

DRA BOARD MEETING MINUTES

August 26th 2014

Location: 1715 Government Street

Meeting called to order at 5:38 pm.

Present: Wendy Bowkett, Nicholas Harrington, Erika Luebbe, Eric Ney, Ian Sutherland, Kaela Schramm (Board members); Lisa Helps (City Councillor)

Regrets: Robert Florida, Doug Boyd, Cathy Brankston

1. Approval of Agenda: Approved.
2. Approval of minutes of July 22nd meeting: Approved with corrections noted (see tracked changes)
3. Business arising from Minutes
 - DVBA's request for a downtown condo building to volunteer for the Organic Waste Collection Pilot Program was discussed at the past two board meetings. We are waiting to hear back from Doug Boyd to see if his strata would be interested. As Doug wasn't in attendance, this issue will be revisited at the next board meeting.
4. Councillor's Report: Lisa
 - City Council has decided to issue call for "expressions of interest" (i.e. proposals to lease or buy) for the Crystal Garden. This is the City's decision in response to the recent interest expressed by Macaloney Brewers & Distillers Ltd. to lease the Crystal Garden from the City for the purpose of establishing a new Scotch Whiskey distillery, restaurant and tasting room on the site. Some council members (Councillor Helps included) fear that this step could delay working with Macaloney Brewers & Distillers Ltd, and ultimately see them choose an alternate site.
 - Councillor Helps' reported last month that Council had voted unanimously in support of the motion put forth by Councillors Isitt and Gudgeon for reduced speed limits on specific sections of roadway within Victoria. Following on that announcement, the new speed limit signage is scheduled to be installed by the end of 2014, with monitoring of these sections of roadway and data gathering ongoing throughout 2015.
 - The Downtown Victoria Business Association (DVBA) is proposing a Car Free Day, a form of community street festival, to be modelled after Vancouver's Car Free Day which has been a successful annual event since 2005.
 - Local event promotor John Vickers (Victoria International Chalk Art, Buskers and Kite Festivals), has proposed closing Government Street to traffic for a total of 30 days in 2015. No further details were available.
5. Community Development Committee: Kaela

The next Victoria Matters event is to be an "All-Mayoral Candidates Meeting" to take place on October 29, 2014 at the Victoria Events Centre. The next Roving Refinery will be at the [Lido Waterfront Bistro](#) on

September 30th, from 6 - 8 pm. The next committee meeting will be held Thurs September 4th, 5:30pm at Lido Waterfront Bistro.

6. Healthy Living Committee: Eric

The meeting scheduled for Wednesday, August 20th, 2014 was cancelled. Eric advised that the location for meetings will be permanently changed to the Veneto Tapa Lounge. Nicholas agreed to populate the first survey into Survey Gizmo, and send the link out to board members to do a "test run" on completing the survey. The next Healthy Living Committee meeting is scheduled for Wed Sept 17th 5:30pm at the Veneto Tapa Lounge.

7. Land Use Committee: Ian

Alpha Project Developments - 920 Yates Street

A CALUC meeting was held on Thursday, August 14, 2014 to discuss the proposal by [Alpha Project Developments Ltd.](#), which calls for a mixed residential / retail building designed by de Hoog & Kierulf Architects to be built at 920 Yates Street, a site, currently occupied by the Philip Nyren Clothing Store. This project, which is set to start next year, will be the tallest building in the area at 17 stories. Ian noted that the features and construction materials are more comparable to the [Aria](#) (737 Humboldt Street) than they are to the [Mondrian](#) (1090 Johnson Street), Alpha's most recent development.

Custom House - 816 Government Street

A second iteration of the design plan was recently presented to the DRA Land Use Committee (LUC) at Paul Merrick's office. This version was much more well received than the initial version which was first unveiled at the CALUC meeting held in early May. The LUC acknowledges that progress is being made towards an acceptable outcome, but many details remain. In the updated design, storeys have been removed and the roof lines simplified for both the proposed new building on Government Street and the heritage wing fronting onto Wharf Street. Cielo Properties, the developer, has resubmitted the plans to the City, but has not yet applied for the necessary heritage alteration permit.

