

President's Report

Welcome to the 13th annual general meeting of the AWWCA, the largest and most active community association in Hamilton. I thank Pastor Dave Stimers and Westdale Baptist Church staff and congregation for being our gracious hosts for the second consecutive year. And I thank Fortino's on Main Street West for donating bags of ice for those who want cool water to drink this evening.

I welcome the following persons and thank them for their attendance and participation:

Representatives of McMaster University

- Dr. Patrick Deane, president
- Mary Williams, vice-president, advancement
- Andrea Farquhar and Gord Arbeau, public and community relations
- Mary Koziol, MSU past president and now special assistant to Dr. Deane

Representatives of the Hamilton Police Service

- Sergeant Sabrina Feser, Division 1 crime manager
- Police Constable Claus Wagner

Representative of the Hamilton Fire Department

- Chief Fire Prevention Officer Frank Biancucci

Representatives of By-Law

- Glyn Wyd, superintendent of standards and zoning
- Kelly Barnett, community liaison co-ordinator

Representatives of McMaster Students Union

- Matthew Dillon-Leitch, president
- Laura Stevens, Student Community Support Network

Representatives of the Ward 1 councillor's office

- Brian McHattie, councillor
- Dale Brown

If I have mispronounced a name or inadvertently omitted anyone, my apologies; please tell me after this plenary session so that I can make amends and acknowledge you later.

Before I give my final report as president of this worthy association I have a short public-service announcement. During the past two weeks some areas in our near-campus community have had to periodically tolerate loud noise from late-night exuberant partying. Instead of

resorting to self-help measures, please go to the useful-numbers section of our last newsletter or our website. There you will find the numbers to call and the protocol to follow. All of us--homeowners, tenants, police, bylaw, and university administration--are much better served if we do this.

You should know that significant changes are happening now at your AWWCA.

1. Two of our founders and stalwart directors--Loreen Jerome and Janet Woodward--are taking well-deserved retirements from the board of directors.
2. Janet's departure means that our wonderful newsletter will be much reduced and probably will be converted to electronic format.
3. In about 10 minutes my friend and colleague, Jay Parlar, on the board for the past four years, will be acclaimed as president. Jay grew up and was educated in this area, still lives and works here, is the proud father of two very young children, and is a newly minted PhD in computer engineering at McMaster. He brings commitment, energy, smarts, and a contemporary mind to the position.
4. At the end of my report at the 2010 AGM I emphasized the need for new persons to join the board. Fortunately a number of you listened, and I am very pleased to tell you that Paul Faure, Pamela Grelecki, Ken Moyle, and Kevin Russell will become new directors of the AWWCA in a few minutes. Each of them brings valuable experience and insight to their new positions.

Paul originally hails from Seattle and teaches behavioural psychology at McMaster. Pamela and her musician husband live in Westdale, she works in food services at McMaster, and she has an interest in policing. Ken has an important IT role at McMaster, is a long-time resident of Westdale, and is a responsible owner of several rental houses. Kevin has lived on Traymore for over 25 years, was a director of retail placement at the LCBO before retirement, and is interested in housing issues.

A brief caution to Ken, Pamela, Paul and Kevin: I encourage you to attend each board meeting. Absence has risk. The board has been known to operate much like the governing council of my church. If you miss a meeting you may end up chairing a newly created committee. If you miss two meetings in a row, you do the sermon the next month. However, Rob Payne, my predecessor, and I want it clearly understood that this custom does *not* apply to past presidents of the AWWCA! Are you listening Jay?

As members of the AWWCA we have to embrace these and other changes. Please give your new president, these four new directors, and the returning six directors—Shelli, Cary, Barb, Ira, Angela, and Vinnie--your full support.

Two final observations as departing president. They are personal ones, which my fellow directors and many of you may or may not share. Over 13 years ago this association, then a steering committee, was formed principally in reaction to the challenges to our near-campus community caused by ever-increasing undergraduate enrolment and the conversion of owner-occupied homes to short-term tenancies operated by absentee landlords and real estate agents. These challenges continue: witness the school board's recommendation to close Prince Philip School--a real blow to Ainslie Wood South.

For the first five or so years of the AWWCA there were frequent episodes of tension, even rancour, among our members, McMaster administrators, students, the Hamilton Police Service, municipal bylaw, and developers as we tried to deal with these challenges. I have been active in the AWWCA and McMaster's President's Advisory Committee on Community Relations for the past six years. During that time I have experienced and observed a concerted effort by almost all community partners to address these challenges. I say "almost" because I personally have reservations about the practices of some real estate agents. I do not advocate complacency. More needs to be done. For example, I think the city should reconsider and implement a housing licencing bylaw. I also think that postsecondary educational institutions should revisit off-campus codes of conduct, a practice adopted at some American colleges.

My second observation is that successive Ontario provincial governments, which have constitutional responsibility for education, have not exercised sufficient foresight and leadership in relation to near-campus communities. The legislature grants powers and gives money to municipalities, school boards, and universities and demands much of them in return, but appears incapable of or unwilling to deal with the challenges of inadequate and unsafe housing for undergraduates and the decimation of family neighbourhoods. If the province will not act, then I believe that community associations like ours and their community partners, including the university, have to start and complete the dialogue before we lose another school, place of worship, or parkland.

I wish to conclude by asking Janet and Loreen to come forward. The board wanted to give each of you a modest gift in recognition of your incomparable contributions to the

AWWCA during these past 13 plus years. (Madam Treasurer, you heard me say “modest,” didn’t you?) This is a gift certificate to Koosh, Westdale’s neighbourhood bistro.

Thank you very much for your attention.

John M. Wigle

AWWCA President