

MINUTES OF YQNA MEETING #85 Wednesday Jan. 13, 2021

On-line Via ZOOM due to COVID-19 Pandemic (approximately 100 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** acknowledged the difficulty of the times and reminded participants that YQNA is a volunteer association that does not charge a membership fee and relies on people’s financial support. He directed participants to the YQNA website at yqna.ca if they wished to donate.

He moved the adoption of minutes of the November 17, 2020 meeting, and seeing no objections, declared the motion approved.

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

Covid / Vaccination Roll Out

Tom commented that we are in the most intense period of the COVID 19 outbreak alongside the vaccination roll out. The City is prioritizing:

1. Health Care Facilities
2. LTC providers.
3. Vaccinations for the general public which will occur later this spring.

Lockdown Restrictions

Regarding the recently announced lockdown protocols, the City is awaiting the detailed regulations re restrictions. They are working out the implications for public facilities such as skating rinks etc. Information will come out as soon as possible.

Paid Leave Policy

Tom highlighted that efforts are required to protect our populations that don’t have the advantage of working from home. A full paid leave policy is being encouraged to supplement the federal benefit program – an idea that is being advocated by both the Board of Health and our MPP Chris Glover.

Development

- **11 Bay St.**

The development application for this project is approaching the public planning meeting phase. The City owns the land and has determined that the development should be approached with a ‘Design Excellence’ lens. Based on the buildings prominent location the applicant will be required to meet the highest design standards both in terms of its ‘built form’ and its integration into the public realm.

The planning resolution for this site might include a lease agreement that would front-end funding payments to the city. This would allow the city to advance the Jack Layton ferry terminal project and arrange partnerships to generate further funding for the project. The Jack Layton ferry terminal is one of the landmark projects for the area.

- **17 Yonge – Pinnacle Development site beside the Toronto Star Building.**

This building received approval for residential buildings which are now underway. It incorporates a community centre that will be completed within the next year. A revised application has been submitted to change the proposed south block office tower to a hotel and to reconfigure the height and massing characteristics of the site.

- **200 Queens Quay**

The public consultation for the planning application took place on January 12, 2021 and included robust discussions around the built form, shadowing and parking issues. The next steps include an assessment of the amount of public and private parking required and a review of the specific parking agreements with relevant condo buildings. The appropriateness of the size and scope of the project will undergo further review.

- **York Park / Rees St. Park**

The design for York Park has been finalized. The City is now moving to advance the Rees St. Park project.

MZO's – West Donlands

The province superseded the City's planning process on 3 sites in various stages of planning in the West Donlands. The due diligence could not be completed and will be limited going forward. There are tools that the City can continue to use, but they are limited.

MZO's have been used in the past, most often in conjunction and co-operation with the city. The City is not likely to see more MZO's because Waterfront Toronto is working co-operatively with the City on sites that do not involve provincial properties.

LRT

YQNA had asked for a working group to ensure that there is co-ordinated planning for, 11 Bay, the East Bay Front LRT, and future infrastructure for Harbour St. There are several integration issues that need to be dealt with. Contacts have been assembled for this working group. A meeting date will be announced shortly.

Flood Protection Update

Lake levels are lower than they were last year. The City recognizes that Spring flooding is critical. The City continues to support flood protection initiatives on the Island and on the City Side.

Angelo Bertolas commented that co-ordination of activity around the Bay and Queens Quay intersection including Yonge St is critical in order to minimize the disruption to the neighbourhood.

Q: It has been reported that homeless people are hanging out in the path without masks. Is 311 the best way to deal with this issue?

A: Tom indicated that he would take this information back to City Hall

Angelo Bertolas noted that MZO's are an unacceptable way to pursue development.

4. Update from the Province – MPP Chris Glover

U.S.

Chris commented that the situation in the States is shocking and speaks to the need for a really strong democracy. The Atlantic Magazine has done a good analysis of the steps that have led the U.S. to the current situation. Chris has a link to the article in his most recent update. He reiterated that we need to defend our democracy and that grassroots / community organizing is the foundation of a strong democracy.

Pandemic Update

Chris noted that we are not doing well in terms of managing the current pandemic. The predictions from Health Canada have been very accurate and they are projecting 20,000 cases per day

nationally. The U.K. strain is here. It is more contagious...but does not cause more serious disease. Toronto is currently experiencing around 3900 cases per day. There are early signs of a downward trend but there is a lag and inconsistency in the number of reported cases. The province has enacted a second state of emergency. A list of restrictions is included in Chris Glover's most recent update, but some key restrictions follow:

- Schools will be closed until Feb. 10, 2021
- LTC homes continue to be the epicentre. There is a need to completely revamp the way LTC homes are managed. The 'private-for-profit' model needs to be challenged. The mortality rates are meaningfully different in these homes versus public homes. The Province has enacted recent legislation that has made it harder for LTC to be sued.
- Small businesses are awaiting a badly needed \$20,000 loan promised in December. They need support from all of us and from all three levels of government in order to remain solvent during the pandemic.

