

DRA Board Meeting April 24 2013

Held at Victoria Silver Threads

Present: Wendy Bowkett; Ian Sutherland; Cathy Brankston; Councillor Lisa Helps.

Regrets: Robert Florida; Hugh Kruzel.

Meeting called to order at 7:05 pm.

1. Approval of Agenda: Approved with one change; Councillor's report moved to first agenda item.

2. Approval of minutes of Jan 30th meeting. Approved.

3. Councillor's Report; Lisa Helps

The Janion property and the Plaza Hotel developments will be discussed at a joint meeting of the Heritage Design Committee and the Advisory Design Panel on Wed May 1st. Start time noon. Anyone can attend as an observer.

1075 Pandora Ave, former BCAA site and 1012 Pandora Ave, St Andrew's School site will be discussed at Planning and Land Use committee on Thurs May 2nd. Start time at 8:00 am. The meeting is scheduled for 2 hours.

Lack of timely notification of applications brought before the Planning and Land Use Committee has been a concern for neighbourhood Land Use Committees. Lisa will link notifications to her Facebook page and also send information to Wendy, chair of DRA to add to DRA's sites. Lisa will speak to city staff as regards to present policy. Downtown and Harris Green share borders with North Park, James Bay, Fairfield and Burnside and proposed developments can have a large impact on direct neighbours as dividing lines are down the center of the roadways. i.e.: 1075 and 1012 Pandora Ave are Harris Green and North Park respectively.

Lisa has met with developers and commercial building leasing agents. Economic and business development was the topics of discussion. Property taxes and permitting procedures are a common concern. Mike Miller, a local developer has given suggestions to improve affordability, such as a certain period of property tax exemption in an area which needs revitalization.

Engineering and Public Works, parking services are drafting a report for implementation in fall of 2014. Current policies are being assessed as parking is a concern to residents, tourists and business owners. New ideas are needed as cost of parking and lack of available space seem to be a common perception.

Ian asked Lisa if the councillors had been receiving land use letters sent regarding DRA's position on recent development proposals on the Janion property. Ian had sent two letters to the Johnson St Bridge group regarding the approaches on the bridge. The city had replied, however no changes were evident or further discussion with DRA was initiated. Members of Merrick Architecture, plus a DRA member J.C. Scott have also voiced the same concerns to city planning.

4. Land Use Committee: Ian

1075 Pandora Ave: JCP Properties

Ian spoke to Brian Sikstrom, senior city planner, regarding the FSR component for this proposal. Brian said the parking and the outside hallways are not included in the calculations. Therefore the building takes a larger footprint on the site for the FSR. Ian felt this design was not sustainable, with heat loss occurring from open hallways, noise carried up and echoing through the central area, and wear on so much exposed building. Residents from the Sutton buildings have expressed continued concerns re phase 1; which is the smaller building fronting Johnson St.

This proposal is before the PLUSC on Thurs May 2nd at 8:00 am. City staff are recommending that the project move to Public Hearing.

615/623 Fort St: Allan Lowe Architect

Ian felt the architect had integrated some of DRA's suggestions/concerns. The windows and pilasters have more relief and add a textural quality. This proposal is looking for a land lift, i.e.; more density. The land would need to be re-evaluated and the city will have the final say. A public amenity will still be required and the DRA has expressed opinions on quality and location of such.

603 Pandora Ave: Plaza Hotel: Eric Barker Architects

DRA's letter was sent to city planning and Eric Barker. Several suggestions were acted upon for the heritage and also new built portion. The gate has been brought forward towards the street as the open area was a safety concern. The higher floors on the heritage building have also been set back to be less visible from the street.

This proposal is before Advisory Design Panel Wed May 1st at noon.

950 Wharf: Harbour Air

DRA's letter to the city was positive. The green roof is a welcome amenity for the Regency Hotel residents and other buildings that look down on the site. We are happy to see the temporary trailer of umpteen years will be no more. Harbour Air and the city will have further discussions regarding the property lease.

