

DRA Board Meeting Minutes

February 20, 2024

Location: ZOOM

Time: 5:30 p.m.

Present: Sandra Severs (President), Dawn Moorhead, Jeremy Zhao, Michael Demakiling, Dianne Flood, Sherry Lee

City Council Liaison: Dave Thompson

DRA Neighbourhood Engagement Coordinator: James Davis

DRA Members: Manosij Majumdar, Furkan Küçükdurmaz

5:30 p.m. Call to Order, Welcome, Land Acknowledgement and Approval of Agenda

5:35 p.m. Councillor Update: Dave Thompson

Councillor Thompson provided following updates:

- City of Victoria budget will move forward and is expected for final adoption in March/April 2024.
- Feb 22, 2024 Council hearing:
 - Public hearing about 937 View St.: Update from proponent will be posted on website ASAP.
 - Forged Axe Throwing liquor license: DRA provided letter which presented potential concerns.
 - Waste collection in Downtown: currently several contractors are responsible for picking up various types of waste. This traffic in waste retrieval creates noise issues in early mornings. City is considering consolidating contract to reduced number of contractors to reduce early morning traffic and noise.
- OCP review: City will begin conducting community engagement in early March until Fall.
 - Some options are currently under review, which range from upzoning in specific areas around urban and transit centres, to upzone entire city.
 - A new requirement is being considered for City of Victoria is to review and revise OCP every 5 years. Under current policy the refreshed OCP will remain in use for planning until 2050.
 - Board member (Dianne) inquired about whether OCP process (rather than the plan itself) will also undergo review and consultation.
 - Board member inquired whether the CALUC process was being reviewed/reconsidered and whether that will be a part of the OCP review
 - The possibility of further education for CALUCs in light of changes to the OCP was also raised
- ACTION: Councillor Thompson will provide update to plan regarding community associations funding.

6:10 p.m. Executive Report: Sandra (report attached)

- ACTION: Sandra to update Executive Report to reflect OCP engagement session participation statistics.

6:05 p.m. Standing Committee Reports – Q and A

- **Urban Livability Committee (ULC) and Urban Ecology and Agriculture Committee (UEC):** Michael/Colby (report attached)
James urges city to provide more public information on timeline in addressing land-use applications (ie. Parking garage garden) and more collaboration in reviewing these applications.
- **Communications and Membership Committee (CMC):** Doug (no report)
- **Governance Committee:** Dianne (report attached)
ACTION: relevant board members will develop annual reports for AGM.
- **Land Use Committee (LUC):** Ian/Jordan (no report)
- **Community Engagement Committee (CEC):** James (report attached)
ACTION: James & Michael to resubmit report to include additional activities.

6:25 p.m. External Meeting Reports – Q and A

- **Victoria Community Association Network (VCAN):** Sandra/Ian (report attached)
- **900 Pandora Good Neighbour Group:** Sandra (report attached)
Note: monthly meeting takes place morning of 3rd Tuesday. January meeting is reflected in attached report. Sandra provided update February meeting, incl. presentation by Public Health officer on opioid use. Board also discussed planning for warming centres and storage for belongings such as tents.
- **Greater Victoria Harbour Authority Community Liaison Committee:**
Doug (no report)

6:30 p.m. Other Business

- Board discussed planning toward the April AGM and development of potential financial policy.

7:30 p.m. Meeting concludes

Next Meeting: Tuesday, March 19, 2024, at 5:30pm

Executive Committee Report – February 2024

OCP Review – A successful community engagement process was held at the Victoria Event Centre on January 31st with 60 residents present to discuss the future direction of the OCP. Work is now underway to integrate the learnings of the January event with the results of the residents' survey which closed on February 20th. Nearly 300 survey responses were received by Wiser Projects.

In addition, the February 8th Committee of the Whole meeting provides the most up-to-date summary of staff recommendations for the OCP review. The video feed of the February COTW meeting can be accessed at: <https://pub-victoria.escribemeetings.com/Meeting.aspx?Id=350f9c65-6f3e-4dc3-bc43-fa3f881b35d9&Agenda=Merged&lang=English&Item=13&Tab=attachments> Also included are the draft documents which form the basis of the staff report and outline the directions being proposed for the city.

