

DRA Board Meeting Minutes

February 18, 2025

Present: Sandra Severs (President), Doug Boyd, Mano Majumdar, Dawn Moorehead, Neil McKinnon

Neighbourhood Engagement Coordinator: James Davis

Call to Order, Welcome, Land Acknowledgement and Approval of Agenda

Councillor Update: Councillor Thompson was not able to join the meeting this evening because of a prior commitment. Sandra provided information from Councillor Thompson saying that the OCP Review report from staff is expected to go before Council within the next few weeks. Although there won't be a formal engagement process in response to the report, members are encouraged to read the report carefully and send comments to Mayor and Council.

The 900 block of Pandora meeting was held the morning of February 18th with Councillor Thompson and Sandra in attendance. Work is underway on the revitalization project of the block with a cost estimate being determined. Nathan Medd, CEO of the Conservatory and Julian Daly, CEO of Our Place, are sharing the vision for the space to groups in the city.

Dowler Place has opened with 12 people currently living there. There have been no problems with the neighbourhood and residents are getting support from SOLID staff.

Concern was expressed about the ongoing problems on the block – insufficient shelter spaces, lack of places for people to shelter outside given the fencing, fires being lit for people to stay warm, no laundromat for people to dry their clothes, biowastes because of a lack of washroom facilities. With challenges to the provincial budget apparent, there are few encouraging signs to suggest that problems will be solved in the near future.

Executive Report: Sandra (report attached)

Sandra will confirm Mayor Alto's attendance at next month's Board meeting.

Standing Committee Reports – Q and A

- **Urban Livability Committee (ULC) and Urban Ecology and Agriculture Committee (UEC):** Michael (report attached)
March 15- Pandora Breakfast
- **Climate Solutions Committee:** Dawn (report attached)
The Climate Solutions Committee has been successful in their application for a grant from the CRD to launch their Dish Library.
- **Communications and Membership Committee (CMC):** Doug (report attached)
Mano has agreed to become chair of the Communications and Membership Committee.

- **Governance Committee:** Jeremy (no report)
The Governance Committee is working on gathering documents to apply for Charitable Status. Soleil Heaney will be taking the lead in putting together the application.
- **Land Use Committee (LUC):** Jordan (report attached)
Neil was present at the pre-CALUC meeting for 1520 Blanshard. The proposal for a 5 storey platform and 30 storey building received moderate pushback from the audience.
- **Community Engagement Committee (CEC):** James (report attached)
Suggestions for film night are encouraged.
James will connect Mano to Jim at Odd Fellows to discuss membership.

External Meeting Reports – Q and A

- **Victoria Community Association Network (VCAN):** Sandra (no report)
- **900 Pandora Good Neighbour Group:** Sandra (no report)

Other Business

AGM Planning - The AGM is tentatively planned for Tuesday, April 15. The Board brainstormed possible speakers for that event.

Preliminary Budget conversation – The Board looked at a draft of the 2025 budget which will come back in March for approval before going to the AGM in April. Sandra will confirm with city staff that our revenue is secure for 2025.

Meeting concludes

Next Meeting: Tuesday, March 18, 2025 at theDock. Time to be confirmed.

Executive Committee – February 2025

Cedar Fundraising – Sandra and James met with Kim from Cedar Fundraising and have finalized the contract. A first meeting has been held and work is now underway.

DVBA Good Neighbour Group- Michael and Sandra attended a meeting at the Downtown Victoria Business Association's offices in Millie's Lane. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss ways in which residents and retailers could work more effectively together to make the Downtown an attractive place to do business. Proposals included street beautification and scrub ups. More information will be forthcoming as plans are finalized.

VCAN- The January meeting of VCAN focused on the wrap up of the first stage of the tree mapping project. An application for a second round of My Great Neighbourhood Grant funding is under consideration at the moment. This will depend on the capacity of volunteers to manage a second stage of the project. There was also discussion about asking that tree protection for Garry Oaks be included in the upcoming OCP review.