Lisa mentioned that the city is doing ongoing technical analysis at Ship's Point for soil contamination. She has had many questions from citizens regarding the work that is ongoing at that site.

Portable Signs: Lisa

The city would like to license Portable signs. They can be a nuisance. Some standards for location, size, and amount allowed for each business location could be set.

Hudson Market: Lisa

New opening date is July 13th. A soft opening is planned. Information will be available from DRA's or Lisa's Facebook page.

5. New Business: Wendy

We have 8 new members for the DRA. One person is a non-resident. Non-residents can actively participate in activities, but do not have a vote at the AGM, nor can they chair committees. Anyone interested in being involved in our downtown community is encouraged to join. The neighborhood divisions boundaries set by the city do not always conform to resident's idea of where they live. A recent poll taken by the city had a much larger geographical area designated as downtown by residents. Walking distance to town gives the perception of living in the core.

Communications Strategies:

Wendy has met with Robert Florida, Erika Luebbe, Don Bain, and Eric Ney regarding changes to DRA's website. Suggestions were given to streamline our site. Survey Monkey, a free software program, will be added as communications evolve. Survey Monkey will provide DRA with current information online through questionnaires, reports and data gathering. Suggestions to improve website were to have a consistent message across website, newsletter, Facebook and Twitter. A broader and more original content in our newsletter will be pursued. Possible themes were community development, safety, and homelessness issues. Don Elliot has suggested we create and publish our mission statement and post what the DRA is doing now. Wendy will continue to hold impromptu meetings with new and present members to allow for more active participation. DRA would like to have more board members. This would allow for an equitable distribution of responsibilities as we are all busy people and are not always available for meetings. Welcome back to Wendy and Ian who have been travelling for the past two months. Case in point.

Robert has assumed responsibility for the newsletter. The newsletter will be posted on the 1st day of every month beginning in June. Erika will manage the web site. Wendy will manage Facebook and Twitter. Don and Eric will be available to support web projects.

North Park Meeting: Cathy

Cathy and other DRA members attended a North Park Neighborhood Assoc (NPNA) meeting. Invited guests from Quadra Hillside and James Bay associations also attended.

Paul LaTour of Hero Works spoke about his organization and their ongoing project. Projects are an extreme makeover of a building to benefit non-profit associations. Mustard Seed is the current beneficiary. Work is done for extremely limited money by donations of material and time. This will be an 8-day renovation valued at \$ 350,000.00. May 24 to June 2nd, with a food and fund raising campaign set for June 2nd. Website is herowork.com for further information.

Al Gallupe of NPNA presented a report on the St Andrews School / Bosa / Blue Sky proposed development. NPNA have many concerns that have not been resolved. This development will be similar in size and scale as the Hudson site at Douglas and Fisgard. Some of the other concerns are the entry/egress route on Mason St which is a narrow one-way residential street. The commercial aspect includes a large destination grocery store, possibly 32,000 square feet. This will put enormous pressure on Vancouver St also. Vancouver St is designated as bike friendly greenway. Planned are 270 parking spaces with much vehicle and truck traffic to service the grocery store.

A lively discussion was held. Great concern that this development, if passed in its present scope, will set a precedent for all neighborhoods.

NPNA has been very active with letter writing, phone calls and on-site walk-around with city councillors.

Many meetings have been held with Bosa/Blue Sky also. NPNA is encouraging all concerned to write letters, email and call city staff and councillors. A public hearing will held, anyone can speak if prior sign-up has been arranged. Please visit website npna.ca under NPNA Meeting Minutes to see additional suggestions as to how to make your views known.

Police board meeting. Wendy attended last year and the topic was “ Making more use of on-line reporting – non- emergency calls “. This years event is scheduled for Tues May 21st. Wendy will attend.

Roving Refinery: An event is planned for the last week in May. Information will soon be available on website, Facebook and Twitter. Sign-up early as numbers will be limited.

Postponed Business: Tabled till next meeting.

Meeting was adjourned at 8:35 pm

Date for next Meeting; Wed May 29th at Silver Threads.