Wiser Projects is reviewing the notes from the community engagement, gathering data from the surveys, and assessing the material discussed at Committee of the Whole. Wiser will be making recommendations and anticipate having a draft report in the next month which will be presented to the Board for review. Once the report has been finalized, a strategy for sharing it with Mayor and Council will be determined.

For your reflection- An interesting article by Frances Bula, entitled “How to build a lot of housing that isn’t ugly” appeared in the Globe and Mail this week. There is a link attached. Also attached is a link to an interesting project which connects residents in multi-unit buildings. Check it out if you have time.

<https://globe2go.pressreader.com/article/281646785061334>

<https://www.heyneighbourcollective.ca>

Track It Forward- As we develop organizational capacity, one of the important items we need to start tracking is the number of volunteer hours members of the Board are committing to the work of the organization. Doug has found a website called trackitforward.com which will enable us to account for volunteer hours. As we move towards getting charitable status and therefore becoming eligible for a wider range of grants, being able to estimate the number of hours volunteers commit to this organization will be helpful. When Doug returns from holidays, he will be in touch with Board members to ask them to roughly track the hours they spend and record it.

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

Victoria Downtown Residents Association

February 20, 2024

Updates

Urban Livability Committee

Breakfast Club Pilot Project Update – Saturday, January 20, 2024

The Urban Livability Committee (ULC) and the Neighbourhood Solidarity with Unhoused Neighbours (NSUN) recently organized a Breakfast Club event on Saturday, January 20, 2024. The event was a great success, and we distributed 60 breakfast wraps and 60 freshly baked pumpkin muffins and served hot tea and hot chocolate. This pilot project's primary objective was to unite the community and encourage them to support one another. Since the pilot project was a success, the ULC and NSUN have decided to hold another one on Saturday, February 24, 2024, from 7 AM to 12 PM. The food will be distributed at Harris Green Park in front of Save-On-Foods from 10 AM to 12 PM.

Urban Ecology and Agriculture Committee

Yates Street Community Garden

Number of people on the waitlist (as of February 19, 2024): **273**

Garden Registrations

Garden registrations are now happening at the YSCG. The deadline for registration is March 7th.

An Increase in Demand for Public Use of the YSCG

The YSCG has seen an increase in demand from residents who wish to use the garden. While the committee is considering offering public use of the garden, they are aware of certain challenges. As a result, they have agreed that anyone using the garden should undergo a safety orientation, which will differ from the usual orientation for new gardeners. The Steering Committee plans to develop and implement a pilot project to address the growing demand for public green space at YSCG.

Expanding events/programs for Children at the YSCG

Last year, a YSCG volunteer collaborated with daycares to invite children to visit the garden during spring/summer. This effort was successful, and the volunteer wants to continue and expand on it. They have met with the Victoria Public Library to explore potential collaborations.

Blossom Your Pride

The YSCG Steering Committee aims to expand the Blossom Your Pride event for the upcoming summer Pride event. They plan to work with the Urban Livability Committee to make the event fun and engaging.

Victoria Coolkit Group (Downtown)

The group is meeting regularly in 2024 on the third Saturday of each month. Current projects include Strata Retrofits and supporting the creation of a second

downtown community garden. In response to Dave Thompson's question and the recent council motion, the group is submitting a paper proposing a number of downtown/Harris Green sites that would accelerate the network of greener, quieter, low-traffic streets. At the March meeting, we will host a presentation by Ryan Senechal, urban forester. Due to crop loss, we are unable to source the columnar apple trees for a balcony/patio pilot project, but expect/hope the farmer will have better luck with his 2024 grafting.

GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE REPORT February 2024

1. 2023 AGM: April 9, 2024 at the Dock. Doors will open at 6:00, the meeting will start at 6:30. All Board members are requested to attend if possible.

