



2014-2015 President's Report

The 2014-2015 year proved to be a busy one for the BCA. From the outset, we continued the approach started during the interim period, namely of monitoring the issues of our community and attempting to work with the Mayor and Council to find acceptable solutions to them.

Neighbourhood Watch

While not directly affiliated with the BCA, Neighbourhood Watch - Beaconsfield was re-constituted by Vice-President Marcel Roux, assisted by Charles Bourgeois and myself. It was officially launched at the end of June at a City Hall meeting attended by some members of the City administration, Karen Messier, Public Security and the Commandant of PDQ 1 Richard Thouin. The launch was successful and a follow-up meeting was held in fall 2014 and early summer 2015.

As a result of my role with both Neighbourhood Watch and the BCA, I was invited to act as a citizen representative from Beaconsfield/PDQ1 at an SPVM planning meeting with all station commandants and police management present.

Emerald Ash Borer

At its July meeting, the Council tabled a notice of motion for a revision to by-law 720 to deal with the Emerald Ash Borer threat. The draft by-law was felt to be extremely punitive and generally unacceptable to the homeowners of Beaconsfield. Despite the summer hiatus, the BCA's Executive Committee sprang into action. Much research was done, numerous meetings were held and a PowerPoint presentation was made for discussion with the Mayor and Council. (available online at http://media.wix.com/ugd/b07431_fda58a94ff7443eaa53f4b321eb4e258.pdf)

Many one-on-one meetings were held with the Mayor and councilors over the summer during which I expressed our concerns, pressing for modifications to the proposed by-law. After these discussions, the City requested BCA's participation in a joint meeting on the issue at City Hall. This meeting, seemingly a first of its kind seemed to bear fruit, in terms of cooperation and the end result.

We prepared and submitted a brief to the City at the September 22nd Public Consultation meeting on the EAB by-law. While not all of our inputs were included, we feel that the resulting bylaw was much more acceptable than the one originally presented by the City.

Emergency Preparedness

This topic continues to remain a major focus of concern. The City continues to maintain that it has a effective plan in place and is fully capable of dealing with any situation that may arise. It alludes to the Agglomeration's Emergency Management group's primary role in overseeing of major emergency situations. This group was called upon to do a presentation for the Mayor and Council on its operations, and provide a tour of the 911 centre.

Some citizens expressed concern regarding potentially hazardous conditions at the Styrochem plant in BaieD'Urfe. Initially downplayed, and seemingly ignored, in the end the City did react. It arranged a tour and meeting of the Styrochem plant with representatives from City administration, Mayor and Council, Public Security and SIM to allow them to view the plant and discuss areas of concerns. The BCA was invited to participate in the process. Feedback from SIM at the time was that the emergency plan in place at Styrochem was excellent. The company did have an action item to provide a risk analysis to SIM. We do feel that additional communication of this plan to neighbouring homeowners is required. The City promises a presentation of its emergency plan to the community this year. Hopefully the presentation will address the Styrochem issue..

During the winter months, several incidents left us questioning whether there was an acceptable communications and action plan in effect during holiday and off normal hours. The details of these points have been discussed with the Mayor and councillors and have been a topic of discussion at caucus meetings.

The creation of an Emergency Preparedness Advisory Committee (EPAC) remains an objective of the Association. We will continue to pursue the subject to see how our concerns can be addressed.

Safety Day

With a view of hosting an informative and fun day that would serve to sensitize both kids and adults alike to safety issues, we had planned to hold a Family Safety Day in Beaconsfield. Participants were to include the SPVM, SIM, Urgences Santé, CN/CP Police and more. Preparations done included planning and measuring possible sites. We selected Beaconsfield High School due to its size, available parking, auditorium etc. We had negotiated the space at BHS, as well as the football field (joint with Beaconsfield).

Unfortunately, as a result of labour unrest caused by Bill 3, we were unable to obtain guarantees of participation from several groups. As a result of this, we reluctantly elected to postpone the event until we could secure guaranteed presence.

Canada Post

Acting on information made available to us by Mayor Bourelle, the Executive Committee prepared a brief for the La Commission sur le développement social et la diversité montréalaise. Our brief and presentation seemed extremely well appreciated by the commissioners, and helped to form part of the City of Montreal's strategy for dealing with Canada Post's planned cessation of door-to-door delivery.

In addition, based on information gained in the process, it became evident that while Canada Post's internal guidelines dictated that it must adhere to local and provincial bylaws, it had a history of failing to do that. Furthermore, many municipalities simply do not have any regulations that cover community mailboxes.

After meeting with City administrators, the Mayor and councillors there seems to be consensus that Beaconsfield should protect itself, by having appropriate regulations in place. A revised PIIA is in the process of being passed and will include this protection.

