

New chair named for NDACT

By Marni Walsh

As of this week, the North Dufferin Agricultural and Community Taskforce (NDACT) has a new chairperson at the helm.

The announcement came that Shirley Boxem, chair for the last two years, has stepped down and Alia Jalbert will be assuming the role.

Board members are reportedly "truly pleased that Alia has stepped up to the plate," saying, "she has demonstrated terrific capability in her role on the board thus far."

Brian Bell will continue on as the Vice Chair, and Karren Wallace has also joined the Board.

Ms. Jalbert retired to Honeywood in Mulmur Township in January 2013 at the conclusion of over 28 years of service with the Canadian Armed Forces. She still works part-time as a civilian contractor in Borden assisting with the training of senior Logistics Officers.

"The habit of service is hard to change, so with time on my hands and no posting every two to four years to worry about anymore, I wanted to get involved with local organizations," she told the Shelburne Free Press.

Her first venture into local volunteering was the Honeywood Beef BBQ, where she says she "met several people who steered me towards NDACT."

In November 2014, Alia was accepted to the NDACT Board, and, in addition to attending board meetings helped organize NDACT's participation in the Toronto Green Living Show, and with the Pegram Barnfest.

Shirley Boxem, who also carries out the busy role of Lead Project Manager for Headwaters Communities in Action (HCIA) says it has been an honour to serve as the Chair of NDACT for the past two years.

"The world of Agricultural land protection was quite busy during this time with the various stages of the Coordinated Land Use Review process and all of the supporting activities around it," she says. "I had many wonderful opportunities to connect with like-minded organizations and protection efforts that were happening across the province."

"Of particular note are the many public engagements and connectivity to the public were always enjoyable. NDACT has remained committed to monthly newsletters which provide support to partner organizations and keep our supporters in the loop on current events. We continue to monitor the pulse of all land protection legislation, particularly as it pertains to the lands of North Dufferin."

"Key to that land protection is the Aggregate Resources Act (ARA), which was at the heart of the Highlands Quarry application. Our work on the ARA modifications remains active as that legislation winds through its phases. NDACT remains committed until its mandate is fulfilled."

New Chair Alia Jalbert says NDACT is at a crossroads right now, and if all goes well there will be interesting developments to share this summer.

"The first thing I would like to do is acknowledge the hard work of my predecessor, Shirley Boxem" says Ms. Jalbert. "She has set a high standard and left me with big shoes to fill. NDACT is very appreciative of all her hard work, and pleased to have her remain as a sitting director on the Board."

?Looking ahead the Board sees NDACT, through our branch campaign ?Food & Water First,' getting ready to bring the issue of farmland and source water security to the forefront in the upcoming Provincial election. We cannot cease our vigilance, or children born today will see prime farmland in Ontario disappear in their lifetime: gone to development or other non-food producing exploitation.

?I look forward to working with the Board, and all of our membership, to preserve Ontario's rich farmland and protect the source water that is so vital to all of our well-being.?