GREN Meeting Minutes Thursday March 5, 2020 1 – 3:30 pm

Forest Heights Community Centre, Room 1

1700 Queen’s Boulevard, Kitchener

Chair: Susan B

Minutes: Susan K

**Guest Speaker: Jim Poling, Editor-in-chief, Waterloo Region Record**

Need diversity and to give voice even if we don’t agree.

Tracking on-line readership – 1 minute spent on article is “good”

Social media (Facebook) - doesn’t put money into community or paper, but it drives traffic to paper. Does not help journalism, investigative reporting and accountability. Print media may not get the story first, but it will be accurate, as in-depth as needed, it supports local news.

High cost of community news compared to Reuters: e.g. Springdale house that blew up – on-site in 25 minutes, updates 8 times that day – that level of debate of what and when to publish doesn’t happen on social media and there’s no accountability. $8 - $10,000 for production, reporters, salaries for 1 story! This can slow down reporting, but it will be accurate

Challenges: disruptive social media, paper delivery issues, on-line issues i.e. log in and get kicked out, is being fixed, complaints have dropped, app works with FB, new website by April – new seamless interface.

Funding and subscribers: need subscribers to pay for quality local journalism. If the Record doesn’t ask, no one else will. Not government subsidized like CBC, which competes for local advertising. Some government bailouts available—creates uncomfortable situation for objective reporting.

Future: Optimistic about Record and local journalism – there will always be a thirst for quality information.

New hire: Grand River Watershed environment reporter: Leah Gerber gerberleah@gmail.com starting March 16, and will get record email. Request from Leah if you have a story: no ranting, be objective, give what’s important, provide time-line – provide context

**Q & A and GREN member updates**

Lulu – 6 month closure of Fischer-Hallman Rd after discovery of First Nations artifacts

Sharon Woodley – Can Record stop use of plastic cover for paper? Won’t happen until they’re legislated out, but Jim will discuss

Greg – What can we do? Word of mouth is powerful, social media has eroded attention span and community involvement. We need to be news ambassadors. Shame people into subscribing.

Kevin - Best way to make contact with Record? Build relationships with editors and reporters. Their emails are on their columns and stories. All reporters have more story ideas than they can use. Don’t cc all.

Bob - How many paid digital subscribers? Proprietary info, but significantly less than print. Suggested that different audience and reading habits for print vs digital.

John – How decisions made to do in-depth story? Intuitive reporters always have short medium and long stories on file. Sometimes no story develops.

Lori – What can we do besides subscribe? Make sure you have both paper and digital, which includes access to all TorStar papers, encourage family, friends, neighbours

Fake news is insidious. Paradigm has shifted re nobility of profession of journalism

**GREN Issues Update**

* John J – Municipal waste issues – no composting in apartment buildings. Frustration with Region’s message that if people refuse to buy these things, they would not be produced. Stop blaming consumers; need producer responsibility. Call out Tim Horton’s, for example, that has decreased options to reduce waste i.e. no or fewer washable cups. RoW diversion rate has dropped to 61%; Markham is at 82%
* Mary Ann – Lakeside Neighbourhood. Started as clean-up and potluck 20 years ago. City of Kitchener natural areas co-ordinator Josh Shea working with them and now have Lakeside Management Plan addressing surplus parkland issues. A guide to city decision making and future actions in improving natural area and proper public use and longterm stewardship. Includes pollinator meadow, protected trees from beavers, tree protection, changed timing for mowing grass to not threaten turtles. Now have newsletter with over 200 people for educating responsible use of salt, sharps in the park, park history, partnership with REEP managing water where it falls, rainbarrels, placemaker grant blue boxes and green bin and for cigarette butts.
* Susan B – Elmira update – Woolwich planning tree planting for spring. Trees for Woolwich 30,000 trees planted in last 6 years. Lanxess – some movement on risk assessment to decide if action is needed for human health and ecological health, a few hotspots of dioxins and DDT pockets that can be carefully dredged. New hydrogeologist to Elmira file, Cynthia Docherty (sp?) is very responsive and timely
* Susan K – Good Green Death Project now incorporated as non-profit. Ministry of Government and Consumer Services just initiated a public consultation for regulating alkaline hydrolysis and alternatives such as composting (natural organic reduction) <https://www.ontariocanada.com/registry/view.do?postingId=31772&language=en>

Deadline (haha) to comment is April 17, 2020 11:59 pm.

**Emerging Issues**

* Greg M – proposed changes to conservation authorities by provincial government wanting to cut back on authority of conservation authorities – concern from managers, municipalities who’s tax dollars help support, anglers are interested in high quality streams and what will happen. Deadline March 13, 2020. We can participate:
1. Through Ontario Nature – <https://ontarionature.org/campaigns/conservation-authorities/>
2. Through CELA – <https://cela.ca/action-alert-ontarios-conservation-authorities-act-at-risk/>
3. Greg will draft statement for GREN using Laurel Creek educational programs as example. Over 10,000 students come each year; “Donut Hole” – wet forest has field of 10 acres – development proposal (Greg, Kevin, Deb) – that hole should be naturalized to become part of the forest – developer wants to make it a gated private enclave bordering the children’s forest educational area. And address local problems – drinking water protection, flood control, second largest landowner etc.
4. Although past date, Susan K will do op-ed for Feb 19

Ann - Aggregate Resource Act – deadline March 28, 2020. Frame comments around health.

Also important new paper released: [National Farmer’s Union – Tackling the Farm Crisis and the Climate crisis: A Transformative strategy for Canadian farms and food Systems](https://www.nfu.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Tackling-the-Farm-Crisis-and-the-Climate-Crisis-NFU-2019.pdf)

Lulu – Save our Water petition - <https://secure.gpo.ca/water-for-people-not-profit>

Lulu – Tyee Plant native trees article - <https://thetyee.ca/News/2020/02/28/If-We-Plant-Trees-They-Must-Be-Native-Trees/?utm_source=twitter&utm_medium=social&utm_content=030220-2&utm_campaign=editorial-0220>

**GREN Housekeeping Business**

* financial statement - deferred
* membership – Greg collected ? membership renewals
* GREN website – Kevin and Deaunn – working with Patrick developing and maintaining the site. Meeting on Sun Mar 22 to keep moving. Need to confirm names on email list.

**Next meeting**

Early June, date TBD. Susan K and Susan B to co-chair, same location, with guided tour of Food Forest by Nicola Whiting-Thomas behind Forest Heights Community Centre.

Aiming for quarterly meetings. Need someone(s) to organize and chair meetings after June meeting. The following community centres in Kitchener offer free daytime rooms: Forest Heights, Victoria Hills, Kingsdale & Country Hills.