BIA Members Meeting –
Grindstone Bridge Construction Project
MEETING MINUTES

Tuesday, April15, 2025, 6:00 PM
Mill Street & 5 American House

BIA Attendees: Amanda Groves, Groves Law & BIA Chair; Shari Reaume, Turkstra Lumber & BIA Vice Chair; Christina Birmingham, Birmingham Consulting Inc. & BIA Secretary; Cat McCrimmon, Rustic Daisy's & BIA Director; Ted McMeekin, Ward 15 Councilor & BIA director; Adam Neumann, BIA staff; Susan Pennie, BIA staff; Jerry Foster, Foster Auto; Nathan Brown, Brown Financial; Andrew Brown, Brown Lawyers; Marnie Mycroft, Pickwick Books; Jennifer Jamieson, Mend Therapy; Tiffany Thrush, Rising Soul; Mark and Yvonne Flippance, Marciano's Pasta Café; Frank Delmonte, Michelle My Belle; Meghan Victoria & guest, Sol Kyst; Drew Paget, Mill Street & 5 American House; John, AJs Alterations; Brenda Jeffries, Flamborough Today/Chamber of Commerce.
City of Hamilton Attendees: Cory Peters, Construction; Ed English, Construction; Paul McShane, Construction; Omo Ajayi, Design; Caroyn Ryall, Transportation; Mike Field, Transportation Operations.

1. WELCOME & OPENING REMARKS - Amanda Groves, Chair
   Amanda welcomed attendees to the special meeting of the Waterdown Business Improvement Area (BIA) regarding the scheduled reconstruction of the Grindstone Creek bridge.

   Amanda thanked everyone for coming and outlined the purpose of the meeting to facilitate an exchange of information between city staff working on the project and local businesses interested in understanding and minimizing the impact of the construction project on the downtown economy.

   The BIA represents 250 businesses in the heart of Waterdown, employing as many as 3,000 people and with commercial assessment value of $137,625,986. Amanda mentioned many of the challenges facing local businesses including ongoing pandemic recovery, rising labour costs, inflation and new tariffs.

   The BIA exists to support downtown businesses and looks forward to working together with city staff and all stakeholders to overcome anticipated challenges related to traffic congestion, access and safety.

   Amanda introduced fellow BIA board of management directors and staff in attendance (directors - Shari Reaume, Christina Birmingham, Cat McCrimmon, City of Hamilton Ward 15 Councilor Ted McMeekin and staff – Adam Neumann and Susan Pennie) and City of

Hamilton staff in attendance (Cory Peters, Ed English, Paul McShane, Omo Ajayi, Carolyn Ryall and Mike Field).

2. GREETINGS FROM COUNCIL – Ward 15 Councilor, Ted McMeekin

Ted thanked city staff for meeting with the local business community, mentioning how important consultation is for the people who will be most directly impacted by the process and resulting disruptions.

Ted and his staff have been working closely with city departments on this project for the last six months. The bridge work must be done. There is no doubt it will cause chaos. The goal is to mitigate disruptions as best possible.

Waterdown is the fastest growing community within the City of Hamilton. Growth brings new customers and businesses; it also presents challenges. More than half of the calls fielded by Ted's office relate to traffic, congestion and road conditions.

Ted highlighted 10 key issues identified at the March Public Information Session regarding the Construction Project:

- Alternating east / west lane closures matched to commuter patterns vs. eastbound only
- Dysfunction of Parkside because of detour / increased congestion
- Paving of shoulders on Parkside to allow for turn lanes
- Clear path for EMS
- Plan for accidents
- Managing cut-through traffic – soft closures, speed bumps
- Truck traffic
- How bus routes, and school bus routes will be affected
- DARTS and accessibility issues
- Communication plan to keep people informed / updated

Ted continues to work with city staff on best mitigation strategies for these issues – we will get through this working together.

3. STAFF PRESENTATION – Omo Ajayi

Omo's presentation covered details on:

- Project location and limits
- Design highlights
- Traffic management plan
- Challenges and community impacts
- Mitigation plans
- Project timelines

Link to presentation slides HERE

Omo stated the contractor and purchase order were confirmed in April.
Soft movements, constructions notices and public notices will happen very soon with construction officially starting in May.

