

Good Evening: It is a pleasure for me to present the fourth FRIENDS OF AUCHMAR, Annual Chair's Report.

First I would like to thank you the members for your participation at meetings and for all your suggestions both in person and via email. I also want to thank your board of the Friends of Auchmar for their regular attendance at monthly board meetings, for their support and for their diligence in working to keep Auchmar in public ownership and suggesting ways to inform and involve the citizens of Hamilton in the preservation of Auchmar. Your board works diligently to further the mission of the Friends.

Now a year in review: On October 9th 2014 following a short business meeting for the Friends of Auchmar's third AGM, MPP Monique Taylor was invited to the podium. Following Monique, we welcomed Keanin Loomis, Executive Director, Hamilton Chamber of Commerce to introduce the keynote speaker Jason Thorne, the new General Manager of Planning and Economic Development the "new architect of Hamilton's revival". Jason Thorne explained his role as manager of planning and economic development. He specifically highlighted the importance of heritage preservation and planning. He also commented on his recent tour of Auchmar where a bugler welcomed him. Jason described Auchmar as "this grand estate with magnificent grounds." Following Jason's talk and an extensive Q & A, Councillor Lloyd Ferguson (a member of the Municipal Heritage Committee) not only thanked Jason for his presentation but also praised Jason for being able to balance such a demanding portfolio. He also thanked Jason for his role in ensuring that the Hermitage ruins in Ancaster would be carefully dismantled, repaired, and rebuilt. An update on restoration work on Auchmar was then provided by Ward 8 Councillor Terry Whitehead. --- Councillor Whitehead also fielded several questions from the standing room only audience. In his closing reports Terry commented that because of his recent trip to Europe he realized even more and I quote "that heritage preservation is an important and beneficial community asset". Terry vowed to keep Auchmar in public ownership.

Thursday January 8th, 2015 Patricia Saunders and I met with Lynda Lukasik, Executive Director of Environment Hamilton to request that our two organizations co-host *Preserving our Heritage – Improving our Environment* on Wednesday April 22 at the next Friends of Auchmar meeting. Lynda immediately agreed as did her board. Architect Bill Curran of Thier + Curran Architects volunteered to design the event notice and James Lefebvre, director, Business Services FirstOntario Credit Union offered to host the meeting in the newly restored Empire Times building. He and his staff set up the chairs, podium etc and provided refreshments for all attendees. Nothing was too much trouble. The standing room only crowd was welcomed by MC Martinus Geleyense who introduced the panel. Presenters on the environment were Ned Nolan, Sean Burak board members from Environment Hamilton architect Molly Merriman and Steve Kulakowsky. In his presentation, Sean Burk posed a pointed question: *Why do we recycle bottles and plastic but continue to demolish heritage buildings and fill land sites?* The Hamilton Spectator's Daniel Nolan repeated this concern in his article the following day: *Keeping historic buildings out of landfills benefits the city and the environment.* Core Urban's Steve Kulakowsky explained the vital link between heritage preservation and our environment. The Spec article described the heritage preservation projects of Core Urban and confirmed that a photo from Ned Nolan's presentation showed a picture of the downtown Hamilton skyline in 1948 that highlights entire blocks of buildings that have been demolished. Ned called that an inconceivable amount of lost heritage. Ask yourself -- What buildings might you add to that list? Your board is concerned with the state of Auchmar gatehouse and is searching for a solution to prevent another demolition of a heritage building.

An update on the restoration of the stone gate to the stables and the surrounding walls at Auchmar was provided by – Architect Peter Stewart, of George Rob Architect along with Jamie Robertson, Robertson Restoration Inc and his colleague Hubert. All attendees were greatly impressed and gratified to view their excellent work. Alan Stacey, Heritage Mill Conservation Services highlighted the window restoration work he planned to do at Auchmar.

To ensure that members of the Friends of Auchmar receive regular updates on the website we count on many volunteer hours from Bob Gill. Since the constitution of the Friends of Auchmar permits additions to the board as needed, Bob was invited and accepted to serve as a member-at-large. If you have any changes in your email or as a member you did not receive an email notice for this meeting or if you would like your name added to the email notification list, please see Bob Gill or Secretary Eric Lootsma. Recently your board also invited Richard Allen to the board as a member-at-large. Richard is an award winning social entrepreneur specializing in the development of sustainable communities. He is the founder and director of The Renew Hamilton Project, an initiative of the Hamilton Chamber of Commerce. Since 2013, Richard has videotaped our meetings following which he creates blogs and posts them on both the Friends of Auchmar and the Hamilton Chamber of Commerce web sites.

You may wonder what else your board has accomplished. As background you know the City of Hamilton announced Request for Information (RFI) submissions in 2013. In addition to the RFI submission from the Friends of Auchmar, the city received approximately 11 other submissions. The city was particularly excited in the interest demonstrated by Mohawk College and the Landmark Group owners of the Ancaster Old Mill. Because of their submissions City Council decided to move forward with the next step a Request for Proposal (RFP). Ward Councillor Terry Whitehead introduced a motion to the RFP that would give council authority NOT to approve any RFP if none was acceptable. .

