

Pilon, Janet

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

From: Emily Downs

Sent: September 18, 2023 12:10 AM

To: clerk@hamilton.ca

Cc: Ward 13 <ward13@hamilton.ca>

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

To whom it may concern,

I began volunteering at the Aviary in 2022 with the health and enrichment and open house programs. I joined the Board of Directors in June, 2023. Although I have been a volunteer for a relatively short time, the Aviary has become a big part of my life. It has been such a privilege to get to know the flock, to work alongside incredibly dedicated volunteers, and to meet members of the community.

A particular highlight of my time with the Aviary has been sharing our birds with people who stop by the outdoor enclosures or attend weekly open houses. Every week this summer we have had between approximately 40 to 100 community members visit us for open house. I am amazed by how many people remember visiting the Aviary at Dundurn Castle and how excited they are to share the Aviary with their children and grandchildren.

The closure of the Aviary as a physical space will be a loss for the volunteers, the birds, and the Hamilton community. In addition to the Aviary's value as an educational resource and sanctuary for parrots, it has served as a community gathering space; first at Dundurn Castle, and then in Westdale for the past 30 years. I have heard stories from community members who wake up to Mya's whistle and families who stop by every day on an evening walk. Multiple children have told me Rosie is their best friend. Hamilton is a community of lots of distinct smaller communities; wide income and resource disparities. We need low-barrier community gathering spaces to visit, to spend time, and to work together. The Aviary has certainly been that for me.

If the Aviary closes as a physical space, I will be sad to see it go. I hope that whatever happens we will find a way to continue as we always have, caring for our flock, and contributing to our community.

Sincerely,

Emily Downs (Ward 13)
Board director, Friends of the Aviary