



Walker's Creek Neighbourhood Association

Annual General Meeting, Tuesday January 31, 2012

Year End Report

Physical Parks

The year began with major work undertaken, by contract, on the open course of Walker's Creek, improving erosion protection and providing better management of the water flow, from Grantham Street to Niagara Street and Scott Street to The Lake. Removal of much brush and some trees opened the Creek to sunlight, viewing and opportunities to watch for the spring fish run, ducklings learning to swim, the odd snapping turtle and even an occasional re-climatized former family Goldfish enjoying even the slight water flow in the driest times.

Particularly in the area between Grantham and Niagara streets, the attention given the Creek sides and bed have made a confused and obstructed water course, one of enjoyment, reducing offensive odours and opportunities to consider pathways into and through the Old Arboretum. Local residents in this area were able to provide TES staff with observations and identification of long lasting concerns.

In March, the dastardly windstorm took out many old trees whose strength had been spent and many evergreens whose roots were unable to counter the fierceness of the wind gusts. With the entire City calling for attention, the very speedy, effective and much appreciated work by the RCS and TES work crews, saw the Parks fatalities removed in a most timely manner.

In the Spring and Summer, "Strolls" with Ward Councillors, Senior Staff from RCS and TES, along with WCNA Directors, reviewed the physical state of the parks, noting issues calling for attention. These "Strolls" were most productive and a photo report, with GPS locations, has proven to be an effective tool in seeing to remediation of identified concerns. Long standing issues of drainage in Cherie Road, and Cindy Drive parks and erosion conditions on slopes remain and have most recently been addressed in a submission to the City Budget group for funding in the year 2012. With a planned survey of the Parks' pathways by the City Accessibility Committee, it is our intention to seek more appropriate conditions allowing and encouraging mobility

challenged individuals, many of whom live in close proximity to entrances to the Parks, to make more extensive use of the Parks and the nature there to be enjoyed.

With four new Memorial Park benches added in attractive locations and with additional tree plantings with schools, the WCNA and by Park staff, the enjoyable passive use of the Parks was enhanced in 2011. The WCNA has made a request to RCS that only native species trees be added to the parks, especially varieties that can no longer be allowed to grow to full beauty as city street structures demands more controlled growth of such varieties. In conjunction with the City Green Committee, a survey of the trees in the Old Arboretum off Niagara Street will be undertaken this spring with planned additional plantings in that most unique 'museum' of species, remaining from the days of the Niagara College horticultural use of that land, now City property.

The addition of the Darby Family Cemetery Commemorative plaque by the City Heritage Committee is a useful and noteworthy addition to the Parks, adding some historical awareness to the early settlement and settlers so the park areas. A request has been made by the descendants of the Darby Family to have Cindy Drive Park renamed "Darby Park". A decision on this matter will be a Council matter and is anticipated in the immediate future. The WCNA Directors have asked that the Cindy Drive Park name be retained.

The addition of a new children's playground in Cindy Drive Park is a most welcome attraction, offering another opportunity for children and families to enjoy active play and the parklands in a most useful manner. WCNA volunteers donated hours of work in keeping the weeds out of the play areas and monitoring the adjacent areas for litter and safety.

Identified areas of minor and of some significant encroachment into the parklands by adjacent home owners was reviewed and City staff are undertaking the necessary study to determine the accuracy of the observations. Similarly, home owners who empty their swimming pool water onto the grasslands of the parks have been advised that

alternative means for that discharge is required as it can and did cause damage to pathways and to the grasslands.

In cooperation with the Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority, a review of the entire Creek course, as a place where mosquito breeding could occur, was undertaken. Happily it was found that even with low water in dry times, the continuous flow was enough to make breeding areas unattractive. This news allayed fears of the West Nile Virus threat from the Creek for nearby residents.

Dog walkers, of which there are many, are in the vast majority of cases, very considerate of the parklands, appreciatively following conscientious "Poop and Scoop" practices. Recreational cyclists, joggers and nature lovers each and all find value in the miles of pathways and calming rest areas throughout the seven Parks that now form the WCNA chain of interest.

