

SEBRA

SOUTH EAST BAYSWATER
RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION

45th Annual General Meeting – 18 November 2015

Minutes

The 2015 Annual General Meeting was held in the Porchester Hall. Some 200+ members of SEBRA attended; there were also approximately 50+ guests. Veolia generously sponsored the Meeting. John Zamit, Chairman of SEBRA, opened the meeting at 7.p.m. to Cat Steven's "The First Cut is the Deepest" 1970's classic hit, setting the tone of the evening.

1 Welcome and Arrangements of Proceedings

The Chairman introduced himself to all members who didn't know him, as John Zamit or "the Beast of Bayswater" as he is known by the HPEA!

JZ welcomed all to the 45th SEBRA AGM and hopes they enjoy the evening explaining an awful lot of time goes into organizing the AGM and said it is a bit like the Oscars ceremony, if you do not thank everyone, you get told off! Huge apologies to anyone missed out. JZ thanked the staff of The Porchester to include, Mo Youseff, General Manager and Porchester Hall Manager Ben McEntergart.. He thanked the SEBRA Committee and all additional helpers. JZ congratulated SEBRA President John Walton on his 90th Birthday milestone and thanked him for his continued and valued contribution to SEBRA.

Last week The Porchester hosted a concert by Electric Light Orchestra (ELO) for those old enough to remember them; for the launch of their new album and Jerry Hall (Mick Jagger's ex-wife) has been filming.

JZ requested members take the time to visit the stands at the back of the hall and view the proposals for the redevelopment of Whiteleys, where application has just been submitted and partly covered in latest SEBRA NEWS. There are also photo boards showing proposals for the exciting proposed public realm improvements in Sheldon Square/ Paddington Central by British Land also covered in SEBRA NEWS. Crossrail is progressing well and there are representatives available to answer any questions. On your seats you will not only find the Agenda, Annual Accounts, Police Information, Save the Heritage of Whiteleys and The Bayswater Reporter and details of tonight's fabulous eight free Raffle Prizes. Plus a late prize from The Caeser Hotel: A voucher to dine for four + wine.

2 Introduction of the Guests

The Chairman introduced the top table:

- Councillor Philippa Roe, Leader of the Council
- Andrew Scattergood, new Chief Executive, The Royal Parks
- Sean McDermid, Chief Inspector, Westminster Police
- John Walton, President of SEBRA
- Karen Buck, MP for Westminster North (will join later)
- Mark Field MP, Cities of London and Westminster (will join later)
- Charlie Parker, Chief Executive of Westminster City Council (will join later)

The Chairman explained the MP's were running late due to business in the House and welcomed invited guests to include: John Walker - Director of Planning, Barry Smith - Head of City Policy & Strategy, Martin Low - City Transport Adviser, Mark Banks - Head of Waste & Parks, Graham King - Head of Strategic Transportation Planning & Public Realm, Tony Devenish, Knightsbridge & Belgravia Councillor who lives in W2 and has been selected by Conservatives for next years GLA elections to represent Westminster in "West Central" seat at the GLA.

JZ welcomed the following Ward Councillors:

- Heather Acton, Hyde Park Ward & Cabinet Minister
- Susie Burbridge, Lancaster Gate
- Antonia Cox, Hyde Park Ward
- Jean - Paul Floru, Hyde Park Ward
- Richard Holloway, Bayswater Ward
- Suhail Rahuja, Bayswater Ward
- Andrew Smith, Lancaster Gate

Special congratulations to Councillor Karen Scarborough of the Marylebone High Street Ward who has been elected as deputy Cabinet Minister for Children and Young People.

JZ welcomed representatives from adjoining Amenity Groups to include BRA and HPEA.

Apologies:

- Daniel Astaire, Cabinet Member, Housing, Regeneration, Business & Economic Development
- Mike Clarke, Head of Tri-Borough Libraries
- Brian Connell, Bayswater Ward
- Robert Davis, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for the Built Environment
- Adam Hug, New Labour Party Opposition Leader
- Kit Malthouse, GLA Representative
- Steve Summers, Cabinet Member, Sports & Leisure
- David Brewin, SEBRA Committee
- Jeannie Dixon, SEBRA Committee
- Angus Hudson, SEBRA Committee
- Penny Linnett, SEBRA Committee

Introductions were also made to various guests to include Businesses. JZ encouraged more Businesses to join SEBRA and Members to join the Committee.

