

# OLD UNIVERSITY NEIGHBOURHOOD RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION



## 2018 SPRING NEWSLETTER

### **OUNRA Annual General Meeting 2018**

**Thursday, May 10; 7:00 p.m.**

**Gymnasium, Harcourt Church, 87 Dean Avenue**

(Please use the rear door of the building, next to the children's playground)

**Guest Speaker: Dr. Franco Vaccarino, President, University of Guelph.**

**OUNRA Business: OUNRA President's Report; Treasurer's Report; Changes to the Constitution/Bylaw; Election of Executive Committee members.**

**Councillors' Corner: Leanne Piper and Cathy Downer will address issues including an update on the Guelph Community Energy Initiative, Homecoming strategies, and the replacement of the OMB by the LPAT (Local Planning Appeals Tribunal). They will also respond to questions from the floor.**

E-mail: [guelphounra@gmail.com](mailto:guelphounra@gmail.com)

Web site: <https://ounra.wordpress.com>

Facebook: Old University Neighbourhood Association



# PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

*Scott Butler*

## **A 2018 Election Wish-list**

With two elections on the horizon, the silly season is now officially upon us.

This note is being offered with the same hope and optimism that used to guide my approach to Christmas as a kid. What follows is my abbreviated wish-list for the 2018 Ontario provincial election and the 2018 City of Guelph municipal election.

These ideas are free to any and all candidates.

**The Role of the City:** There is an often repeated phrase that municipal governments are the closest to the people and the most transparent. This is undeniably true. However, all across Ontario there is disappointing tendency for former councillors to abandon the municipal sector when they get to Queen's Park. A new fiscal arrangement that allows municipalities to use revenue tools beyond user fees and property taxes is absolutely crucial to the long-term viability of our City. At the same time, we need representatives at City Hall who appreciate this and will demand it from MPPs at Queen's Park.

**Transportation:** There are seismic shifts happening in the realm of transportation that will have significant impacts on our City. The prospect of all-day, two-way GO Train service has the potential to be a game changer. High speed rail, not so much. Bike lanes – that would be a connected network of separated-by-a-curb bike lanes – must be a priority. What do good bike lanes look like? The answer is pretty simple. Would you let a child you love ride her/his bike alone there? If the answer is no, then better infrastructure needs to be constructed.

**Downtown Revitalization:** The signs are there that our downtown is changing for the better. Intensification, as seen in the new condos, is paying community enhancing dividends. The new main library will be a catalyst for further positive gains in the city centre. In the interim, something must be done about the garbage cans downtown. They are an eyesore.

**The Role of the University of Guelph:** I am unapologetically biased in favour of U of G. I am a graduate and I have family who works at the University. I am a shameless proponent of what the University stands for. Unfortunately, the conversation regarding the University's place in our city has been stunted by complaints about 'the students'. Our elected representatives at City Hall and Queen's Park must reach out to the University and build stronger partnerships with the community. More can be done to meaningfully work together.

**Democracy:** Everyone should vote in the provincial election. The turnout in the last election was low. But it was still better than the municipal election, where turnout is dismal. No one should be pleased with voter turnout below 80 per cent. Locally, it would be wonderful to see re-imagined candidate debates that are more than a mere recitation of speaking points. Efforts also need to be made to ensure that candidates reflect the community they are representing. This means more women candidates and more people of colour standing for office.

Here is hoping the election brings happy gifts to all of us.

## City Policy on Severance and Demolitions

In recent years we have seen, in the Old University Neighbourhood, an increase in requests to subdivide larger lots into smaller ones along with applications to demolish existing houses to make way for new (and often larger) houses. There is nothing inherently wrong with intensifying the housing stock or with property owners wanting to upgrade their houses, but such applications frequently leave the near neighbours feeling uneasy. The usual concerns are focused on the crowding of property lines, the scale of the new buildings or the destruction of the style/look/feel of the neighbourhood. The latter is especially sensitive when a particular streetscape is characterized by a group of houses that were built at about the same time and in a consistent style.

The aim of this piece is to provide OUN residents with some information about the policies the City of Guelph Council and staff follow when faced with applications to sever/divide lots or demolish buildings. Whenever OUNRA intervenes in these situations, we are obligated to do so only within the City's existing planning rules and policies. Frankly, anything else is deemed irrelevant in the formal approval process.