Community Safety and Wellbeing Plan – The final planning meeting of the Leaders Advisory Group has been completed with final revisions being made to the proposed plan. Members of the advisory committee attended a presentation by Muflehun, a Washington, D.C. based non-profit which analyzes Stats Canada, police and other data sources to produce a description of the preventative and risk factors associated with increases in violence, racism and acts of terrorism. The purpose of the data collection is to track over time how preventative and risk factors change and to strategize ways in which risk can be mitigated and prevention strengthened. Muflehun's analysis will be included as part of the report to Council.

Upcoming Meetings – Our March meeting will be an in-person meeting with Mayor Alto. The time for the start will be confirmed closer to the meeting date as Mayor Alto will be meeting with the police board just prior to our meeting.

Our **AGM** is scheduled for the 3rd Tuesday of April at the Dock. Ideas for speakers are welcome.

**Urban Livability Committee
and
Urban Ecology and Agriculture Committee
Reports**

Victoria Downtown Residents Association

February 18, 2025

Urban Livability Committee Report

Pandora Breakfast: Saturday, February 01, 2025

We had a fantastic turnout at the Pandora Breakfast, with seven community volunteers participating in the event. These volunteers assisted with set-up, breakfast distribution, tear-down, and baking of delicious food for everyone.

It was wonderful to see the community come together for this occasion.

As part of this event, we launched a pilot project in partnership with the Victoria Coolkit (as part of their serve and share program) to use reusable dishes, cutlery, and mugs. This initiative aimed to help reduce waste at events like ours.

We hope initiatives like this encourage community members to realize that contributing a little bit of their time can make a difference, especially during a busy period when many residents have hectic schedules.

Looking ahead, our next and final Pandora Breakfast event for the winter season is scheduled for Saturday, March 15, 2025, from 9 AM to 11 AM. We encourage Downtown Board members to join us in the morning to meet our dedicated volunteers and connect with our neighbours on Pandora Ave.



Humans of Downtown Victoria

As mentioned in the January 2025 report, the Urban Livability Committee is working on a "Humans of Downtown" photo and story project. This initiative aims to highlight the vibrant lives of Downtown residents, local business owners, and other community members, celebrating the diverse stories that make our neighbourhood unique.

To kick off this project, the committee has chosen to feature Michael, the chair of the Urban Livability Committee, along with his partner Kris. They will be the first subjects of this initiative, showcasing not only their personal stories but also their connections to the Downtown community. A committee member will conduct an interview with Michael and Kris, capturing their experiences and insights, while also taking a photograph to accompany the write-up. This content will be shared in the Victoria Downtown Residents Association's newsletter, marking an engaging start to the project.

In addition to the debut feature, other committee members will actively reach out to fellow Downtown residents and small business owners. By gathering stories and perspectives from various community members, the Urban Livability Committee hopes to weave together a rich tapestry of narratives that reflect the cultural fabric of Downtown Victoria. This project invites everyone to participate and share what makes Downtown Victoria special, fostering a deeper sense of community and connection among all who live and work here. If you are interested in getting involved with the project, either by taking photos and collecting stories or being featured as a Human of Downtown, please contact Michael at urbanlivability@victoriadra.ca.

Urban Ecology and Agriculture Committee

Yates Street Community Garden

Waitlist Count: 281

Updates

The Yates Street Community Garden is preparing for registration for the 2025 growing season. We are also planning some exciting workshops for this year. Ideas include hosting a tea workshop at the garden and partnering with local small businesses to offer gardening workshops focused on urban living. These workshops will cater to people who live in condominiums or have limited space, among other themes.

Seedy Saturday - February 15, 2025

Overview

The Yates Street Community Garden (YSCG) participated in the Victoria Seedy Saturday event, which turned out to be a tremendous success, with an impressive turnout of 1,893 attendees. Feedback from participants indicates that the atmosphere was vibrant and community-oriented, fostering connections among visitors who expressed gratitude for the event.

Participant Engagement

Over 300 individuals completed the participant survey, providing valuable insights. The YSCG booth featured Laura from the steering committee and Janet, a dedicated garden volunteer, who engaged with attendees. They showcased a photo display prepared by Laura and provided information about two key initiatives:

1. Second Downtown Community Garden Project: The second community garden project generated considerable interest, with many visitors eager to learn more about its development.

2. March 1st Launch of the "Dish Library": A poster and leaflets were available to promote this initiative, which received positive responses from attendees, highlighting a community desire for such resources.