3 Election of the Committee

The Chairman introduced the election by welcoming new Committee member Ward Al-Safi who was co-opted to the Committee earlier in the year.

Turning to the formal election of Committee members, the Chairman confirmed that nominations for the Committee had been set out in the Notice of the Meeting and repeated in the Agenda, of which a copy has been placed on every chair, and that no other nominations had been received.

Honorary Alderman Anne Mallison proposed the re-election of all those named (below), and Bob Rodgers seconded. On a show of hands, all nominees were elected nem. con.

Committee elected

Ward Al-Safi: 2 Cervantes Court, Inverness Terrace

David Brewin: 14 Westbourne Grove Terrace

Jeannie Dixon: 162 Gloucester Terrace

Jack Gordon: 54 Keynham House, Westbourne Park Road

Angus Hudson: 21 Cleveland Square

John King: 4 Heron Court, 63 Lancaster Gate

Penny Linnett: 32 Westbourne Park Road

Michael Nicholson: 17 Craven Hill Mews

Catherine Watters: 165 Gloucester Terrace

John Zamit, 2 Claremont Court, Queensway

4 Adoption of the Accounts

The Chairman introduced the accounts to 31 March 2015 (at Annex A to these minutes), which has been provided to all attending. SEBRA has had a successful year and explained following changing SEBRA *NEWS* to an A4 format (despite the Chairman's reluctance), the Magazine now covers production costs due to the Advertising revenue gained. The Chairman thanked all sponsors who have contributed for their support.

Adoption of the accounts was proposed by Steven Harley and seconded by Tony Shaw.

On a show of hands, the accounts were adopted nem. con.

The Chairman blew his whistle and asked there be a break in proceedings.

The Chairman went on to say there is a person in the audience who has done a fantastic job for SEBRA over the past 11 years, and SEBRA would not be where it is today without him. He has worked tirelessly from the helm and it is none other than our Editor Christopher Tanous who is stepping down as Editor of SEBRA NEWS following the autumn issue of the Magazine. Thank you for the past 11 years and presented CT with the following gifts from SEBRA.

- A Book on Railways “The Railway Nation Network
- A voucher for 2 to visit the Shard with champagne
- 3 original pictures of Paddington Station
- A Thunderer Whistle from 1900 or before

5 Invited Speaker, Leader of the Council – Councillor Philippa Roe

The Chairman then invited Councillor Philippa Roe, Leader of Westminster City Council, to give her address. Councillor Roe thanked John Zamit and SEBRA members and explained this was her 4th year speaking at the AGM and how time flies. It has been a very busy year and a tough year for WCC, the budget for 2016 is not known until just before Christmas so cannot tell us what cuts we will be facing. However, the council do expect further cuts and Councillor Roe assured the audience WCC will continue to be innovative and make savings through innovation and technology to preserve front line services. Over the past year the council has launched the Leader’s vision, titled: “City for All”. Due the diversity Westminster has with people from all different socio-economic backgrounds. There are 1 million people who visit Westminster daily.

There are 3 main strands to City for All:

City of Aspirations – to help people reach their full potential to own their own homes and to provide more homes by working with other boroughs and to help people get into work. There are currently 10,000 people who are out of work many of whom have been for some time. The Leader is determined to reduce this number by one third.

City of Choice – Helping people to make the right choices, for example; the council has launched an obesity programme to reduce this major problem. It has also launched a programme as to how to communicate with the Council, moving with technology in order to make it easier.

City of Heritage – It is vital to WCC and is an important item on the Government’s agenda for growth to protect our heritage. City Inspectors have been trained to be more effective.

Prior to Question time, The Chairman introduced Andrew Scattergood, Chief Executive, The Royal Parks to say a few words. Andrew echoed Philippa Roe saying they are modelling different scenario’s regarding the budget cuts they are anticipating. Two-thirds of the Parks income comes from other sources and Andrew is hoping the other sources protect the Park from the cuts.

