

MINUTES OF YQNA MEETING #81 Tuesday May 12, 2020

On-line Via ZOOM due to COVID-19 Pandemic (65 participants)

Hosted by: Neal Colgrass, Chief Technical Officer

Chaired by: Angelo Bertolas, Co-chair

1. Neal welcomed the participants and outlined the technical details of the Zoom event. All will be muted except the chair and current speaker. Questions can be posed by typing in the chat box or using the “raise your hand” key.

2. Angelo introduced the meeting outline and mentioned that YQNA now has a Square account for donations, since the physical shoe box cannot be used. He also thanked everyone for writing to oppose the Enbridge gas pipeline being located on Queens Quay, along with help from Councillor Cressy, and reported that Lakeshore Boulevard has been selected for the new pipeline.

3. City of Toronto issues – Councillor Joe Cressy

Joe commented that it has been a very hard time for everyone coping with the pandemic. He said that staff and Council are keeping the City running. The City has three roles: prevention of outbreaks, delivery of services, and recovery. Once a recovery is under way Toronto needs to come out stronger. Public health is the key factor. There are two pandemics in Toronto: in the general population, the curve has flattened and is going down; in congregate living situations, such as shelters, long term care homes, group homes and retirement homes, the infection rate is much worse. The disease has exposed the health inequities in these populations.

In Ontario, 75% of the cases are in the GTA and Ottawa, different from the rest of the Province. The rate of infection (R value) is down to about 1 so there is more to do. Measures should be aimed at taking care of the most vulnerable. There has been good work done on food security. The City has opened 12 new food banks in library branches. The Red Cross has partnered with the City to help isolated seniors, delivering 1,000 meals a week. There is 24/7 child care in 7 locations for key workers. Free wi-fi service has been expanded and mental health supports provided.

COVID-19 has exposed the weaknesses in the homeless and housing sector. There are some 8,000 people in the shelter system, of whom 3,000 are being rehoused into hotels, apartments and permanent homes. The City can rebuild once there is a vaccine or treatment. Until then, the path to opening the economy is unknown. The new normal means coping with a virus still circulating and addressing the needs of the most vulnerable.

Crowded sidewalks and bike lanes are a problem, so a street design is essential. Public Health has asked Transportation Services to look at making more room for non-motorised traffic. Mayor Tory asked for swift action, so there will be some 50 km of “quiet streets” and the closure of some streets such as along the waterfront to expand the bike network starting Thursday.

Turning to other matters, the new Enbridge gas pipeline will be installed on Lakeshore Boulevard, not Queens Quay. Thanks to YQNA for organising strong opposition to the Queens Quay option. The level of Lake Ontario is below that of 2017 and 2019 and it looks hopeful for avoiding a flood this year. However, the permanent mitigation work worth \$30 million is continuing with \$12 million in financial support from the Federal Government. As for the Waterfront LRT, design work has reached 30% and public meetings will be held soon. In recent news, Sidewalk Labs is departing. However the goal remains of building a 21st century neighbourhood on the 12 acre Quayside site that is more sustainable and affordable. A foundation has been built for moving forward here.

Q & A

Q: How will the waterfront cope with summer crowds?

A: In most years some 17 million visitors come. There must be physical distancing. Transportation Services are looking at closing adjacent streets to cars. A report is coming on the options. People **will** come so we must create more space for them.

Q: There are problems locally with homeless camps.

A: The City is dealing with the encampments. They have increased as the weather warmed along with concerns about the shelters. The City is opening housing for folks in encampments with a capacity of 200 in rented buildings. About 100 have already moved in and they get all services on site such as three meals a day and laundry etc. It is transitional housing. The City will not take down the tents.

Q: Regarding Airbnb, are there any further controls over the health risks in condo buildings? Is there more enforcement?

A: The City passed a bylaw regulating short term rentals which was upheld by the LPAT. Home sharing is only permitted for the primary residence, not in secondary residences or investment units. The Province has prohibited business use as well. Inform Joe's office if you note any infringements.

Q: Is there any news about 200 Queens Quay West (the parking garage)?

A: Canada Lands Corporation amended its offering to require a minimum of 10% affordable units, and there is a buyer. Joe requires pre-consultation with YQNA and neighbours, which the buyer has committed to. There is no further information so far.

Joe Cressy finished his remarks by thanking MP Adam Vaughan and MPP Chris Glover for working closely on the crisis.

