

YQNA MINUTES OF MEETING #83 Wednesday September 16, 2020

On-line Via ZOOM due to COVID-19 Pandemic (83 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 again mentioned that YQNA now has a Square account for donations, which can be made through the “Contribute” option on yqna.ca. He moved the adoption of minutes of the July 14 meeting, and seeing no objections, declared the motion approved.

Angelo advised that usually the November meeting includes an AGM portion, and requested that persons with an interest in serving for the next year send an expression of interest, with a short resume, to info@yqna.ca or chair@yqna.ca. He noted that in particular a new Secretary is needed, as Carolyn Johnson is currently fulfilling this position as well as co-chair.

3. City of Toronto issues – Tom Davidson for Councillor Joe Cressy

Tom advised that Councillor Cressy is nearing the end of his parental leave and will be returning to his normal duties as well as his role as Chair of the Board of Health.

In an update of COVID-19, Tom remarked that this fight is a marathon not a sprint. It started with travel, moved to institutional settings, and is now in the community. He thanked everyone for their efforts at containing the virus. The City’s contact tracing work shows that certain groups are worse affected. The shelter system needed more space, and a quarantine hotel was required. There is a Toronto Public Health report on scenarios for the Fall and Winter. New mitigation measures may be required to address the rise in cases from social gatherings, and the City is recommending that the Province reduce the size of groups from the current 50 indoors and 100 outside. Wider use of masks and enforcement of the regulations is needed, and the City will do this where permitted.

Regarding homelessness, the Band-Aid shelter system was revised to deal with people living on the streets and encampments. People were moved to improved shelters and temporary facilities with wider spacing. Tent people were moved to safer conditions with housing, shelter beds or temporary housing. Shelter staff worked with the camp people to help them, and over 800 have been moved. This effort took some time. The next step is real housing. Modular houses are to be built on sites the City is buying. The City is also asking for more help from higher orders of government, as shelters are not the answer.

On short term rentals like Airbnb, the City by-law came into effect and registration opened on September 10, 2020. Enforcement by the City is under way. Call 311 if you are aware of illegal rentals.

In case of high lake levels next year, the City is preparing. The TRCA has now prepared flood mapping at various lake levels, but is making improvements prior to public release. The Emergency Planning and Resiliency Offices are working on the issue. On the Island, the park is being protected.

Q & A

Q: Regarding vaccines against COVID-19, are there any efforts to prioritize large cities?

A: MP Adam Vaughan may know. Toronto Public Health is ready for distribution.

Q: What is the plan for enforcement of short term rental rules?

A: There are serious fines and levies, and violators can be taken to court. By-law issues around the pandemic are stable so the framework that is set up can be used.

Q: What can be done about new camps springing up?

A: For safety issues, call 911 or the Police. For general complaints, contact 311. The city will continue with supportive housing as real estate agreements are addressed. Members can also reach out to YQNA so that we can call in our contacts at Homes First.

Q: What measures are being taken to address violence, especially gun violence?

A: Some communities are experiencing gun violence, and community supports are essential. It is a long-standing issue of political will to eliminate the causes.

4. Update from the Province – MPP Chris Glover.

Chris commented that we are living a new reality. Imagine if, like 10 years ago, we did not have tools like Zoom. These are good for family and other contacts. The number of COVID-19 cases has risen to over 300 a day, which is related to more contacts. The Province will need to close some contacts and gatherings. Regarding the 32 outbreaks in Long Term Care facilities, an investigation is to be announced, but the NDP feels there will be too much government control over that process. They say it has to include public hearings due to the deaths of clients and staff. A second wave may be coming.

With respect to schools, **Chris** noted that the TDSB has had to shift resources to on-line education. The NDP is pushing for smaller class caps for a Safer September. Other countries are using churches and community centres to provide more classroom space. The situation could still change, but there are already some school outbreaks with 29 cases including 9 students and 14 staff. Quebec has more cases, but they started back to school earlier.