The Parks will need to grow income in a diverse way. Andrew is currently looking at the status of the Royal Parks in legal terms, as currently it is part of a Government Department, which comes with many rules and regulations. The proposal is to become a Public Corporate Charity. This will enable the Parks to be more flexible to protect the Parks in the future, with more volunteers and diverse ways to raise income

The Café at the Italian Gardens is being renovated and will be open in the spring. AS apologises for the disruption caused by the construction of the Mayors Cycle Super-Highway, to be completed by January 2016.

The Winter Wonderland opens tomorrow night and is much bigger than it was last year.

The Chairman thanked AS and introduced Sean McDermid, Acting Police Chief Inspector.

SMcD thanked the Chairman for the invitation and said the cuts to come are very concerning but they will be protecting front-line services. The cuts predicted are 20-40%. Will need to reduce staff. The Police have made significant savings £600m. Savings have been made by streamlining ranks and having less management and senior staff and by reducing a lot of the bureaucracy. Crime in Westminster continues to go down and Westminster is a safe place. There are 130 crimes/day in Westminster reduction of 17% since 2011. Public confidence in the Police has increased and 79% of people asked think the Police are doing a good job.

The Chairman thanked both AS and SMcD.

6 Questions from the Floor - Question Time

The Chairman stated this is the largest audience we have ever had at an AGM and suggested the following hot topics to start the question time session:

- Basements
- Queensway Public Realm Proposal
- Neighbourhood Forum
- Mayors Cycle Super Highway
- Crossrail
- Rough Sleepers
- Roads and Pavements – Gloucester Tce & Moscow Road
- Recycling, Refuse Collections

Q Peter Wilson-Smith: Question for Councillor Roe: I have lived in Moscow Road for 20 years; why is Queensway, one of the few places in Central London going downhill? The road is a disgrace, there is rubbish, the pavements are appalling and the bike racks in a state of disrepair. No more excuses, when is the public realm of Queensway going to be sorted?

A John Zamit: agreed it was a major issue and has been talked about for years. JZ explained the North end of Queensway has been greatly improved with a piazza and SEBRA has been active in achieving this. Christopher Tanous has written on numerous occasions in SEBRA NEWS regarding this issue and there have been numerous exhibitions with ideas to enhance Queensway. Developers are willing to put their hand in their pocket. Thanks to Councillor Susie Burbridge has done more than anyone with regards to this issue. There was a suggestion to take away all the parking from Queensway at a cost of £10million over a 50-year period. Survey paid for by developer to get rid of parking opposite Whiteleys. SEBRA will fight this. There are plans to spend £10million on Queensway public realm in the future.

Graham King added: Various developments come together with an agreed plan. It is not a good idea building a scheme to find someone will re-develop in the middle of it. It is a victim of own process. Whiteleys plan does not include any public realm works. Hopes to have further information in the New Year with regards to a publically agreed scheme. Agreed to take message to Robert Davis.

John Zamit: We want to see a Cabinet report by Christmas and not be fobbed off anymore.

Leader, Philippa Roe added: Agrees Queensway has degraded and this causes distress to the Council, however, she is committed to resolving this issue and improving the area. It is very difficult and complex as there are multiple property owners and facets to consider.

On his arrival, John Zamit congratulated Councillor Tony Devinish, Knightsbridge Councillor and a good friend of SEBRA. Tony has been selected by the Conservatives to run for the GLA. We wish you well.

Q Jack Gordon, Chair Westbourne Panel: Question for Sean McDermid: Hogan Howell and Lord Blair felt that cuts would be a disaster. Do you feel cuts to PCO's will sound the death knell to neighbourhood policing?

A Sean McDermid: Responded by saying he feels the PCO's do a great job and have great links with the community. He says no he doesn't feel it will be the death knell to neighbourhood policing, however, any cuts will have a detrimental effect. A decision does need to be made as crime is changing with more cybercrime than community crime and the increased threat of terrorism attacks. They will need to look to the future and as budgets have not been given they do not know as yet. There is a legal issue with Police redundancies and we will try and preserve front-line services will be preserved. It is uncertain and we will know more in a few months time.

