

Annapolis County Council's Committee of the Whole Meeting Marilyn Wilkins Presentation – Melvern Square – July 2008

The Melvern Square Elementary School opened in September 1959 as a five-room schoolhouse encompassing 7,040 square feet. The building was vacated as an elementary school on June 30, 1987.

On July 4, 1988 The Melvern Square & Area Community Association (1988) entered into an Agreement with The Municipality of the County of Annapolis whereby the Municipality conveyed to the Association the former Melvern Square Elementary School Property.

The Association agreed to re-convey the property to the Municipality in the event that:

- The property was not used for community purposes for a period of six consecutive months;
- The property was not at any time kept in a good state of repair;
- The community determined that the property was no longer of any value;
- The property became used primarily for purposes other than community purposes.

The Agreement was for a term of twenty years and therefore as of July 4, 2008 the Agreement ceased to have any force or effect.

The Melvern Square & Area Community Association established its mandate 'to promote the use of community properties for purposes of recreation, culture, education and projects of community interest for the benefit of the residents of Melvern Square and surrounding areas'. The Association serves a diverse population made up of families in the agricultural, military, educational and service sectors. We believe it is very important for area residents to spend time together in order that a true sense of belonging to a community is established. Recreational facilities are a wonderful venue to meet neighbours and share the notion that we are living in a community immensely rich in human and natural resources.

This Community Centre is the focal point for social gatherings throughout the year as well as daily and weekly activities with the rental of the rooms. Nearly everyone in the community has spent many happy hours at this Centre, and has offered their time and money to keep it operating. It has been a large task to keep the Centre open, but it has truly been a labour of love. Many of our residents attended school here, and their children and grandchildren still enjoy using the building to this day!

That is the reason we are here to celebrate “Community Working Together” because without that component this building would have reverted to the Municipality a long time ago.

Fundraising activities over the years have included:

- Children’s Dances, Variety Shows, Mother’s Day Suppers, Harvest Festival where giant pumpkins are weighed in and children and adults get to try out their tractor skills, Bean Suppers, Children’s Christmas Tea Parties; Christmas Teas; Chinese Auctions; Pancake Breakfasts and Canada Day Celebrations; Music Nights with the Annapolis East String Band; Easter Teas. I would like to tell you about the Canada Day celebrations – registration for the children’s parade starts at 11:15 a.m. at the Melvern Baptist Church. The children parade down Stronach Mtn. Road to here – parents, grandparents and community members line the roads. We present a loonie to every child who participates in the parade and Canada Day prizes for the winners in the three separate categories of Most Comical, Most Original and Most Patriotic. After we sing O’Canada and raise the flag, we enjoy a beautiful cake made by Catherine Mailman, a BBQed hot dog and beverage and then a terrifically fun soap slide. Alden and Linda Neiley come year and year with the tanker from the Kingston District Fire Department to ensure that the community children have a memorable Canada Day. This celebration has happened in excess of 20 years and this year we had over 150 people in attendance.

Building Improvements:

- Installed a modern kitchen; bathrooms were renovated; four classrooms were renovated into two large rooms; dance floor installed; removal of underground oil tank; wheelchair ramp and rail; new electrical panel; new windows in the front and rear (rear window project - \$3,000 from Health Promotion and Protection and \$500 from Annapolis County – the project cost \$11,056.55) of the building; exterior painting several times; white floor tiling throughout most of the building; interior painting several times; installed new front door and overhang; a new furnace and hot water heater installed; programmable thermostats put in all rooms; outside motion sensor lights; improve lighting at side and rear of the building; parking lot enlarged in the rear; new kitchen window installed; installed new lighting in the hallway;
- Two new stoves were purchased; two new refrigerators are on order; electrical heater installed in the kitchen; 30 VenRez chairs were purchased (\$1,030); serving trolley and 120 percolator; purchased ten eight foot long VenRez tables.
- I have highlighted some of our renovations and purchases but cannot possibly list all the small individual jobs that have taken place the past

twenty years like the frustration of repairing a leaky roof or cleaning the furnace room after frightened birds became trapped.

Today our wonderful building is the meeting place for many community groups including the Annapolis Valley Duplicate Bridge Club, the Wilmot Garden Club, Larry MacLellan and his martial arts club, West Kings Twirlers, the Artist Circle; TOPS Chapter 4612 and DanXpress.

Rent is charged at a rate of \$7.00 per hour, \$35.00/half day or \$55.00 for a full day. Community members are able to use the hall at no cost for wedding showers, birthday parties, going away parties, meetings, etc.

