

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting
of the Niagara Historical Society
Thursday, October 15, 2009

Neil Rumble welcomed members to the 114th Annual General Meeting of the Niagara Historical Society.

As outlined in the circulated agenda, the following motions were agreed:

- A quorum was present with 27 members and one guest. Eight Board Members were present
- Request to approve the Minutes of the 113th Annual General Meeting held Thursday, October 9, 2008 circulated earlier, moved by Kelly James and seconded by Chuck Jackson. Approved.

Finance and Administration Report

Dennis Kam presented the Treasurer's Report, Finance & Administration Report and appointment of the auditors:

2008 Financial Statement:

- Summary results reported in Summer Newsletter and reproduced in Phoenix Circle Prospectus;
- Audit letter provided traditional opinion: nothing significant to report; qualifications related to nature of the "business" and staff size;
- Overall surplus of \$21,576, primarily due to large donations received late in the year, and receipt of a federal grant for work that was deferred to 2009.

2009 Budget Forecast:

- Refer to attached financial overview tables;
- Significant variances on revenues and expenditures in the Museum table – both driven by replacement of three furnaces and funding obtained for that purpose;
- On the Society side, two new items are primarily responsible for the forecast deficit: the reprinting of the Society publication "The Battle of Fort George" and the costs of acquiring the parcel of land behind the Museum.
- The Board considers these worthy investments, suitable as a draw on the unrestricted reserve funds.

2010 Budget Plan:

- The Board of Directors approved the new year Budget Plan at its September 24, 2009 meeting;
- See attached summary tables for an outline of the Budget Plan and identification of dollar changes from the 2009 Budget. Dennis addressed each of these changes in turn and answered questions from the floor.

Appointment of Auditors:

A motion was made to appoint Bridgman and Durksen, Chartered Accountants, as the 2009 Auditors. Moved by Karen McGrath and seconded by Joan Draper. Approved.

Town Report

The Chair introduced Municipal Representative Jim Collard who made a presentation outlining the actions the municipality had taken in terms of heritage. He reported the following:

This plaque is designed to help us celebrate Niagara's rich heritage within the context of the War of 1812. It is hoped that council will budget funds necessary for a plaque similar to this to be placed on buildings and structures that pre-date and/or survived the War of 1812. Currently we believe that 15-20 properties qualify for this type of plaque.



We currently have 54 Part IV designated properties within the town plus the Queen-Picton district. Your MHC will consider 3 proposed designations in November for final approval. Once designated, we will have increased our total to 57.

The Town continues to do everything necessary to improve the manner in which MHC and our MHC planners work with the public. They have found that cooperation is far better than confrontation and the more they help, the more families consider heritage as an integral part of our community. To this end they have continued to streamline the list of items for which Leah Wallace can now give immediate approval for thus issuing much faster the heritage permit needed for repairs.

Last year Jim indicated that the Town was looking at a policy for heritage lighting on our streets within Niagara on the Lake. He reported that this policy has been accepted by council and will be used each time we rebuild streets in our community.

Jim was pleased to report that they have also implemented a new policy designed to help Queenston upgrade their communal storm sewers. This is very important as Queenston has needed storm sewers for years. On their own, the 210 homes could not pay for the work. Now the burden of payment will be shared equally amongst all residents living within an urban area. Now that the sewers can be installed other much needed road and sidewalk work can move forward.

Council has had a busy year. They approved their zoning document; implemented a community plan for Queenston, a community plan that was awarded the 2008 Niagara Community Design Award by the Region of Niagara. They continue to struggle with the DSBN to keep our high school open; they continue to work to bring Project Niagara to reality; they work to improve our community shuttle systems and fire protection services. They have broken ground on our Community Centre; continue to build our library and continue to be the most efficient community in the region.

Last year Jim convinced council to establish regular funding to the Society and Museum. They allocated \$89,250 to our budget. Jim was pleased to report that this funding continued this year with a 3% increase and will continue next year with another increase.

Jim thanked everyone for coming and being part of the Niagara Historical Society and Niagara-on-the-Lake family.

Publications and Communications Report

The Chair introduced David Murray to present on the actions taken by the Publications and Communications Portfolio.

David noted that the new website was a vast improvement from our former one and will definitely increase awareness and communication with potential visitors. He thanked Amy Klassen, Society Administrator, for the communication efforts made between the Society and Membership through emails and newsletters.