Q Sarah Medland: Question to Councillor Roe: What can we do about the loss of social housing in Bayswater? We should be looking to preserve the mixed nature of our neighbourhood, as we will face great problems in the future.

A Councillor Roe: Completely agrees. It is the bedrock of the housing policy written 8 years ago. In Westminster we are building housing for social rent and low- income workers as part of the regeneration plan in Church Street, Ebury Bridge and Tollgate. A mixed community is absolutely vital. We need to have a tiered society for all income earners in Westminster.

A housing bill is going through at the moment and this will have a significant impact on building houses in London. For the first time ever London councils have come together with one voice, putting forward devolution proposals to deliver housing in the borough as well as outside the borough to get the volumes required. It will always be about mixed communities.

John Zamit: That is reassuring, however, many flats and houses in the area are empty, and it could be said we are priced out of the market. We do believe the community needs to be balanced and there should be provision for social housing in any new development such as Sellars Tower.

Q Sophie Cook: What volume of basement developments triggers affordable housing?

A Councillor Philippa Roe: It is permitted development and doesn't believe it triggers affordable housing as you need a certain threshold of space created. It used to be 10 flats, the Mayor changed it to square footage and doesn't think a basement conversion would trigger any affordable housing.

Sophie Cook: Responded by saying that some of the basements are incredibly large approximately 8000sq ft.

Councillor Philippa Roe: Agreed that there are basements that are very large, but, not anymore as the new basement policy has just come into force. You cannot go down more than one floor and you cannot go out further than half of your back garden. This will limit the size of basements and the amount of disruption to neighbouring properties. It has been a laborious legal process and the new policy is now being implemented.

John Zamit: Welcomed Little Venice Councillor Melvyn Caplan, Cabinet member for City Management and Customer Services, Stuart Love, Executive Director for City Management and Communities and Charlie Parker, Chief Executive, Westminster City Council.

Basement developments are close to SEBRA's heart, we have written many articles in SEBRA NEWS and have been campaigning and finally got a basement policy. However, the policy states the development cannot exceed 50% of the garden. John Zamit asked the council does this mean 50% of the front garden and 50% of the back garden? The Council responded by saying good question we will get back to you. They did get back to JZ and said you are quite right, you can develop both your front and back garden. Or, you can develop 100% of your back garden if you decide it is too noisy to go 50% out in your front garden. A very loud NO was voiced from members in the audience.

Director of Planning John Walker: Explains it is not quite as bad as JZ paints it! As it stands the policy excludes any additional extensions from 1948. If you do have a front garden then you can have a larger basement extension to your back garden. Not many houses have large front gardens. Basements are limited to one storey and are not allowed to be too close to their neighbour's boundary. JW can see problems with people trying to establish what the property was like in 1948. It is now policy and is being implemented. Very few people objected to the policy and it is a big step in the right direction. Basement developments in listed buildings are being limited and are dependent on their hierarchy. The policy is not perfect and there may be more to do and if you think that only 50% of the rear garden should be included in the policy then put your views forward and campaign.

Q A Member: Asks, if basement developments are restricted to one story does this apply to the Listed Whiteleys building development proposal to include a 3-storey basement? What is your policy for Whiteleys? This would be a major engineering project.

A Director of Planning John Walker: Has worked for the Council for over 30 years and never had a problem with basements until the past 5 years. The reason attitudes have changed is basement developments have moved into residential streets and small Mews, where it is difficult to do the excavation without creating merry hell for your neighbours and that is why the new basement policy has been created. It is very different for commercial development. They need the basement space for operation purposes to limit the noise and inconvenience to surrounding properties. There has already been deep excavation in the 1980's at Whiteleys. There will be deeper excavations of basements to commercial properties as that is what is required to be a success and there should be less issues for neighbours as the heavy machinery required will not be travelling down narrow streets. The development will go ahead.

Q Herminia Fernandez: Asks are WCC regulating Shisha Cafés as they are now moving off the High Street to residential streets?

