

Glebe Report Association  
Annual General Meeting — May 16, 2016  
Draft Minutes

Attendees: Martha Bowers, Micheline Boyle, Bob Brocklebank, Valerie Bryce, Barry Davis, Judy Field, Ann Hyland, Andy Joyce, Elaine Marlin, Brendan McCoy, Liz McKeen, Chris McNaught, Sheila Pocock, Peter Polgar, Jeanette Rive, Marisa Romano, Jock Smith, Tom Tanner, Zita Taylor, Steve Zan

Regrets: Julie Houle Cezar, McE Galbraith, Bob Irvine, Dan Lanfranconi, Val Lasher, Ian McKercher, Lois Seigel, Ruth Swyers.

1. Call to Order and Welcome

Bob Brocklebank welcomed those present and remarked that since the **Glebe Report** is the closest thing to a literary society in our community, he had chosen to open the meeting with a poem available from the web site "Poetry Soup". Bob read "Newspaper Man" by John Wilowski. <http://www.poetrysoup.com>

2. Approval of Agenda

Jeanette Rive moved the approval of the agenda as circulated. This was carried.

3. Approval of Minutes of previous Annual General Meeting, May 20, 2015

Sheila Pocock moved the approval of the Minutes of the 2015 AGM. This was carried unanimously.

4. Discussion on the State of Journalism with David Reevely

Bob introduced David Reevely, a Glebe resident who regularly appears on the front page of the **Ottawa Citizen**. He frequently covers provincial issues and his work is often picked up by other Post Media papers.

David Reevely began by saying he read the Minutes of last year's AGM and also read the financial report — which is very encouraging as revenue is up. This is a great thing and shows people place great value on the **Glebe Report**. The **Glebe Report** is on solid ground.

David's first taste of journalism was at the McGill **Tribune**. He covered student politics. Next he studied Journalism at Carleton and joined the **Citizen** when Conrad Black was expanding the paper. He also worked for the **Vancouver Sun**, spent some time as a freelance writer and then became an editorial writer. In 2008 he became Assistant City Editor for the **Citizen** — a burnout job, but satisfying when things were going well. He asked to be sent to cover City Hall. A couple of years ago he became a columnist. As the newspaper staff has

shrunk, remaining employees have more scope. He likes to write about what the provincial government is up to without being at Queen's Park. His theme is often provincial politics and how this affects schools, hospitals and other vital services.

Mainstream media is struggling and thus more is having to be done with less staff and fewer resources. David illustrated the attitude of many media people with an analogy to a Cargo Cult — if we went back to what we were doing all would be well. But this is not supportable.

The **Citizen** and the **Sun** are now together and their staff has shrunk. Nevertheless, City Hall coverage has been maintained. The two papers have four reporters covering City affairs. Resources devoted to City Hall have been reduced slightly, but the reality is that the duller planning commission meeting gets more readers than national issues. Local issues affect what happens where people live. The **Citizen** can pay attention to, for example, checking the development applications every day. A reporter can attend all meetings and their better stories get beyond local area interest and engage readers across communities. David works to make development news from Westboro meaningful to the folks in Vanier. He needs to find ways to make the specific, general. The fine details of the redevelopment of the Mr. Muffler and Beer Store sites can't get into the **Citizen** because it does not have general interest. There are many things like this.

David's favourite section of the **Glebe Report** is the "Comings and Goings on Bank Street". This is important for the community and might well be expanded to cover Bronson Avenue. The **Glebe Report** can cover what is important to the local community. He said the city found out a lot about the giant IKEA store development because it was in the *Citizen's* neighbourhood. Reporters report on what they see.

The **Glebe Report** can follow neighbourhood stories. Lansdowne was a huge city wide story, but now it is a continuing local story. This is why people read the paper and why advertisers want to be here. The **Glebe Report** also has access to community activists and is often informed of forthcoming projects before they are announced. There is a risk the reporting can be captured by the activists, who are not the whole population. But reporting can also be captured by self-indulgence.

A question period followed David's remarks:

Q: Do you read other community newspapers?

A: Yes, the **Centretown Buzz**, and the **Centretown News** — but it is hard to get copies. The Barrhaven community paper does a good job of getting copies to City Hall.

Q: Is it hard to cover the rural areas?

A: We **don't** get there so we **don't** see things. Making a city-wide story about local rural issues is difficult. For example, snowmobile trail easements is important to rural residents but not to urban residents.

Q: Was it a mistake to make Ottawa so big?

A: David does not think so. There was a cost as the city spent 10 years trying to convince rural residents that they were part of the city area. Ottawa extends far out but is not like Toronto or Vancouver which are surrounded by independent suburban communities. Ottawa is more integrated.

Q: An Investigative journalist should not let people “off the hook”, but where is the line between being balanced and asking the hard questions?

A: In the lead up to the Iraq War, some leading journalists were captured by their sources — and used. Some small papers did better reporting because they tried to confirm the assertions which big news organizations were accepting. The need for balance is a pathology — meaning any claim has to be represented “fairly”. This may be great TV, but not great reporting.

David now has the confidence to call “bullshit” when he sees it. It is important to report what is said, but also to report what is the fact. As a columnist, it is possible to “call powerful people out”.

