

DRA Board Meeting Minutes

October 13, 2020

Location: ZOOM

Time: 5:30 p.m.

Present: Paul Gandall (chair), Dale Dearing, Ian Sutherland, Nicholas Harrington Doug Boyd, Dianne Flood, Ruth Annis, Sandra Severs

City Council Liaison: Councillor Charlayne Thornton-Joe

City Staff: Mike Hill

Regrets: Mathew Yee

Guest: Michael Demakiling

Call to Order/Approval of Agenda

The meeting was called to order by Paul Gandall. The agenda was approved with one change. The Councillor's Report has been moved to the end of the agenda.

Welcome of Guest

Paul welcomed Michael Demakiling to the Board meeting. Michael is sitting on the steering committee of the Yates Street Community Garden and working with Nicholas to support garden activities.

Downtown Update – Mike Hill

Report attached.

Mike reviewed items from the Downtown Update. He reminded Board members that there are opportunities to provide input to Council and staff on a number of issues including a survey on the expansion of patios which are in place until October 2021. The survey can be found on the public engagement site. As well, the Participatory Budgeting voting process is on-line with 26 projects vying for \$50k in funding. Strategic plan grants are focused this year on "resilience" and information is available for organizations looking to apply.

The by-election to replace Councillor Collins is set for December. Council is still determining whether there will be an option to vote by mail for this election. Costs of this by-election have doubled as a result of COVID.

Business Arising from the Minutes

- 1) **Great Neighbourhood Grants** -Dianne asked for a list of residents who had made application to the program so that the DRA can connect and support

Update: Mike will put together a list and forward that list to Dianne. (Outstanding)

- 2) **Urban Ecology and Agriculture Committee (UEC)**

The Board discussed the current garden waiver signed by participants and agreed that it should be re-examined in light of COVID-19.

Update: Paul will complete the review of the garden waiver. (Outstanding)

- 3) **Victoria Community Association Network (VCAN)**

There has been a request to the DRA to consider providing administration of the insurance policy covering the six community associations which do not have property. Fairfield currently provides this service.

Update: Info will be sent to the Treasurer for evaluation/ recommendation (Outstanding)

- 4) Given North Park's success in finding resources to hire staff, it was agreed that the DRA will approach North Park to learn more about their strategy.

Action: Paul and Dianne will initiate a conversation with North Park and set up a meeting with their staff person, Sarah Murray. Matt will look at the budget implications for the DRA in light of additional funding this year in response to COVID 19. (Update: Reporting below)

5) **AGM Planning**

Given the challenges and uncertainties of COVID 19, the Board discussed whether the AGM should be held in January (its traditional time) or whether it should be postponed until March. Discussion about the challenges of conducting the AGM on-line were also discussed. **Update: The report of the Governance Committee outlines recommendations for the AGM.**

- 6) Concern was expressed about the challenges of responding to contentious issues, like camping in Centennial Square, when there has not been time for conversation at a Board level about an agreed upon Board response.

Update: A process to deal with contentious issues will be developed by the Governance Committee. Content, such as the above issue, will be provided by the ULC.

- 7) **Community Engagement** – Proposal for website redevelopment

Action: Dale is asked to provide the Board with information about the WIX platform and to approach Starling Memory Designs for a quote on website redevelopment. (Update: Reporting below)

Governance Committee Report– Dianne

Report attached.

The Board discussed the recommendations of the Governance Committee regarding the hiring of staff support to expand board capacity. **Motion: To approve the recommendations and proceed with the hiring process.**

Moved: Dianne Flood **Seconded:** Paul Gandall **CARRIED**

Questions for Upcoming Municipal By-election- Doug

A list of

candidates running in the municipal by-election will be finalized by November 6th. Doug has tweaked the questions that the DRA created prior to COVID.

Action: Doug and Sandra will finalize the wording the language for the questions and Doug will circulate to the candidates.

Questions on Standing Committee Reports

1) **Land Use Committee (LUC)**

Report attached.

Ian expressed concern about the public engagement process (CALUC) currently in place under COVID. Developments like the **APEX site** are providing limited and inadequate information for a comprehensive public feedback process and the on-line system of

providing response is not working in a timely fashion.

