

Date: Wednesday, March-26-14

To: Heritage Oshawa Committee,
c/o Laura Davis, Advisory Committee Co-ordinator

From: Susan McGovern, VP External Relations and Advancement

Topic: Preservation of the Windfields Farm gates

Purpose:

Update for the Heritage Oshawa Meeting, scheduled for Wednesday, March 26, 2014 on the preservation of the Windfields Farm gates. This is additional information from the university subsequent to the news release of March 21, 2014. *One clarification from the news release: the gates were made of aluminum, and not wrought iron.*

Long-term history:

Windfields was bought by the Taylor Family from the McLaughlin Family circa 1950 (the McLaughlin Family had acquired the land lot-by-lot circa the early 1920s).

Windfields became the leading North American thoroughbred racing stable over the years, highlighted by the fabled success of Northern Dancer in the 1964 Kentucky Derby. However, after the passing of E.P. Taylor in 1989, the family began to shut down the business.

In 2003, the owners sold the property, which was then leased back to Windfields for ten years. Windfields' operations ceased in November 2009.

After the change in ownership, the university made several repairs to the property, including remediating some contaminated soils and repairing damage to some of the buildings' roofs.

University formally acquires property in 2013

Title acquisition of the property by UOIT was not finalized until April 2013. However, prior to that UOIT assumed responsibility and costs for many activities like landscaping, grass-cutting, installation of closed-circuit cameras, security and monitoring of the property, installation of fencing around buildings, repairs to damaged buildings

Briefing Note

(including those where lightning rods were stolen by vandals prior to 2013 and roofs were damaged).

Background regarding gates:

UOIT, as part of its commitment to proactively preserve historic components of the former Windfields Farm in Oshawa, is working with the City of Oshawa, Heritage Oshawa and the Windfields Community Group (WCG) to ensure stewardship of the property.

After Windfields closed its operations, the stone pillars were targeted on many occasions by vandals. People tried to steal the face stones, original signage was removed without permission, and one of the pillars was subject to arson in August 2012. The targeting of the pillars by thieves, combined with weathering and erosion had made the pillars unsafe.

The aluminum gates had been repaired three times by the university including after they were rammed by a truck in June 2012.

Due to the ongoing vandalism, the university increased security on site and removed the gates for safekeeping.

The Region of Durham has plans to widen Simcoe Street North in the near future to accommodate the anticipated higher traffic flow; this will follow completion of the Highway 407 extension to Harmony Road (there will be an interchange at Simcoe Street just north of Winchester Road). Currently an environmental assessment is underway.

The four stone pillars and aluminum gate on the west side of Simcoe near Britannia Avenue needed to be removed to make way for the widening of the road.

At a meeting of the City-established Windfields Community Group (WCG) on December 6, 2013 (attendees: Susan McGovern, Murray Lapp, Ken Bright, Devon Biddle, Jenny Bridle, Karen Young, Tom Hodgins, Susan Ashton, Margaret Kish, Diane Stephen and Ken Knox), UOIT's Ken Bright provided an update on the many initiatives the university has undertaken on the property as part of its secure-and-hold project. The WCG was also advised in that meeting that the university would take down the stone pillars and gate at the main entrance and replace them with a farm gate; the stones and gates would be stored until such time that an appropriate new location was determined through the Campus Master Plan (CMP) process.

The City of Oshawa was advised on March 4 that the pillars would soon be removed.

Through a hiring process, the university engaged a reputable contractor, Bored Barns to dismantle the stone pillars and remove the gates. The dismantling activity began on March 19. Cleanup is scheduled to be completed by March 28.

Briefing Note

On March 19, the pillars were measured and photographed prior to being dismantled for storage in a secure location during the construction period.

After the start of dismantling on March 19, some of the face stones could not be removed due to the cold temperatures and frozen ground. To prevent damage, the remaining stones were carefully removed as the temperature moderated. The stone marked “1946” was also carefully preserved.

Currently the face stones are being cleaned and carefully stored.

The WCG, through the CMP consultation process will be able to provide recommendations on the future location of the pillars.

Summary of dismantling activity:

- UOIT acquired title to the property in April 2013.
- Due to years of vandalism, theft and erosion, the pillars had become unsafe.
- The pillars were photographed and measured in detail.
- The face stones have been removed (on March 19) and transferred to a secure location.
- The stones are currently being cleaned of mortar and other debris, and documented separately by pillar.
- The stones will remain in secure storage.
- In the future the stones will be re-used to create replica pillars at a location to be determined.
- The concrete interior of the former pillars has been taken down. Remaining rubble will be cleared by March 28.
- UOIT continues to cover the cost of the maintenance of other aspects of the former Windfields property to which it has title (about one-quarter of the original property), including security. Other portions of Windfields to the north, toward Winchester Road, are owned by other groups.

Current status:

Some passers-by had noticed the rubble on March 19 that filled the interior of the stone pillars, which had also been exposed to vandalism, weathering and erosion over the years. The rubble on the ground has been cleared.

As plans continue for the future development of the Windfields Farm property by the university and its community partners, UOIT remains committed to the security of the property and to maintaining the legacy of Windfields Farm for future generations.