Regarding homelessness, an update has just been released. It is happening due to a policy failure over housing. The City needs to take care of the people and give us back our parks. Some campers have mental health or drug issues and are without supports. Some are looking for a detox spot but unable to find one in a timely fashion. A Canada-wide study has shown that income levels and housing costs are the cause. Ontario Works and similar payments are too low. The Province has cut \$160 million out of the housing budget and made evictions easier through a change in the law. Thousands of eviction orders are before the Landlord and Tenant Tribunal.

In terms of businesses, **Chris** noted that tourism-based firms need help until next Spring. It is a big part of our local economy, with some 17 million annual visitors to the Waterfront.

Chris is trying to create a Federation of South Toronto Residents Associations (FOSTRA), modelled on FONTRA in the north, for which there was a meeting in January. He feels that local RA's need to band together to put more pressure on the Province concerning the rules for development, the LPAT, etc.

Regarding local efforts to help those dealing with the pandemic, he is helping with the delivery of 400 meals on Sundays and more help would be welcome. Another initiative is outdoor concerts in places like condo courtyards giving local musicians a venue and an audience on their balconies. The pandemic has been hard on us but Canada is doing well compared with Europe and the USA, by standing together.

Q & A

Q: The Federal government has sent money to the Provinces, but is Ontario sitting on it?

A: Yes, the Province is sitting on housing funding and not flowing it to the cities to deal with homelessness.

Q: How about Federal funding for schools?

A: The rate of inflation is 2% so the 1% increase led to a \$700 million shortfall, with the TDSB short \$60 million. This year's funding for pandemic preparation is less than half what was cut. We need more money for more teachers and smaller classes. It's so bad for our children missing the school experience on top of actual education. We must make the investment to achieve it.

Q: Can Ontario even handle on-line learning?

A: No, schools in Northern Ontario have inadequate wi-fi, students have had to drive to college parking lots to borrow their wi-fi even if the buildings were closed. Today the internet is essential for life.

5. Update from the Federal Government – MP Adam Vaughan

Adam commented that the response to COVID-19 is the top priority, especially concerning a second wave. The focus is on people; their health, their housing and their incomes. Canada needs a vaccine and the best testing available and to keep small businesses viable. Cities, including Toronto, are on the front line, as social impacts are highest in cities. The Federal government is ensuring that services continue. The economy is rebounding, but how? Who is going back to work? Who is not? The same people who are getting sick? The government is not pleased with the way the provinces are flowing Federal funds. Ontario's plan does not even mention homelessness, which makes him angry.

Adam noted that the throne speech has to address current challenges including climate change. It is a reset for Parliament. We need to follow the UN sustainable development goals with three pillars – economy, social and environment. EI benefits and housing supports are crucial. Canada needs a new approach to cover all the needs, but not a basic income because then we could not afford other supports like daycare and senior care – “Family Care”. Economic development depends on addressing the supply and cost of daycare so that women, who are largely stuck with it, can return to work. The government needs to look at wage subsidies, and more focussed support for example for arts and culture, which is a large part of our local culture and economy, like OCADU.

Adam remarked that the world needs to battle climate change because of issues like fires and the migrants who lose their homes and need to escape extreme weather. An announcement is coming on new money for homelessness. Homeless people are now young, diverse, and volatile, and heavy lifting is needed to help them. \$19 billion was sent to Queens Park and not spent. The Federal NDP needs to change its tune and stop supporting transfers to the provinces. The Federal government has to work directly with the cities to ensure funding reaches its targets, because the local conservative governments are not spending the funds. The Fall is key to housing the homeless because this wet, cold season leads to health problems. We cannot tolerate homelessness, during this pandemic in particular.

Families need more access to computers while parents are working from home, and High School students have to take on-line courses. If students go to libraries to access computers, they will tend to interact with homeless people sheltering from the weather.

Q & A

Q: Due to difficulties with distancing, are cities going to be prioritized for vaccines?