4. Update from the Province – MPP Chris Glover.

Chris commented that the Provincial Legislature met today, and had Question Period for the first time since the State of Emergency was declared on March 13. It has been extended again, to June 2. New rules for retail have been announced, with garden centres and hardware stores open for in-store shopping and other stores with street entrances open for pick-up. The City is adjusting street parking to enable the pick-up of goods. Main street businesses are struggling despite the relief that has been offered. There was a main street BIA town hall recently. According to a survey in the Danforth BIA half of businesses could not pay rent for May and two thirds for April. The Federal and Provincial governments offer to cover 50% of rent if landlords forgive 25%, but few landlords are taking this up. Mayor Tory has pointed out that we are all in this together, and there may not be any new tenants coming. There will be a town hall next week for the Chinatown BIA.

Regarding the pandemic, Chris said that we need to know the markers for opening the economy. If 3% of tests are positive then we can open up. We must test, trace and isolate, which is what South Korea has done from the outset and has not needed to lock down its economy. The crisis has highlighted the issues with long term care homes. At nearby Mon Sheong, 50 residents and 16 staff have tested positive, and there have been some deaths. They are hiring more staff. In a war it's the soldiers; here it's the essential workers who need support. They must all get N95 masks. A \$2 mask can save a life. Finally there are masks coming from the GM plant in Oshawa. The York Distillery is making hand sanitizer. These are examples of manufacturing helping out.

Seeds of Hope and Kitchen 24 have been taking food to the encampments, where the people have no places to get warm anymore, although some are getting into housing. We need a final solution for the vulnerable populations. Stitchers on the islands have made 120 masks that have been distributed to Portland Place. Chris noted that he still has a few available for any seniors in need. 5,000 disposable masks donated by Chinatown have gone to local seniors' homes. Seeds of Hope is looking for old cell phones to give to the homeless so they can access services. Please advise Chris' office if you have any.

Chair Angelo Bertolas commented that we need an enquiry into the issues with long term care homes and other vulnerable populations, as well as with PPE and the problems arising from using a supply chain from abroad. Also we need a permanent solution to homelessness.

5. Update from the Federal Government – MP Adam Vaughan

Adam reported that the Federal Government is concentrating on providing income supports, with more coming for seniors and students. The next focus is on small businesses to restore the tax base for cities. There is information on his web site. Adam noted that he has the Families and Social Services portfolio, which includes housing. The government is providing support for PPE supplies, and funding for shelters, quarantine spaces and housing. This is temporary housing. The government has asked the cities what it would cost to make it permanent. A good outcome would be a final solution to homelessness. An announcement is coming. Society must deal with providing shelter, due to the impact on families and especially on women. There should be child care for all who need it so folks can return to work. There will be more support for Black communities, non-profits and charities like Meals on Wheels, as well as safe spaces for women and children, from a \$350 million fund.

Adam remarked that cities have done the heavy lifting and need to be stronger. The TTC and other transit authorities also need help. Canada must build back better. The national housing strategy is providing 240 modular units but more must be done.

Meanwhile there are other issues. The climate change crisis will lead to severe weather, fires and floods. The waterfront needs a permanent solution and the conservation authorities and tree planting exercise need funding restored. The Federal government is working with Toronto on flood mitigation. Airbnb has to end, because criminals rent units and then burgle adjacent units. It is a dangerous business. The Federal government is looking for tax measures that could help restrict this business and strengthen cities' efforts. Regarding encampments, Adam noted that he recently visited the one in Little Norway Park, and is aware that residents will stay there until they get real housing. Recovery from the pandemic must include enhanced care for the vulnerable members of society.

Q & A

Q: Are there any special measures regarding Billy Bishop airport?

A: Nothing specific; it is unlikely that Porter will get special treatment. The airline industry may get some Federal support. The sector will be very slow to come back. Unlike in Europe, Canada does not have the rail infrastructure for short haul travel that could replace flying. To add rail capacity between Windsor and Montreal would be extremely expensive and disruptive to residents along the corridor. The situation will be monitored.

Q: What is the status of the bird sanctuary?

A: The Minister wants to get it done, and the City has responded. There has been push back from the Port Authority and Transport Canada. Pearson uses hawks to keep birds away, rather than bangers. There are ways to have bird sanctuaries next to airports. We need to fortify the wild spaces around the Great Lakes.

Q: It would be good to undertake a noise survey while the airport is closed.

A: Yes, then we would be able to measure the change over this baseline.

