

Northwest residents coming together to form own Ratepayers? group

Residents in Aurora's northwest quadrant are coming together as a united voice to speak out on area traffic, development and transit.

On Monday, April 15, at 7 p.m., the Northwest Aurora Ratepayers Association will hold their inaugural meeting. Residents living in this community are asked to RSVP to the first of what is hoped to be many meetings by April 5 to nwaurorarpa@gmail.com in order to determine the venue needed.

The Northwest Aurora Ratepayers Association, which is being steered by Sue Bugos and Michael Rotondi, was born out of the Ward 1 Committee facilitated by local Councillor Ron Weese.

Its catchment area includes the section of Aurora bordered by Yonge Street and Bathurst Street in the east and west, Heathwood Heights in the south, and the Town's border with Newmarket in the north.

Concerns voiced amongst community members include increased traffic on neighbourhood roads, the expansion of GO service and its impact on traffic along St. John's, and the Shining Hill development at St. John's and Yonge.

'Any of those things that are changing have an impact on us as well,' says Bugos, noting both she and Rotondi saw the value of bringing neighbours together in a more cohesive way. 'I prefer to be part of the solution; I would rather not sit on the sidelines and whine if there is something to be done; let's do it and figure it out. I think, for me, it was an opportunity to try and coordinate everyone so that we can have a unified voice for any issues that affect our neighbourhood. It's an easy way to have a presence with other organizations like the Town, York Region, Metrolinx - any of those organizations where they are trying to contact residents and residents want to be in touch with them. If we can be more of an official body, in a sense, it would really facilitate that and make it easier.'

In order to become an officially-recognized ratepayers' association, 10 households and at least 20 people need to sign up. Organizers of the Northwest group were very close to that threshold last week and spent the weekend hitting the pavement.

'As we move forward, we will start reaping the benefits [of organizing], but from my experience, any time you can bring people together creates a sense of community and I think we have an opportunity here to create a more cohesive sense of community in our neighbourhood in Aurora and it gives an organized and coordinated way for people to have their voices heard and to provide input,' says Bugos. 'We're inundated with information in so many different ways. This is one way we hope will be an easy, one-stop way for people to find out what is going on in our part of Aurora that affects them.'

'[Residents] don't have to do anything. They literally can just add their name to our list and become passive members; there's no obligation to come to regular meetings or go to Council meetings or anything like that. Everybody is busy, and when people see something like this, sometimes they go, 'Ugh, I just don't have the time for another committee' or whatever it is.'

'This is probably the easiest organization somebody could be a member of. They just have to give us their contact information and let us know they're interested; yes, we need people to step forward and take on some leadership roles, but the majority of people in our area honestly can just be passive members. I have been in Aurora for 13 years now and it is a great little community and just by paying attention you get a sense of what's going on. If we can contribute to that in a small way for our little pocket of Aurora, I think that's what we're hoping to do.'

By Brock Weir
Editor Local Journalism Initiative Reporter