Gold Rush Warehouses (formerly known as Northern Junk) – Concern has been expressed by the LUC that the heritage designation of these buildings and the Duck Building are not being respected. The LUC has requested an assessment from heritage specialists and will be sharing the report with the Director of Planning.

2) **Urban Livability Committee (ULC)**

Report attached.

3) **Urban Ecology and Agriculture Committee (UEAC)**

Yates Street Community Garden has received a \$1,500 Great Neighbourhood grant to build boulevard boxes in front of the garden. The steering committee will be having a land acknowledgement sign designed for the garden with the funds remaining in the grant. Dianne reminded Nicholas that money had already been transferred from the TRC grant to the Yates Street Garden for this purpose.

Action: Dianne and Nicholas will work on clarifying the funding resources available for the land acknowledgement signage.

4) **Communications/Membership Committee (CMC)**

Report attached. Doug will be putting together the monthly newsletter next week.

Action: Items for the newsletter should be sent to Doug by Friday, October 16th.

5) **Community Engagement Committee (CEC)**

Report and funding proposal attached.

Dale reported that the CEC is working towards an interactive rather than static website design. They are recommending the hiring of a professional website designer to facilitate this process.

Motion: That the Board empower the CEC/CMC to procure a formal quote for the creation of a new website focusing on its development as a public engagement portal.

Moved: Dale Dearing **Seconded:** Dianne Flood **CARRIED**

External Meeting Reports

1) **Victoria Community Association Network (VCAN) Paul**

A governance working committee has been established. Paul will be chairing that committee. The goal is to create working groups across neighbourhoods so that joint work plans can be established.

2) **Late Night Advisory Committee (LNAC) Mike/Paul.**

There will be a meeting on October 15th on the impacts of the COVID response for facilities with liquor licenses. Paul will attend.

Councillor's Report- Charlayne Thornton-Joe

Build Back Victoria Recovery Process – It would be good to have response from the DRA about how this process is going. The focus is on businesses but it would be valuable to have resident feedback as well.

Bastion Square Mural -Charlayne has a motion ready for Council on Thursday about the removal of the acronym ACAB on the NO JUSTICE NO PEACE mural painted by Black artists. The recommendations in the motion are:

1. That staff facilitate further dialogue among AHAVI, the artists, staff, and the police chief, and

2. That the letters ACAB be removed at the earliest opportunity possible, and
3. If the artists choose to replace the removed letters with another design, that they submit their proposal for the staff's approval.

There was Board discussion about whether or not to write a letter in support of Charlayne's motion. Given the lack of time available to debate the issue, it was agreed that individual members of the DRA could respond as appropriate but no letter would be sent from the organization. Questions about process will be added to the agenda of the Governance Committee for discussion and recommendations.

Adjournment-The meeting was adjourned at 7:10 p.m.

Next meeting- Tuesday, November 10, 2020, 5:30 p.m. via ZOOM.



In Your Neighbourhood

Childcare Action Plan

On Thursday October 1, Council received a staff report regarding steps to improve the state of childcare in Victoria in the areas of process, policy, partnerships, advocacy, and education and training. The [full report](#) from the Working Group was prepared for this presentation. At their October 8 Council meeting, Council directed staff to report back on the resource implications for implementation and capacity to advance the policy, process and education within municipal jurisdiction.

1244 Wharf Street Rezoning

In response to a [staff report](#) relating to the rezoning of the heritage-designated building at 1244 Yates, Council have instructed staff to prepare the necessary Zoning Regulation Bylaw and set a Public Hearing date once the applicant enters into an Encroachment Agreement with the City. The rezoning would add hotel use to the zoning of the site and allow residential use in the floor below street grade.



Business in Public Space

Last spring, Council approved a plan to make public spaces available in order to help them meet COVID 19 risk management requirements. The program has been very popular (over 100 approved installations) and beneficial in meeting its objectives. On September 17, Council resolved to "...endorse in principal the extension of the Open Air Recovery – Support for Restaurants and Cafes in Public Spaces expanded and expedited patio initiative pending receipt of a report from City Staff detailing feedback from businesses and residents." At approximately the same time, the province approved continuation of a complementary program allowing for the extension of liquor licensed seating into patio areas.