Speaker: Mayor Alto is still to be confirmed as the guest speaker.

Action: Sandra to confirm.

Agenda: To be set by the Executive in accordance with the Constitution and Bylaws and will include:

- *2023 financial statements and 2024 budget:* **Action:** Doug to prepare and circulate by in advance of the AGM, for the required Board approval.
- *Annual Report:* to reflect the DRA's more complex nature and to enhance our reputation to external organizations, a formal annual report will be prepared. The January 4, 2024 letter to council will be used as a starting point. **Action:** Sandra, Dianne and James to undertake this.
- *Committee Reports:* All Committee chairs are required by the bylaws to provide a report about last year's activities, in advance of the AGM. **Action:** All committee chairs are to please provide their respective reports by no later than March 15, so that information can be incorporated into the Annual Report as may be required. Doug and James will post on our website, in advance of the AGM.

Board elections:

Sandra, Michael and Dianne's terms all expire this year. Sandra is willing to commit to a second term, Dianne has completed two terms and will not be running again, and Michael's intentions are, as yet, unconfirmed. Max needs to stand for election. **Action:** Michael and Max to confirm they will stand for election.

Seven Board members have terms yet to be completed: Colby, Dawn, Doug, Ian, Jeremy, Jordan and Sherry.

Assuming Sandra, Michael and Max all stand for election, with the maximum of 13 Board members, three spots will be open. Our by-law change last year now permits election of a small number of non-resident Board members, if desired.

The April Board meeting will be held immediately after the AGM to elect the Executive and appoint Committee chairs. *Action:* Current Committee chairs and other Board members are asked to consider and confirm if they are willing to continue and/or take on a new role. The Community Engagement Chair and the Governance chairs will be vacant.

2. Any Special Resolutions need to be sent to all DRA members in advance of the AGM. *Action:* All Board members are asked to please advise if you are aware of any special resolutions that may be needed.

3. Orientation and training for new Board members: In anticipation of new Board members being elected, an orientation and training session is proposed to be held at a mutually convenient date, as early as possible.

4. Financial Policy: With the substantial increase in funding, clear authority on spending by committees, including the Executive, need to be established. *Action:* Dianne will draft a policy for the Committee to present for consideration at the March Board meeting. Other Board members are encouraged to provide their thoughts on this to Dianne.

5. Charitable status: Preliminary investigations indicate two benefits to obtaining charitable status:

- having charitable status means other charitable organizations (eg. the Victoria Foundation) can more easily provide funding to the DRA. Although the current CRA limitation on such organizations funding only charitable organizations is currently being revised, that limitation may still be a barrier in some cases.
- having charitable status means the DRA would have the ability to give charitable receipts to persons who may wish to donate money to the DRA

Action: Dianne and Doug will work to advance this initiative. As part of that, a policy will be developed to guide when and to whom donations may be made to ensure that the donations meet with Board approval and consistency in approach.

Submitted by
Dianne Flood
Governance Committee Chair

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT COMMITTEE REPORT – FEBRUARY 2023

1. Recent activities:

Queer Open Stage: Three open stage events have taken place since the November report. The December event took place on the second Thursday of the month (one week earlier than normal) so as not to conflict with holiday events. There were 28 people in attendance and singer-songwriter Skye Alexander was the featured performer. The January event was postponed by one week due to weather and took place on January 25th. It was attended by 30 people and stand-up comic Roz was the featured performer. The most recent open stage was on February 15th and it had 36 attendees.

2. Upcoming activities:

Queer Open Stage: The next open stage will take place on Thursday, March 14th and the featured performer will be singer-songwriter Opal Dar.

Black History Month Books: We recently purchased a number of second-hand books by Black Canadian writers and will be distributing them to Little Free Libraries in the neighbourhood over the coming days.

3. Welcome package:

Copies of our *Welcome to the Neighbourhood* brochure (with DRA fridge magnets attached) were dropped off for Mod on Cook Street in December and for The Pearl Residences on Store Street in January and will be continue to be distributed to residents as they move in over the coming weeks and months. We have also made inquiries with Nest on Yates Street and the Townline project at 975-983 Pandora Avenue.