6. Bathurst Quay Update

Chair Angelo Bertolas introduced guest speaker **Bryan Bowen**, Waterfront Project Manager at the City's Waterfront Secretariat.

Bryan's slide show regarding the Bathurst Quay Neighbourhood Plan is posted on the YQNA web site. It was completed in 2017 and is now being built. Some key points are recorded here. The Canada

Malting silos were transferred to the City for public purposes in 1992. There have been many unsuccessful ideas for new uses such as event space. The buildings are basically broken. The Bathurst Quay Neighbourhood Plan was completed in 2017. Under the plan, the silos will stay in public ownership, unlike the situation in 2015 when there was an effort to sell them off. There will be an arts and culture focus, as well as improved links to the water's edge.

Bathurst Quay is one of the oldest neighbourhoods on the waterfront, but has not benefited much from recent investment on the waterfront. They have had to deal with the growth of the airport and the uncertainty of the silos' future. While a larger project is awaited, a series of 7 smaller projects is feasible. All are now funded, and three have started or will soon.

The Western Channel Dock Wall Rehabilitation began last November. A drawing from 1912 shows how the wall was built, basically of cribs filled with rocks which have settled over time leading to the break-up of the concrete on top. The top layers have been removed and a new concrete cap placed, along with sheet piles on the outside face. In mid-July the granite paving for the promenade will be started, matching the design along other parts of the water's edge promenades, and seating units will be added. Surplus buildings and other junk related to the silos have been removed.

In 2010 there were improvements made to the taxi corral and parking, under a Memorandum of Understanding with Ports Toronto to reduce traffic impacts on the community. Now a new design will be built to a higher standard with a smaller footprint. The corral will be fenced off from the adjacent public space. A nice courtyard for the administration building will be provided. There will be a new parking lot for the airport, the City and the schools between the silos and the park. It will have elegant lighting and could be used for activities like farmers' markets or food trucks outside school hours.

Along Eireanne Quay there will be public realm improvements with better sidewalks, benches, street trees and fewer curb cuts. Port Authority approvals are coming. The goal is to complete this project during the airport closure, and finish it this summer.

The former administration building is leased to the Ireland Park Foundation, which will refurbish the building into a showcase to tell the story of successful immigration from around the world, not just from Ireland. The outdoor space will be made available for various groups to put on displays and events. The designers are Kearns Mancini who are heritage restoration architects. The Foundation has just retained Bespoke Collective who will reach out soon to the community associations. A building permit will be requested soon.

A waterfront plaza and event space will link the schools to the water west of the silos. The City is looking for a design team for this project, which will be completed in two phases to allow for staging for the other projects. There will be more public outreach for this project. Phase 1 is expected to start next spring. On the TDSB site there will be improvements to the playground and the sports field.

As for the silos themselves, they are heritage buildings and must be saved, repaired and repurposed. The first thing to do is make them safe, especially the roof which is in a terrible state. In 2019 a Condition Assessment was completed. The City has just issued a RFQ for engineering design for the repairs along with a cost estimate. A permanent swing stage will be installed along with utilities services. The work should be done next year when the fence can be removed. It may be possible to open an east-west link between the silos. Regarding the ultimate re-use, the City will learn from past efforts and wait for the right partner to come out of an Expression of Interest posting looking for new ideas for the interior. There will be a robust public consultation process in due course.

Q & A

Q: Will the current state of the City's finances affect these projects

A: No the funding is all secure and targeted, and comes from private sources or Section 37 contributions which must be used for capital projects..

7. Lake Ontario Water Levels – Lynn Robinson, Toronto Island Community Association

Lynn advised that the lake level has probably peaked, but we must keep up the pressure on the IJC because of the amount of water in the upper lakes that is flowing down. We have to prevent future flooding and protect ourselves in case there are future floods. How can this be done? The only control is through the Moses-Saunders dam near Cornwall. We have learned that the IJC's Plan 2014 does not work under these conditions. It is basically a computer algorithm that does not take care of riparians. A plan review is under way.

The IJC followed Plan 2014 through 2017, 2018 and 2019, and was late to realise the need for extraordinary efforts to manage the lake level. There was a big uproar, and the IJC finally allowed the plan to be over-ruled. Since then the Lake Ontario and St Lawrence River Board has been actively managing the water flow and has done a good job. The Board's discretion only runs until June 2020, so we have to keep it going until there is a new plan or until the upper lake levels fall to average values. With the help of our local representatives we must send a letter to the IJC.

