

Newcastle Community Association – Regular Meeting

Tuesday, October 3rd, 2023, at 7 PM on Zoom.

The meeting was called to order by NCA President Karen Kuwica at 7:00 PM.

1) Review and adopt minutes of July 4th, 2023, and September 5th, 2023.

A motion to adopt by Suzanne Groulx and seconded by Janet Buechler.
Passed.

2) New Business

No new business brought forward by members of the Newcastle Community Association (NCA).

3) Vacant /Derelict Property Issues

President Karen Kuwica discussed the issues surrounding 1045 Terminal Avenue (The old Bino's Restaurant).

- 18 calls were placed to Bylaws in August by a NCA member regarding the property regarding people sheltering around and, in the property, and the derelict condition. The property has been breached and there was someone living in there.
- Karen Kuwica also reported that letters had been sent to Bylaws and City Council members regarding the property and its strain on community resources.
- Karen Kuwica received a response from a City Council member that stated that the City was limited in their response to the property as they were governed by the Province of BC Community Charter. Karen Kuwica pointed out that cities like Penticton had enacted their own bylaws to register and permit vacant properties to try and deal with any issues the City might have with them. Currently in Nanaimo, the only recourse the City has with derelict/nuisance properties is to bill the owner for services to the property if they have a nuisance property designation.
- President Karen Kuwica asked the NCA membership how they would like to proceed with issues surrounding the property such as to continue to lobby the City of Nanaimo for changes to the vacant property bylaw or continue the status quo.
- It was suggested that: fencing around the property would help mitigate any fire risk to the community and surrounding buildings like

the Bluebird Motel next door to 1045 Terminal Avenue; and possibly the owner of the motel would be interested in helping with this issue.

- NCA Director Nancy Mitchell, reported that cities which have adopted a vacant property bylaw have added measures such as daily fines for owners who neglect their properties. A good start would be to require property owners to obtain a vacant property permit and have a sign posted with an active phone number to call if there are any issues. It appears the City of Nanaimo doesn't want to go to the effort or expense of creating a registry.
- Present Karen Kuwica was surprised that the City was not interested in pursuing any changes to the vacant property bylaws as it posed a risk to the community and individuals who sheltered in vacant properties such as the person who lost their life in the vacant Caledonia Clinic fire earlier this year.
- NCA Director Darrel Gyorfi felt that this is an emergency issue that required action and the City must deal with it immediately.
- Agreed that this problem will increase and that we need to put the burden of responsibility on the landowner and suggest to City Council those aspects of a vacant building bylaw that could be implemented in Nanaimo under the Community Charter.

4) Update on the Millestone Embankment

- President Karen Kuwica reported that in the next few weeks we will be moving into the rainy season. Last year, a worker was injured on the bank and WCB has now prevented them from accessing the area between November 2023 and March 2024 when conditions are at their worst.
- Karen Kuwica will follow up with Ministry of Transport and Infrastructure as they were to meet with the City of Nanaimo staff to work on long term options for protecting the embankment.
- NCA Director Darrel Gyorfi was also concerned about the one million fry (fish who have recently hatched) to be released into the stream as stream health have been deteriorating over the last 5 years.
- John Holmes offered to follow up, in his role at Department of Fisheries and Oceans, regarding the fry release and give Karen Kuwica or Darrel Gyorfi an update.

5) Development Update

- There were no new developments in the neighbourhood to report.
- Discussion centred on the City of Nanaimo's presentation, Sept 12 2023, on infill proposals specifically affecting the R1 Zone; and suggestions on the NCA's position.
 - It was noted that it was difficult to hear the discussion on Sept 12 as the room was very noisy. Concern was expressed that parking would be an issue with densification and that there may be damage to the heritage buildings in the area.
 - President Karen Kuwica noted that neighbours she spoke to who live in R5 zoning were concerned about preserving the character of the area. Karen Kuwica said that with R8 zoning on an estate home property, a rooming house can be built but not 2 secondary suites which would be more in keeping with the neighbourhood's character. She felt that the City was more interested in densification rather than preservation.
 - It was suggested that the parking bylaws for 66 x 132 foot lots would interfere with re-development of large estate homes and that the City's proposals would have more impact on other neighbourhoods than ours.
 - It was recommended by those present that, regarding future infill policies, the NCA recommend to City Council that:
 - the City of Nanaimo recognize the heritage features of our neighbourhood and give us special consideration like the Old City Quarter;
 - form and character guidelines be included to keep the attributes and character of the neighbourhood; and
 - that the community have an opportunity to give feedback to the City regarding any new developments going into the area.

6) Neighbourhood Updates

President Karen Kuwica reported that she and several NCA Executive Board members were to attend the Emergency Preparedness Seminar being presented on Sept 19 2023 (NB: The meeting was rescheduled to Oct 16 2023).

7) Block Watch Updates

President Karen Kuwica reported that:

- there was a fire behind the German Hall unintentionally set by an unhoused individual;
- the fence to the property at 210 Caledonia had been breached but the property owners have been proactive with getting unauthorized people removed from the property.
- Residents have witnessed drug trafficking at the Chinese memorial gardens as well as sheltering in a vehicle. The RCMP has been informed about the activity.
- there is new management at the Castaway Motel and that a problematic residents has now been evicted.
- There have been issues with garbage and graffiti on the old White Spot property by 250 Terminal Avenue. The overgrowth surrounding the property also needs to be cut back. The property owners have been unresponsive and there has been no communication.

Note: if you see someone who appears to be suffering from mental health distress call the following number. Triage will be performed, services, food or medications will be offered.

AT nighttime: call the RCMP at 250-754-2345

During the day: call **COR** at 250-741-7645 or **ACT** at 250-739-5705

Check out our website at: <https://newcastlecommunityassociation.ca/>

Next meeting: Tuesday, November 7th, 2023, at 7 PM on Zoom.

Meeting adjourned at 8:17 PM.

Submitted by Belinda Climenhaga