Q: How do you deal with the risk of becoming insular?

A: This is a risk. There are people out there who do not live my life. I have to remember that every day. Twitter accounts represent a small sector of the Canadian population. The world is not all Twitter followers.

Q: How do you track your readership?

A: Analytics help. If you are writing things that people **don't** read, you **won't** be writing it very long. People criticize clickbait and cat videos but there have always been “toy” sections like the “Driving” section because people want to read them and they make money. This may be necessary to support the more serious aspects of journalism. Getting important stories out there can pay off later as people will tell you things.

Q: Headline writing is very important — people read things because of the headlines.

A: Website headlines and print headlines are different and what works in print does not necessarily work on line. The best headlines tell you what matters.

Q: Newspapers have a slant — right, left or “fluffy”. How does this challenge the **Glebe Report**.

A: The challenge for the **Glebe Report** can be illustrated by Lansdowne — people who had views came out to meetings and wrote about the project and the process. People who thought the Lansdowne project was fine thought Minto was looking after it for them. The paper needs to seek out opinion. Letters to the Editor are important and a “representative” sample needs to be published. A bad letter to the editor can tell people a lot about the viewpoint expressed.

Q: What percent of the letters received get published [in the **Citizen**]?

A: There are many fewer letters now because social media provides alternatives. David has not worked on the letters page in a while, but he estimated the **Citizen** used to get 2,000 inches a day by email + mail + fax. Now the paper receives one tenth of that. The space for letters has shrunk. Now, perhaps one in five letters is published. David thinks the letters page in the **Citizen** is a dying form and should be eliminated. The people responsible for it don't think so.

Q: How does a moderator keep things under control in the “Comments” section of a website?

A: The Letters page is a curated selection. More papers are shutting off their comments area as it has become so unpleasant. People can be driven away by a nasty comments section. There are some stories — like court stories — where the **Citizen** does not allow comments.

At 8:00 p.m. Bob closed the discussion and thanked David.

##### 5. **A Networking Break followed — a chance to get up and circulate.**

##### 6. Report by Board Chair

Bob noted that this day marks fifty years since the beginning of the Cultural Revolution in China. He sees our community as the polar opposite of the enforced orthodoxy of China under Mao-ze-dong. Residents are engaged, tolerant of divergent opinion and turn out in record numbers on election day. Public meetings are well attended and there is energy for memorable events like “Abbotsford — a Musical”.

This community energy is reflected in the **Glebe Report**. New things are happening and new people are contributing. People who care about their community read the paper with “surprising intensity” and this involvement makes it an attractive medium for our advertisers.

Bob introduced members of the Board and production team. He invited Liz McKeen, the Editor, to comment. Her report is given below [#7].

Other members of the production team were introduced and special mention was made of Zita Taylor who has been Circulation Manager for 18 years. Bob described the work involved in distributing 7,000 copies of the paper 11 times a year. He also mentioned the contacts necessary to recruit new carriers and keep copies available in local business establishments. Zita is retiring and Bob announced that the Board had approved the selection of Marnie Wellar, a resident of Fifth Avenue, to continue the work done so ably by Zita.

Bob thanked the proof readers, the contributors and those who deliver the paper to every doorstep. Many who deliver are quite young and this may be their first time volunteering to serve their community.

“So what’s the **Glebe Report**? Far from a distant monolithic institution, it’s a bunch of your friends and neighbours, engaged in active conversation about the community they share with you.”

#### 7. Reports by Members of the Production Team

Liz McKeen [Editor]. It will be two years in August since Liz became Editor — and she enjoys the position. There were 54 letters to the Editor over the year (one month had 13). She has tried to keep the focus on the Glebe, but some issues, like climate change, go beyond the community. There were 648 contributors to the paper over the year (an average of 59 per issue). The paper published 9 short stories and 32 poems. There were 8 articles on Lansdowne. Proof readers deserve thanks for meticulous work. Volunteer contributors are vital for continued success — keep the contributions coming!

#### 8. Financial Report

Sheila Pocock [Treasurer] reported that revenues have gone up by 8% and much of this is due to more colour ads. Expenses are up 6% but much of this is colour printing costs. The current year produced a surplus of \$7,000. Money is set aside each year to cover 4 to 6 months of operation without any advertising revenue.

**MOTION:** Moved by Elaine Marlin, and seconded by Jeanette Rive, that the meeting accept the financial information presented and re-appoint Collins Barrow as the accountants for the current year of 2016. In addition, Collins Barrow will be given a free ad for a year in thanks for the deeply discounted invoice received. Carried.

#### 9. Election of Board Members

Bob announced that there was a vacancy on the Board. He spoke of the opportunity of becoming the 9th member of the **Glebe Report** Board. Steve Zan spoke of his interest in standing for the position.

Bob asked three times if there were any other nominations or volunteers. No one spoke up. The meeting agreed that Steve Zan should become a member of the Board.

10. Other business

There was no other business.

11. Adjournment

Sheila Pocock moved that the meeting adjourn. This was carried.

-----Bob Brocklebank, Chair

-----Tom Tanner, Recording Secretary

Dated:-----