Additionally, they distributed free pollinator seed packets, which were warmly received.

Community Feedback:

Conversations with visitors revealed a strong desire for more green spaces and community gardening opportunities in the city. Many emphasized the importance of supporting local initiatives, their passion for growing food, and proposed ideas for utilizing underutilized urban spaces for gardening.

Both Laura and Janet engaged with a diverse group of participants, including residents from Northern Ontario, Vermont, Vancouver Island, and the interior of British Columbia, further illustrating the event's appeal beyond our local community.

Support for Community Initiatives:

The overall sentiment reinforced the importance of community gardens and highlighted concerns regarding the diminishing green space amidst ongoing development in the city. Several attendees voiced that new real estate projects should incorporate more green elements, such as vertical gardens and rooftop spaces.

Particular interest was shown in the View Street Parkade community garden project, with attendees keen to understand the barriers that may impede its progress.

Local Perspectives:

Laura and Janet encountered city residents who currently lack access to gardening spaces and expressed frustration with long waitlists. Additionally, local individuals shared their enjoyment of walking by the garden and appreciating the floral displays in the boulevards. Numerous inquiries about potential garden tours and open garden hours were also noted, and they mentioned their annual effort to provide these during Pollinator Week in June.

Conclusion:

The day was filled with positive energy and enthusiasm for the upcoming gardening season. It was heartening to see support for our initiatives and the excitement surrounding community engagement in gardening. We are confident that the feedback from vendors and attendees will continue to reflect the success of the event and the ongoing need for vibrant community spaces.



Urban Food Table

The Chair of the Urban Ecology and Agriculture Committee, Michael, has begun to attend the Urban Food Table meetings. The Victoria Urban Food Table (UFT) is a volunteer advisory committee dedicated to supporting the Victoria City Council in food security policy and decision-making. The committee is made up of professionals from various sectors of the food system, including urban and rural farmers, local business owners, educators, representatives from community associations and gardens, health workers, dietitians, and staff from not-for-profit organizations focused on environmental stewardship.

The UFT's strategic goals emphasize urban farming, community and home gardening, food equity, soil restoration, land and biodiversity stewardship, waste reduction and composting, pollinator support, First Nations reconciliation, and the celebration of local food. The committee meets on the second Wednesday of each month and is involved in organizing community events, such as Seedy Saturday.

By bringing together organizations and individuals working in diverse areas of food systems, the UFT aims to share information, align efforts, and develop effective food security targets, policies, and programs for the City of Victoria.

To learn more about the UFT, please visit their website by clicking [here](#).

CLIMATE SOLUTIONS COMMITTEE FEBRUARY 2025 REPORT

“VICTORIA” COOLKIT

THE DISH LIBRARY

The Dish Library launched February 1 at the ULC Breakfast on Pandora. Yes, we finally decided on a name for this project, whereby locals can freely borrow place settings and cloth napkins for their gatherings. The Zero Waste Emporium has generously offered to host the project at their store on Douglas Street. Coolkit volunteers will connect with local organizations inviting them to take advantage of the service. This project can potentially divert 131,400 items annually from the landfill. The behaviours we will influence include needless consumerism and the use of disposable and/or plastic/fossil fuel generated items - fostering long-term behavioural change through consumer responsibility.



Success: Application submitted to CRD’s Rethink Waste Community Grant Program in January

The Rethink Waste Community Grant application was approved for \$5,000, the maximum. The funds are being spent to increase The Dish Library place settings from 30 to 60; hold a Rethink Waste Event; obtain shelving and storage for the place settings; and provide a small offset to Zero Waste Emporium for dish detergent, increased utilities, and wear and tear/venue rental.

Rethink Waste Community Event March 1

Rising costs, threatened tariffs, what to do?

Reduce, Refuse, Reuse. And if that's not possible - Recycle!

On March 1, 2025 community members will come together to learn, celebrate, and share.

There will be three tents featuring lots of information:

- * The Dish Library
- * MURB recycling
- * Local venues offering pre-owned clothing, furniture, craft supplies, tool libraries
- * Repair cafes
- * DIY mending, patching, embroidery
- * Circular economy
- * "Victoria" Coolkit
- * Alternatives, e.g. rags instead of paper towels
- * CRD/Greater Victoria Public Library Climate Kits - electrification and efficiency

NOW, MORE THAN EVER: A TIME FOR ACTION!

