

It is a pleasure for me to present the FRIENDS OF AUCHMAR, Annual Chair's Report for 2015-2016

To begin I would like to thank you the members and guests for your participation at meetings and for 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.

Now a year in review

Last year on Thursday October 29, 2015 a public meeting was held at the Scottish Rite. ATA architect Alexander Temporale gave a comprehensive and fascinating talk -- ***Reclaiming the Past – Successful Adaptive Reuse of the Bell-Gairdner Estate*** . . Julie Mitchell Facility Manager of Bell-Gairdner, a member of the restoration team, was also present to reply to the many questions. This estate owned by the City of Mississauga is totally restored and financially viable Ward 1 Councillor Aidan Johnson thanked Alexander and Julie for their informative talk and presented them with Nina Chapple's book *A Heritage of Stone: Buildings*. Councillor Johnson vowed to work the Friends to preserve Auchmar..

Later that month we learned that Anna Bradford, director of tourism and culture, hired Ketchum Canada to answer potential council questions about community fundraising support for Auchmar. In other words, --- is the necessary financial support available or will council be forced to either return to the tax levy or finally sell Auchmar? We learned that Ketchum Canada was paid to put together an action plan and list of prospective donors and sponsors for both Auchmar and city-owned St. Marks Church. We presume the results were not that clear because two months later Ian-Kerr Wilson, Manager of Heritage Resources , City of Hamilton, presented a draft **Auchmar Operations Plan** to the Municipal Heritage Committee. The report is entitled **Keeping Auchmar in City Ownership**. The following week Ian presented the draft **Operations Plan** at a public Open House for citizens of Hamilton to review, discuss and provide input.

Also in January Richard Allen, a board member and I met with Mayor Eisenberger to request the mayor's support for Auchmar remaining in public ownership. We also informed the mayor of Heritage Trust Canada's conference in Hamilton October 20th to October 22 -- 2016 a great honour for our city.

In order to have information on how wards and neighbourhoods receive funds for projects, we invited Durand Neighbourhood Association board members Janice Brown and Yonatan **Rozenszajn** to explain the Participatory Budget Process, used in Wards 1 and 2. We learned that this process is used to advise the ward Councillor about how to spend an annual infrastructure budget - something that could be instituted in Ward 8 the site of the Auchmar Estate.

January 11 2016 –Pat Saunders contacted Colleen Wicken, president of the Bonnington, Buchanan, Mohawk, Southam Neighbourhood Association requesting confirmation of that association’s active support for keeping the entire Auchmar Estate in public ownership. Members of your board also met with Hamilton business men and women to inform them about Auchmar and asked them to contact their councillor to request that Auchmar remain in public ownership

February 2016 board member John Kajaske drafted a petition that was approved by the board – *Keep Auchmar Estate in Public Ownership* -The petition was posted on the Friends of Auchmar website ready for signatures

April 12 2016 newly elected Councillor Donna Skelly was invited and attended a Friends of Auchmar board meeting to learn about the Auchmar Estate. Councillor Skelly listened intently, asked questions, seemed supportive and said she would do what she could to keep Auchmar in public ownership.

May 18, a standing room audience was welcomed at a Friends of Auchmar Public meeting entitled *The Case to Keep Auchmar in Public Ownership*. Guest Speaker Marvin Ryer, Assistant Professor in the Business Dept, McMaster University commented on Auchmar through a business lens, and reiterated the importance of determining a predictable path forward that begins with a realistic vision of an effective adaptive reuse backed by a sound business plan. At that meeting a presentation *Stand Up for Auchmar* was given by board members Eric Lootsma and Richard Allen. This meeting helped galvanize community support for maintaining and leveraging public ownership of Auchmar. It also contributed to a game-changing decision made a month later when Auchmar was centre stage at the June 15 meeting of the General Issues Committee.

At that June 15 meeting, City staff had prepared a report recommending that Council resume past efforts to sell Auchmar through a real estate disposal process. Yet delegations by key organizations — the Architectural Conservancy of Ontario, Heritage Hamilton Foundation, Hamilton Mountain Heritage Society, Durand Neighbourhood Association , the Friends of Auchmar and Nina Chapple former director of architectural preservation, City of Hamilton confirmed the heritage importance of the Auchmar Estate and requested that the entire estate remain in public ownership. These delegations helped turn the tide.

Perhaps the biggest impact was made by representatives of the Royal Hamilton Light Infantry (Rileys) who presented draft plans for a multi-phase, adaptive reuse of the entire Auchmar Estate.

Ultimately, Council passed a motion “that the Auchmar Estate and grounds remain in public ownership of the City of Hamilton.” “That City staff in the Real Estate Section and the Planning and Economic Development Department be authorized and directed to explore a long term lease or operating and management agreement, to include that capital repairs and maintenance be the financial responsibility of the lessee or the manager/operator, with any interested non-profit private parties and to report back to the General Issues Committee on the progress toward that end in six months.”

Additional details covered in the motion directed City staff to continue with stabilization work at Auchmar and “that any proposed use must align with the provisions in the Heritage Conservation Easement “

In the event no lessee or management and operations interest can be secured after a period of one year, Council will direct City staff to report to the General Issues Committee with a work plan for the adaptive reuse of the Auchmar Estate. The Friends of Auchmar see many positives in this step forward by City Council, especially the certainty created by resolving the issue of long term

ownership. It was reported in the press that a majority of councillors voted to try to negotiate a lease or operating agreement for the historic Mountain estate – but retain city ownership regardless.

We expressed our thanks to all on City Council — including Mayor Fred Eisenberger and especially Ward 8 Councillor Terry Whitehead for their progressive leadership— and to city staff members Anna Bradford and Ian Kerr-Wilson for their tireless devotion to Auchmar.

Upon learning that Eleanor McMahon was re-elected as the liberal MPP for Burlington and named the new Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport replacing Michael Coteau, we sent a letter to congratulations – on Auchmar stationary! . We hope to have the Honourable Eleanor McMahon at a future Friends of Auchmar meeting. If anyone here knows Eleanor please let us know.

In September following the suggestion that the Friends of Auchmar involve young Hamilton entrepreneurs, we met with Alyssa Lai, Director of Hive-- Hamilton's go to resource and network of emerging leaders and young professionals that recently included a new young professional group, The Young Architects of Hamilton. Alyssa agreed to invite the Friends of Auchmar to a meeting of Hive to tell this group of young professional about Auchmar.

(Also) In September we invited Doug Embelton to attend a board meeting. Doug told us many wonderful stories of growing up with his family in the Gate House on the Auchmar Estate. Several years ago when Doug visited Mrs. Voelker to return some photographs Mrs. Voelker asked Doug if the Hamilton Mountain Society would be interested in three rolls of film shot by her husband in 1943. Doug brought the film back to Hamilton and has the old films transferred onto a stable format. These rolls of film are now a DVD – Auchmar The War Years the story of the R.C.A.F.NO.2 Convalescent Hospital Young Division at Auchmar .We had a wonderful meeting with Doug – and learned so much. If you also have any artifacts, photographs or films about Auchmar please let us know.

In conclusion, I would like to emphasize that as stewards of the Auchmar Estate, the Friends of Auchmar remain committed to working with a range of partners, including the City of Hamilton, Ontario Heritage Trust and various prospective lessees or operators.

As reported you now know that with your help we were successful in confirming that Auchmar remains in city ownership with continued public access – now for a financially viable long-term use.

Thank you again for your interest in Auchmar and for your participation at this meeting

Respectfully submitted,
Diane Gower Dent, Chair. Friends of Auchmar

Thank you

Thursday October 13, 2016