Homelessness Crisis

Chris is part of a group that is delivering 400 meals a week to the homeless. Housing is the solution and the provincial government is AWOL on the housing file. Additionally, there has been an eviction blitz at the Landlord Tenant Board. Ford says there will be a moratorium but has yet to enforce it.

Paid Sick Days

There is a need to ensure that employees have paid sick days. The Federal government has offered some benefits. The province needs to step up and make sure that people are not going to work sick.

MZO's

Chris commented that the use of MZO's by the Provincial government is appalling.

Conservation Authority

There is a need to protect flood plains as a result of the provincial government's recent changes altering the powers of the Conservation Authorities. Chris suggested that there is a need to amplify the voices of resident associations across the city around this issue. Chris has organized FOSTRA (Federation of South Toronto Associations) to this end. Carolyn Johnson is participating for YQNA.

Other

Chris noted that it is heartening to see how people are coming forward to help others. He appealed to participants to reach out and let people know that they are thinking of them. Social connections are important during the pandemic.

Q: Why has the vaccination roll out been slow?

A: We are currently getting 10,000 vaccinations completed a day. If we are to get everyone vaccinated by September 80,000 people a day need to be vaccinated. Chris has confidence in Hillier's ability to achieve this goal but identified that there had been shortcomings in the provincial vaccination implementation program.

5. Federal Update – MP Adam Vaughan

Vaccine

Canada is in the top 10 countries in terms of the volume of vaccines it has acquired and when compared to population that put us in a 'very good space.' The challenge is getting people vaccinated and that relates to provincial health system breakdowns in addition to logistics issues. There is strong confidence that Canada can overachieve relative to the September completion date for vaccination administration. September was the measuring point because of the importance of getting kids back to school. It is important to recognize the priority being given to long-term care,

both health care workers, staff and family leads. Homeless and people serving the homeless are also a priority.

COVID Relief

The federal government has been working with hotel and hotel workers and the hospitality sector which broadly describes the arts community, the sports sector, the tourism sector, restaurants amongst others, to administer financial relief during COVID. There have been challenges in Toronto in that the governments 'one size fits all' business relief program has had some shortcomings especially around the treatment of dividends. The federal government is working closely with cities, through the Canadian Urban Institute plus 257 participants in the hospitality sector to ensure that the business sector remains vital. In the event of mass failure in the business sector, the burden of taxes will fall on residents and that will further exacerbate the housing problem.

Housing

There will be a housing announcement on Friday. Money will be distributed directly to the cities. Adam noted that Provinces, such as Ontario, have not distributed previous funding for long-term care. The announcement will include:

- Spending of \$236 million on front-line services to end homelessness. The federal gov't has spent \$500 million since the start of the pandemic on front line services to end homelessness versus \$150 million per year pre-COVID.
- The Rapid Housing Initiative will be announced this week. It is a billion-dollar investment in housing by the federal government. The initiative includes a commitment to building 3000 housing units. The overriding goal is to move people into permanent housing from tents, including the large tent facilities that have been erected by the city,
- An Indigenous housing program (Indigenous led, designed and delivered) is being introduced in urban areas. Indigenous people represent 80% plus of the homeless population in Cities in Western Canada. This will be a stand-alone program that will address the needs of rural, northern and urban indigenous populations, particularly non-status indigenous populations. Approximately 87% of the Ontario indigenous population are non-status.
- Support for Co-ops – lapsed agreements have been a problem that require resolution.
- Early Learning Childcare investment is included in the budget, ensuring that we have a strong National policy supporting parents and children. The impact will be meaningful for racialized communities and women in the labour force in particular, who have been hardest hit by the pandemic.

Climate

The federal government is committed to overachieving on the Paris Climate Accord and specifically to achieve 'net zero' on an aggressive timeline. Part of the federal government plan includes a proposal to plant 2 billion trees in the service of conservation and the mitigation of flooding that impacts the Great Lakes. This planting will strengthen and secure the flood plains upstream to mitigate the flooding downstream. Lake levels have been stable for the past 2 years. However, there is still work to be done. Fortunately, Canada has better partners in the U.S. now supporting that work.

