

## **DRA BOARD MEETING DRAFT MINUTES**

**21 July 2015**

Location: Greater Victoria Public Library

735 Broughton St

**Present:** Co-Chairs Kaela Schramm and Nicholas Harrington, Board members Cathy Brankston, Erika Luebbe, Ian Southerland, Eric Ney, Don Elliott, Ruth Annis, Karen Gallagher, Kelly Chirhart, Robert Florida. City Councillor Charlayne Thornton-Joe. DRA member Wendy Bowkett. Invited speakers Mike Woestenburg and Rob Woodland.

**Regrets :** Doug Boyd

Meeting called to order at 5:35 pm. Cathy Brankston volunteered to act as secretary.

**1. Approval of Agenda:** by consensus.

**2. Approval of Minutes of 16 June 2015:** by consensus.

**3. Housing and Homelessness in Downtown Victoria:** Presentations and discussions.

a. Mike Woestenburg: a member of the Greater Victoria Coalition to End Homelessness Speaker's Bureau was introduced. The speaker's bureau is comprised of volunteers who speak to groups regarding different topics, such as addiction, homelessness, and First Nation issues. Mike shared his personal history, explaining his disability, which has affected his ability to work. He spoke of his housing experience in Surrey, and his eventual arrival in Victoria to be nearer family. He has managed to go from staying with relatives, to a place at Rock Bay Shelter, and is now living in a small unsubsidized apartment. He mentioned the difficulty of living on a disability income. Mike feels he was fortunate to have been able to participate in a transition and employment program. Having his own place has allowed him to pursue options to continue making items such as dream catchers and eventually hopes to mentor others using his skills as a graphic artist. Mike answered relevant questions from board members.

b) Greater Victoria Coalition to End Homelessness: Don Elliott, DRA board member and housing development co-ordinator, presented an overview of the Creating Homes Enhancing Communities Plan (CHEC). The coalition is a partnership of all levels of government, service providers, business and community members and others. The coalition coordinates efforts and drives commitment to end homelessness throughout the region. This four year plan (2015-2019) is focused on providing safe, affordable, appropriate, and secure housing with support, on an individualized basis for the chronic homeless population. The group that is currently using shelter beds and/or living on the streets, approximately 367 people. A two-pronged approach focusing on housing and support. Support would comprise of assisting individuals in housing selection, independent living skills, financial literacy, and maintaining treatment participation for health or substance abuse issues. The plan calls for 185 units to

be made available over the next four years. Options to obtain required funding for homes and support are part of the report. Don answered questions from other board members, and said he would distribute the plan by email to all board members.

c) City of Victoria Action Plan for Housing Supports and City Services for Sheltering in Parks: Rob Woodland -Director of Legislative and Regulatory Services for the City of Victoria presented the City's plan of action to address the immediate homelessness issues. The coalition plan is distinct from long term housing initiative ,and fully supported by City and CRD. More of a crisis plan for the immediate needs. Micro Housing , overnight camping in a designated park, and more focus on obtaining rent supplements from Provincial Government are priorities. A local group is working with the city on a concept for micro housing . A ½ acre site, preferably paved and with a 2/3 year lease, would be sufficient to house approximately 35 people. The city would provide services ie: water, electricity and sewer.

Allowing overnight camping for homeless is being entertained, and the city is checking potential sites. Needs are : close to services and transit, with washrooms available. An over-night site manager, with support from police. Camping location would be on a 1 year term and then move to a new site. Potentially could house 35-50 people. City is developing a budget and site plan. Target is Sept/Oct for approval. The city is drafting a change in the camping in parks bylaw, with a more specific enforcement policy. In the meantime, the city will be providing a full-time crew 7 days a week in the parks to hand out information and maintain city property for all citizen's enjoyment.

The city is also working on having a storage facility available for carts and belongings. Rob answered questions from the board members.

#### **4.Councillor's Report:** Charlayne Thornton-Joe

Charlayne attended the monthly Pandora Community meeting held at Our Place Tues July 21<sup>st</sup>.Local residents, Our Place staff, Police and other interested parties discuss issue and events in the Harris Green neighborhood.

City is still looking for a storage site for the carts and the homeless belongings. Specific needs are central location, on-site management, and funding in place. Perhaps a trial location will be an option.

Government Street Pedestrian mall project. Lov Gov is being planned for Oct, Nov, Jan, and Feb. Once per month in the non busy time of year seems to have more approval from merchants. DRA has sent a letter of support to the city for this pilot project.

The rainbow crosswalk at City Hall on Pandora Ave has had positive support from many.

A 100 year anniversary event is planned for Chinatown on Saturday Aug 8th. A statue honoring Sun Yat-Sen will be unveiled. DRA will post info on our sites when available.

JSB : Johnson Street Bridge approach is still on city's agenda, not highest priority at this time. DRA and Vic West will definitely be included in the discussions. Ian, other board and DRA members have been pursuing this issue for 1 year now.

The two-way cycling lane on sections of Pandora Ave has been implemented .City has received positive feedback from cyclists. Eventually, the lane will reach the JSB .

City has requested the Downtown Community Activity Centre, located at 755 Pandora Ave, to work with the DRA to facilitate a greater use of the space by all downtown residents.

**5. Community Development Committee:** Kaela.

Report is tabled till next meeting. August meeting date TBA.

**6. Urban Liveability :** Eric and Nicholas

Questions and complaints have arisen regarding the current construction work at the Hudson development site. The city engineering dept granted a noise violation permit, and work is occurring 7 days a week. The police have attended twice. Charlayne stated she would investigate the noise exemption process to ensure the effect on all nearby areas are taken into consideration.

Eric and Nicholas are drafting a letter to the city expressing DRA's support for the city initiative "Growing in the City". Janet Strauss, a DRA member, is a member of the City's Support for Local Food Systems committee. Janet is leading DRA's vision to ensure community gardens become a reality in downtown Victoria. Eric will email the letter to board members for approval. Charlayne suggested adding the city directives to enhance and steward green spaces and food systems listed in objective 8 in the latest strategic plan. Next meeting TBA.

**7. Land Use Committee:** Ian

JSB: Land Use is waiting for a first meeting with the city. Tomorrow will be the one year anniversary from our original meeting request.

Northern Junk : A Public meeting is scheduled for Tues July 28<sup>th</sup> 5:30 pm. Victoria Executive Centre 3<sup>rd</sup> floor 915 Fort St. Notices have been distributed to all affected neighbors. A large turnout is expected.

Government St Charette: DVBA is arranging a planning meeting to be held Sept 16th at The Bard and Banker. Further details will be listed on DRA's web sites.

**8. Downtown Service Providers:** Report tabled. Next meeting TBA.

**9. VCAN:** Report tabled as Doug is absent. Next meeting TBA.

Meeting was adjourned at 7:25pm

**Next DRA Board meeting is Tues Aug 18 2015 5:30 pm** Location : Greater Victoria Public Library