Hudson Walk Update - The Townline Group of Companies

Hudson Walk, [promoted](#) by developer Townline as "a new urban village in the Uptown District of Victoria's downtown", is planned to rise out of the pit in the earth that currently exists at the south west corner of Blanshard Street and Caledonia Avenue. All of the residential units are to be rental, with ground floor retail. Planned as "a mixed-use, multi-family residential community with ground floor retail, shops and restaurants", Townline is now asking for a variance to put ground level town homes facing Caledonia instead of the required commercial space. The LUC has agreed in principle with the variance request. As this is just a variance to the Development Permit and not a rezoning, it could be approved in as little as 90 days.

The Sawyer Building - 840 Fort Street - Three Point Properties

With an average unit's living area in the range of 425 square feet, perhaps the best way to bill this development would be as "Micro Rental Units". The [website](#) promotes the project as offering "41 strata-titled residential rental suites", which "offer excellent first time home-buyer value as well as strong rental opportunities for investors", in addition to "1,500' of prime retail space". LUC Chair Ian's recent conversation with the City indicated that the latest incarnation of the plan has added many more residential units - up to 59 from the initial 41. The City has concerns about "livability" in the lower units, and the LUC is disappointed by the build quality, which is characterized by the use of HardiePlank exterior cladding. At this point, the official status or timeline of the project is not known.

Former Van City location - Blanshard & Broughton

The building at the north east corner of Blanshard Street & Broughton Street, the former Van City location, has been vacant for several years now, but we understand that the property has recently been purchased by Fort Realty Ltd. The new owner wants to use the existing building for retail, and has not requested any density increase. The issue that the new owner is facing, is that the property is currently zoned "CHP-OB" (Cathedral Hill Precinct Office Building District), the only allowed used for which are office, accessory uses for office, high tech, and call centre. The owner will need to obtain a zoning change in order to use the property for their intended purpose. Technically, this property is in Fairfield, but the Fairfield Gonzales Community Association have indicated that they aren't interested in looking at the issue until it is introduced at a CALUC meeting.

8. Communications Committee: Nicholas/Erika

Nicholas reported that there were several responses to the Newsletter's Mystery Photo Contest in August, and that the winner was Ellen H., who has been mailed her prize. He will continue with more obvious mystery photos as they at least get some response. Nicholas will re-run the call for contributions as a reader replied to the call with an offer to write a piece on the former Bottle Depot at Vancouver and View having been transformed into a "mini tech park". Erika will create a form page on the DRA website to allow the public to contribute questions for the mayoral candidates in advance of the Victoria Matters event. The next communications meeting is to be advised by Wendy, likely at the Vento Tapa Lounge.

9. New Business: Wendy

VCAN - Victoria Community Association Network

The next meeting of the Victoria Community Association Network (VCAN) takes place on September 9, 2014. Two DRA board members have committed to represent the DRA at this meeting.

Base Grant

Wendy advised the Board that the DRA's base grant had been increased for the coming year.

Business Cards

Wendy surveyed Board members present about what to change for the next batch of business cards, as the current batch is almost gone.

Town Hall Meeting: Livability Solutions for Downtown YYJ

Wendy announced that the Antechamber at City Hall had been booked for our "Town Hall" style event to take place on October 1st, 2014. A host of "key city stakeholders" will be invited to provide expert insight into what solutions are workable. Rob Woodland and Chief Elsner have already confirmed that they will attend. Wendy advised that this event was to be run under the agency of the Healthy Living Committee, as it clearly falls under the HLC's mandate. Wendy will research which issues affect residents of other cities, in order to learn what solutions are workable. A brief discussion was held to consider possible formats for the event.

Meeting adjourned at 7:40 pm

Next Board meeting: Tuesday September 23rd @ 5:30 pm, at the DVBA offices