

DRA Board Meeting Minutes December 17, 2024

Present: Sandra Severs (President), Jeremy Zhao (Vice President), Doug Boyd (Treasurer), Michael Demakiling, Jordan Royer, Neil McKinnon, Furkan Kucukdurmaz, Mano Majumdar, Sherry Lee (Secretary)

DRA Neighbourhood Engagement Coordinator: James Davis

City Council Liaison: Dave Thompson

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

Councillor Update: Dave Thompson

Councillor provided update on the following topics:

- **Fencing impacts on Pandora Ave.:** Concern expressed about the displacement of folk who have been tenting. There are around 10-20 unregulated drugs incidents per month.
- **Homelessness plan:**
 - City is working with provincial gov on comprehensive homelessness plan. The city is filling in gaps where provincial services/fund are inadequate. Council acknowledges that bylaw enforcement does not solve ongoing homelessness issues.
 - It is difficult to obtain precise estimates on the shortfall of sheltering spaces. The most recent homelessness count suggests an underestimate of 200-300 spaces.

Board provided feedback to advocate for strategies to look after the most marginalized population who are not accessed through regular process.

Executive Report: Sandra (extended report attached)

- The following motion was proposed for approval:
 1. That the DRA designate the interest earned on funds held in the DRA bank account to an internally restricted fund to be held as a contingency fund, the terms of use of such funds to be developed at a future date.

Mover: Doug

Secunder: Jeremy

Motion carried

Standing Committee Reports – Q and A

- **Urban Livability Committee (ULC) and Urban Ecology and Agriculture Committee (UEC):** Michael ([link](#) to report)
Michael to submit funding requested for community breakfast offering on Sat Dec 21, 2024, for board approval.
- **Climate Solutions Committee:** Dawn (report attached)
- **Communications and Membership Committee (CMC):** Doug (report attached)
- **Governance Committee:** Jeremy (no report)
- **Land Use Committee (LUC):** Ian/Jordan (report pending)

Commented [SL1]: Where?

- **Community Engagement Committee (CEC):** James (report attached)
Discussion re. Odd Fellows Hall: Sandra/James will provide feedback on what type of amenities DRA would like to see go into former 7-Eleven store space.

External Meeting Reports – Q and A

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

Other Business

- The following motions were moved forward for approval by Jeremy for the purpose of housekeeping:
 1. Appoint Chair of the Urban Ecology and Agriculture Committee to the Yates Street Community Garden Steering Committee. (see bylaw and governance recommendations attached)
 Secunder: Neil
Motion carried
 2. Approve 2024 YSCG budget. (see attachment)
 Secunder: Doug
Motion carried
 3. Appoint Lisa Small as YSCG coordinator.
 Secunder: Doug
Motion carried
 4. Approve Financial Policy amendment (see attachment) specific to YSCG.
 Secunder: Jordan
Motion carried
 5. Approve any third-party grants or sponsorships to YSCG. Retroactive blanket approval of all 2024 grant received.
 Secunder: Jordan
Motion carried
 NOTE: For any future grants, each grant would require individual approval. A future decision will determine whether approvals are to be made by the Board or by the Executive committee.
- The following motion was deferred:
 1. Question of creation of additional committees emerging out of Climate Solutions Committee and Victoria Coolkit cohort (Dawn)
- A discussion took place to clarify which staff can update the YSCG website
- No updates from City Councillor regarding city liquor policy.

Meeting concludes

Next Meeting: Tuesday, January 21, 2024, at 5:30pm

Executive Committee Report – December 2024

PARC Retirement Living - Sandra and Jordan met with Kaeley Wiseman of Wiser Projects, and Margaret Lucas, Executive Director Business Development, for PARC Retirement Living, to talk about a proposal to develop land on Quadra Street across from Pioneer Square. We talked about community amenities and also suggested that this project, in collaboration with the redevelopment of the Cathedral lands as well as the project being developed for the YWCA might work together to work to create a “village” centre at this overlapping point between the Downtown and Fairfield neighbourhoods. On behalf of the VCAN project to increase the number of Garry Oaks in the neighbourhood, we suggested that this project might consider adding Garry Oaks to their landscaping plan to expand the small cluster of Garry Oaks growing in Pioneer Square.

Meeting at Cathedral with Jonathan Thomas -Sandra was invited to a luncheon at Christ Church to meet with the Dean of the Cathedral, Rev. Jonathan Thomas. The Dean invited a number of services providers from across the city to talk about the issues of concern to service providers as well as their dreams about the future of their work in this city. We discussed the role of a Cathedral and its Dean as an advocate for issues of social justice.