If conditions lead to Lake Ontario reaching a serious level there would be very bad results. Impacts could affect sewers, the water treatment plant, roads and Leslieville. TRCA mapping is close to being released so that we can see the hot spots. We need a meeting about emergency management with the support of Joe Cressy and the TRCA maps.

8. Waterfront BIA Update – Tim Kocur

Tim noted that the BIA is advocating for local businesses and the use of delivery and curbside pickup. The web site has a list of what is open locally. New signage is coming soon. The BIA has installed pavement stickers to remind people to keep a safe distance. While welcoming weekend visitors to the waterfront, the BIA is asking that people avoid the peak times shown by pedestrian counts to be 11 am to 6 pm.

Events are cancelled, but the BIA is exploring the opportunities for public art shows or things that would allow for distancing. The special paint treatment of the Gardiner bents at Rees Street is to be repeated at York, Simcoe and Spadina.

Tim encouraged everyone to support Harbourfront Centre and hoped that it will emerge stronger from this crisis. There could be development potential at the parking lot at Portland Slip, encouraged by the Bathurst Quay revitalization efforts, and possibly as many as 65,000 new residents in the eastern waterfront. The opportunity remains for development even after Sidewalk Labs has walked away.

Chair Angelo Bertolas noted that the site at 545 Lakeshore is slated for redevelopment, and the developer might be able to contribute to work at the Portland Slip. **Tim** said that he has not been in touch with the developer for some time.

9. Harbourfront Centre (HC) Update – Martin Kenneally

Chair Angelo Bertolas advised that all programming at HC has been cancelled and the building is closed. Roof repairs are under way, and HC is looking for funding to repair the dock was that was damaged by the flooding last year. They need about \$5 million.

Martin explained that the Centre closed on March 16. Full time staff are working from home and are receiving the wage subsidy, while commercial supports are being pursued. HC has maintained essential services for sanitation and infection control. There is extra security in partnership with the BIA to address concerns with boats and disorderly people, with an extra evening patrol.

While events have been cancelled, they are reviewing summer camp options and have pivoted to digital programming. On May 16 they will host the Virtually Junior Festival, and there will be on line Summer Music in the Park. Next Friday they will be looking at opening the commercial marine operations once the Province gives permission. They are still servicing the year-round boat users as an essential service. They are working with the City to hold a digital Canada Day event.

The roof repairs are almost finished. The next renovation project will be an energy retrofit and solar panel installation. 245 Queens Quay West is still on the market with viewings every few days.

The underground parking lots are closed for security reasons. The Rees Street parking lot is free for now. In the short term Enwave will be using western half of the area for its deep lake water cooling project, starting in September and lasting for 8 to 9 months, and parking will continue on the other half until the City is ready for the new park construction.

10. Summer Activities at the Canoe and Kayak Centre – Clare Corrigan and Dave

Dave advised that the docks are back in and they are just waiting for permission to open. Office staff can work outdoors and have customers line up safely. All the equipment can be disinfected. Paddling is already a separate activity and part of a peaceful lifestyle on the water. The marinas are still closed so pleasure craft can't really operate, although personal boats are permitted along with canoes and kayaks.. Transport Canada is still not allowing water taxis.

11. Mariposa Cruises Operations – Cindi Vanden Heuvel

Cindi remarked that the timeline is punishing for seasonal businesses that rely on tourism and hospitality, and have no income stream during the winter but invest in improvements to the vessels. Normally Mariposa welcomes conference delegates and other tourists from all over the world to special events and harbour cruises. Usually they employ 125 people but currently there are only 4 taking care of essential services and fleet safety. They appreciate the security efforts of HC during this quiet time on the waterfront.

They are working with the regulating bodies including Transport Canada and Public Health to allow the resumption of business, but it will be July 1 at the earliest. Everything hinges on control of the pandemic. Consumer confidence is key. They will be using PPE, enhanced disinfection, reduced capacity, distancing and comprehensive staff training to keep everyone safe. Regional opening models are likely for the industry in the various provinces, despite the Federal jurisdiction. Mariposa will be following the rules in Ontario.

12. Adjournment

Chair Angelo Bertolas thanked all participants and especially Neal Colgrass for a seamless meeting. The meeting was adjourned at 9:15 pm.

The next meeting will tentatively be on September 15, 2020. A further Zoom event may be scheduled during the summer.