A Councillor Philippa Roe: It is very difficult to regulate, as the Council has to work within the law. If there is smoking indoors then that can be dealt with as it is against the law and against health and safety regulations. The Council can't just say you cannot have a Shisha bar in your café. What the Council is doing, is putting together an education programme, as people do not realise how bad smoking shisha is for your health. It is the equivalent of smoking 200 cigarettes. There is a need for a strong campaign on enforcing where we can and an education campaign to dissuade people using shisha recreationally. It is a cause for concern.

Councillor Heather Acton: The Council is enforcing against inappropriate Shisha use and the strategy is coming out for consultation within the next two weeks. It proposes steps to enforce and educate. It is very difficult and restrictive, as Shisha is not a licensable activity. The Council is enforcing where it can and will continue to do so.

Q Emma Slater: The question is regarding trees. Historically it has always been very difficult to have a tree chopped down without permission. Now, and personal experience on Chepstow Road has proven trees are being chopped down much more freely than before and are not being replaced.

A Councillor Philippa Roe: Apologises for the experience and this should not happen and will look into this Member's issue personally. There are strict guidelines regarding trees in the area and WCC guard trees jealously. Where a tree is diseased or dangerous, permission is given to chop the tree down and it must be replaced. If a tree is causing subsidence and there is evidence to support it, then the tree will not be replaced. WCC has a dedicated Arbour Crew who processes all applications in detail.

Q A Member: States he is disappointed Councillor Robert Davis is not present this evening as planning has been a big issue in the area and WCC has been very slow in formalising the basement policy. As a homeowner he has benefitted greatly from the increase in housing prices in the area and feels this is not reflected in Council Tax. Asks if WCC are considering raising Council Tax to assist with affordable housing?

A Councillor Philippa Roe: Immensely proud that WCC has the lowest council tax in the country and continues to deliver a good service. If council tax is raised it will affect low-income families and it was the right thing to do to not increase given the state of the economy at the time. However, times are changing and it will be looked at by WCC accordingly.

John Zamit: Feels WCC missed an opportunity and his understanding is if you want to increase Council Tax you need a referendum. WCC has managed cuts well.

Councillor Phillipa Roe: Council Tax is capped at an increase of up to 1.9%. So, the amount of money this would have generated was only £500K, which, is not a great deal. There is a balance and low-income families would have been greatly affected had an increase been made.

Q Chris Lankey : Questions WCC priorities, with deep cuts on the horizon, why is WCC spending money on polishing street lights and why are the Police giving out magic marker pens instead of making arrests and getting rough sleepers/beggars off the streets?

A John Zamit: The maintenance of the lights is under contract and if they weren't clean, you would be complaining!

Chief Inspector Sean McDermid: The traceable marker pens referred to are part of a new Police initiative called "Met Trace". The scheme is designed to reduce burglaries as burglaries have increased in the area and this is taken very seriously. The object of the scheme is to visit one in seven homes in the area with high visibility Policing giving crime prevention advice and has to date seen a downturn in the number of burglaries. The Police are prioritising beggars and rough sleepers and are deporting where they can.

Bob Rodgers: Hopes he will be one of the seven homes visited and is looking forward to his pen!

Q David Smith: States he is a social housing tenant and asks why is my rent skyrocketing increasing in 18 months time, why is WCC serving notice and why are one-bedroom council properties selling for £600-700K?

A Councillor Philippa Roe: WCC and all London boroughs are lobbying to protect London's unique position. The Government is saying that if you earn in excess of £40K per year you should pay market rate rent. What London borough's argue is you should pay a little more rent as long as this doesn't take away most of your income and doesn't detract from the desire to work. All additional monies raised, should go back into providing affordable housing. WCC are also lobbying for a right to buy and any monies raised from selling off WCC council properties should be protected and kept in London to build the next generation of social housing, which is greatly needed.

Karen Buck MP: Entirely agrees with Philippa Roe and says that it is refreshing that the Leader of WCC shares the view that the Government proposed housing policy will have a devastating effect on social housing and if we want a mixed community and lower paid workers in London we must supply housing. Doesn't believe pay to stay will come into force as it was proposed in 2011 and nothing has happened.

John Zamit ended the question time and presented flowers to Philippa Roe and Karen Buck in thanks for their attendance. A presentation of flowers was given to Janet Tanous as a thank you for all her support to SEBRA over the past 11 years.