Tour of the Oddfellows Hall- James and Sandra met with Jim Stevens, a member of the Oddfellows Hall on Douglas Street and had a tour of the upstairs facility. The Oddfellows are currently looking for a new tenant to occupy the space vacated by 7-Eleven. We discussed the need to revitalize Douglas Street and suggested possible businesses that would be helpful to Downtown residents. Jim invited members of the DRA to become members of the Oddfellows which would give us access to the meeting spaces upstairs.

VCAN Garry Oak mapping project -Sandra was in contact with Brendan Neilson, Executive Director of the Anglican Diocese, and Sarah Murray, staff member at Wiser Projects, to ask whether it is possible to include Garry Oaks in the planting scheme for the Cathedral redevelopment project. Carollyne Yardley, lead on the VCAN mapping project and Ryan Senechal, arborist with the Garry Oak Meadow Restoration Project Society, have examined the landscaping plans for the Cathedral redevelopment and believe Garry Oaks would be appropriate in this plan. A meeting with everyone involved will be set up in January.

OCP Review – Sandra has reached out to Andrea Hudson, Planning Department, to set up a meeting to talk about the Wiser report commissioned by the DRA in anticipation of the OCP Review. A meeting with Councillor Coleman is still outstanding.

Land Use Committee expansion- Plans are underway to create a landing page for Land Use projects on the DRA website. The goal is to describe in plain language the projects that are currently under development and to increase the skills of residents to understand how the development process works at the City. Possible community engagement

activities include book clubs or gatherings in which key policy documents can be reviewed and discussed.

Regional Community Safety and Wellbeing – The CRD is currently working with the Canadian Centre for Safer Communities to examine options for the creation of a Regional Community Safety and Well-being Plan. A survey is now online which seeks to gather information from organizations and interested parties about local experiences and needs to be shared with the CRD Board in 2025. You can fill out the survey at:

<https://crd.checkbox.ca/identifying-regional-possibilities-for-community-safety--well-being-in-the-capital-regional-district>

Council Liaison Appointments - The DRA was pleased to hear that Councillor Thompson has been reappointed to serve as Council Liaison for the remainder of the Council term. Councillor Thompson will remain the Council Liaison until the next municipal election in October 2026.

Financial Review – Sandra and James met with Dwight Aranha, DRA bookkeeper, to discuss early projections for our end of year financial statements. Dwight has recommended that we establish a policy of designating that interest earned in our bank account be moved to an internally restricted contingency fund.

FOR ACTION:

Moved: That the DRA designate the interest earned on funds held in the DRA bank account to moved to an internally restricted fund to be held as a contingency fund, the terms of use of such funds to be developed at a future date.

Climate Solutions Committee

December Report

ShareNserve / Zero Waste Update:

- * The City has erroneously published that there is a financial cost for community use. It is free.
- * Item collection continues
- * In January, Dawn and Kris will apply for a CRD grant to make a permanent home for the project

Escape Room Debrief: The Escape Room is available for use, especially indoor use at this time. Janet will contact a student teacher who may want to facilitate school use.

Steps Taken to Reduce Fossil Fuel Use in Your Buildings: Four members have moved their strata buildings step(s) closer to electrification!! Electrical Planning Report quotes vary hugely for the same building.

Air Conditioning Survey Update: This survey has been folded into the Mapping Project. Rachel stressed the need to clarify between AC in common spaces (which might be quite common) and AC in individual units.

Boulevard Garden: Jet reported that there is not permission for her proposed site for a boulevard garden and that she is continuing to investigate alternative locations.

Given that there is now a boulevard garden 'network' encompassing a variety of Victoria neighbourhood associations, it was agreed that this project should be a separate committee. Jet volunteered to chair the committee.

Business Heat Pump Project: Mike and Kris, as part of the Climate Solutions Committee, are interested in engaging with other small businesses in their efforts at retrofitting. It is hoped to launch this project with a workshop in March 2025.

Truth and Reconciliation: Acts of truth and reconciliation are embedded in our mandate and will be addressed by the newly formed Truth & Reconciliation Committee consisting of Dawn, Rachel, Janet and Jet..

Sacred Cradle House: Transitional housing for Indigenous mothers and birthers experiencing housing precarity and substance use when discharged from hospital is opening his month. Committee members will support the project through a variety of actions, such as donating gift baskets for the new mothers and, at the suggestion of the house manager, co-organizing social get-togethers throughout the year.

