



Election fever
The candidates and the issues in Somerset Ward. p. 5



Polo – with bikes
Community growing and becoming more organized. p. 17

Centretown News

Advisory board cuts ‘closed door’ on citizen input

By Garrett Barry

Municipal candidates and advocacy groups are capitalizing on the upcoming election to lobby for the reversal of a two-year-old change to city hall’s advisory committees.

An all-candidates survey compiled by the environmental group Greenspace Alliance of Canada’s Capital shows widespread support for a proposition calling for improvements to the committee structure.

The proposition stated the 2012 change to the advisory committee structure “deprived the city of much goodwill and volunteer effort.”

The city reformed the advisory committee structure in 2012, reducing the number of committees to five from 15, removing their mandate to provide a forum for public feedback and ensuring that the actions of the committees “serve to complement” council’s priorities.

The city also created the built heritage sub-committee, comprised of citizens and councillors, in lieu of the former heritage advisory committee, and created a seniors’ roundtable.

“The framework that they have now . . . that is no solution what-

soever,” says Erwin Dreessen, co-chair of the Greenspace Alliance. “That is just useless.”

According to the city clerk’s report that suggested the change, public forums led the advisory committees to believe they were supposed to represent the concerns of citizens. The report said this role was the responsibility of council and recommended it be removed from the mandate of the advisory committees.

It stated training for the new advisory committee members will reinforce the point that the role is not to act as “advocates for particular mandates or groups.”

Dreessen says the committees have now been reduced to acting simply as a resource for city staff and councillors.

“The advisory committees . . . were never given a chance to work properly – given virtually no resources, bureaucratized, with little commitment by councillors and almost no influence on council decisions,” Dreessen wrote in an open letter to Mayor Jim Watson, attempting to elicit a response to the survey.

“The old system just wasn’t working, plain and simple,” Watson said.

See **WATSON** on page 2

Trustee hopefuls line up to replace board chair

By Thomas Hall

There’s more to voting at the upcoming municipal elections than picking a mayor and 23 city councillors. On Monday, it will also be time to elect school board trustees.

The Ottawa-Carleton District School Board has five candidates in the running for Zone 10, which encompasses Somerset and Kitchissippi wards.

Incumbent Jennifer McKenzie,

who also chaired the school board for the last four years, isn’t seeking re-election.

“We’ve done a huge amount of work to transform the school board from a low-performing dysfunctional board to a high-performing school board,” McKenzie says.

But she adds it’s frustrating to work with the province, which has been stymieing change.

See **LOW-INCOME** on page 2



Garrett Barry, Centretown News

Ottawa police cordoned off downtown streets Wednesday afternoon in response to shootings by unidentified assailants. First responders searched buildings and escorted civilians to safety.

Shootings shock residents and shut down city centre

By Dan Taekema and Francella Fiallos

Much of Centretown became a lockdown zone Wednesday after a soldier guarding the National War Memorial was shot dead by a man who was then believed to have stormed Parliament Hill and wounded a House of Commons security guard before being killed in a shootout with police.

Scenes of chaos played out across the city’s downtown core as various workplaces – including Parliament itself – were evacuated amid bursts of gunfire and police cordoned off streets in a search for what they believed might be multiple suspects.

The Rideau Centre, Chateau Laurier and other landmark buildings were cleared as police spent hours trying to comprehend the scope of the attack and ensure no further sites were being targeted in what they described as “an active shooting investigation.”

Jason Kenney, federal minister of employment, social development and multiculturalism, was the first government official to re-

veal, via his Twitter feed, that the second shooting incident had left a “Parliamentary guard wounded.” Kenney, underscoring the general assumption – not immediately confirmed – that the shootings were acts of terrorism, added that: “Canada will not be terrorized or intimidated.”

Jordan Davies, a Carleton University student who was in the downtown area visiting his girlfriend when the incident began to unfold, said he was at the war memorial just minutes after the first shooting.

He described the scene as “chaotic” and “surreal.”

“I was on Rideau Street when the commotion began,” said Davies. “At first no one had any idea what was happening. There was a very fast police response so there was a lot of police activity. Then word started spreading that there was a shooting and buildings started getting shut down very quickly.”

Davies described how “police had their guns drawn, it was very chaotic. There were too many people talking and too many si-

rens to hear any shots.”

Davies took shelter in the courtyard in front of Milestones restaurant next to the Chateau Laurier.

“I thought, at least, that down here I don’t have to worry about stray bullets or anything like that.”

Shortly after 10 a.m., Twitter and other social media exploded with witness reports, photos and videos of police SWAT units and medical teams responding to the crisis. The RCMP’s national division, meanwhile, used its own Twitter feed to warn citizens “not to post videos or photos of the on-going incident to ensure safety of first responders and the public.”

The RCMP further warned downtown workers “to stay off rooftops and away from windows in the downtown core” as events unfolded – a chilling sign of how a national security incident that captured the world’s attention was also creating potential risks for Centretown residents and office workers.

See **WITNESSES** on page 2

NEWS

Watson defends change

Continued from page 1

"The groups were acting as advocates as opposed to offering advice," he says. "They were contradicting city policy, and it was just becoming more and more dysfunctional and costing taxpayers a lot of money."

The city clerk's report estimated the change would save \$190,000.

The new system, which Watson says is working better, helped rectify the situation by making the committees work within the priorities of council, and not work against council.

"There is lots of opportunity for individuals to be advocates for their causes," he says. "You can join a community association or a lobbying group or an advocacy group. But these are called advisory committees, they are to give advice to city council and staff.