Whether it is for exercise, a pleasant stroll or fun with family, the physicality of these Parks are gems that add significantly to the potential enjoyment of the neighbourhoods and communities fortunate enough to be in nearness to them.

A special note of appreciation is due Della Trojan, Vice Chair of the WCNA and the driving force behind the physical care and attention given the WCNA Parks.

The WCNA, Communities and Neighbourhoods

The Parks, whether used for solitary walks or in play that can include others, has a great potential to bring people together, to strengthen community ties, discover interesting other people with common interests in one's own neighbourhood and to support the caring neighbourhoods we all can appreciate.

In 2011, the WCNA actively pursued this potential with events held in the Parks, with Community meetings on interesting topics and in discussion with people in casual meetings while using the parks. Involving residents in decisions and action plans, as seen in the Creek area between Niagara and Grantham streets, providing interesting

evenings as in the Star Gazing evening with the Niagara Chapter of the Royal Astronomical Society, offering opportunities to become more aware of the history of this area of St. Catharines and Grantham Township courtesy of the City Heritage Committee leadership, holding Spring "Walks In The Parks" in cooperation with the RCS, with leaders from the WCNA offering insight to the natural habitat and interesting features of the various Parks, holding a first "Town Hall Meeting In the Parks" with our most willing and supportive Grantham Ward Councillors, the WCNA attempted to take action on these less visible aspects of the WCNA Parks and Association.

The WCNA website, developed and managed by Mike Fancy of the Directors' group has been a means by which we can more immediately and effectively communicate with Members and Friends. As interest was indicated by Members for some hands-on assistance with their electronic worlds, Mike handily offered a Community night of 'solving problems', improving use of and understanding the additions to social media sources and assisted individuals who were seeking answers to both simple and complex concerns. This expansion into areas of interest, outside the Parks, is one that will continue to be fostered.

The WCNA has developed stronger ties with Malcolmson Eco-Park leadership, now sharing information, volunteer activities and some combined purchasing. Efforts by Malcolmson Park and the WCNA, working with Regional Councillor Bruce Timms and Ward Councillor Dawn Dodge, seeks to connect the Waterfront Trail to our two parklands.

We are delighted in being a charter member of a new group being formed under the leadership of RCS staff that is bringing together Community groups and City Committee leaders from across the City for sharing, cooperation, mutual support and increased awareness of the many undertakings these groups foster. This new grouping begins to eliminate the isolation long felt by Community groups, promoting shared investigation of common concerns, increased awareness of and the ability to possibly influence decisions by City Council and truly makes the unknown people and projects, known and appreciated.

Making things happen cannot be accomplished alone and it is with humble recognition of the constant support of Councillor Phillips, who at moment's notice, is willing to meet with WCNA Directors, encourage and support the various activities considered and attempted and offer counsel in both central areas of the WCNA activities. The active support of Senior leaders and staff from RCS and TES quickly resolves physical concerns in the Parks, while providing the needed awareness of the WCNA parks in relation to all other parklands our City enjoys. The few volunteers ... how we wish we had many more ... please know of our gratitude for your willingness to answer the call for help.

The interested individuals who attend meetings and answer the call for help, are the base on which we hope to grow more involvement. By the absence of many, we wish to believe that the WCNA is functioning well, meeting needs, and handling concerns ... from signage to garbage to Park access ... in a manner that sees them quickly resolved and not become serious NIMBY issues!!

And finally to the especially good folks who have stepped forward and served on the 2011 Director's group, my deep appreciation for your thinking, sharing, leadership, willingness to try new things and see that the good things of the past 10 years are well continued.

Mr. Mayor, thank you for attending with us this evening. As you build your positive vision of our city, we intend to be the bubbles in your champagne, adding the neighbourhood human touch that makes it all the more wonderful and fulfilling.

Ben Hannan
WCNA Chairperson
January 2012