Permanent Transit Fund

There are legislative guidelines to create a permanent transit fund which will also include operating supports for cities and will include non-project related funding that will support 'state of good repair,' capital expansion and fleet maintenance.

Affordable Housing

Stand-alone public housing does not work. We have had meaningful learning from the St. Lawrence Market development and the co-op sector. Integrated communities need to be the goal with mixed incomes, mixed tenants and mixed unit counts. Federal dollars will be available to help realise affordable rental and market rate rental housing.

Comment by Angelo Bertolas. YQNA was a strong advocate with the IJC to reconsider Plan 2014. There is currently an agreement to lower the lake this year during the shipping hiatus, but there is a need for a good long-term plan to mitigate future flooding.

Q: Small business creates a tremendous number of jobs across Canada. Are there any plans to support small business? Are there any infrastructure projects planned?

A: There are a suite of programs available for small business including emergency wage subsidies. Some incentives involve taxes, especially municipal taxes. Tax submission policy changes, changes to way taxes are remitted and changes to the taking of dividends will all help. Tax relief programs are being re-visited to try to make them work better. Individual supports have been introduced to provide sick pay. It was noted that the logistics of the federal sick pay program, don't currently have the front-line delivery mechanisms that meet peoples timing needs. The federal government used this approach to avoid problems with social programs which fall under the provinces' jurisdiction.

Q: What is the status of vaccine distribution. Why are countries like Australia and Israel succeeding in ways that Canada is not?

A: Israel's success is not being shared by all people who live in the occupied territories. This is a significant human rights concern. Additionally, Israel has a centralized health care system. Australia implemented comprehensive lock down restrictions including robust measures on trade and travel. That country is not vaccinating until February / March.

Other

- LTC program funding was delivered to Ontario and it was not spent. As a federation with divided responsibility for healthcare, we face those challenges.
- Vaccination resistance is an issue. Adam presented the example of Copernicus Lodge, a Polish Seniors home, that was getting their information from Polish language media who were skeptical about vaccines. This kind of information is gaining traction. There are plans for a large public education and information campaign to try to build awareness about the safety of vaccines.

6. Waterfront Toronto Update – George Zegarac, Chief Executive Officer

Waterfront Toronto is releasing an updated 5-year plan at the end of the w/o January 11th. The public has been engaged in the update. Waterfront Toronto's reputation has been built on engagement going back to the original CEO and YQNA has been a key part. One piece of key learning has been that the mandate of Waterfront Toronto is more important than ever.

Going forward, building a dynamic, safe and inclusive community will be a key priority. Achieving that balance will require continued engagement.

5-year Plan Highlights

Over the past 20 years Waterfront Toronto has built 43 hectares of public space added. 25 new parks have been added. Three aspects of the 5 year plan were highlighted:

- 27 new hectares of parks and 9 new kilometres of trails.
- Enhanced access to the waterfront via transit and the LRT
- Integrated affordable housing

4 signature projects

1. Expanded Walkways
2. Ferry terminal
3. Destination playground
4. Cultural Centre

Priority Projects

1. Portland's flood protection, redirecting a river, creating a new community with affordable housing, new park space, employment opportunities. So far, the project is on-time and on-budget. Project completion 2024.
2. Quayside – have revisited priorities including affordable housing, equity issues, green spaces and walkways. The plan is to select a vendor by fall 2021
3. Employment - Created tens of thousands of jobs over the past 20 years. Innovation is an important priority as well as permanent jobs. Innovation Centre is projected to generate 2000 permanent jobs...ideally professional jobs that attract talent to the waterfront. People are looking for Hope.

The organizational culture of Waterfront Toronto is noteworthy for its generosity and its commitment to the community.

Q: Has the pandemic impacted your funding?

A: Governments are recognizing the importance of the project priorities of Waterfront Toronto. Quayside stands out as do LTC – aging in place investments.

Q: Is your vision to have more parks, more greenspace?

A: Yes. There is a destination playground on Villiers Island. More public realm space is a priority.

Q: How does the funding with the developer work?

A: Development agreements on public land give Waterfront Toronto meaningful control. We have a master planner who is focussing on integration and evaluating the uniqueness of proposals. On private lands the city takes the lead with the developer. Waterfront Toronto has a strong relationship with the City that facilitates the development of good project planning in both situations.

Q: What are the plans for schools?

A: TDSB has the right of first refusal on 5 waterfront sites. They build once the demand is known. One school is being delivered next to the Pinnacle site where the LCBO is currently located.