Starting in 2002 and continuing since then, Melvern Square & Area Community Association has awarded an area student graduating from Middleton Regional High School \$200.00 towards their continuing education.

The former Melvern Square Community Hall is located across the street and is now being adaptively re-used and renovated to being a residential dwelling. That community hall was operated for many years by committed volunteers.

When the Association sold that property (as you are aware we went through the re-zoning process), a portion of the land was retained. On that retained land is a pond that is used as a skating rink in the winter time by community children. There is a warming hut and electricity is providing for night skating.

Community Partnership with groups has been so helpful over the years – A Co-ed soccer team is mowing the lawns this year in exchange for the use of the back soccer field. Wilmot Garden Club maintains the front garden in exchange for use of a meeting room once a month. The West Kings Twirlers purchased and donated to the hall 6 six feet long permapreen tables. The Municipality of the County of Annapolis gave a grant of \$2,000 to assist with hall improvements in preparation for celebrations of 400 years of living and working together. \$1,250 was received for our 2005 celebration. We have also received three \$500 grants from the County under the Recreational Grant program. The IOOF donated dishes. Spurr Bros have snow plowed the driveways at no cost to the Association for twenty years. For nineteen years, plastic was put up over the rear windows to conserve heat – a Spurr Bros. tractor was used a good many times to get that job done. Fortunately, new windows were installed last year so that fall and spring job is a one of the past. Solicitor Chris Parker has been very supportive of the Centre over the years. A recent example was when we sold the old community hall, it had to be converted to the next registry system, a new deed had to be prepared for the pond land and Deeds, etc. had to be prepared. Mr. Parker not only waived his fees, he waived out of pocket expenses. Another example of people contributing when and where they can. Our stage was renovated by the West King Twirlers and the overhead screen was donated and installed by the Wilmot Garden Club. On October 17th last year employees from

the Nova Scotia Community College arrived on mass and spent the day painting this room – it certainly saved many volunteer hours.

Community Volunteers – We would not be able to accomplish anything without the willingness of each and every one of the volunteers who come forward to help with building maintenance, serve at teas, wash dishes at suppers, provide foot donations, prepare food, pay to attend activities here and support the Association throughout the year. It is a rare person who says no to a call for help with an event or a donation of a food item for a supper. As a result it is easy to keep the momentum going forward because it is not a handful of tired and worn out volunteers doing all the work. Having said that however it should be noted that there are a dedicated group of leaders who keep the momentum going. We very much appreciate any support that is given the hall.

We cannot possible name all of our volunteers who have worked so hard and willingly but we need to tell you about David VanBuskirk. When the Association took over the building in 1988 there was great enthusiasm but over time, which is often the case, the enthusiasm ebbed as only a few volunteers stayed committed to the hard work of keeping the building open. During the ebb period from about 1992 – 1998, one individual stayed on the course and keeping this building open. That person was David VanBuskirk. David lived across the road and collected the rent from the two lone renters at the time, he did whatever maintenance work needed to be done and he watched carefully from his home that the building was not mistreated in any way. David VanBuskirk died suddenly at a young age in November 2004. His death was a terrible shock. David was a big man with an even bigger heart who is still missed to this day and the community will be forever grateful to him.

In 1998 the Municipality of Annapolis County advised that community halls would not be exempting from paying taxes unless the governing body was in good standing with the Registrar or Joint Stocks which meant recorded annual meetings, financial statements, etc. It was time to put up or walk away. At a meeting in March 1998, a commitment was made to ensure that the building was maintained for the benefit of the community and the Melvern Square & Area Association has not looked back. We are very proud of our accomplishments and we are thankful to have the opportunity to showcase our history today to Council and community members.

We would like to tell you about an exciting happening – We have a website – www.melvernsquare.ca Lesley Carter who lives in Beaverbank was visiting during the 2007 Canada Day celebrations and offered her services to design a webpage to highlight and showcase what is happening in the community of Melvern Square. I would like to share an email to me from Lesley. (the don't roll your eyes one – haha) The site was launched at our 2008 Canada Day celebrations. A sincere thank you to Lesley for her willingness to drag us into the 21st century – she did a terrific job!

We would like to thank the Melvern Square United Baptist Church Women for preparing lunch today for us, Catherine Mailman has designed and made a wonderful cake for us to enjoy and to Amy Spurr for sharing her talent with us. Thank you again for coming to Melvern Square today.