

DRA Board Meeting Minutes

March 18, 2025

Present: Sandra Severs (President), Doug Boyd, Jeremy Zhao, Neil McKinnon, Dawn Moorhead, Michael Demakiling, Mano Majumdar, Furkan Kucukdurmaz, Sherry Lee
City Council Liaison: Dave Thompson
DRA Executive Director: James Davis

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

Councillor Update: Dave Thompson

- Community Safety and Wellbeing report -tentative release in April
- OCP: (DRA previously submitted consult)
 - Spread growth beyond the Downtown, not just concentrated in Harris Green
 - After the OCP is passed, there will be a review of the Downtown Core Area Plan “DCAP” with some modifications to reflect a new retail strategy
 - Expect few changes to the OCP as it aligns with Council strategic plan
- Homelessness: expect to see seasonal increase in outdoor population as weather improves
 - Demolition in the next few weeks of the remaining buildings at 930 Pandora
- Councillor planned coffee chat at “Blue Nile” inviting VDRA – Thursday Mar 21 @ noon. See BlueSky posting
- Downtown businesses are experiencing challenges which will impact vitality of DT. Councillor hopes landlords will prioritize filling these significant spaces:
 - The Bay likely shutting down
- Due to general cut in municipal budget, expect some proposed cuts to grant funding could impact DRA programming. Advocacy is welcome closer to date of decisions
- No update regarding View St Parkade location for community garden, however, official community plan currently has plans related to parks and green spaces, so there is room for optimism.
- Councillor clarified Crystal pool referendum parkade location- The location will stay in the northern location minimizing impact on other recreation facilities and trees
- Mano: update on sheltering for homeless population. Councillor will be in touch
- DRA expressed intent to offer input toward the revision of the Downtown Core Area Plan. The plan is to be reviewed within the next 5 years, and DRA intends to conduct community engagement in time to inform input.
- DRA expressed critical feedback regarding the recently published Committee of the Whole [report](#) – Sheltering in Parks and the Parks Regulation Bylaw. The report did not capture all voices or reflect realities on the ground, in particular re. cluttering.

Executive Director Report: James (report attached)

Update: ongoing administrative work to set up accounts. James’ access to the CRA account established.

Executive Report: Sandra (report attached)

Discussed perception of AEHCR’s strategic plan, accountability, and deliverables.

Standing Committee Reports – Q and A

- **Urban Livability Committee (ULC) and Urban Ecology and Agriculture Committee (UEC):** Michael (report attached)
- **Climate Solutions Committee:** Dawn (report attached)
- **Communications and Membership Committee (CMC):** Doug/Mano (email report attached)
 - Chair role is being transitioned from Doug to Mano.
 - Mano completed survey via VCAN to understand use of Bluesky by community associations. Supporting coordinated effort to migrate to more inclusive social media community.
- **Governance Committee:** Jeremy (report attached)
- **Land Use Committee (LUC):** Jordan (report pending)
- **Community Engagement Committee (CEC):** James/Furkan (See Executive Director report)

External Meeting Reports – Q and A

- **Victoria Community Association Network (VCAN):** Sandra /Dawn
- **900 Pandora Good Neighbour Group:** Sandra/Dave
 - Group discussed proposed architectural plan for the 900 block including memorial recognizing survivors of residential schools as well as those lost in the toxic drug crisis

Other Business

- **AGM planning**

Currently proposed: Presentation by Indigenous representative. Entire event to be livestreamed. Annual report will source from monthly reports – important reference document for any intended grant applications.
- **Board membership**

See attached summary for board membership and necessary re-election at upcoming AGM.
Discussed consideration of current board staffing complement and potential additional skillsets.
Attending board members approved to present current complement at AGM.
- **Discussion and Motion to accept 2025 Budget**

Discussed potential supports for Yates Street Garden Coordinator role.
Motion 1: to review grant funding possibility to support garden coordinator role and consider options to top up coordinator compensation using DRA budget at \$4500.
Mover: Michael **Second:** Neil
Decision: Board approves. With consideration for other revenue sources in the future.
Motion 2: approval of budget
Mover: Doug **Second:** Neil
Decision: Board accepts the draft budget for 2025 recommending approval at the April 2025 AGM
- **Governance discussions**

- Solicitation of funds (e.g., fundraising): any such activity in DRA events shall report to DRA board for awareness.
- DRA membership: due to insurance structure, any volunteer at DRA sanctioned events must to be enrolled as a society member or complete a insurance waiver.

ACTION: James asked for review of financial policies to determine whether grant applications must be reviewed by the Board or whether this refers only to the receipt of donations made by corporate bodies. If most grants come from the City of Victoria or the CRD, do they need to be reviewed? Discussion about the intent of the financial policies. Jeremy will review.