As the city moves from design stage to construction, the best contact for questions and updates will now be constructionservices@hamilton.ca.

4. Q & A

***Jennifer Jamieson owns two relaxation businesses – Mend Therapy and Rising Soul** - located at 331 Dundas Street East (directly in the work zone). Jennifer had several questions for staff.*

Can you talk about planned utility shutoffs (power and water)?

Cory Peters advised that power is not expected to be affected. Short water disruptions will be necessary in Phase 2 (2026). Shutdowns will be scheduled after hours to minimize business disruptions. Any affected businesses will be given a minimum 48-hours' notice.

What type of noise is expected and how will it affect my relaxation businesses?

Omo said they anticipate some noise due to the movement of construction vehicles (trucks, backhoes, etc.)

Jennifer asked about EMS access for the seniors' home adjacent to her property.

Omo explained access to both properties will be maintained via a mutual driveway connecting the two properties. This will allow access through one property when the entryway to the other is temporarily closed as they align driveways to the regraded road. Entryway access is expected to be closed for only a couple of days as cement is poured and cures. Access on the north side of Dundas (Jenn's side) will only be affected in Phase 2 (2026).

Can driveway work be scheduled on a weekend?

No. Contractors will be working on a Monday to Friday schedule.

***Mark Flippance owns Marciano's Pasta Café** located at 5 Mill Street; another property located immediately west of the bridge. There are two entryways to the 5 Mill Street parking lot – one off of Dundas (near the bridge) and one off of Mill Street.*

Mark asked if access to the 5 Mill Street lot from Dundas Street will be affected?

Yes. Access from Dundas Street will be restricted through much of Phase One. Entryway from Mill Street will be the primary access during construction on the south side of the bridge.

Mark requested that signs be placed coming up Waterdown Road to let customers know to enter from Mill Street before they pass the Mill Street driveway access and attempt to turn right on Dundas. Many customers come from Burlington – signage farther down Waterdown Road would assist with wayfinding.

Andrew Brown is a partner with Brown Lawyers *located at 25 Mill Street North. Brown Lawyers employ 7 people and have been in business for 14 years. Many clients are from Burlington and due to Brown's specialty in estate planning, many clients are seniors. These clients do not use technology. Andrew asked that detour signs be highly visible and easy for elderly members of the community to read.*

A variety of signs will be used, including portable variable message boards that display large lit messages and can be updated frequently.

The traffic division will monitor and adjust accordingly.

Frank Delmonte is an owner of Michelle My Belle Bridal Salon*. Frank inquired about project timelines. With Phase One construction scheduled to finish at the end of 2025 and Phase Two not scheduled to begin until May of 2026 – does this mean there will be no construction work from January to May 2026?*

Phase One will end as of December 2025. At that time, traffic lanes will be open for two-way traffic that will stay in place throughout Phase Two. Construction and concrete work are difficult in winter conditions.

Contractors have been challenged to expedite the project where possible. They have been asked to look at the alternating east and west lane closures.

Ted emphasized there was consensus at the Public Meeting for an alternating solution.

Mike Field mentioned this is a major bridge and disruption is not avoidable. There has been significant amount of study of traffic patterns. The one-way eastbound proposal was not selected because it was the easiest but instead took in many factors, including safety.

Ted asked if there were any in the room not in favour of an alternating solution. Attendees agreed an alternating route was preferred.

City teams continue to look at this option. Staff could not commit to timing on final decisions on traffic patterns but mentioned they would be communicated as soon as possible with construction start imminent.

Tiffany Thrush delivers spa experiences at Rising Soul. *Many of her services require water, especially as it relates to safety and hygiene. She emphasized how advance notice of water disruptions would be required to accommodate her appointment-based clientele and to ensure she can safely and fully provide services or implement contingency plans.*

Water disruptions will likely happen only once or twice and not until 2026. The typical duration of water shutoffs is 4 to 6 hours. A business like Tiffany's would be identified as sensitive and construction crew will work closely to work around sensitive businesses.

Nate Brown is a co-owner of Brown Financial *which employs 10 people. Nate commented on the 'official' detour of Avonsyde to Parkside as the only identified westbound route. He*

inquired whether signage could also be placed to encourage traffic on two routes, including Burke Street to Mountain Brow and Waterdown Road.