A: Delivery of vaccines will be driven by science, depending on befitting population, and method of delivery. Hot spots would be addressed. There are many technical issues involved.

Q: We are still concerned about floods from Lake Ontario. Can Adam do anything to influence the IJC?

A: We had a meeting about this with the Great Lakes Caucus. We had some success last year, but it is tricky. They need to sustain draining the lakes as much as possible, as well as upstream detention and flood protection measures such the Don River works. The bird sanctuary in the harbour is important because it allows for Federal investment. The caucus is working with the TPA to fortify the harbour, and worked with the local politicians in the US to get it going.

Q: Adequate bandwidth and computers are now essential for education. Are there any plans to assist?

A: Yes, there has been Federal money sent and invested. This is a rural caucus priority. Lowering the cost of the internet helps. We need more support for libraries and tech hubs. Urban MP's are pushing

for it but the rural ones want broadband, so it needs an holistic approach. We do need more computers for families, along with childcare and housing.

6. Streetcars on Queens Quay East – Carolyn Johnson, Co-chair YQNA

Carolyn gave a short presentation about this joint initiative by TTC, Waterfront Toronto (WT) and City Planning, using a few slides from the City presentation given to Stakeholder Advisory Committee members.

Carolyn said that at the end of July, the YQNA Planning Committee was provided with information during a Zoom-type call with some of the City staff involved. We posted a blog afterwards on the website. We could not get anyone to come to this meeting today, but further public consultation is promised this Fall. Here is a quick overview.

In 2010 an Environmental Assessment Study (EA) for the East Bayfront Transit was completed and approved. This project saw service from Union Station with an expanded platform, through the existing tunnel to Queens Quay, a new tunnel section from Bay to Freeland, and surface tracks as far as a turn-around loop just west of Parliament. An EA is only valid for 5 years, and much has changed in the area since 2010. The City and TTC therefore launched the Waterfront Transit Reset study, which also deals with streetcar service as far west as Long Branch.

In 2019 the study determined that the link from Union to Queens Quay should remain as streetcar service rather than some other technology. Council approved continuation of the study for service along Queens Quay East. The latest findings are that the line could be phased, with one phase ending at the loop, while another would push to line all the way to Cherry Street loop within the Distillery District.

The biggest possible change is where the tunnel portal would be located, following a targeted sub-study. A problem that was discovered in 2013 is the depth of the combined sewer pipe at the foot of Yonge Street.

In Option 1 the tunnel comes to the surface west of Yonge Street and does not have to deal with the sewer pipe. In Option 2 with the tunnel portal east of Yonge Street, the pipe is too deep in its current location, and it would have to be diverted to the west to ensure clearance over the streetcar tunnel. The pipe diversion and the longer tunnel would increase the project cost over the shorter tunnel option.

Putting the portal west of Yonge Street has implication for access to buildings on the south side, especially the Westin Hotel and the vehicle entrance to the ferry docks. The traffic situation in this area today is quite congested with bus and taxi drop-offs, and has conflicts between bicycles and cars. The staff team is recommending a possible solution to all these issues by extending Yonge Street south onto about 50 m of lake-fill at the head of the slip. This area would provide a waiting area for buses and taxis, and lead to new driveways for the hotel and the ferry docks. The preliminary concept includes landscaping.

The next stage of the work is to develop the design to a higher standard, known as 30%, which will enable better cost estimates and timelines for construction. As shown, the TTC is responsible for the tunnel work, and a contract has just been let for this aspect of the job. The balance is being managed by Waterfront Toronto, and their ideas so far include making the street much like Queens Quay West with even better tree planting and “arrival” features at the various slips along the way.

Carolyn noted that we will be posting the full slide presentation on the website, so if members are interested in knowing more about the streetscaping they can view it there. To provide comments to the study team, they can email waterfronttransit@toronto.ca.

