Elmvale Acres Community Association

Monthly meeting – June 15th, 2016, 7:30pm

Alta Vista Baptist Church

Attendance: 35 members & guests

Duration: 90 minutes

President Kevin Kit welcomed attendees and provided a summary of the agenda, beginning with community concerns over crime and the interest in crime prevention and reporting.

NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH INFORMATION SESSION

Pete Weston, a neighbourhood watch volunteer coordinator with the Ottawa Police, described the creation and organization of a neighbourhood watch. According to Mr. Weston, neighbourhood watch rely on communication and cooperation between neighbours and police. The program allows residents to access a home security assessment, with information on how to safeguard their property, recognizing criminal activities and contacting police.

Mr. Weston described the various volunteer roles in a neighbourhood watch, including street and block captains. An effective neighbourhood watch requires participation from 80% of households, though Mr. Weston said it’s possible to manage with just 50%. “Where you live on your street, you’re actually the eyes of the police. If you see something strange, call it in,” he said.

According to Mr. Weston, Elmvale Acres once had a neighbourhood watch program in place, but that program disbanded several years ago.

Some members of the audience were concerned that lower-profile community members might be mistaken as intruders in a formalized neighbourhood watch. Kevin said that forming a neighbourhood watch in Elmvale Acres is an option available to the community, and this meeting’s session was only to provide information about that option.

RIOCAN DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL UPDATE

Kevin stated that himself and EACA VPs Marc Comeau and A.J. Blauer attended a meeting on June 3rd at City Hall with representatives from RioCan, City Councillor Jean Cloutier, a representative from Ottawa South MP David McGuinty’s office, and the City’s planning department to discuss the RioCan bid to construct apartment buildings at 1910 St. Laurent Blvd. – the Elmvale Acres Shopping Centre.

RioCan stated at that meeting that they will no longer be submitting their bid for planning committee approval this fall. Instead, they will engage in further consultations with stakeholder groups (including the EACA and other community associations) over the summer and will host open house events with community members in the fall before resubmitting their bid in the first quarter of 2017.

Kevin stated that he has pushed RioCan for details on what changes will be made to the development proposal, but the developer says it wants to finish community consulations first.

Kevin said he has been doing some research about community engagement and community consulations to determine what “best practices” look like. According to Kevin, developers like RioCan possess a lot of detailed information about community infrastructure, traffic patterns and usages, but they don’t “know” communities like the individuals who live there, which is why “we need to constantly push forward and everyone needs to be involved” in this process.

 Kevin pointed out that in the fall of 2015, Elmvale Acres residents were “informed” that a major development was being planned for 1910 St. Laurent Blvd. Now, in the spring of 2016, we’re being “consulted with” – a major change of tactic by the developer.

“We can help frame what that site transforms into, and that’s a great, great thing,” said Kevin. “We have moved the yardsticks with this proposal.”

Kevin identified several EACA priorities moving forward:

1. The EACA will ensure that community membes are given adequate notice of public meetings pertaining to this development proposal.
2. The EACA will ensure that any information received from consulations over the summer and fall will be shared with the membership.
3. The EACA will ensure that communitiy concerns are heard and responded to.

“When you have questions, concerns and good ideas, you should get a response,” Kevin stated.

Kevin said the City of Ottawa’s planning department will be putting up a website on June 17th about the proposal and that website will be linked to our own – [www.elmvaleacres.org](http://www.elmvaleacres.org) Kevin also said he is trying to coordinate a site walk-through with the developer in th fall to identify specific interests and concerns with the proposed development.

The floor was given over to Ottawa South MP David McGuinty, who has consulted with the EACA executive regarding the proposed development. Mr. McGuinty stated that the EACA has done a tremendous amout of work, and conducted itself in a highly organized and professional manner in addressing the proposed development, and he feels confident that a satisfactory resolution will be achieved.

He offered some context about development in the city and community engagement to achieve satisfactory outcomes. Specifically on this file, Mr. McGuinty indicated that he has held two, 60-minute meetings with Coun. Cloutier to discuss the proposed development and the community’s interests. He also raised the need for a Community Development Plan in Alta Vista, which would provide a framework for future development in the ward.

FUNDING

Kevin stated that the EACA would greatly benefit from the services of an urban planner as this process moves closer to a decision by the City’s planning committee. Based on his research, urban planners cost approximately $200, and a file like 1910 St. Laurent Blvd. would require approximately 8-10 hours of an urban planner’s time. This underscores the need for the EACA to start generating funds.

EACA VP A.J. Blauer explained that the initial focus of the fledgling EACA was to reach out to as many community members as possible. To that end, costs for renting meeting space, postal service, photocopying and community survey infrastructure was being absorbed by EACA executives and volunteers. While the baseline costs of paying for meeting space could be covered by a collection of attendees at a community meeting, there is need to collect enough funds to pay for professional services like the hiring of an urban planner to present the community’s perspective to the planning committee.

After some discussion, a large majority of members at the meeting indicated, by show of hands, that they would be willing to donate money to the EACA (amounts of between $20-$100 per household were offered) to advance the interests of Elmvale Acres residents through the hiring of an urban planner to achieve a satisfactory resolution at planning committee. Blauer said a volunteer treasurer would be sought from within the EACA membership and a bank account created to manage all monies received.

There was some discussion about how other community associations raise funds; Blauer said he would look into that. On the subject of raising money through a direct appeal, Mr. McGuinty suggested, from past experience, that many donors offering modest sums of money is preferable to a few donors offering large sums.

This issue will be addressed in a message to the EACA membership and will be on the agenda of the next meeting in July.

Meeting concluded at 9pm.