Mike Field commented that people will use every street available and establish their own routes into town. There are issues with the south route:

- Parts of roads in the Mountainview Heights subdivision are unassumed (not yet passed from developers to city responsibility)
- Burlington owns a section of Waterdown Road
- The official detour route must be truck friendly.
- For these reasons the detour route must stay as outlined.

Nate asked if they could not indicate a D1 and D2 route with one that is strictly for light vehicles / cars only.

Mike emphasized the goal remains to encourage as much traffic in and out of downtown as possible. Businesses most affected might suggest the best routes to their own customers. He also mentioned that truck drivers don't stop in town – they drive through. Keeping them bypassing on the north route may help alleviate truck traffic in the downtown core.

Drew Paget is an owner of Mill Street and 5 American House *located at Mill and Dundas Street. He lives just on the east side of the bridge. It already takes him as much as 17 to 20 minutes to get from his side of town to the restaurant when going up to Parkside and around. Drew inquired about plans to facilitate lefthand turns onto Parkside Drive.*

Temporary lights will be placed at Boulding and Parkside and Robson Road and Parkside.

Christina Birmingham is a co-owner of Birmingham Consulting Inc. *and the property at 21 Mill Street North. 25 to 30 people work at this location between Birmingham and their tenant (CBY Academy of Performing Arts). 21 Mill Street has sufficient parking for its employees and customers, but Christina anticipates parking on side streets could impact the movement of vehicles through detour routes. She inquired what will be done to manage on street parking, especially if/when construction activity impacts access to other local parking lots.*

The construction team will canvas businesses and neighbourhoods. They will endeavour to schedule disruptive activity outside of business hours for businesses identified as sensitive. Construction and traffic will continue to monitor and adapt as necessary if issues or problematic areas are identified.

There was discussion around the BIA collecting a list of hours of operations for businesses in the area closest to the construction site. Susan Pennie will follow-up with businesses and prepare a list for the city.

Christina inquired if the name of the contractor for the project has been announced.

It was confirmed that KAPP Infrastructure has been awarded the business.

Jerry Foster has operated Foster Auto *at the Dundas Street location (on the west side of the BIA) for 18 years. Jerry previously sat on the BIA board of management for 4 years. He has been involved in discussions about the by-pass, the interchange improvements at Hwy 5 and Hwy 6 and the bridge construction going back years now. He expressed concern that the timing of this project is less than ideal with major disruptions ongoing or anticipated for two of the main roads into Waterdown. He asked about status of the by-pass and Hwy 5 and Hwy 6 interchange projects.*

Ted McMeekin advised construction of the Hwy 5 and Hwy 6 interchange will not start until mid 2026. Unfortunately, the bypass project is still in limbo pending negotiations with an Indigenous group. There is no confirmed start date for that project.

Jerry expressed a need for lots of signage to address changes to traffic patterns.

Mitigating strategies will remain fluid and signage will be added or moved as necessary. Mike also spoke to traffic calming measures that will be used if deemed necessary – such as temporary speed bumps and cushions.

Susan Pennie is the Executive Director of the Waterdown BIA*. Susan mentioned local residents and commuters will find their routes because they have no choice to get home or to work. The concern of the downtown business community is that consumers can opt to avoid the BIA altogether by changing their shopping patterns and visiting businesses to the east, west and south (Burlington and Dundas). Minimizing inconvenience and offering suggestions for alternate routes in the first few weeks will be crucial. Susan inquired about the possibility of posting 'Waterdown Village is Open for Business' signs in tandem with detour signs.*

Ed English confirmed the city can do this. The BIA can prepare artwork, using BIA branding, and the city will produce and install the signs. Ed cited other construction areas where this has been done successfully, including Garner Road in Ancaster and York Street in Hamilton.

Susan mentioned the current difficulties turning left into and out of the Sobey's Plaza, Turkstra Lumber, Weeks Home Hardware and the Bulk Barn Plaza on Hamilton Street North. The west side of the BIA includes several large properties that are some of the busiest locations in the core. Access to these businesses and safety will be affected by increased detour traffic. (Someone referred to it as already a 'game of chicken' to enter and exit these plazas).