Angelo Bertolas noted that the pandemic has shown us that we need our outdoor spaces especially when you are living in small residences.

Note: George Zegarac suggested that everyone should feel free to contact him.

7. Seeds of Hope – Homelessness Presentation Shafeeq Armstrong, Toronto Shelter Network Community Engagement Project Coordinator and Sa'ad Talia a member of the Dream Team People with Lived Experience.

Seeds of Hope

Mandate – improve dialogue with the community when implementing shelter and respite projects for the City's homeless. An important part of this mandate is building awareness about homelessness and its causes.

The Causes

8000 people are homeless every night. Two thirds identify as coming from groups that are racialized with the largest segment identifying as black. Many fall in and out of homelessness.

- Migration, inability to pay rent, non-financial related eviction are the main causes of homelessness. 94% want permanent housing. 6% were planning to leave Toronto or had concerns about available housing options or preferred their current situation.
- Anxiety, PTSD and depression (not schizophrenia) are common. Substance use is often a consequence of homelessness – not a cause.

The Cost

- We pay up to \$161,000 per person a year, mostly because of homeless peoples' interactions with the police and with healthcare.

Challenges

- People believe that homeless people cause violence. But more often they are the victims of violence.
- People believe that shelters in their neighbourhoods bring down property values. Again, this is not supported by the evidence.
- Homeless people have a hard time applying for jobs. It is hard to prepare physically and mentally for an interview when you are homeless.

Long-Term Solutions

Use of shelters are increasing and 30% are over the age of 50.

'Housing First' provides people with a home without preconditions

Action

- Educate people
- Continue to welcome people to our neighbourhood
- Share what you know about homelessness
- Donate
- Advocate to your local representatives.

Sa'ad Talia a member of the Dream Team People with Lived Experience.

Sa'ad gave a compelling presentation about the importance of having a home. His story about his current situation and the circumstances that left him in need of support were an important reminder that life is precarious, that addictions derive often from trauma and that everyone deserves dignity and respect. Sa'ad asked that participants recognize the importance for people with mental and physical health issues. Importantly, he requested that people not deny others the security that they demand for themselves. After all, they are our neighbours as well as fellow citizens of the City.

Q: Why do people choose to live on the street?

A: There are several reasons. It could be claustrophobia; some don't want to deal with the restrictions imposed by shelters

Q- Is the support to live on your own sufficient?

A. –Support is changing. ACCESS Point is the central location for support. They work with MAP and Urban Health initiative. There is work being done to increase the supply.

8. Waterfront BIA News - Tim Kokur

- BIA has been working with Harbourfront Centre to have a few attractions and installations available for visitors. There are two illuminated displays that now will not be advertised but will be available for viewing by the neighbours that live in the area.

- BIA has a job posting for an operations and special project manager
- BIA has doubled the size of its association meaning that there is one voice and fewer competing interests

9 Harbourfront Centre Update - Martin Keneally

Project Update

- Harbourfront Centre will be locked down as of January 14th.
- Current users including the National Ballet will not be in the building with the current lockdown
- An all-staff session was held to understand the impact of the pandemic on people's mental health. Part of the meeting was on a Brand Refresh – a review of Harbourfront's strategy
- Harbourfront is launching a capital project to rebuild the rink. Stakeholder sessions are planned.
- Still awaiting annual operating budget to come through as well as a large capital request for the rink alongside other capital projects
- Harbourfront is in serious engaged discussions with a tenant for 245 Queens Quay.
- Marinas damaged by recent weather. Repair work is ongoing.

10. Lake Ontario Flood Watch - Lynn Robinson, TICA

- Water levels are down to their seasonal average.
- Snowfall in the Ottawa river valley has been low so far this year. Consequently, flooding may be avoided in the spring.
- Long-term work is ongoing to ensure that there is a balance between Toronto and Montreal's needs.
- Another letter is needed to reinforce the issues for Toronto's waterfront

11. YQNA updates – Angelo Bertolas (to be discussed at the next meeting)

200 Queens Quay West Redevelopment Update from Community Engagement Meeting
YQNA is participating actively on this project and has submitted a detailed proposal and questions.

Lower Simcoe Underpass Flood Protection update

Some major pumps are being installed that constitute a more permanent solution to the flooding at this site.

York Street Park (Love Park) update

Construction to start in the next month or so. YQNA will continue to participate in stakeholder meetings.

11 Bay Street redevelopment – Update

YQNA continues to meet on the 11 Bay St. Development. Progress is being made.

Next Meeting Date: Tuesday March 10, 2021