On October 9th just before last year's AGM the Friends of Auchmar submitted a Request for Proposal to the Procurement Office in the Standard Life Building. We were later notified that only two Requests for Proposal were received – those were from the Friends of Auchmar and CoBALT Connects, both were rejected. But in May 8th 2015 we were provided the opportunity to be debriefed on why the Friends of Auchmar submission was rejected. We attended that briefing meeting and left a bit dejected. We were informed that we could according to the Vendor Complaint Resolution meet with procurement to continue the process. However on May 11, 2015 we sent a letter of thanks to procurement stating that even though we were disappointed our submission was not approved by the evaluation team, we decided that rather than impede progress by requesting additional meetings, we would continue to work in partnership with the city, advocate to keep Auchmar in public ownership and continue to educate everyone about the heritage value of the Auchmar buildings and the cultural landscape. We also stated our intent to investigate the possibility of a Land Trust using Ruthven in Cayuga as a template.

Later in May, City Council was told by heritage staff to sell Auchmar even though staff did explain that any buyer would have to honour easement conditions mandated by the Ontario Heritage Trust and the city's municipal heritage designation. On May 20th, the sale proposal for Auchmar was presented to councillors at General Issues Committee.

On June 12 it was made public that a secret non-profit organization was interested in buying Auchmar. City manager Chris Murray confirmed that the city was discussing the possible sale with Cardus. However, councillors narrowly turned down the idea of the special private negotiations in favour of a public call for offers.

June 15 the Friends of Auchmar board attended an informal meeting with Cobalt Connects the only other RFP submission to look at points of agreement, discuss potential obstacles. But no action followed that meeting.

Later in June letters from MPP Monique Taylor, Catherine Nasmith, President Architectural Conservancy of Ontario, Neighbourhood Associations, the Friends of Auchmar and numerous Hamiltonians were sent to the mayor and city council stating: *Please support the motion to be made by Councillor Terry Whitehead at Council to suspend the real estate sale of Auchmar until Councillor Whitehead along with the Dept of Culture have a plan ready with a compelling case to keep Auchmar in city ownership.*

City Councillors voted 12-3 in favour of Councillor Terry Whitehead's motion to suspend the private sale process for six months. Mayor Einsenberger, Councillors Lloyd Ferguson and Judi Partridge voted against the motion. Councillor Whitehead promised to host a roundtable to give residents time to work with him to keep Auchmar in the public domain. As promised, on June 16th Councillor Whitehead hosted the First Auchmar Roundtable. It was reported all but two of the 30 citizens present confirmed that they wanted Auchmar to remain in city ownership.

In the midst of this the Federal Government's **Canada 150 Community Infrastructure Program was launched**. There was significant interest in the program in southern Ontario. Ontario received more than 1,100 applications, requesting more than \$260 million in funding during the application intake from May 15, 2015, to June 9, 2015. We could not understand why city staff suggested that Auchmar did not qualify to be included in the City of Hamilton's list of projects. Councillor Jason Farr and the Durand Neighbourhood were also told that St Marks did not meet the criteria but Farr along with the Durand Neighbourhood Assoc fought to keep St Mark's Anglican Church built in 1877 on the list. They were successful; the city received \$280,000 to further the adaptive reuse of St. Mark's.

As a result, in June your board decided to investigate solutions for Auchmar from other communities. We learned that: The Bell-Gairdner Estate, owned and designated by the City of Mississauga; Annandale, designated and owned by the City of Tillsonburg and the Ruthven Estate, Cayuga; designated under the Ontario Heritage Trust are all successful and financially sustainable adaptive reuse projects. Thanks to the assistance of tonight's panel members a tour of the Bell- Gairdner Estate was arranged. Friends of Auchmar board members have also toured Annandale and Ruthven. Patricia Phelps, Annandale Curator, and Marilyn Havelka, Ruthven (CAO) Chief Administrative Officer have both agreed to present at a future Friends of Auchmar meeting. Very recently, Brian Buckle was given permission by his board to present ideas from the Royal Hamilton Light Infantry for the possible adaptive reuse of the Auchmar Estate.

The board of the Friends of Auchmar is eager to bring forward all these possibilities for the adaptive reuse of the Auchmar Estate. The mission of the Friends of Auchmar and our goal is to work toward finding the best sustainable use for Auchmar and keeping the entire estate in city ownership. We are now charged with setting meeting dates to hear presentations from Annandale, Ruthven and the RHLI.

In conclusion, I would like to emphasize that the Friends of Auchmar's Short Term Goal is to raise awareness of Auchmar and increase membership through events, our Auchmar Newsletter and current information on the Auchmar website. Our LONG TERM GOAL is to have the Auchmar Estate designated a National Historic Site and possibly become a Hamilton Community Land Trust to ensure the Preservation/Restoration/and Maintenance of the entire Auchmar estate and to guarantee that Auchmar remains in city ownership with continued public access.

We continue to ask for your suggestions and your participation in working out and achieving our goals which are consistent with the 1999 City of Hamilton's heritage designation and the 1999 Ontario Heritage Trust's easement.

This is the 2014 -2015 Annual Report for the Friends of Auchmar. Respectfully submitted,
Diane Gower Dent, Chair. Friends of Auchmar
Thank you