David reported that he and Chuck Jackson have attempted several times to establish partnerships with the Buffalo and Erie County Historical Society for 2012 projects, but has had no response and thus assumes they are not interested in any projects.

David noted that he and Clark would be attending the Ontario Museum Association conference later this month.

He also reported that the Society's publication "The Battle of Fort George" has been reprinted. This is an investment that will recover its costs over the next few years. 2000 copies were printed with Fort George already purchasing some for resale in their shop.

David noted that this is the first year the Brock University Scholarship will be awarded, which he and his wife Elizabeth Surtees helped fund. This will give the Society the rights to publish the thesis work of a graduate student doing work on a topic related to Niagara-on-the-Lake's history. The recipient of this scholarship is Joanne Humphries of St. Catharines who is researching Religion and Politics in Newark 1792-97.

Membership & Development Report

The Chair introduced Terry Boulton to present on the actions taken by the Membership and Development Portfolio. Terry reported the following:

As a focus, it was decided by the Committee to hold events that would encourage those new to the community as well as long-time residents who may not have been to the museum for many years to visit and see the new exhibits or participate in museum activities. At the same time, some of these events were designed as fundraising activities.

Phoenix Dinner:

- In December of 2008, the first Phoenix Dinner was held. The elegant Christmas decorations used proved to be very popular on the Rotary House Tour. The event was “sold out” with seventy nine guests attending. In addition, several persons who could not attend donated the cost of their tickets to the museum.
- Stone Road Grille catered the event. Everyone was well pleased with the dinner provided. Perry Johnson donated \$1200 to the event.
- A small live auction followed the dinner.
- After expenses, approximately \$6000 was raised. As well, this event raised \$4000 toward the purchase of new furnaces.
- The 2009 Phoenix Dinner, with all tickets already sold, will be held on December 5th. This year’s dinner has a “Noel Coward” theme. Perry Johnson from Stone Road Grille will once again cater the dinner. Wine for the evening has been provided by Stratus Wineries in exchange for property research conducted for the winery by Clark. In addition to a small live auction, there will be a silent auction as well. The Committee anticipates exceeding last year’s revenue.

Spring/Summer Exhibition - “Through Their Eyes”:

- The opening for “Through Their Eyes” was attended by 73 members, a very encouraging sign of support for the museum.
- Sponsored by *Beau Chapeau* and “University Women In Niagara”, the exhibit was a great success. Of note is the fact that the average time taken by our visitors doubled during this exhibit.
- As this exhibit focused on the “Women of Niagara”, an invitation was extended to several ladies’ groups in the community to hold their meeting or afternoon “tea” at the museum. At each function, Clark presented a 10 to 15 minute orientation about the museum. This initiative was well received with 80 women attending. \$800 in donations was received from these groups.

Fall/Winter Exhibition - “The Forgotten Years”:

- The Opening for “The Forgotten Years” is planned for the afternoon of Thursday, November 5th. Everyone is encouraged to support the Opening. Invitations will be sent out shortly as a reminder.

Directors’ Evening:

- As a further initiative to bring newcomers to the museum, a Directors’ Evening was held. Each director was asked to bring a number of friends who may not have been to the museum previously, to this event. Thirty two people were present, a number of whom subsequently became members.

Annual Christmas Hamper:

- This fundraiser will begin soon. Tickets will be \$5 or 3 for \$10. This year's first prize will include an iPod. Donations for the hamper are being sought: chocolates; candles; pate; crackers etc.

Physical Plant & Planning Report

The Chair introduced Jim Armstrong to present on the actions taken by the Physical Plant and Planning Portfolio.

It was decided by the committee that no new items would be added to our Strategic Plan since the plan is so ambitious already. We have a considerable amount to accomplish leading into 2012 so will not look at projects for the years which extend past our current plan at this point.

The building is in good condition thanks to annual inspections and the day-to-day work of our volunteer maintenance committee and gardening committee.

Three furnaces were replaced this year and new temperature and humidity monitoring devices installed. Jim noted that fire suppression equipment is still needed in all the Museum buildings. We currently only have hand-held extinguishers and will most likely need a sprinkler system of some kind. Funding for this project will be the main issue.

The Society approached our next door neighbour and offered him a tax receipt for the value of the parcel of his property which is behind Memorial Hall. He has accepted and a survey has been conducted. The Society is still waiting to receive the completed survey and will then apply for severance. We have budgeted in 2010 to put up a "barrier" along the property once all the legal matters are finalized. There is no immediate plan for the land, but it will give us the opportunity to expand in the future since we are running out of space for storage, etc.

