted the first batch of documents on its DevApps website and called a public meeting on June 25, with comments due seven days later. The Alliance and several members sent in [comments](#) despite this very tight deadline; Al Crosby continued to be our guide.

The comments included praise for CLC's Don Schultz because of his consultation practices which were such a contrast to the City's. In Spring 2016, along with several neighbourhood groups, we nominated Don for the Federation of Citizens' Associations' Community Builder of the Year Award.

Council approved the various proposals between October 2015 and February 2016. In late March machines appeared on the site to start clearing trees, including in a section that we had understood would be saved. Quick action and a visit by a City forester put a stop to that. In the process we learned that Don no longer worked for CLC. Whether the new management will honour the commitments made earlier remains to be seen.

Domtar Lands ("Zibi")

We continued to monitor and report on proposals by Windmill/Dream for development of the Chaudière islands and the north shore. At our November meeting, in a rare vote with one against and one abstention, we decided to write to federal Ministers, arguing that the islands should be returned to their natural state as much as possible. We noted that this would conform to the visions of the Gréber Plan as well as of the late William Commanda. We said that this turn away from intensive development would be a highly significant act of Reconciliation. The [letter](#), dated 26 January, was co-signed by the Ottawa Field-Naturalists Club and CPAWS-Ottawa Valley Chapter. We await a response.

Erwin and OFNC President Fenja Brodo met with Windmill representatives in February, to ensure that there were no misunderstandings about our position.

Airport Parkway and Lester Road widening

An Environmental Assessment process proceeded with Public Consultation Group and public meetings. In line with Councillor Riley Brockington's position we continued to voice our opposition to widening before knowing what effect the extension of the O-Train line will have on congestion; but at the same time engaged constructively in the study in order to promote good road ecology practices. Erwin and CPAWS-OV's Elena Kreuzberg met with the consultants and City staff. The final report does recommend a number of wildlife passages along Lester Road.

In early January it came to light that the 2016 Budget which Council had passed at the end of the year implied a delay of this widening project to 2020 or later, due to lower than projected Development Charge revenues for roads; this had not been pointed out to Councillors. Still, a final Open House for the EA was held on March 10. The Report and its recommendations will be considered by Transportation Committee on June 1, 2016. After Council approval, the Province will open a 30-day window for comment. It will be valid for 10 years when finally approved.

Old Richmond Road widening

In November, the City released a [15-page letter](#) from the NCC's Director of Federal Approvals and Environmental Management, dated 20 February 2015, that set out performance expectations and recommended key actions. A number of additional files including road kill data were made available as well. There has been no other sign of action on this file.

Oblate lands

A final zoning by-law amendment for these lands next to St-Paul's University came before Planning Committee in November. We made an [appearance](#), praising Regional's constructive work with the community which, like CLC's for CFB Rockcliffe, stood in sharp contrast to the unhelpful role played by the City's planning staff over the course of the preceding years.

National Capital Commission

NCC Annual Public Meeting

Nicole addressed the NCC's Annual Public Meeting on June 25, suggesting to protect wooded areas along the Parkways, expressing impatience about implementation of the Greenbelt Master Plan, more generally expressing impatience with the lack of follow-up after plans are approved, and why planning is not proceeding on a watershed basis as the IUCN guidelines require.

NCC transparency and governance

Commitments made last year about greater transparency around Board of Director meetings have not always been met. They're still only "endeavouring" to have the staff reports available at the time of the meeting instead of three days later. On January 20, we wrote again to Dr. Kristmanson, suggesting especially this time that the video record of Board meetings and of the Urbanism Labs be made available on the NCC's web site. On April 19, we were informed that henceforth the Board meetings will be archived on the site.

We drafted a letter arguing that the mayors of Ottawa and Gatineau should, at most, have observer status on the NCC Board of Directors but were scooped by the news that this would be the case henceforth. We'll look for another opportunity to promote the other idea in our letter, namely that the Tripartite Committee (NCC-Ottawa-Gatineau) be revived.

NCC's next Plan for Canada's Capital

We responded to the NCC's request for "17 Big Ideas" for its next Plan by offering a mixture of the grand and the mundane including: bring the South March Highlands and Carp Hills into the Greenbelt, create better connectivity between all of the capital's green spaces, open up Harrington Lake, and mow less along pathways and parkways and other green spaces.

Mediation of the NCC's appeal of the 2003 Official Plan

The NCC's appeal of the 2003 Official Plan concerning the status of Rochester Field and the Southern Corridor has remained in suspended mediation since 2008. A letter from the OMB Planner dated January 25 requested an update before February 24 but no such update has been forthcoming. Meanwhile, in March the NCC put forward ideas for a Linear Park along the Sir John A. Macdonald Parkway, which included options for Rochester Park; and negotiations with the City about Phase II of the LRT affecting the Park have been concluded.

Other federal matters

Central Experimental Farm encroachment

Our [web site](#) continued to fully document the evolution of this issue – the expansion of the Coalition to Protect the Farm, letter writing and lobbying. Paul has been instrumental in many of the initiatives undertaken by the Coalition. The Hospital finally held a first public meeting on March 7 and on April 11 the Agricultural Institute of Canada convened a [stakeholders meeting](#) to explore ways of conducting better public consultation on the issue.

Memorial to the victims of communism

In December the government announced that the memorial would be relocated and redesigned. In April the NCC's Board approved the Garden of the Provinces and Territories as the new site. A national design competition is to follow.