Raffle draw and social gathering

The draw for raffle prizes then took place.

The prizes, generously donated by the organisations concerned, were:

Magnum of Champagne, British Land: Won by Roger Raglan

Christmas Hamper, Waitrose Bayswater: Won by ?

Pilates Voucher for 5 Classes –value £100, Bootcamp Pilates: Won by ?

Family Ticket for 4 to Winter Wonderland, The Royal Parks: Won by ?

'Shard' vouchers for 4- with a glass of champagne, Sellar Paddington Ltd: Won by Tessa Horiton

Laithwaites Special Christmas Selection of fine wine and pair of Dartington Crystal glasses, DCD Properties Ltd: Won by Nigel Snuggs

Caesar Hotel Voucher, Dinner for 4 with wine, Caesar Hotel: Won by Linda ?

M&S Vouchers to the Value of £250, Meyer Bergman & Warrior Group: The vouchers were split 3 ways: £100, won by ?, £100 won by Linda King-Taylor, £50 won by ?

Fortnum & Mason Champagne Tea for 4 Voucher at the Diamond Jubilee Tea salon, Fenton Whelan: Won by the West End Extra reporter Alina Poiianskava

John Zamit thanked all for coming and hopes they will return next-year and to please view the exhibitions and enjoy the social gathering. The formal meeting closed at 20.50, and those present moved to the back of the hall, where free beer, wines and soft drinks were available. Anna's Kitchen catering staff served a plentiful selection of hot and cold canapés. The post-AGM gathering went on until 22.30.

ANNEXE TO AGM MINUTES

Guest List (Excluding those mentioned in Minutes)

Sally Beck: General Manager, Lancaster London Hotel
Shelley Browne: Community Relations Officer Crossrail
Tom Burke: North Team Planning, WCC
Colin Buttery: Deputy Chief Executive Royal Parks
Kay Buxton: Chief Executive, The Paddington Partnership
Amanda Coulson: North Team Planning, WCC
Mike Chatten: Head of North Team Planning, WCC
Scott Edgell: General Manager, Veolia
Lawrence Foe: Paddington Library WCC
Graham King: Head of Strategic Planning WCC
Martin Low: Commissioner of Transport WCC
Don Murchie: Senior Transport Manager, WCC
Tony Rice: Tri-Borough Libraries & Archives
Rebecca Mason: North Team Planning, WCC
Murad Qureshi: GLA Member
Ross Boyle: Community Relations Officer, Crossrail
Tessa Singleton: Friends of Hyde Park
Michael Smith: Assistant Centre Director, Whiteleys
Tracey Taylorson: CSIV Community Relations for Westbourne Park works, Crossrail
Elizabeth Williams: Manager, Paddington Libraries, WCC
Jess Ward: CSIV Community Relations for Paddington main works, Crossrail
Ben Whitton: Traffic, Crossrail

Apologies

Paul Akers: Arboriculture Manager WCC
Mark Banks: Group Manager, Waste & Parks WCC
Richard Barker: Director of Sport, Leisure and Well Being WCC
Richard Brown: Licensing, Citizens Advice Bureau
Philip Byrne: Centre Director, Whiteleys
Richard Clifton: Planning, WCC
Leon Daniels: Managing Director, Surface Transport, TFL
Sheila Davis: Hon. Secretary Hyde Park Estate Association
Andrew Garwood-Watkins: Paddington Waterways & Maida Vale Society
Pascal Hauret: Regional Director, Veolia Environmental Services
Andrew Jordon: Chair, Westbourne Neighbourhood Association
Daniel Le Grange: GLL
Kit Malthouse MP AM: West Central G.L.A
Vinnie Masseri: Senior Contract Manager, Veolia
Sue Price: Chair, Friends of Hyde Park
Barry Smith: Operational Director, City Planning WCC
Elizabeth Virgo: Chair, Paddington Waterways & Maida Vale Society
Andrew Wolstenholme: Chief Executive, Crossrail
Christopher Wright: Hon. Secretary Bayswater Residents Association

(Apologies to anyone missed off list)