This being his final meeting, Jim thanked everyone for a great term on the Board and Neil thanked Jim for his 5 years of commitment to the Society.

Managing Director's Report

The Managing Director, Clark Bernat, presented his report:

Research:

The Society declared 2009 "The Year of the Women of Niagara" and accordingly, a large segment of staff time went into researching the role women have played in the town and developing "Through Their Eyes".

The Society has set up a Research committee due to the impending 200th anniversary of the War of 1812. This group is working on a number of areas related to those who lived and fought in

Niagara-on-the-Lake during the war. Currently the committee has 10 volunteers devoted to this work.

One of the major tasks with the anniversary of 1812 approaching is verifying that all of the artefacts that state that they are from that period, in fact are. Glenn Smith has completed a report on the uniform collection and this summer we attempted to properly date the domestic material in the collection that dates from 1812, we have submitted a funding request to have someone on staff research the remaining artefacts that have some 1812 provenance but we need to ensure it is properly documented and in fact 1812 related.

Collections Management & Development:

Over the past year, 25 separate donors contributed to the collection. These donations represent well over 120 separate items.

The Museum is increasing the number of artefacts in the collection that have been photographed digitally. This will improve access to the collection and improve our ability to track the condition of artefacts and to conduct research. Our work with Brock University will provide a great presence on the web for the Society. We also have two new volunteers at the museum who are working on getting our photographic collection online.

Of the over 125 new artefacts in the collection, Clark highlighted the donations made by Donald Combe of a wide variety of materials including a Betty Lane painting of St. Andrews Church, as well as a nice collection of engravings and prints. He also noted the ongoing donations by both Christopher Allen and Pat Simon, two rare engravings of Queenston Heights donated by Dr. Richard Merritt and a collection of 28 Niagara District Secondary School yearbooks donated by the school.

The Society has joined a regional group that is attempting to input all land registry records of Niagara and place them onto an online database. This is a slow and tedious process and to date we have two volunteers working on this project (Marilyn Bray and Clara Tarnoy).

We were also able to place the 44 early Historical Society publications on the web in a searchable format, both on our own website and www.ourontario.ca.

Exhibitions:

The Museum held two major exhibitions this year in the temporary exhibition space. They were;

1. "Domestic Gems" an exhibition put together by the Niagara Society of Architects on the work of Nicholson and MacBeth
2. "Through Their Eyes" an exhibition that examined the role women played in the development of Niagara

Both of these exhibitions were very well received.

Marketing and Public Relations:

Our largest improvement this year is through the development of a new website that was launched in April of 2009.

This has translated into a large increase in visits to the site. Comparables between October 6, 2007 – October 12, 2008 and October 6, 2008 – October 12, 2009 see an increase in visitation of 84%, a page view increase of 93%, and an average time on site increase of 40%. Between these two dates in the past year, 4,796 different individuals visited our website to access information ranging from hours of operation to our exhibitions, the collection and research material.

The Society would like to thank Ecentric Arts for their work on the project and Heritage Canada, through its Canadian Arts and Heritage Sustainability Program for funding assistance on the project.

Niagara-on-the-Lake 2012:

Our continued participation in the development of marketing, tourism, research and educational materials related to the 200th anniversary continues to be a major item on Clark's schedule of jobs. We have attempted to keep track of all events and activities going on in Niagara for this important event, as well as tried to ascertain the potential funding possibilities for undertaking our own events.

Events:

Of the many events that took place at the Society this year, the high point could easily be seen as the Niagara High School Reunion. Over 70 individuals attended the event in June commemorating the school that closed over 60 years ago. Coverage in local papers was extensive, many donations came out of the event and it allowed the Society to reconnect with some of Niagara's long time residents.

Our lecture series continued to be well attended. This year we focused on "The year of the Women of Niagara" theme. Thanks to support from Niagara's Finest Inns, the Society was able to invite some of Ontario's best historians on women's history, with both local historians presenting and academics at institutions around the province presenting.

Also tied into this year's theme were three events related to the Women of Niagara. Maja Bannerman presented "Kate Ward meets Laura Secord", Norma Shepherd came to give a retrospective millinery fashion show and Barbara Worthy and Jennifer Phipps put on "A Chat with Miss Chicky".