- **Potential Alter Arts Society space (very early stage) collaboration discussion** Board expressed interest and will remain informed about any future development.
- **Cedar Fundraising:** James presented on finding by CF regarding DRA Systems Review. Including options to implement volunteer/donation management system software to replace current software (MailChimp) and resolve current deficiencies.
ACTION: members to review information to be sent out by James and prepare any comments/feedback for discussion.

Preview: in-person meetings for May and July, including Mayor Alto as guest

Meeting concludes

Next Meeting: 2025 AGM

Tuesday, April 15, 2025, at theDock, 7-9 pm

Executive Director Report - March 2025

Updates since last board meeting:

Emergency Preparedness - The My Great Neighbourhood Grant application that we submitted to the City of Victoria in support of offering the Connect & Prepare program to three additional buildings was successful. We will deliver the workshops later this year.

Community Gaming Grant - Our application was approved earlier this month and we received \$10,000 again this year.

Membership Development Project - James met with Kim from Cedar Fundraising on March 6th and was provided with three possible options for a new CRM. We need to decide which option to go with and sign up for a membership by the beginning of April so that Kim can start to clean up data and migrate it to the new platform. She will also start working on a membership development plan.

Operational Updates - We have applied for a credit card from Coast Capital, to be used for ongoing expenses such as subscription fees for website hosting and other technology, as well as programming expenses. The credit card balance will be paid directly from the DRA bank account each month, after the treasurer reviews and approves the monthly reconciliation. We have also submitted an application for our insurance policy with Acera to be renewed, as the current policy ends on April 1, 2025.

Upcoming events:

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

Outdoor Film Night - Plans have changed and will hold the first of two films nights that we received funding from the OUR DWTN Ideas Fund for on April 16th (National Canadian Film Day) under the Johnson Street Bridge. We will be screening two documentary films, *Lekwungen: Place to Smoke Herring* and *Singing Back the Buffalo*.

Summer Concert Series - We plan to host a concert series in the three small Downtown parks again this summer, as we have for the past three years. The series will launch with an unofficial warm-up to the Pride festival on June 25th in Cridge Park. The tentative dates for the other two concerts are July 10th (Reeson Park) and July 29th (Pandora Green).

Executive Committee – February 2025

Alliance to End Homelessness in the Capital Region -Sandra attended the presentation of the AEHCR's Community Plan for 2025-2030. The goal of the plan is to work with community organizations and government partners to reach functional homelessness by 2030. The AEHCR's plan can be found here:

VCAN- The February meeting discussed the OCP plan which was before Council. A letter to Mayor and Council was sent asking Council to provide plenty of time for neighbourhoods to consider the implications of the plan. Councillor Gardiner was present at the meeting providing a link between Council and VCAN.

Upcoming Meetings – Our AGM is scheduled for Tuesday, April 15th at the Dock. The May meeting of the Board will be an in-person meeting with Mayor Alto. The time will be confirmed closer to the date.

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

Victoria Downtown Residents Association

March 18, 2025

Urban Livability Committee Report

Pandora Breakfast: Saturday, March 17, 2025

We had a successful event on Saturday, March 15, 2025, despite the rain. We welcomed 6 community volunteers, which included three wonderful children of a volunteer who did an amazing job distributing food to our unhoused neighbours on Pandora Ave. Together, we fed 72 people, providing 60 meals that included a breakfast sandwich, a muffin, two types of cookies, and a piece of fruit, as well as 12 additional baked goods like cookies and muffins.

What was truly remarkable about this event was that we served all 72 individuals in just 29 minutes, while we had scheduled ourselves to finish within 1 hour and 30 minutes. Given the high demand, and with the anticipation that the need for food security will increase due to economic uncertainty and rising costs of living, we plan to boost the number of meals we can prepare for future events.

This was the last gathering for this program until we resume again next winter season. The committee will brainstorm on how to increase our meal output and will seek resources through collaboration with other organizations. This year's Pandora Breakfast event has highlighted the importance of continuing to support our unhoused neighbours as we work together to find effective solutions to this issue. It was wonderful to connect with the volunteers and, most importantly, to foster a sense of community for those who feel the impact the most.



Urban Ecology and Agriculture Committee

Yates Street Community Garden (YSCG)

Waitlist Count as of Sunday, March 16, 2025: 292

Updates

Registrations and Trug Beds

Registration for the 2025 gardening season is currently underway. The YSCG implemented a new system for the Garden Agreement forms this year that uses Adobe for electronic signatures, and it is working well. So far, about 50% of the gardeners have completed their registration. Lisa Small, the YSCG Coordinator has also been working through the waitlist to assign plots to new gardeners.