Submitted by: James Davis, Neighbourhood Engagement Coordinator

Victoria Community Association Network (VCAN) – February 2024

The January meeting of VCAN focused on the upcoming OCP 10-year review and whether the engagement process as outlined by the city was going to make space for concerns being expressed by CALUCS about their ongoing role in responding to development applications. A decision was made to invite members of Council to meet with VCAN to try and gain clarity about its anticipated changing role and how VCAN concerns might be addressed. Discussion about provincial legislation on housing targets was also a topic of conversation.

There was considerable discussion about the City's acquisition of the land at the corner of Blanshard and Fisgard with a variety of opinions about the wisdom of this acquisition.

900 Pandora Ave. Good Neighbour Group - February 2024

Complex Care –

Curtis Hart, Operations Manager from Island Health, provided an educational unit on Complex Care to members of the 900 group. Hart pointed out that “complex care” does not refer to the complexity of an individual’s needs. The complexity actually refers to the government systems at play in providing health care. There are currently apartment suites and outreach care being provided in Victoria/Saanich. An additional 40 beds will be coming on-stream this summer to be managed by non-profits.

Encampments-

The Office of the Federal Housing Advocate released their report on the situations of encampments across the country. You can find the report here:

<https://www.housingchrc.ca/en/publications/upholding-dignity-and-human-rights-federal-housing-advocates-review-homeless>

The Canadian Urban Institute hosted an on-line event called “City Talk” this past week also focused on the encampment and shelter crises in the country. The video recording of that event will be released this week and can be accessed at: <https://canurb.org/citytalk-canada/>

Daytime warming centre-

The City announced the opening of a daytime warming centre at 930 Pandora which opened on February 1st and will run until the end of March. From the Times-Colonist:

<https://www.timescolonist.com/local-news/city-of-victoria-opens-daytime-warming-centre-on-pandora-avenue-8214495>

The City of Victoria is funding a new daytime warming centre through the end of March.

The centre opened Feb. 1 at 926 Pandora Ave., a city-owned building slated for development, and is open daily from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m.

Mayor Marianne Alto said the warming centre, with capacity for 40 people at a time, is meant to address a lack of daytime spaces where people who are unhoused can go inside and escape winter. Most shelters close early in the morning and while some people have access to programs in the day that take them inside, not everyone does.

“So the question then is ... what do you do if you don’t have a place to go? And you literally have to wander for the entire daytime before the shelters open again at night. It’s a pretty stressful place to be,” she said.

The city has been working toward the creation of a daytime shelter since November, and tried to work with other partners, but has ended up doing the work on its own, Alto said. It’s the first time the city has funded a day shelter of this kind, she said.

The city plans to invoice the province for the \$300,000 cost, which is coming out of the city's contingency budget for now, she said.

"We would appreciate a contribution, no doubt, because... this appears to be an emerging pattern where municipalities are stepping in where gaps appear," Alto said.

The warming centre is pet-friendly and people are allowed to bring their belongings, which helps to make it accessible for people who carry a tent and other important items with them. Some people living outside fear they'll lose their belongings if they leave them behind to go to a shelter.

The city tapped Solid Outreach Society, a grassroots organization staffed mostly by people with lived experience of drug use, to run the warming centre.

The space has been busy since it opened late last week, with about 140 visits each day, and numbers are expected to grow as more people become aware of the warming centre, said Fred Cameron, a senior manager at Solid.

Those using the space are grateful to have somewhere to go during the day, he said. Some people don't feel comfortable using other services, but they trust Solid staff because they have similar lived experience.

There are fewer tents and people camped outside on the 900-block of Pandora Avenue since the warming centre opened, Cameron said.

"I think the entire community is going to notice very quickly that this is having an impact on the block," he said.

There are still tents on the street, however, and more people without a place to go, Cameron said.