

WEST BEND COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION

Minutes of January 17, 2007

Chair: Jim Chisholm

The meeting was called to order at 7:20 p.m.

1. **Minutes of November 11, 2006** – Copies of the minutes were distributed for information and comment.
2. Membership 2007 – Membership forms were distributed. Membership for the calendar year is \$10.00 and residents are encouraged to join.
3. **Committees and Reports** –
 - 3.1 **Keele Street Traffic Committee** – Duncan Farnan provided an overview of the Committee's work and history in the community. The committee's direction has evolved from a focus on safety issues to a more comprehensive vision of integrating Keele Street into surrounding neighbourhoods and to Lake Ontario's waterfront. The committee is planning to link up with other resident associations and interest groups e.g.: High Park Advisory, cyclists, in developing this vision. A deputation will be scheduled to one of the City committees. People interested in assisting the committee should contact Duncan or Jim Chisholm.
 - 3.2 **Communications** – Aileen Scott gave a report on the association's website development and answered questions. The website address is <http://www.thewestbend.com>. The site content was developed through volunteer effort and on a low cost basis. A student is being employed to get the site open in the next few weeks. As a point of information the Association has about 300 e-mail addresses on its database for mailing of announcements and association meetings.
 - 3.3 **Baird Park Improvement Committee** – Deferred for later discussion with Ward 14 Counselor Gordon Perks.
 - 3.4 **Summer Event Day Planning** – Aileen Scott reported that the event will take place again this June. She will coordinate with Mary Jo Leddy of Romero House for dates that do not conflict with the Wanda Road Street Party.
 - 3.5 **Treasurer's Report** – David McIlraith reported on the positive account balance and on where money gets spent. Examples are the Baird Park Summer Event and the Railside Gardens Project. It was noted that money also goes towards the expenses of association sponsored All Candidates meetings (Federal, Provincial and Municipal elections).
- 4.0 **Councilor Gordon Perks** – Jim Chisholm welcomed and introduced the newly elected Ward 14 Counselor. Councilor Perks informed the residents' meeting of Mayor Miller's platform document and that the document would be available in electronic

format and be forwarded to the association. The Councilor's City Hall office telephone number is 416-392-7919 and email address is councillor_perks@toronto.ca. Additionally, he hopes to put out a regular newsletter to keep Ward residents informed of City business. Richard Decter was introduced by Councilor Perks. Richard is one of four staff members who have been hired for his office.

What is new at City Hall - Residents were informed that with the various changes at City Hall over the last four years and the new City of Toronto Act, Council procedures have changed. On the City's 2007 budget, the financial planning process is now for the presentation of a balanced budget for the first time. The budget process is late this year due to 2006 being a Council election year. Important budget dates are:

February 8 - presentation of draft Capital Budget.

March 19 - presentation of draft Operating Budget.

Council presentations will be followed by both stakeholder and general public hearings.

April 19 - presentation to Council and budget(s) approval.

What is new at the City governance level is an Executive Committee which includes the Chairs of each City Committee. The result is that the City budget will become policy driven rather than reactive. One of the City bodies that will probably get new powers is the Community Councils who may be charged with matters of a local nature e.g. traffic studies.

Issues – A number of important issues were highlighted: 1) Challenge of supporting local businesses due to the cost problem of the *Special Business Education Tax* imposed by the Province. One strategy the City is proposing is a *Neighbourhood Commercial Business Strip* rate; 2) Challenge of supporting the 14 priority neighbourhoods identified by the City; 3) Air and Climate initiatives; 4) Clean and Beautiful City initiatives.

Local Issues – A number of local issues he was aware of were: 1) Various outstanding development and traffic proposal files; 2) *Options for Homes* development (Keele and Dundas Street West); 3) former McBride's Cycle site; 4) status of Baird Park improvements; 5) 2400 Dundas Street West (Price Chopper Plaza) landscaping compliance; 6) Junction Business strip.

There was some discussion regarding local businesses in the Junction. Councilor Perks noted that City revenue does not keep pace with the growth of Federal and Provincial revenues. He suggested that the Mayor's request for 1% of the PST or GST and TTC infrastructure support would probably become major campaigns in the upcoming Provincial and Federal Elections.

Questions and Comments – A number of suggestions were made around introducing parking levies, varying the tax rates for small versus box-store type businesses.

1) On the question of whether Residents Associations would be considered stakeholders for the Budget consultation, Councilor Perks said that they would be.

2) Two Junction businesses that are closing or moving (Shoppers Drug Mart and Curry Twist) were given as examples of how taxes and big box format are affecting the Junction strip.

3) Garbage and litter were given as examples of municipal neglect. Councilor Perks noted that City litter audits were changing to include not just where but what it is.

4) The Councilor was asked what committees he would be serving on. He has been appointed as a member to the following bodies: *Environment and Parks; Budget; Toronto Atmospheric Fund; Toronto Hydro; Board of Health; Exhibition Place Board of Governors*; and has applied to the *Board of Artscape*.

5) On the question of a location for a constituency office he indicated that he was looking at various ideas for being available for constituents. Councilors' office budgets include a line for *Staff* and a line for *Other*; this last line is budgeted at \$50,000 and may be used for local office rent. He indicated that half of that amount could easily get taken up with staff and rent for a constituency office. Some downtown Councilors, do not have a local office. As an example, Councilor Pantalone holds some constituency meetings and office hours at the CHIN radio building. Councilor Perks said he would like to hear back from residents about this kind of approach to availability.

6) On a question relating to emissions from the National Rubber Industry (NRI) site, he indicated there was now a *Community Right to Know Bylaw* strategy that was having an initial report to the Board of Health and that this could a future avenue for identifying emission health risks. It was noted by residents that the West Bend was bounded by a major rail corridor and that a train car derailment recently occurred. Rail line issues are primarily a Federal government responsibility.

7) On various park improvements and the draft *Dogs in Parks Strategy* as related to Baird Park, residents voiced that they felt abandoned by the City after a number of clear promises. Councilor Perks, informed residents that one of his assistants, Amy Johnston, will be taking Baird Park under her wing. Richard Decter will be the office contact on local issues. Richard's email address is rdecter@toronto.ca. A number of residents felt that they were being harassed by Bylaw Enforcement Officers over the issue of dogs being off leash. Residents were clear that they were looking for concrete information and action with respect to the Park issues.

8) The number of raccoons was raised as a big neighbourhood issue. It was suggested that some strategy should be developed by the City to manage them.

9) The issue of City management of the Baird Park improvements (Parks Department) and the Willoughby United Church demolition (Building and Planning Departments) was raised. It was felt that these were prime examples of the City failing the local residents and of residents having to do the work of City staff. These were also examples of how vigilance, was becoming a byword for residents in dealings with City Hall.

5.0 Announcements –

- 5.1 *Citizen's Assembly on Electoral Reform* – Deborah Chalmers spoke to this provincial initiative which includes a Citizen's Assembly www.citizensassembly.gov.on.ca that is interested in hearing from Ontarians about electoral reform. Residents were encouraged to visit the website and provide input. *Fair Vote Canada* is a supporter of this initiative. Comments should be received by January 31st.

- 6.0 **Adjournment** – The meeting was adjourned at 8:55 p.m.