New trugs - Rewood

The YSCG is partnering with ReWood, a volunteer-led initiative based in Victoria, BC, that focuses on upcycling lumber from demolition sites to create durable and sustainable wooden products. Their mission is to reduce waste and support community gardens, urban farms, and nurseries by repurposing salvaged wood into items such as planter boxes, potting benches, and compost bins. A dedicated team is currently working on designing new trugs for our mural wall. These trugs will be crafted from reclaimed, untreated wood, highlighting our commitment to sustainability.

To address the growing demand for garden beds, the YSCG is excited to invite community members to participate in a work party where we will assemble six new garden trugs. This initiative goes beyond just building garden beds; it's about collaboration and making a meaningful contribution to our community's gardening efforts. By working together, we can create more space for planting, growing, and harvesting, ultimately fostering a stronger community connection.

The work party is scheduled for Saturday, March 22, 2025, from 10:30 AM to 12:30 PM at the garden. Individuals of all skill levels are welcome to lend a hand. If you would like to get involved, please email Lisa at yatescommunitygarden@gmail.com to volunteer.

Urban Food Table

Seeking a Co-Chair

The Victoria Urban Food Table is seeking a new co-chair to help lead their efforts over the next two years. The Victoria Urban Food Table (UFT) is a volunteer advisory committee committed to providing informed support to the Victoria City Council on issues related to food security policy and decision-making. Their members include food systems and sustainability professionals, urban and rural farmers, local business owners, educators, community association representatives, garden advocates, health workers, dietitians, and staff from environmental

stewardship non-profits. They believe that local food production is essential for a healthy and sustainable food system and they share the common goal of achieving food security for our region. You can find more information about the co-chair position [here](#).

CLIMATE SOLUTIONS COMMITTEE MARCH 2025 REPORT

“VICTORIA” COOLKIT

Rethink Waste Event & The Dish Library

Coolkit members pulled out all the stops for the Rethink Waste Event held March 1 and the response to The Dish Library has been, quite literally, overwhelming. Local organizations and informal groups have embraced the concept, with initial bookings outstripping capacity. We immediately expanded the number of place settings from 60 to 75, to meet demand.

Much work remains to be done, including sending targeted emails, and digitally streamlining the project, possibly with an app.

This is all part of coolkit actions to reduce Victoria’s greenhouse gas emissions - in this instance the culprit is unnecessary waste sent to the landfill.



Climate Solutions Committee

The committee is turning its attention to green roofs and biodiversity corridors. Stay tuned for further information.



<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2025/feb/28/green-roofs-deliver-for-biodiversity-how-basel-put-nature-on-top>

Communications and Membership Committee Report – March 2025

Update on Committee activities since the February 2025 report:

- **Newsletter / Other Communications to Members:**
 - The March newsletter was issued on March 7. Statistics from Mail Chimp indicate that it was opened by 34.8% of subscribers.
 - The most viewed items were the Land Use Development Tracker and the article on the Vic Placemaking Café.
- **Web site**
 - We continue to add posts to the News page and add events to the Events page of our website.
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- **Social Media**
 - The number of posts over the past month, and the current number of followers are:
 - Facebook - 1 post, 1065 followers
 - Instagram - 1 post, 1185 followers
 - Bluesky – 2 posts – 19 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.
 - 12 new newsletter subscribers since the last report

Submitted by
Doug Boyd
Chair, Communications and Membership Committee

Governance Committee Report – February 2025

Volunteer Code of Conduct – The group is still looking into what needs to be done for the volunteer code of conduct. The committee agreed that the all volunteers should register as DRA members, and if a volunteer for whatever does not, then they should be required to sign a waiver. The action item is to have a waiver in place for future volunteering events.

Clarification on Responsibilities – Over the past few months, there have been numerous requests for the VDRA to comment on how other groups that we are partnered with should operate, or insurance coverage, or how things are advertised. Jeremy will speak to the Board to ensure there is clarity on this from an insurance perspective.

Charity Status – A DropBox has been created to put together all the required documentation. The group would like assistance from James to help contact a notary so the VDRA can get certified documents completed. Once documentation is complete, Soleil will help put together the CRA charity status application.

YSCG Bylaw and Governance Documentation Review – The governance committee and the Board have rectified the gaps between what is currently written in the YSCG bylaws and governance documents versus what is actually being done. James and Jeremy have also clarified with Acera that the garden itself will be covered by insurance, but YSCG's Steering Committee will not be covered by the Directors and Officers insurance. This will be communicated to the YSCG group.

VDRA Bylaws Review – The committee discussed whether we delete a line in the bylaw about limiting consecutive executive positions to no more than 2 terms. There were likely reasons why the original bylaws had them in place as it is generally difficult to remove Board members. There were other bylaw line items that came up including whether to add wording about assuming a Board member is resigned if they miss more than X number of meetings, and the clauses in the bylaw that currently say that a director can resign, but does not mean that they have vacated the Board. Soleil to review bylaws and give recommendations prior to the next Board meeting.