7. The Lake Ontario Flood Situation – Lynn Robinson, TICA

Lynn provided a graph from the International Joint Commission (IJC) website showing Lake Ontario water levels up to date and their projection for the next six months. The current level is a foot less than this time last year. The projection is concerning because it could see a level higher than ever seen.

Lynn advised that the Upper lakes are at high levels and sending us lots of water. If the Ottawa River floods, then we flood, because of protecting Montreal under the IJC Plan 2014. That was the reason for our floods in 2017 and 2019. There is no control over flows from the upper lakes, but some control over the outflow from Lake Ontario through the dam at Cornwall. The best idea is to plan for serious floods and tweak the outflows as much as possible.

Lynn commented that there was a good start on flood protection last Spring. The TRCA is preparing professional flood level mapping at various levels and then we can see the impacts on infrastructure. Now we need to take preventative measures and cost out the impacts. The TICA is available to participate in any plans along with YQNA. We need to prevail upon the IJC to deviate from Plan 2014 in the short term. There is a review of the controversial Plan under way but it will take a couple of years. They need to balance the needs of shipping, Montreal and Ontario. There are some good people working on the review. The deviation last winter worked well, and we need it to continue.

Therefore, we need to write letters to the IJC to ask for a repeat, and to ask all our shoreline politicians for their help.

8. 200 Queens Quay West and 11 Bay Street – Angelo Bertolas, Co-chair YQNA

Angelo advised that YQNA contacted the developers and the City planner for 200 QQW but has not received any updates. We are encouraging residents of Waterclub condos to form a group to work with the developer.

Regarding 11 Bay, **Angelo** noted that the land for the existing conference centre is leased from the City. In conjunction with the renewal of the lease, the tenants have submitted a development application for a new building with a 54 storey office tower on top of a more modern conference facility. Along with the new streetcar line and the new ferry dock terminal, and possibly a replacement for the Westin Hotel, this area could see a lot of construction and good co-ordination will be essential.

9. Waterfront BIA Update – Oliver Hierlihy for Tim Kocur

Oliver noted that the BIA is expanding east to Cherry Street. He asked that members let the BIA know of any businesses in the stretch east of Yonge Street.

The BIA is partnering with the Bentway to sponsor an art projection on the Bathurst malting silos.

The BIA met with the developers of 200 Queens Quay West. The Waterfront Reconnect vision is important, along with a PATH link for the future. The BIA feels that parking needs better signage and a parking management plan, as parking will be removed at Rees Street and reduced at 200 Queens Quay West.

10. Harbourfront Centre (HC) Update – Martin Kenneally

Martin advised that all public events, camps and festivals at HC are cancelled. There is digital programming such as for Canada Day, and “The Mic is ON” for musical artists.

Martin noted that under COVID-19 health and safety rules there can be some use of the facilities, so there are 27 artists in residence working in the studios. Powerboat and sailing activities are open mainly for members. The commercial marine tenants have been devastated by the loss of cruises, but the water taxis are doing better. HC has some business to business contracts to keep businesses going. The concert stage has been cleared of audience seating and made available for more Boxcar Social patio space.

Martin added that Marina 4 by 245 Queens Quay is being closed for renovations over the winter and the boats will be moved to **Marina Quay West** by the Music Garden. HC is in negotiations to finally lease the former Pawsway building and more details will be released once a contract is signed.

The Power Plant will open again later in September. At present the National Ballet is rehearsing there, and may put on a show, and the other theatres are in use for rehearsals and play testing. The ice rink will be opened with reservations and reduced capacity. The International Festival of Authors will be digital this year with a launch on October 22, 2020.

11. Adjournment

Chair Angelo Bertolas noted that there has been an increase in the use of e-scooters along the waterfront. He mentioned again that the AGM will be held on November 17 and invited any interested parties to be in contact. Billy Bishop airport is now slated to restart in November. We could ask Hal Beck to join our November meeting with an update.

He thanked all participants for joining the meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:05 pm.

The next meeting will tentatively be on November 17, 2020.