

DRA Board Meeting Minutes

19 April 2016

Location: Songhees Meeting Room, Victoria City Hall

Present: Board Members: Ruth Annis, Wendy Bowkett, Ian Sutherland, Kaela Schramm, Eric Ney, Nicholas Harrington, Cathy Brankston, Erika Luebbe, Doug Boyd, City Councillor Margaret Lucas, City Downtown Community Development Coordinator, Michael Hill.

Regrets: Karen Gallagher, Don Elliott, Robert Florida.

Meeting called to order: at 5:35 by Kaela.

1. Approval of agenda. Approved by Ian, second by Wendy. Nicholas added one item under new business.

2. Approval of minutes of 15 March 2016 meeting. Approved after discussion.

3. Approval of minutes of 16 February 2016 meeting. Tabled.

4. Councillor's report: Margaret Lucas (Charlayne was unable to attend).

- Margaret is council liaison for James Bay and shares duties with Charlayne for Downtown/Harris Green. Margaret is prime for business issues in our area.
- James Bay Neighbourhood Association hosted a meeting last week with the developers from the Empress Hotel. Conceptual plans, basically a block design of new building on previous PCL bus site. Inside and outside building restorations/renovations. Emphasis on restoring outside gardens along Belleville St to bring the public back to the Empress and give everyone an opportunity to walk through the grounds.
- DVBA has planned a second annual Car Free YYJ Day on June 19th, along Douglas Street from Chatham to Courtney. Website www.downtownvictoria.ca. Volunteers needed. Six hours of entertainment, have fun, chance to meet with neighbours. DRA will host a booth. Car Free Day organizers want used bicycles to erect an innovative bike sculpture along Douglas Street. Tentative plans to donate bicycles to Habitat afterwards.
- DVBA has narrowed selection of a new executive director and is expecting the chosen candidate to start by June.

- Open Space, 2nd floor, 510 Fort Street, will present Civic Heritage Trust 50 Years of Revival on May 24th. Special Old Town Reunion moderated by Martin Segger.
- Tourism Victoria reported an 80% hotel occupancy in Victoria for the month of March, an all-time record. Amazing media coverage in Vogue Magazine and Toronto Star “Why Victoria should be your next Weekend Getaway”.
- Jocelyn Jenkyns, Deputy City Manager, is compiling a report on Airbnb. Significant concerns regarding the loss of affordable housing. This report will cover all of Victoria, however Downtown and James Bay are most affected. San Francisco has come to agreement with Airbnb to charge assessments to create a more level playing field with hotels.
- Downtown “Friday Night Street Party” was discussed. Security, safety, garbage collection were the biggest issues.
- Tent City on Provincial property was also discussed. Portland Hotel Society has been brought in to live and manage site 24/7. The key objective is to transition people to housing by September. Regional Director, Roger Butcher from BC Housing is involved in discussions. Question was “will there always be more moving in as current people are placed in housing”. Yes. Many of the original occupants have been given accommodation at My Place and Choices. Significant amount of unemployed workers are moving from Alberta to Kamloops, Kelowna, Penticton, and Victoria.

5. City Liaison report: Michael Hill

For complete details of Michael’s report, “Downtown April Update”, see pages 7-12

- Biketoria cycling path report is scheduled April 24th.
- DVBA’s Douglas Street project introduction has been deferred to just before the May long weekend. This will be the kick-off to our public realm plan and way-finding initiative. Fresh new look. Tenders out right now.
- This Thursday, Committee of the Whole will decide on a bylaw amendment regarding overnight sheltering for 4 parks. Report is on-line. A very strong response from neighbours and neighbourhood associations.
- New art installation on Centennial parkade staircase. Yates Street parkade will have an interactive art display soon.
- Earth Walk is being held on April 23rd.
- Times Colonist 10k run Sun April 24th.

- MEC Bikefest will be held from 10am - 4pm on April 30th (website: events.mec.ca).
- Ship's Point Pop-Up design contest coming soon. A DRA board member is on the jury.
- Community land use process meetings are continuing.
- BC Transit priority bus lane meeting tomorrow April 20th.
- JSB public realm update, work will proceed with continued community discussion.
- City's new security firm Footprint Security (www.footprintssecurity.com) will be responsible for commissionaire's duties and Late Night...Great Night! security. Mandate is a focus on customer service, more supportive, not policing. Moving around town more.

6. Community Development Committee: Wendy

- The last Roving Refinery was held at the Hilton Double Tree's Table 21. A smaller turnout than usual.
- Wendy has canvassed many businesses to host coming events, however all visited were not interested at this time. Busy season is starting, so September would be a better fit for all. Options are a rebranding, with more promotion on our website, twitter, and Facebook to reach out to more downtown residents. Perhaps charging a nominal fee, that we could then donate, would ensure attendance.
- Regarding the "Party in the Parklet" that was proposed last summer, but ultimately postponed, we should relook at planning this event before September. Mike suggested another location for an event could be the empty parking lot beside the Italian Deli on Blanshard.
- **Victoria Matters update:** Thanks to Kaela for submitting the Strategic Planning grant application. Meeting scheduled for Tuesday April 26, 5 pm at City Hall with Charlayne and Marianne to plan event and decide which other community partners should be invited

Next CDC meeting: 5:30 pm, Thursday May 5th at The Drake

7. Urban Livability Committee: Eric/Nicholas

- The last meeting took place on April 13th, and was attended by Nicholas and Eric. Going forward with the "Pipe Down" campaign was the sole topic of

discussion. Eric advised that he does not have the time to coordinate the initiative, and therefore will poll the DRA board to assess who is interested in committing to proceeding. Marketing material and a plan are needed. The latest conversations with police were last spring. A discussion was held. Doug suggested reaching out for volunteers through social media.