Insurance Renewal – Acera has sent the VDRA an insurance renewal as the VDRA has been flagged as having grown in size and budget since the time that our original policy was purchased. Doug is currently helping fill this insurance renewal form.

Budgets - Other committees are encouraged to bring forward plans/budgets for approval to the Board per the financial policy recently passed. This is particularly important for the Yates Street Community Garden to have a budget prepared and presented to the Board as soon as possible.

Financial Policy – James to upload the latest financial policy that the Board has adopted onto the VDRA website.

How to handle Cash/Monetary Donations – During a previous governance committee meeting, it was advised that any solicitation of donations on behalf of another organization during a VDRA-sanctioned event should be brought to the attention of either the Board or executive prior. This will ensure that the Board is aware of the group that we are soliciting for, making sure we do our due diligence with the organization's background, and accountable from a financial perspective. Jeremy will speak to this during the Board meeting.

Other Business

- The AGM will be held in April 2025. While the governance committee is technically the group that should be handling, James and others have been working on this.
- Cedar Fundraising: The governance committee will wait to see if they have recommendations for member lists, volunteer lists, and membership renewal procedures.

VCAN Meeting of February 26, 2025, 6:30pm

Attendance:

FCGA: Don Monsour, Steve Roddick

Oaklands: Brenda Turner

SJNA: Susan Wetmore

Vic West: Mike Medland

Hillside Quadra: Matt Takach, Jon Moat

Rockland: Carollyne Yardley

Fernwood,: Tyler Akis, Jan Firstbrook. (LUC)

JBNA: Trevor Moat

DRA: Dawn Moorhead

GNA: Susanne Rautio

Guest: Marg Gardner, Councillor

Don Monsour called our meeting together at 6:30 pm.

Don Monsour gave our Land Acknowledgment.

Motion to accept previous minutes.

Carried.

Key Takeaways

- The OCP draft was released February 23, with council deliberations scheduled for Committee of the Whole on February 27th.
- VCAN will write a letter to council requesting sufficient time for community associations to review and provide feedback before the bylaws is initiated.
- Individual association encouraged to contact their council liaison to request more time for review of OCP.

Topics

New Business

The meeting had a discussion with Councillor Gardner on the OCP and the OCP process. Trevor to prepare a letter to council requesting that the council ensure there is appropriate time in the OCP process to allow the community association to have sufficient time to consult the communities of Victoria.

Neighborhood Updates (Roundtable)

- All communities raised issues around developments in their communities.
- VWCA held its AGM Feb 25 losing one board member and gaining 4 new members. VWCA is looking to create a major community project in Vic West.
- SJNA dealing with multiple development proposals, concern has been raised in this neighbourhood about the Centennial Square plan.

- JBNA reported about the concern around transit and the potential changes to the transit hub. Also continue development concerns with projects not compliant with the OCP.
- Rockland AGM is coming up March 18 and will feature a presentation on emergency preparedness.
- GNA raise concerns about the potential for the Crystal Pool project to go over budget.
- FGNA report work has begun at looking at their governance model.
- DRA is hosting a rethink waste event on Saturday, March 1st.

Next Steps

- Next meeting scheduled for March 26th, 2025

Action Items

- Trevor (JBNA) to prepare a letter to council re. OCP from VCAN.
- Potential of an in person meeting for April.
- Next Meeting March 26th 6:30pm.

<https://fathom.video/calls/242361979?tab=summary>

DRA Board membership 2025-2026

Our Bylaws permit board members to let their names stand for two terms of 3 years each with the possibility of one renewal (years 6-9) if there are spaces remaining open on the Board. The maximum number of Board member is thirteen. The bylaws do not require a full complement.

FIRST TERM:

Elected 2024-

Furkhan Kucukdurmaz
Mano Majumdar
Neil McKinnon

Elected 2023-

Dawn Moorhead
Jeremy Zhao
Sherry Lee

Elected 2022-

Jordan Royer

SECOND TERM:

Renewed 2024-

Sandra Severs (elected 2019 to complete a term then First term 2021)
Michael Demakiling (elected First term 2021)

THIRD TERM:

Renewed 2023-

Doug Boyd (elected First Term 2017/Second Term 2020)

Motions at AGM:

- 1) To remove Sebastian Calderone from the position of Director of the DRA**
- 2) To elect Jordan Royer to a second term as a Director of the DRA**

Questions for Board:

Are you comfortable with the number of people currently serving as DRA Board members? What skill sets are we missing? If we were to seek new Board members, what demographic would we need to be searching for? Whose voices are not represented among residents?