Further actions in the neighbourhood, such as settler historical awareness, will be discussed at the next meeting.

Community Engagement Tom reported on participating in the Camosun College 'Retrofit Fair', in partnership with a variety of other local organizations (including Vancouver Island Strata Owners Association). Unfortunately, there was very limited public attendance and this approach may not be the most effective strategy for engaging with the public. We continue to experiment and search for effective climate mitigation engagement strategies.

Meeting with CRD: Dawn and Megan (from Vic West Coolkit) met with Sam and Megan (from the CRD) to discuss:

As part of our ongoing efforts to accelerate climate action in the region, we are seeking input on how the CRD can better support and mobilize our communities.

Here are the questions we'll be asking you:

- *Describing your organization's mandate. What is your role?*
- *How do you typically engage or involve your community? Who is your target audience?*
- *Describing any current climate action initiatives your organization is involved in.*
- *What successes and challenges/barriers have you encountered in these efforts?*
- *What sorts of support and resources would help you mobilize your community more effectively? Do you see the CRD playing a role in that?*

Bluesky Rachel continues to post relevant links to Coolkit's instagram account (which now has 100 followers) and committee members agreed with her suggestion to create a Bluesky account, the increasingly popular alternative to X/Twitter.

Small Business, Big Impact Event

Three members attended and tabled at this incredible climate mitigation event hosted by our downtown neighbour, the Synergy Foundation. Like-minded, hard-working, inspirational folk gathered for networking, snacks, and learning. We left with big smiles and renewed motivation.



Neighbourhood Engagement Coordinator Report - December 2024

Updates since last board meeting:

Queer Open Stage - The November edition took place on November 20th and was attended by approximately 45 people.

Emergency Preparedness - The pilot with two Downtown stratas (Regents Park and Yates on Yates/Vivid at the Yates) is going well and we have had great participation from residents. Approximately 65 people have attended at least one of the two workshops that we have hosted at Regents Park and we have a smaller but very enthusiastic group of 11 people from Yates/Vivid participating in the program. Residents have formed into neighbour action groups and have started to work on projects that they selected as a larger group. The next round of workshops will take place during the second week of January.

Funding Applications - The proposal that we submitted to the OUR DWTN Ideas Fund has been added to their eligibility roster. The program received a significant number of applications, with funding requests exceeding five times the available funding. City staff will be in touch soon to confirm if the outdoor film screening that we proposed will receive funding. We submitted our Community Gaming Grant application before the November 30th deadline and should receive notification by February 28th.

Upcoming events:

Queer Open Stage - The December event is happening on Wednesday, December 18th and the featured performer will be singer-songwriter Hoelune.

Communications and Membership Committee Report – December 2024

Update on Committee activities since the November 2024 report:

- **Newsletter / Other Communications to Members:**
 - The November newsletter was issued on November 19. Statistics from Mail Chimp indicate that it was opened by 38.7% of subscribers.
 - The most viewed items were the Land Use Development Tracker and the Poet Laureate announcement.
- **Web site**
 - We continue to add posts to the News page and add events to the Events page of our website.
 - 290 site sessions for October (down 20% from the previous month). The most viewed posts were the community plans 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 - 3 posts, 1069 followers
 - Instagram - 2 posts, 1171 followers
- **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.
 - 2 new newsletter subscribers since the last report

Submitted by
Doug Boyd
Chair, Communications and Membership Committee

Yates Street Community Garden (YSCG) Bylaw and Governance Follow Up and Recommendations

Issue 1: The Victoria Downtown Residents' Association (VDRA) Board has not formally appointed the Chair of the Urban Ecology and Agriculture Committee per Section 4.1 of the YSCG bylaws.

The governance committee recommends that the Chair of the Urban Ecology and Agriculture Committee be formally appointed by the VDRA Board no later than the last Board meeting of 2024, and a list of Steering Committee members be sent to the VDRA or posted on the YSCG website. The YSCG Steering Committee should send an updated list of its members when there are changes as soon as reasonably possible.

Issue 2: Section 4.2.1.9 of the YSCG bylaws seems to be in conflict with Sections 5.3 in terms of who approves expenses.

After reviewing the language of the YSCG bylaws, the governance chair is satisfied the two sections are not in conflict with each other. The VDRA approves the budget and holds the funds for the YSCG based on Sections 4.2.1.10 and 5.3. The Steering Committee is allowed to operate within the approved budget per Sections 4.2.1.9 and 5.1. Sections 5.2 allows the Steering Committee to ask the VDRA Board for additional expense approvals should the initial budget be exceeded.