- **Update on downtown community garden:** The city made the official announcement last week. No official name has been chosen as yet. The Greater Victoria Placemaking Network, City Studio Victoria, City of Victoria and the DRA are involved. The Steering Committee is comprised of 5 members. Nicholas Harrington, Janet Strauss, and Bronwyn from the DRA, Donna McKenna and Zinnia Clark from Cool Aid. Meetings are held weekly. The committee has met with Katie Hamilton and Virginie Lavallee-Picard from City of Victoria, and Sarah from the University. Discussions were held to implement a basic management structure, questions and answers to introduce into the course material. The university course is scheduled May 9 - May 30. The garden would then be turned over to DRA. Nicholas will send an expression of interest request to Katie to secure insurance coverage. Nicholas has also applied for a strategic plan grant.

7. Land Use Committee: Ian

- **952 Johnson St: McCalls Funeral Home.** Daniel and Stephen Cox. CALUC meeting took place March 5th. Subsequently, new information from the city stated only a special use permit was required, not a CALUC. Rezoning will be required eventually. The heritage designation should be completed before then.
- **721 Government St: Empress Hotel. Bosa.** Pre-CALUC meeting with LUC members took place March 22nd regarding development of old bus depot site. Conceptual design. Simple massing. How to fit in with the neighbourhood. Ruth mentioned Humboldt Valley Committee concerns at the CALUC meeting. She stated that the Bosa architect then met her at the Humboldt Valley condo sites, and took many pictures from different floors. A meeting is scheduled with HVC and Bosa this Thursday April 21st. Ian and Wendy will attend.
- **CALUC process review:** 2nd meeting April 6, next meeting April 20th. Ian explained that every 5 years this process is looked at. No significant changes. UDI (Urban Development Institute) is working separately with city staff on the process review.

- **Biketoria update:** Ian sent a letter to the city outlining DRA's concerns, such as: the proposed routes on Government Street, the planned extension of the Government Street Pedestrian Mall to Pembroke Street, commercial loading requirements on Government Street, emergency vehicle access in light of the proposed single lane of traffic on Fort Street, lack of proper traffic modelling. The letter suggested that the City 'pick one route and build it end to end'. Margaret mentioned she has heard significant concerns from other neighbourhoods. The report comes forward from Biketoria to the City's engineering department, who then give their recommendations, in consideration of input from the neighbourhoods and the consulting group. There will still be significant consultation after the initial report. Not one group has said they don't want a bike route.
- **Proposal: Protecting Victoria's Character Homes:** A discussion was held. DRA does not have very many character homes/heritage properties. Decision was made to ask to be invited to the Fernwood or Rockland neighborhood presentation.

8. Governance Committee Update: Wendy

- **New DRA Statement of Purpose:** BC's new Society Act dictates that a society's constitution must only consist of the society's name and its statement of purpose. The Governance committee proposes the following draft statement of purpose for consideration by the DRA Board of Directors: "*The purpose of the Association is to provide a collective voice for residents of the Downtown and Harris Green neighbourhoods to create and promote a desirable urban living environment within the neighbourhood boundaries as defined by the City of Victoria*". A discussion was held. Nicholas moved that the phrase "to create" be replaced by "in order to create". A motion to adopt the draft statement of purpose, as amended, was voted on and passed.
- **Next meeting:** TBA

9. Victoria Community Association Network (VCAN): Doug

- VCAN last met on March 8th, and details of that meeting can be found in the March 15, 2016 board meeting minutes.
- The next VCAN meeting is Tuesday May 10th. Suggested topics include the Burnside Gorge Neighbourhood plan, demolition of older homes, and job descriptions for neighbourhood coordinators.

10. Downtown Service Providers (DSP): Tabled

11. Business Arising from Minutes:

- Ruth spoke on the outcome of the recent transit terminal proposals, both the BC Transit terminal, and that of the Douglas Street commercial buses terminal on. The option chosen was the original proposal that came to the city. There are no increases in the number of buses, just the routings were altered. Approximately 500 buses a day. Some options were a great concern to HVC and Ruth said the area greatly appreciated the level of support from DRA. 150 people attended the HVC meeting. Ruth mentioned the bus route options went from 1 to 5 at one point, was not widely advertised, and caused some upset. The Commercial bus terminal will be on Douglas Street, in front of Crystal Gardens and the BC Transit stop was moved to the north end of the block. The City has stated that this is an 18 month trial. A suggestion from HVC to not take all buses into James Bay was given to transit and city officials. Transit seems to be interested in pursuing a further change. This would significantly reduce traffic through James Bay. Most buses do not have stops in James Bay. Broughton Street could be a better street for a route change.

12. New Business:

- Car Free Day 2016 June 19th 11am-6 pm: DVBA has hired Sarah to run program. DRA's application for a booth is in. Applications will be reviewed in the next few weeks. No certainty until payment is received. Wendy will monitor approval and then send out a shift schedule. Will need volunteers for 2 hour shifts, set-up, and tear-down. Requested west side and a little further from the stage. Nicholas suggested that perhaps we could borrow a pyramid garden, which would help us promote our new community garden. Nicholas or Eric will follow-up.
- Wendy asked if our annual base grant application has been sent to the city. Doug, as treasurer, will follow-up. Usually an email is sent to DRA, nothing received so far.
- **Brianne Czphyha**, Stormwater Management Specialist, City of Victoria Engineering and Public Works, will present the City's Stormwater policy to the DRA at our next board meeting. Time will be allotted for Q&A.

Meeting adjourned: at 7:15 pm.

Next Meeting: Tuesday May 17, 2016, 5:30 pm, Songhees Meeting Room, City Hall