Come, learn, and participate in the circular economy
that strengthens our community



Support: Launch of "The Dish Library"

Participate: Games, survey, and information exchange

Enjoy: Free food and cider (while supplies last)

Play: Games and prizes

March 1, Noon-2 pm

**At the corner of Douglas Street and Herald
In front of the Zero Waste Emporium**



CRD
RETHINK WASTE COMMUNITY GRANT

Climate Solutions Committee

The February committee meeting was cancelled. We're seeking a breakthrough so we can move forward with the "cool roof" project.

Communications and Membership Committee Report – February 2025

Update on Committee activities since the January 2025 report:

- **Newsletter / Other Communications to Members:**
 - The February newsletter was issued on February 4. Statistics from Mail Chimp indicate that it was opened by 44.6% of subscribers.
 - The most viewed items were the Land Use Development Tracker and the article on Community Emergency Preparedness.
- **Web site**
 - We continue to add posts to the News page and add events to the Events page of our website.
 - 320 site sessions for January (up 39% from the previous month). The most viewed posts were the Emergency Preparedness Workshop, the Sidewalk Talks page, and the Queer Open Stage post.
- **Social Media**
 - The number of posts over the past month, and the current number of followers are:
 - Facebook - 1 post, 1071 followers
 - Instagram - 0 posts, 1177 followers
 - Bluesky – 1 post – 15 followers
 - At the February Board meeting, the Board decided that the DRA will pilot engagement activity on Bluesky while maintaining Meta (Facebook and Instagram) presence and will conduct a member survey (through email) after the initial pilot to seek member opinion.
- **Other**
 - 2 new members since the last report. As a note, we send welcome letters to all new members inviting them to become involved with DRA activities, and, where applicable, to become an ambassador for posting notices of our events in the buildings where they live.
 - 4 new newsletter subscribers since the last report

Submitted by
Doug Boyd
Chair, Communications and Membership Committee

Downtown Residents Associate Land Use Committee (DRA LUC)

Monthly Board Report: February 2025

Development Tracker: <https://tender.victoria.ca/WebApps/OurCity/Prospero/Search.aspx>

Upcoming CALUCs				
Project	Description	Developer	Location	Time
Letters being drafted				
Project	Description	Developer	Date meeting held	Target for Letter
1520 Blanshard St	Density: 7.8 Height: 30 storey	Reliance	Hotel Rialto	Feb 25
Duck building	Add two storeys to hotel	Chard	October 9 th	Jan 31 overdue
Liquor Licence Application Under Review				
Property/Business	Description/Ask	Preliminary feedback		Target for Letter
Axe and Grind 910 Government	Add liquor licence to axe throwing (60 to 110 load)			Feb 18
Downbeat Event Centre 1325 Government	210 persons 9am to 2am Monday to Sunday			Feb 18

Miscellaneous:

- (Jeremy) Book Club for March 2025 Walkable City: How Downtown Can Save America, One Step at a Time
- LUC Meeting Feb 24 – hybrid, meeting room at the Dock and Zoom.

Executive Director Report - February 2025

Updates since last board meeting:

Emergency Preparedness - The workshops we have been facilitating for two Downtown stratas (Regents Park and Yates on Yates/Vivid at the Yates) wrapped up earlier this month and the neighbour action groups that were formed by residents continue to work on their projects. The DRA will continue to support them over the coming months and we will schedule in-person check-ins in 3 and 6 months respectively. We have submitted a My Great Neighbourhood Grant application in support of offering the program to three additional buildings later this year.

Outdoor Film Night - We plan to hold the first of two films nights that we received funding from the OUR DWTN Ideas Fund for on April 22nd (Earth Day) under the Johnson Street Bridge and are asking for suggestions from the community regarding environmental films they would like to see screened.

Upcoming events:

Queer Open Stage - The February event is happening on Wednesday, February 19th.

Administrative changes:

James has been added to our Coast Capital account as a signer and will be taking over the task of initiating payments. Board members who have expenses to claim should send receipts to James and copy Doug. James also has access to our Societies Online account and will be taking over filing our annual report and other related administrative tasks.