At their October 8 meeting, Council considered a [staff report](#) outlining conditions (e.g. accessibility, winterization) for formal endorsement of the extension, as well as a [summary of feedback](#) from participating businesses. Council resolved to:

- Extend the Build Back Victoria Program including the pedestrian priority on Government Street until October 31, 2021
- Direct staff to check in with Council by the end of March 2021 with any proposed improvements and provide an update with a recommendation on whether Government Street should be closed between Fort and View Streets for the spring/summer season.

An opportunity for community feedback to the Build Back Victoria program will be facilitated through an engagement survey to be posted to the City's website in coming weeks.



Accessibility Framework

Council endorsed the Accessibility Framework in August. This [staff report](#) for Thursday October 4 responds to further direction from Council related to the establishment of an interim advisory committee, revised policy, adjustments to the short term action plan, status of seven priority issues raised by the Accessibility Working Group, and a proposed future approach for development of decision making tools for Council. Council approved staff recommendations at their October 8 Council meeting with several amendments, including additional provisions for the new Accessibility Advisory Committee.

Participatory Budgeting

We've received a record number of proposals in this year's Participatory Budgeting initiative and now it's the community's turn to weigh in and help decide which projects receive funding.

The theme this year is helping new immigrants and refugees and there is \$50,000 in funding available. To vote and view all 26 projects, go to engage.victoria.ca and cast your ballot before November 6. This [video](#) helps explain the voting process. Please spread the word by sharing this information with your networks.



By-election

Council has endorsed the tentative scheduling of a by-election on December 12, 2020. This October 1, Council approved a [staff report](#) requesting assignment of electoral officers, approval to request a by-election from the province and allocation of \$350,000 in funding.

Direction for Strategic Plan Grants

At their October 1 meeting, Council received a [staff report](#) providing changes to the program as requested by Council, as well as a request from staff for direction of focus for the 2021 Strategic Plan grants program. Council provided weighting for grant review and has shifted 30% of the score from community "impact" to building community "resilience". Resilience is defined as "...the capacity of a system, enterprise, community or a person to maintain its core purpose or integrity in the face of dramatically changed circumstances."

Youth Poet Laureate - Call for Nominations

The City of Victoria, in partnership with the Greater Victoria Public Library, is seeking nominations for next year's Youth Poet Laureate. The Youth Poet Laureate will reach out to vulnerable youth populations, develop a community youth poetry event and encourage peer-to-peer education through new works.

Applicants must be 14 to 24 years of age, reside in the CRD and demonstrate an ability to engage the community and have clear and innovative ideas for the vision of their role. It's a one-year term with a \$1,750 honorarium and \$2,000 of project funding. Applications are accepted until Tuesday, November 3, 2020 at 4 p.m. For more information, please visit: www.victoria.ca/youthpoetlaureate.



Expanding Sheltering

In response to a motion presented by Councillors Loveday and Potts, Council requested that the Mayor write to the Minister of Housing and Municipal Affairs and BC Housing, advocating for the Extreme Weather Response to be expanded to open shelters and provide other necessary services during non-winter extreme weather events including when poor air quality presents a health risk.

Get Growing, Victoria

At their October 1 meeting, Council approved Councillors Loveday and Isitt's [recommendations](#) to continue with the Get Growing Victoria program, which was initiated in response to COVID 19. Specifically, the resolved to:

- Endorse in principle the continuation of Get Growing, Victoria as an annual program
- Direct staff to report back on the results of the 2020 Get Growing, Victoria program and on the implications of continuing the program annually in 2021 and future years
- Invite input from the Urban Food Table and other stakeholders on the continuation of Get Growing, Victoria.

City Council Meetings

Committee of the Whole meets on October [1](#), [8](#), 15 and 22 at 9:00am. Council meets on October [8](#) and 22 beginning at 6:30pm. There is also an additional [Council meeting](#) immediately following the October 1 COTW meeting. You can also watch the meetings live or after the video has been posted through a link on the agendas.

If you have comments that you would like to express regarding any of the upcoming agenda items, contact your [Mayor and Council](#).

GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE REPORT - OCTOBER 2020

1. CONTRACT POSITIONS TO SUPPORT DRA ACTIVITIES

Board approval is sought to proceed with the following contract positions:

City Council 2021 Budget Funding Application:

- A one-time, direct award to engage a specific, identified person experienced in civic grant funding applications to prepare a submission for additional 2021 strategic City funding.
- The contractor will report to the Governance Committee, with the submission to be signed by President.
- The contractor is to be paid \$25- \$40 per hour, to a maximum of \$1,000.
- The submission is anticipated to request funding to support
 - community engagement activities
 - opportunities for the greening of and/or street improvements to the Downtown Harris Green neighbourhood, and
 - exploring opportunities for the development of a neighbourhood community centre.
- The submission is expected to be for less than the joint “ask” made last year with North Park N/A, as the DRA is not currently in the position to undertake activities or deliver services of a similar type or similar scale as other N/A’s.
- Given time constraints for the budget submission, a direct award is recommended for this position. A specific, qualified person with experienced in civic grant funding applications has been identified but not approached yet. Other qualified persons may be available if that person is not.

Grant writer:

- A one-year contract for an experienced writer of grant funding applications, ideally with experience in civic and/or non-profit organizations.
- The contractor will identify opportunities for potential grant funding for various DRA activities and, with the approval of the Governance Committee and the support as required by applicable Committee chairs, complete submit grant applications for submission by the Executive.
- The contractor may also be engaged, as may be required, in executing successful funding applications.
- The contractor will report to the Governance Committee.
- The contract will pay \$25- \$40 per hour to a maximum of \$2,500 to \$4,000, renewable with Board approval.

- Examples of possible grant funding activities include outreach and membership growth, volunteer recruitment, community engagement, strategic planning, social activities, greening of the Downtown Harris Green neighbourhood and development of a neighbourhood community centre.
- Due to its on-going nature, for transparency, this contract will be advertised.

Administrative support:

- A one-year contract for administrative support to meet the needs of the Board Executive and, with the approval of the President, Committee chairs.
- Duties will include sending out notices to Board members as required, keeping and distributing monthly Board minutes, monitoring media and information requests for DRA responses and input and directing for follow-up as required, and reporting on same.
- The contractor will report to the Board Secretary.
- The contract will pay \$20- \$25 per hour to a maximum of \$2,500, renewable with Board approval.
- Due to its on-going nature, for transparency, this contract will be advertised.

2. 2021 AGM

Planning is underway as follows:

Date and format:

- to be held virtually on **Tuesday, February 9, 2021, at 6:30 p.m.**, via Zoom or other platform.
- The format will be similar to past AGM's except, instead of a speaker, a video will be played to generate conversation on a topic of interest still to be decided (emerging green cities or similar).
- A Board meeting will follow immediately afterward and a new Executive elected.

Recruitment of new Board members:

- All Board members are asked to consider recruiting new Board members (up to 13 directors are permitted under the Bylaws).
- An "ad" for persons interested in becoming a Board member will be sent to Volunteer Victoria and for such wider distribution as may be possible.
- Board members whose terms are expiring (Ruth, Sandra, Dianne) are asked to confirm their willingness to stand for the Board again.

Communications:

- The Committee will look to work with Communications and Membership re: giving advance and formal notice of the AGM and also to recruit new Board members.

Urban Livability Committee Report- October 2020

Camping in Centennial Square - The press release on camping in Centennial Square was made available to the media following the September Board meeting. There were four opportunities to provide input to media – Times-Colonist article, in person interview with CTV, a radio interview with Sarah Murray from NPNA and Gregor Craigie for CBC Radio, and a radio interview with CFX. The media contacts expected me to say that I thought living in the downtown was now unsafe and that's why we shouldn't have homeless people camping in Centennial Square. My response was that the downtown was a very safe place to live but I was concerned that we were accepting the idea that it was a humane response to homelessness to leave people outside for the winter without adequate shelter.

VCAN Working Group on Housing – I have indicated to Allison from North Park, through Paul's introduction, my willingness to participate on a working group on homelessness and housing issues. The purpose of the working group is to represent the DRA in crafting a VCAN response to the issues. I have reached out but have not heard anything from Allison.

Conversation with Sean Kahil from North Park - Following the media coverage, Sean Kahil and I talked about the use of an equity lens to determine the number of unhoused tenters which could be assigned to each city park. With pressure coming from groups like "Friends of Beacon Hill Park" to prevent any tenting in Beacon Hill Park, (\$21,000 raised on a Go-Fund-Me page for legal action) the NPNA wants to make sure that those who are unhoused do not all end up in neighbourhoods where there is limited green space. I expressed concern about the lack of green space in the downtown core but given the decision not to put Centennial Square on the list of parks where camping is not permitted, I agreed with him that a model of equitable distribution should be used.