We can't have, on the one hand, duly elected men and women who have run on a platform, and (saying) 'this is what we are going to implement,' and then simply have another group that are unelected an unaccountable, opposing that."

Watson added that by creating the built heritage sub-committee and adding citizen voices to the transit commission and the Ottawa board of health, the city has ensured the public is heard.

All Somerset candidates who responded to the Greenspace Alliance's survey supported the proposition to improve the work-

ings of the advisory committees. Seventeen community groups also signed on to support the Greenspace Alliance's letter, which included other propositions on environmental questions.

Somerset Ward candidate Martin Canning was vice-chair of the environmental advisory committee when the changes were introduced. He says he was one of the few committee members to hand in a resignation letter in protest.

"The City of Ottawa watered down citizen engagement," he says. "That was the primary result of the (so-called) reform.

"When you close the door on citizens, then you take over the powers of the decision-making process... It was essentially a reduction of power for citizens and an increase in power for councillors and city staff."

However, not all respondents agreed, including College Ward candidate Guy Annable.

He said he supported the dissolving of the committees given his personal dealings with them.

"As a person who sat on the business advisory committee for three years with no work plan, not one councillor visiting our meetings and no feedback being taken from any of our reports, I endorsed Jim Watson's dissolving of the BAC in (2012) along with other City of Ottawa committees as they accomplish little if nothing as the reports we submitted were not reviewed or even considered by council," he wrote.



Jessica Kenny, Centretown News

A Goopy Giggle

A participant reacts to a handful of goo during Science Funfest held at Natural Resources Canada. The event featured interactive presentations on animals, minerals and bugs.

Low-income families championed

Continued from page 1

McKenzie says there are a few ongoing projects she hopes the new board will tackle.

And although she says the upcoming trustee election is not about a specific issue, child poverty is a growing problem in Ottawa.

She says there needs to be a focus on ensuring there are equitable services across schools that meet the needs of every family, particularly low-income families.

"We're taking over child care to a large degree in the city," she says. But with the cost hovering around \$20 a day, McKenzie says low-income families, the group that most need affordable day-care, are being shut out.

"We still have a lot of low income children coming to school and I think the problem is getting worse, not better, from what we see on the ground," McKenzie says.

Apart from ensuring fair access to services, McKenzie says Zone 10 is doing well.

"The schools are full, the programs are good, and the parents are happy," she says.

McKenzie says she wants to see

School board candidates

Each school board has a different zone structure, so to help you on election day here are the zones and trustee candidates for Somerset Ward:

Ottawa-Carleton District School Board: Zone 10

Idris Ben-Tahir; Colin Leger; Daniel Nugent; Guy Hughes; Erica Braunovan.

French Catholic School Board: Zone 6

Diane Doré.

Ottawa Catholic School Board: Zone 10

O'Neil Brooke; Thérèse Maloney Cousineau.

French Public School Board: Zone 11

Jean-Paul Lafond; Myriam Hebbabi; Mohamed Habaneh Egeh.

a trustee that will be a champion for the less fortunate.

"I think what you want in a trustee is someone who will make sure that all children have access to quality programs that are in our schools," McKenzie says, noting that she's endorsed candidate Erica Braunovan.

People in Somerset Ward are

asking for early French immersion programs and a rebuild of the Elgin Street public school, Braunovan says.

But although inner city schools may be in need of repairs or rebuilds, similar to what Broadview Public School is undergoing, there's more to an education than bricks and mortar, Braunovan says.

"I think the schools in the downtown area attract high-quality instructors," she says.

With two children of her own in a downtown school, Braunovan says she's "very impressed" by the quality of education they are getting.

Guy Hughes, also a candidate for Zone 10, says while canvassing he's heard people asking for infrastructure investment downtown.

"I heard from residents in the golden triangle that there is crowding at Lisgar," he says, referring to Lisgar Collegiate Institute. "Residents are saying there's a need for a new high school."

Hughes says he would also focus on anti-bullying work and implement a review of the programs offered by the schools to ensure they're offering the right services.

Straightforward · Caring · Dedicated

Janny, Jeff and Shan...

The Power of Three... Working for You!

proven performance in
Centretown since 1986



JannyMills · JeffRosebrugh · ShanCappuccino
Sales Representative Sales Representative Sales Representative

ROYAL LEPAGE
Performance Realty
Brokerage, Independently Owned and Operated

613.238.2801

jannyjeffandshan.com

Witnesses describe scene as surreal

Continued from page 1

By early afternoon, it had been confirmed that the soldier shot at the war memorial in Confederation Square – the Elgin Street plaza where the national Remembrance Day ceremony is held every Nov. 11 – had died. Two other unidentified victims, including the Parliament Hill security guard, had been taken to hospital with "minor injuries," said Ottawa Police Chief Charles Bordeleau during a mid-after-

noon press conference.

The police statement also clarified that "contrary to earlier reports, no incident occurred near the Rideau Centre."

The shootings took place just days after another Canadian Forces personnel was killed in a hit-and-run collision blamed on a "radicalized" Quebec man who had been expressing his support for the ISIS terrorists attempting to establish an Islamic state in Syria and Iraq.

The incidents have raised con-

cerns about home-grown terrorism, the heightened risk to uniformed military personnel in Canada and the level of security surrounding politicians and public servants in the National Capital Region.

"It was more surreal than anything else... that was the general vibe," said Davies, the Carleton student swept up in Wednesday's events. "People couldn't believe it was actually happening in Ottawa in front of the Parliament Buildings."