

Pilon, Janet

Subject: Public Works Committee meeting, September 18, 2023 - PW23062: Management of the Aviary at 85 Oak Knoll Drive (Ward 1)

From: michelle davies

Sent: September 18, 2023 12:10 AM

To: clerk@hamilton.ca

Subject: Public Works Committee meeting, September 18, 2023 - PW23062: Management of the Aviary at 85 Oak Knoll Drive (Ward 1)

To whom it may concern,

I am writing to express my support for the work being done at The Hamilton Aviary by the volunteer group known as The Friends of the Aviary and implore the City of Hamilton to continue allocating funds to care for its flock of exotic birds.

Since 1927, The Hamilton Aviary has been a sanctuary for many exotic birds. It predates The Hamilton Tiger Cats, Tim Horton's, and McMaster University. Each of these organizations contributes to the rich culture of the City of Hamilton, but none have done so for longer than The Hamilton Aviary.

The Hamilton Aviary was originally built to entertain children at Dundurn Castle. Today it has evolved to be a community hub for everyone interested in all things avian. The Aviary serves to educate people, giving them the chance to learn what it means to take care of exotic birds. It allows them to learn about the importance of things like training, a balanced diet, and enrichment activities. These captivating creatures require specialized care and therefore dedicated people who are willing to cultivate the necessary education to look after them.

Visitors get a fun experience unlocking the elaborate and sophisticated personalities of The Aviary's residents. Children can not only do crafts, but have the opportunity to read to the birds, which is both educational for them and stimulating for our feathered friends. People can sing, talk, dance, and whistle to engage the birds and interact with them, leaving the birds and people excited by the new connection they made. We also cover serious topics like the impact that urbanization and climate change are having on the wild birds of South America and the dangerous practices of the illegal pet trade.

Volunteers on the other hand get the hands on experience, learning how much time and work goes into caring for an exotic bird. As a volunteer you are rewarded when caring for these animals by long lasting relationships with the entire Flock. You can call a bird by their name and see them make their way over to you. Like young children they recognize faces and voices and their moods change depending on who they are near.

It is through their stories that our flock have become ambassadors, teaching people that they should not enter into owning a bird without doing the necessary research and having the necessary tools and space for them. Parrots are the most rehomed species in the USA because people do not realize the amount of time, effort, and money that it takes for them to live a fulfilling life. It is only through education given at places like The Hamilton Aviary, that people will understand the needs of a Macaw, Amazon, or African Grey and not end up in a situation where their exotic bird is mistreated or needs to be surrendered.

These birds have lived most of their lives so far together, in a building with specialized features such as indoor / outdoor enclosures. Exotic birds are not domesticated pets like cats or dogs and should therefore be treated with more reverence, as they are wild animals. Our society does not tolerate the abandonment of those who are most vulnerable or those without a voice. Instead we protect and nurture. The residents of The Aviary deserve no different.

Together Aspire, Together Achieve - is the motto of the City of Hamilton. I firmly believe that the City of Hamilton has an opportunity to help The Hamilton Aviary become a profitable and self-sustaining charity that can expand to help with the growing need in our community to take in birds that require new homes. Since December of last year we have received 15 requests from bird owners to care for their birds, as they can no longer give them the loving home they deserve.

The birds at The Aviary have come to trust us. Trust that we will bring them their food and clean their cages between 9 and 12 every morning. It is a promise to them that we try to fulfill, to provide the best care possible. A torch we have taken

up from The Friends of the Aviary that came before us. A promise the City of Hamilton made when they accepted ownership of each and every bird currently residing at 85 Oak Knoll Drive.

Together we can Aspire. Together we can Achieve. Together we can inspire current and future generations of Hamiltonians to appreciate and protect these rare and vulnerable avian companions.

Thank you for your time,

Michelle Davies