**Applications for severance** are submitted to the Committee of Adjustment, which has to consider the City's zoning bylaw and regulations. Under the City's official plan, most of the OUN is zoned R1b although a small section in the middle of the neighbourhood (parts of Maple Street, Forest Hill Drive and Wolfond Cres) are zoned as R1a. In R1b areas the minimum lot frontage is 15 metres while the minimum frontage in R1a areas is 18 metres. If, after severance, the remaining frontages are within those limits, permission to sever is mostly routinely given. If the new frontages are less than permitted under the Bylaw, the C of A must determine if the variance from the requirements is minor. If deemed to be minor, then the C of A can permit the severance.

**Applications for demolition** are submitted to City Council, which can issue a demolition permit. A permit is required if the building to be demolished "contains one of more dwelling units" (structures in which people live and sleep, basically). But if a building is "subordinate or accessory" and its use is only incidental to the use of the main building, no demolition permit is required for such buildings. In practice, Council approves almost all applications for demolitions.

A major concern for neighbours with respect to severances and demolitions is what comes next. Approvals in both cases routinely require the application to protect existing trees but, in truth, Guelph has no enforceable forest protection policy for lots smaller than 0.2 hectares/0.5 acres. All existing lots within the OUN are smaller than this limit.

Also a major concern is what sort of building will replace the demolished one or be built on the newly severed lot. These issues are not formally on the table during severance or demolish decisions although it is customary practice for applications to be accompanied by some form of plan regarding the replacement structure. In the formal sense, these matters get taken up in the building permit process that must precede any new construction. If no variances are required (i.e., if the new buildings are fully within what is permitted by the zoning Bylaw), then there is no way for neighbours to intervene or comment on the new developments. But if the buildings require a variance (to be granted by the Committee of Adjustment), then neighbours can express their views and make comment.

If the application concerns a house on the heritage registry or is in the Heritage Conservation District in the OUN, the application is reviewed by Heritage Guelph. If Heritage Guelph deems the house or some feature of the house worthy of designation (if not already on the Registry) or if the demolition compromises the integrity of the Heritage District, then Council can refuse the permit.

## Proposed Changes to OUNRA Constitution and Bylaw

The OUNRA Executive Committee is recommending a number of changes to the OUNRA Constitution and Bylaw. Most of them are relatively trivial and are intended to rectify a number of ambiguities in the existing version. The most significant of the changes are noted below. The full statement of the changes is posted on the OUNRA website.

### Members and Memberships

1. Existing language defines a 'member' as "any person or family" living in the OUN. The new language will define a member as any person aged 18 or more years and will eliminate any reference to family. Further, the new language states explicitly that all members have the right to vote at general meetings of the OUNRA where business is conducted.
2. The designation of 'Contributing Member' is being created to distinguish between members who volunteer to pay what has been called the 'Membership Fee' and those who do not. The fee will now be called a 'Contributing Membership Fee'.

### The Executive Committee

3. New language will give the Executive Committee the power to remove from the Committee any members who miss more than three consecutive meetings without a reasonable explanation.
4. New language regarding the election of members to the Executive Committee makes it clear that the vote at the AGM is to elect Executive Committee members. New language also makes it clear that the newly elected Executive Committee will elect the officers at its first meeting following the AGM. The old language implied that the Officers were also elected at the AGM.
5. Quorum at the Executive Committee meetings will be changed from "more than one-half of the Officers" to "more than one-half of the Executive Committee members". This new language follows more conventional practice.
6. Until now, the OUNRA has had no standing committees. New language will create a standing committee to be called the Communications Committee to highlight the importance of finding more effective ways to communicate with the OUN residents.

## **OUNRA CONTRIBUTING-MEMBERSHIP FORM Spring 2018**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Postal Code \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

E-Mail \_\_\_\_\_

**Annual contributing-membership fee is \$20.**

*Cash accepted; cheques (payable to OUNRA) preferred.*

**Please bring your form to the AGM or mail it to:**

**David Josephy, Treasurer, OUNRA, 66 Maple St., Guelph N1G 2G2.**

**I can help to deliver the semi-annual Newsletter**