Ontario policies

The Province was very active requesting comment on various reform proposals:

- ▲ review of the *Conservation Authorities Act*
- ▲ review of the *Municipal Act and Conflict of Interest Act*
- ▲ review of the *Aggregate Resources Act*
- ▲ a discussion paper on Wetlands policy

Submissions on each are available on our [web site](#). Meanwhile, Queen's Park held a hearing on Bill 73 (which amends the *Development Charges Act* and the *Planning Act*) in November. We made another [submission](#). Significant amendments were made at Committee and the amended Bill passed and received Royal Assent in December. Amendments included a new subsection of section 2 of the *Planning Act*, setting out well-designed built form as a provincial interest. The amendments to the *DC Act* came into force immediately but the changes to the *Planning Act* await the promulgation of regulations. Five draft regulations were published on 29 February; we sent in a brief [comment](#) on one.

In January, Erwin participated in a workshop to discuss the Province's proposals for a [Waste-free Ontario](#).

The Province's April 2015 Budget had floated the idea of a regional plan for Eastern Ontario. Apart from the issuance, in December, of an RFP to conduct consultations with municipal officials, no news about this initiative has been forthcoming from the Ministry.

Organizational matters

Our membership in the FCA

At a meeting in August between the Alliance and the President and Vice-President of the Federation of Citizens' Associations it was agreed that creating an FCA Committee on the Environment would lead to too much duplication. It was further agreed that the Alliance would be the first point of contact on environmental issues that may arise, insofar as they fall within our mandate.

On October 6 we hosted the monthly FCA General Meeting, which had an [Environment Focus](#). Erwin and the City's senior environmental planner made presentations.

At the December FCA monthly meeting Councillor Nussbaum commented that most planning issues play outside the Greenbelt and that there is no consensus on what makes for a good city; he also observed that there is political interference in planning advice that comes forward.

As noted above, FCA members had expressed a strong desire to see public engagement in planning matters improve. The City appears to have recognized the problem and, led by staff in the City Manager's Office, a concerted effort is under way to adopt new practices. The FCA's Governance Committee (of which Erwin is a member) has had two constructive meetings with staff so far.

Other networks

We endorsed initiatives by the Healthy Transportation Coalition (low-income transit pass; road tolls study) and attended its quarterly meetings. Erwin has also continued to attend the monthly NCENN meetings but noted that attendance is frequently poor lately. He has continued to represent the Alliance at the OFNC's Conservation Committee. CAFES (Community Associations for Environmental Sustainability) met only once during the review period (on 29 August), when the main topic was Complete Streets; but we also networked with the group in June, commenting on Council's Priorities; also in June, we endorsed a CAFES letter to Council on trees and forest management.

Web site, listserv and Twitter

Since early August our web site was connected with Google Analytics which allows significant insight in its use, especially once trends become discernible. Unfortunately, in November we realized that the site had been hacked; while it continues to function, visitors could be tagged and later become infected. Jason erected a new web site using the WordPress platform, transferred all static information and cleaned all files. It is functioning to support our current campaigns. A large task remains, however, to transfer much content over from the Drupal site.

Subscriptions to our listserv continue to grow moderately and now stand at about 115. It is as active as ever, averaging two postings a day. Juan Pedro and Erwin have continued to serve as moderators. We have recruited a student who is designing a survey of our subscribers.

We have to date tweeted or retweeted about 170 messages, are following about 500 other accounts and are followed by close to 200. Its effectiveness in communicating our actions to media and politicians remains to be proven.

Volunteer recruitment

Both Carleton University and the University of Ottawa have notably renewed their commitment to working with community groups. We attended contact days at both schools and have engaged or are in the process of working with some half dozen students on various research projects. In addition to those mentioned above (LEAR study, site alteration by-law, subscriber survey), Paul sponsored a Practicum student to assist with a video project on the urban boundary, and three students are analyzing OMB decisions to assess how they have affected Ottawa's green spaces; we're still looking for a student to examine the claim that the City must buy environmentally sensitive lands if it wants to protect them.

We decided not to become members of Volunteer Ottawa, instead seek volunteers through increased membership.

Celebrating anniversaries

We have begun deliberations on taking advantage of new funds that are becoming available to celebrate Canada's 150th anniversary in 2017 to also commemorate 20 years of Greenspace Alliance. Two options are under further investigation, narrowed down from seven.

Membership and promotion

Under Bruce's leadership our renewal process has become more disciplined and paid membership has increased by one third. We currently have six group members. His <report> is attached. Bruce has also taken a more active role in developing promotion material and increasing our presence at various outreach opportunities.

Donations

We received one very generous donation this year but less from other sources. Janice Seline, helped by son Simon, Michael Mack, Barbara Dytnerska, Christel Woodward, and Gert & Erwin Dreesen, once again organized a plant sale at the May event of the Friends of the Farm, for which our deep-felt thanks. Thanks also to the providers of plants: Albert Dugal, Janice, Christel and Gert.

Looking forward

We have not conducted a priorities setting exercise this year but our major priorities flow from the report above. The site alteration by-law, the LEAR review and fall-out from OPA 150 will remain top of mind. The campaign to protect the Central Experimental Farm will absorb much of our energy and may well evolve into defending it against other threats once the Hospital has found another solution. The Development Charges file demands that light be shone on it and, with FCA, we must work now to gain a place at the table for the next round that will conclude in 2019.

The widening of Old Richmond Road through Stony Swamp may well become active over the next year. We will closely watch what will happen with Urban Expansion Areas 1 and 2. Plans of Subdivision for the Remer and Idone lands may well come finally forward.

Our dream of starting with a clean slate for the next Official Plan remains alive. We are convinced that there is an appetite for this even in the development industry, which was mightily annoyed having to deal with an OPA with 351 amendments and a process that was too rushed.

As noted, the provincial government has floated the idea of a regional plan for Eastern Ontario. Should that be pursued then this could become one of our major files.

Creating a lasting legacy in 2017 would be an exciting project.

Our sincere thanks go to all who have assisted us in our endeavours over the course of the year.

The Board

30 May 2016