At the time of our conversation there were 91 unhoused people living in Central Park. That number has grown to 112. NPNA has set up their own tent in Central Park to provide those living in the park with information about services. NPNA has also made efforts to decrease the amount of stigma against those who are unhoused by providing opportunities for housed and unhoused residents to talk.

Fencing has been put up around the trees in Centennial Square, I assume, in preparation for the arrival of tents.

Downtown Service Providers meeting- BC Housing is making 60 new rent supplements available. These will go to people who are currently living in supportive housing who are ready to move into independent living. The rent supplements are worth \$450/person/month. By moving people into independent living, this will make 60 spaces available in supportive housing for those currently living in the parks.

The dilemma is that there are currently 1200 people living in shelters (1523 2020 PiT count), many of whom have been on a BC Housing list for years. Because of the disorder that results from encampments and the resultant public outrage, those who are living in tents have a better

chance of moving into housing than those who are currently in the shelter system. No one wins in this situation.

Communications and Membership Committee Report – October 2020

Update on Committee activities:

- **Newsletter:**
 - The September newsletter was issued on September 16. Statistics from Mail Chimp indicate that it was opened by 34.4% of subscribers, down from our average of 46.8%. The item most frequently clicked on was the link to the article in the Times Colonist about the plans for the historic building at 1244 Wharf Street. I intend to put together a newsletter in mid-October and welcome contributions from Board members.

- **Other**
 - 1 new member since the last report.
 - Updated our media contact list and sent the Press Release titled “Victoria Downtown Residents Association Frustrated by Proposed Resumption of Sheltering in Centennial Square” to the media list. This resulted in a number of interview requests which were handled by Sandra.
 - It has been suggested that we reactivate our questionnaire that we sent to Candidates for the City by-election in March, and send to all Candidates who have registered for the upcoming rescheduled by-election in December. I have included the March questions below and welcome comments or additions, since a lot has changed since March. I suggest that a question be added regarding the decision by Council not to include Centennial Square as one of the locations where overnight sheltering is prohibited.

Submitted by
Doug Boyd
Chair, Communications and Membership Committee

Victoria Downtown Residents Association: City of Victoria Municipal By-Election Questions for Candidates and Responses

1. Development: There is rapid densification with new residential buildings going up all over downtown. This has led to rising housing costs in both the sales and rental markets. The provincial government has taken steps to mitigate lack of affordability. What in your view should the City of Victoria do to ensure there are affordable housing options downtown?

2. Parks & Green Space: The Official Community Plan calls for green space in downtown Victoria, However, it often feels that development occurs with little to no consideration of providing parks and green space for a rapidly increasing urban population. What are your views on what action should be taken by the City to ensure that there is adequate green space and parks downtown?

3. Street Life: Victoria's homeless population has grown in recent years. This has led to rising tensions. What are your views on what steps should be taken to address the concerns of housed and unhoused people?

4. Transportation: What policies would you advocate for balancing the competing transportation priorities in downtown Victoria? For example, need for parking, bike lanes, pedestrian walkways, public transit, etc.

5. Police Budget: There has been considerable controversy about providing an adequate budget for the Victoria PD for the last two budget cycles. Downtown residents are very concerned about safety and often the apparent lack of police resources. Would you support the additional budgets that have been requested by the Victoria PD?

6. Noise & Vibrancy: We want a lively city and we want to grow the downtown residential population. That creates inevitable conflict in terms of noise, including traffic noise and bar-related noise. What steps would you initiate or support in resolving this?

CEC Report- October 2020

- 26 Sept: last CEC meeting
- Agenda: Development VDRA website (strategy shift)
 - Discussed proposal from Starling Memories
 - Discussed website examples
 - collecting spreadsheet with members feedback of proposal/examples
 - Discussed improving photos used for website
 - collecting photos from committee members in shared Dropbox folder
 - established working list of photo topics
 - collection started

Had planned a meeting tomorrow but most cannot make it, so rescheduled next CEC meeting for 7 October; continue above agenda.