Many of the demerged cities have joined Montreal and others in a lawsuit against Canada Post seeking a moratorium on its plan, until it has addressed a large number of their concerns. We ask that Beaconsfield joins this lawsuit. Moreover, we urge our members to contact their elected representative, and demand that the City joins forces with other municipalities in the lawsuit.

Electronic Billboard

In April, Council presented a notice of motion to change the zoning of U222, Public Works, to allow for the placement of an advertising billboard on its property. While this sign would have generated revenues of approximately \$300,000 per year over a 10-year contract life, many residents felt that it would change the character of the city and affect homes in the sign's immediate vicinity.

In order that the community be better informed, the Association emailed information concerning the EBB to all of its members as well as individuals on the Neighbourhood Watch list. Furthermore, the BCA website has provided additional information and as well as a survey allowing both member and non-member residents to express their opinion. In addition, approximately 300 flyers were distributed throughout the city. The website got about 175 hits on the subject page, a significant penetration. We encouraged citizens to attend the consultation meeting, regardless of their personal view on the subject.

The consultation meeting was extremely well attended and the voices of those who took the time to attend and express their concerns were clear. The project was subsequently withdrawn, and we anticipate a similar fate for the zoning change.

Since initial discussions indicated that member opinion was split on the topic, we did not attempt to take a position, one way or the other. I thank those members who helped with the distribution of the flyers, namely Marcel Roux, Ike Partington, and Caroline Laforest)

Other Roles

During the past mandate, the Association was approached on two occasions to mediate contentious situations. These have required several meetings each, but hopefully we were able to provide assistance to those involved.

The Association Itself

Effective March 6, 2015 the BCA was officially registered as an association with the provincial government. As per government linguistic requirements it is officially known as "L'Association des citoyens de Beaconsfield" but with secondary and equally important name of "The Beaconsfield Citizens Association"

In February 2014, we undertook to review the existing membership list due to outdated information. We instituted a new enrollment process and after restarting the membership from zero, our new count is in excess of 210 members. Since not everyone is equipped with a PC, our email distribution is approximately 175. The count continues to grow.

Communications

Communications has been an important factor in the activities over the past year, and spans various domains.

- **With Our Members**

Using the various tools at our disposal, we have made every effort to communicate with and inform our members and citizens of our community. These methods include regular emails sent to our distribution list, our website, which has grown substantially, and where necessary via information flyers. Our website provides the ability for citizens to identify their concerns to us.

Because of SPAM filters, it is difficult to ascertain our level of success in reaching members by email. To try to improve our success rate and ensure that they have reached their destination, we have asked for feedback on certain communiqués, so we know they are reached the destination. Should members receive a request to confirm receipt, they are urged to respond without delay so we can improve our communications.

The Association now has its own flyer which publicizes our goals and identity. These have been made available at various locations around the city, and have been distributed along with EAB and EBB flyers.

- **With The Mayor**

Since the beginning of the past term, I have met with the Mayor at least once per month, prior to the Council meeting to review the agenda, and reach an understanding on the issues. As a rule, this time is also used to identify areas of concern by the Association and if possible resolve these.

- **With The Councillors**

When the situation warrants further discussion, I have initiated one on one meetings with the councillors. As a rule, they have always been more than willing to meet with me and spend the time necessary to address the areas of concern. Subjects addressed in this manner include the EAB by-law, Emergency Preparedness, and Canada Post.

- **With Other Levels of Government**

Throughout the year, our Association has met with Francis Scarpeleggia on two occasions. The first was to discuss our concerns regarding the EAB regulations, but also express our concerns regarding the potential threat of ALB (Asian Longhorn Beetle) which attacks maple trees. The second was to discuss the Canada Post brief, submitted by the BCA, and seek information and support regarding this initiative. He was well prepared for our meeting and also researched and provided follow-up information to our questions

We also met with Geoff Kelley at the provincial level. We discussed our concerns about the EAB and several other issues. We also informed him of the Association's activities and plans for the year. He was receptive to our plans and approved a \$500 grant for our group.

- **With the Police**

Throughout the year, primarily under the umbrella of Neighbourhood Watch, we have met with the commandants and officers of PDQ 1. These meetings have always been positive and there is a great working relationship with them.

Observations

While it may appear to some that in the course of pursuing a more cooperative approach we have lost sight of the watchdog role. Such is not the case. It is my feeling that a more collaborative attitude has led to greater dialogue and that has translated into better decisions for the residents and taxpayers of Beaconsfield. Instead of a few moments of discussion at Council meetings, we have succeeded in spending much more time discussing the issues and making our views known to our elected officials.

I would like to thank the excellent members of the Executive Committee for their support throughout the year. They sacrificed many hours of their time over the last summer over the EAB by-law, as well as other issues through out the year. I would also like to thank Bruce Macdonald, for his participation and efforts with regards to Safety Day, and other emergency preparedness issues. It was an honour to work with this excellent team.

Al Gardner

President

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