**GREN Minutes April 13, 2017**

**Christian Science Church, Kitchener**

**GREN Membership Money due**! $20.00 – Theo N.

**Greenbelt Report**—Kevin S.

Re: Push to expand greenbelt to Waterloo Region. Kevin noted that after January, we’re into election season, so pressure needs to be on before. Developers are saying house prices are so high because of the greenbelt! Actually, we have lots of land approved for building but developers aren't building. They're sitting on the land. Gov't and media are seeing this and blaming developers for skyrocketing house prices.

The greenbelt has been on the Premier's tongue often lately. (Will it buy them votes?) Polls show big support for greenbelt. The best we can do is keep pressure on our local MPPs, and maybe it will become a campaign issue. So call/write your MPPs and make a pitch for extending the greenbelt to Waterloo Region. Kevin will send an email with what we can do---who to write to. {See his email of April 25.) He also has lawn posters that say "Save our Water"--signed by www.greenbelt--now available for pick-up on John Jackson’s front porch at 17 Major St., Kitchener.

Greg noted a problem with the greenbelt is “leapfrogging.” Toronto development depends on North. Dumfries for aggregate, and it now has the largest number of gravel pits in country.

Kevin says the solution is to thicken the greenbelt to make leapfrogging much harder. Gov't can approve it in cabinet and doesn't need consultation. The Federation of Agriculture very supportive, wanting all of S. Ontario greenbelted. Reform of aggregate legislation is happening.

Region thinks its protection in relation to aggregates and other protections is stronger than that of greenbelt, and some argue that we don't need greenbelt here. Others on Regional council want the greenbelt here for more permanent protection. Kevin says the Act says that the stronger protections apply.

Lulu noted that threat to Great Lakes from Trump might help us argue for greenbelt to protect water.

**Hidden Valley**---Deaune

The GREN Hidden Valley group has met. The Hidden Valley Art show, a juried show, will happen in fall.

Studies of the area by the Region will go on for 2 years before Region does anything. There’s a cornfield there that we'd like repurposed—maybe get can Region to buy it. We need to find a way to make our priorities theirs, and the Hidden Valley group is now strategizing about how to do it. Gord has a plan. Next meeting is in May. Craig Campbell, a great amateur naturalist who did work in Hidden Valley, has recently donated his work to the Region archives.

Deb-when a developer owns property such as Hidden Valley, he can do whatever. How can we influence that? We need to put together a compelling deal for him---a land swap? Name on something? We could put together grant applications for municipalities.

**Municipal Garbage** ---John J.

John noted that textiles go to the dump, making up 5% of the waste stream. Attention is only now being paid to options for recycling. One of his teaching assistants has done extensive research on textiles and is willing to talk to GREN to help us explore what we can do here about it. John will try to get her for the next meeting.

John noted that Waterloo Region is behind other municipalities in rates of diversion from residential waste, with 51% here (2014) compared to comparable municipalities, which are in the high 50s.

Recyclables are at 48.1% province-wide---and 39.6% in Waterloo Region. The poor showing is an opportunity for GREN to raise waste issues with the Region.

**Biosolids--** Bob B.

The Region is currently doing lots of consultation on how to manage biosolids (sewage sludge) in the future. Do we want Region to make presentation to us about their plans and options to deal with it?

**Radioactive Waste**---John J.

The Bruce/Kincardine proposal is to put it 3/4 km below ground within 1 km of Lake Huron. They describe it as "low to mid-level waste," but mid-level is highly radioactive and lasts forever. The only nuclear waste not included is waste from the core or reactor.

The gov't sent back the first enviro assessment, as it didn’t look at alternative sites or do a cumulative impacts study. The company did a second assessment that was no better, stating there are no impacts. Now the Minister and the Board are repeating the same questions to them. The nuclear industry doesn't think it needs to obey rules, and the gov't has a conflict. Nuclear is a big part of climate change plans--so it must have ways of disposing of the waste. There’s pressure to approve something.

At Chalk River, they’re experimenting with how to shut down the plant. Entombment is an option, which means cover up everything. At Blind River, they’re planning on building a landfill for radioactive waste. John is involved with citizens groups on these issues.

**Miscellaneous Updates**

Greg G. reported that there will be **marches for science** in U.S. and Canada (TO and Buffalo are closest) on April 22, and there might be one in Waterloo Park. Also a **climate change march** on April 29, with closest in TO. We could put our name on the list of sponsors for science march in Buffalo. Greg will check into it.

Greg is the GREN appointee to the rare land trust committee. Meetings are monthly, with an interesting group and work. He also noted that the U. of Rochester has done some genetic modification on chestnut seeds to create a hardy **American Chestnut.**

John reported that the **Brant citizens group lost its appeal**, supported by CELA, before the Environmental Review Board. It is concerned about the opening of a gravel pit outside Paris. The big issue was that the company wants a washing pit. Citizens were arguing against it based on atrazine in the soil. The citizens had an excellent expert toxicologist. The decision time was very quick--a month.

Don noted a **conference on free transit for people living in poverty** will take place on Sat. June 3, 2-4, at Historic St. Paul's Lutheran Church, near the Charles St. terminal. There’s room for another person from GREN. Email him by May 16 if you’re interested, at jandonrob@gmail.com

Lulu noted that a **Blue Dot Rally for a federal environmental bill of rights** will take place at Kitchener City Hall on June 4. Also, that Jeff Rubens, an enviro economist, is being brought to Waterloo by Divest Waterloo.

Deaune expressed concerns about **tree removal and erosion in Bechtel Park**--into Laurel Creek. She was advised to talk to the ward councillor and head of parks for the city.