Strategic Plan – ongoing work (copies are available):

Virtual Exhibition of Niagara 1810 – the Society was turned down in March by the Virtual Museum of Canada to develop an exhibition of the town as it was in 1810. The Society is continuing its research on this era and has submitted an application to the Province of Ontario to fund this project.

Jim Collard suggested that Niagara College may be a good partnership for completing the virtual exhibition project, but Clark believes it is quite costly to use their equipment. He has been speaking with Brock University, Department of Digital Humanities and is taking the project in a different direction.

The Society has identified and photographed the stone markers placed around Niagara-on-the-Lake by the Society indicating significant events in the towns' history. We are preparing a plan to move forward with restoring and/or fixing the stones that are in place. Some are in very good condition, others are damaged and we need to determine a plan of action with them.

Phoenix Circle:

Most likely the most important work undertaken by the Society this year is the development of the Phoenix Circle. Working with past funders and potential future funders, the Society developed a group of individuals who have committed themselves to the ongoing support of the organization. These individuals will remain critical to the ongoing success of the organization moving forward by contributing to the ongoing costs to own and operate one of Ontario's most important local history collections. Clark thanked Suzanne Edwards for her assistance on this project. Suzanne came to us via the Foundation for Rural Living that provided the human resources required to undertake such a project. He also thanked the first 10 members to join the group for their faith and commitment to the organization. They are: Jim Bratton & Drew Tait, Les & Jean Taylor, Neil Rumble, Geoffrey & Lorraine Joyner, Kelly & Janet James, Richard & Monica Taylor, Chuck Jackson & Sandra Lawrence, Peter Corbiere & Deborah Paine, David Murray & Elizabeth Surtees and Marsha Howe.

Conclusion:

The implementation of the Strategic Plan has allowed us to stay focused on the direction of the organization. We continue to receive wonderful reviews from the individuals who visit us. We need to continue to promote the great work being done here by staff and volunteers to make this the best little museum in the province.

Clark thanked Jim Armstrong for his work while on the Board.

Nominating Committee Report

The Chair introduced the Chair of the Nominating Committee, Kelly James, who presented the slate of officers for 2009/2010:

President:	Neil Rumble
Vice President Society:	Deborah Paine-Corbiere
Portfolios:	Development & Membership
Vice President Museum:	David Murray
Portfolios:	Publications and Communications
Treasurer:	Dennis Kam
Portfolios:	Finance and Administration
Secretary:	Amalie Enns
Portfolios:	Finance and Administration

Director:	Terry Boulton
Portfolios:	Development & Membership
Director:	Charles Jackson
Portfolios:	Publications and Communications
Director:	Karen McGrath
Portfolios:	Plant & Planning
Director:	Carol Walker
Portfolios:	
Director:	Leonard Kooperman
Portfolios:	
Town Representative:	Councilor Jim Collard
Managing Director:	Clark Bernat
Society Administrator:	Amy Klassen

Respectfully submitted by the **Nominating Committee**: Kelly James, Past President, Daryl Novak, Past Treasurer, Neil Rumble, President, David Murray Director and Clark Bernat, Managing Director

A motion to pass this report was made by Neil Rumble and seconded by Elizabeth Surtees.

Neil then announced that Carol Walker was unable to make the commitment to join the Board at this time and has withdrawn her name. Neil asked if there were anymore nominations from the floor. Clark Bernat reported that Geoffrey Joyner had nominated Linda Rodeck for the Board.

The new nominations to the Board, Leonard Kooperman and Linda Rodeck, were moved by Kelly James and seconded by Chuck Jackson

Neil moved that Kelly James, Daryl Novak and David Murray be elected to the Nominations Committee for next year. Seconded by Anthony Griffiths. Approved.

President's Report

In Neil Rumble's closing remarks he thanked the members and the Board for their continuous support and thanked Jim for his contributions to the Society during his term. Neil drew attention to the newly formed "Phoenix Circle" and its importance to the sustainability of the Society. He congratulated the Society on an excellent lecture series this year.

He reported that the activities of the Society have concentrated on getting the people of Niagara-on-the-Lake into the Museum. He recognized the need for the Federal Government, Province, Region and Municipality to coordinate on 2012 funding and projects so that we will know what we can accomplish.

Neil thanked our volunteers for the work they do and thanked Clark Bernat and Amy Klassen for all the work they accomplish as a staff of only two.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 9:00 pm. Motion to adjourn moved by Chuck Jackson and seconded by Jim Armstrong.

Secretary: _____

President: _____

Date: October 15, 2009