Issue 3: The VDRA Board has not formally approved the 2024 YSCG budget as outlined in Sections 4.2.1.9 and 4.2.1.10 of the YSCG bylaws. The governance committee recommends the following:

1. The YSCG Steering Committee formally submit a 2024 budget to the VDRA Board using the 2023 actual budget that was conveyed by the Chair of the Urban Ecology and Agriculture Committee. A template of this 2023 budget has already been drafted by the governance chair and can be used to expedite the process. This should be done prior to the last VDRA Board meeting of 2024.
2. The VDRA Board approves a YSCG budget of \$14,183.67 (inclusive of the garden coordinator contract) as per the 2023 actuals no later than the last Board meeting of 2024. Any expenses exceeding the above amount need to be approved by the VDRA Board as per Section 5.2. Therefore Nicholas is instructed that he cannot reimburse expenses submitted once the budget of \$14,183.67 is exceeded during the fiscal year.
3. The VDRA Board approves the contract of Lisa Small as the YSCG coordinator for a contract of \$10,000 for the 2024 fiscal year no later than the last Board meeting of 2024.
4. The YSCG Steering Committee should formally submit a 2025 budget prior to the third VDRA Board meeting of 2025.
5. VDRA Board continue to approve the YSCG budget on an annual basis, and should have an obligation to pro-actively do so.

Issue 4: Clarity is required in Sections 5.3 of the YSCG bylaws where "all YSG funds (with the exception of \$100 in petty cash) be held and administered by the DRA".

The governance chair is satisfied that the processes for expense approvals is being followed with at least two (2) signatures from the Board as per the VDRA bylaws. The governance committee recommends that the financial policy recently passed in mid-2024 be posted on the VDRA website as part of the governance documents.

Issue 5: Section 5.8 of the YSCG bylaws require DRA approval of any and all grants and sponsorships, but this has not been formally done.

If there were any grants and sponsorships that were awarded by third parties to the YSCG specifically, then the governance committee recommends that the VDRA Board formally approve them no later than the last Board meeting of 2024.

Issue 6: Section 7.1 of the YSCG bylaws require the minutes of the Steering Committee, working group and annual meeting be posted on the YSG website or distributed to the members, but the governance committee has not seen them yet.

The Chair of the Urban Ecology and Agriculture Committee has indicated that monthly meeting minutes and the minutes from the annual member's meetings are taken/recorded, and then posted in the YSCG garden shed afterwards. The governance committee recommends that these meeting minutes also be uploaded to the VDRA's Dropbox repository for record keeping and can be viewed internally by the VDRA. This action should be done prior to the last VDRA Board meeting of 2024.

All future meeting minutes and the minutes from future annual member's meeting should be uploaded online in addition to being posted on the garden shed.

Issue 7: Section 8.1 of the YSCG bylaws require VDRA Board approval of any amendments, should any be necessary.

Based on the correspondences that the governance chair has received so far, there are no indications that the bylaws or governance documents have been updated since their initial adoption and that nothing indicates that these procedures haven't been followed yet. This issue is considered closed.

Issue 8: A question was raised about whether or not DRA's liability insurance covers the YSCG steering committee and its volunteers?

This is still an outstanding issue after discussing with a few more individuals. James is following up with Ian Ward from Acera Insurance, and Ian has indicated that they should be able to respond by the end of week (November 22, 2024). If there is no response from Acera by that time, Jeremy will personally follow up via phone.

This issue does not impact the governance or operations of the YSCG as the VDRA has other events and volunteering efforts that would fall under a similar issue/umbrella. Whatever the outcome of this will allow the VDRA to best plan for future events, and work closely with our underwriters.

Below in blue is the correspondence that is contrary to what the VDRA believes is covered under our liability insurance:

Hi Doug,

I have reviewed the correspondence between you and Amanda, including the by-laws of the VDRA and YSCG.

I have attached the D&O policy wordings for your review and bring to your attention the definitions of Insured and Insured Person:

Insured means any:

(i) **Insured Person**; or

(ii) **Corporation**.

Insured Person means any:

(i) natural person who was, now is or shall be an **Executive**, volunteer, or **Employee** of the **Corporation**; or

(ii) **Board Observer**, but solely for a **Board Observer Claim**

As the YSCG is a separate entity, although governed to a certain extent by the VRDA, it is my interpretation that this D&O coverage would not apply to the volunteers of the YSCG.

I hope this helps.

Certainly reach out if you have additional questions.

Thank you,

Ian