Mike Field said the city will keep a close eye on bottlenecks and problem areas and will adjust the timing of traffic lights at Dundas Street, White Oaks Blvd., Rockhaven Lane and Parkside to create buffers / lag time for entry and exit to those plazas.

Concern was expressed from the audience that the runway is too short between traffic lights to create openings.

There is no doubt this project will cause delays and inconvenience, but Mike reiterated the city's commitment to work with the BIA and business owners to identify and react to situations as best possible.

Shari Reaume of Turkstra Lumber *is also a BIA board director. Shari inquired about strategies for anticipated road rage*.

Mitigation strategies will be adjusted as necessary. Mike Field recommended contacting local police department to report any issues.

The Q & A portion of the presentation was concluded to allow time for BIA members to brainstorm mitigation and marketing strategies.

Amanda thanked the entire city team for the presentation and for opening the lines of communication with local business owners.

While the delegation from the city prepared to leave, Amanda asked BIA members to review the three questions (on tables and slide) and discuss amongst their tablemates before opening up a group discussion.

1. Brainstorm some ways the BIA can work with you to sustain visits to the downtown during construction.

2. Do you have ideas about marketing or communication programs you would like to see the BIA execute…

   During construction?

   Post construction?

3. Can you suggest slogans/themes or hashtags to encourage downtown visits during construction?

Notes From the Brainstorming Session

2026 Celebration

- Plan to celebrate completion of the project.
- Shut the bridge for a street celebration?
- Run something in the 5 Mill St. parking lot? Mark from Marciano's offered to help with food.
- Have a community-wide sale, 'christen' the new bridge with a ceremony and bottle of champagne.

Share information with other municipalities

- Make connections with the City of Burlington for signage on Waterdown Road.
- Find out what worked for others during similar construction projects.
- Use other BIAs in the city to help communicate.
- Reach out to contractor – do they have any ideas, positive examples to share from their experience on similar projects.

What can the BIA do?

- Create a Construction Project Page / Pop Up Window on the BIA website
  - Share updates / links to city pages
  - Communicate delay times – how long is it going to take to get here?
- Share plans for members' events and programs.
- Create a form on the BIA website to make it easy for BIA member businesses to communicate bottlenecks, safety and congestion issues - the BIA can be central point to funnel information back to the city.
- Work with the city to create sign artwork, communicate issues.
- Share suggested hashtags, slogans, graphic assets for consistent messaging from all businesses.

What can BIA businesses do?

- Get in front of it – start communicating with your customers NOW!
- Provide alternate routes and best ways to get to your business during construction phases – adapt as phases change.
- Advise customers to plan for extra time to get to your business – especially for appointment-based businesses. Ensure you add a brief descriptor blurb to appointment notifications outlining best routes and expected travel times to get to your location.
- Thank your customers for their patience.
- Consider special 'construction offers' – BOGOs, discounts, free appetizer, gift cards. Honour people who made the effort to visit in-person and thank them for their patience. Implement 'construction loyalty' cards.
- Create a construction notification pop-up on your website home page – include 'how to get to MY business' message.
- Share information about your events – tag the BIA – let's create excitement and vibe and support for each other's businesses to amplify the message that Waterdown Village is still open for business.
- Expand your e-comm offerings or ways to get your products and services to customers when it is not convenient for them to get to you.
- Summer 2025 – host large 'Construction Sidewalk Sale'?

Collaboration

- Look after each other.
- Cross-promote – share your neighbour's news. List others as collaborators on social media to make it easy for them to share.
- Create itineraries for your customers – shop here, snack here, don't forget to pick up other necessities here. A trip into the Village is worth the detour especially if you're visiting multiple businesses and ticking many things off your list.
- Become ambassadors for our community as a whole.

Capitalize and rally around strong 'Canadian' sentiment

- Emphasis on shop local – importance of supporting your business community.
- Focus on consumers / clients in our own backyard - appeal to them to support local.
- BIA – 'WE CAN' Campaign – emphasizing what BIA businesses can do to support customers – what makes us different.

Utilize Google Maps, Apple, other digital way finders

- Communicate alternate detour routes.
- User-driven platforms – get people posting about alternate routes.

Potential Hashtags
- It’s worth the detour
- It’s worth the wait
- Wiggle your way to Waterdown

The meeting was adjourned at 8:10 PM following the group discussion.