

Newcastle Community Association – Regular Meeting

Tuesday, March 5th, 2024, at 7 PM on Zoom

The meeting was called to order by NCA President Karen Kuwica at 7:03 PM.

1) Review and adopt minutes of January/February 2024.

Amendment to Minutes of January 2024

Renee Cooper reported that there was not a break-in at Marine Vista as reported by CST. Gary O'Brien in the January 9th Block Watch update and has requested that they be amended. Renee reported that there was a trespassing incident in December 2023 and that it was resolved quickly and amicably by the RCMP.

- A motion to adopt the minutes, as amended, by Renee Cooper and seconded by Suzanne Groulx. Passed.

2) New Business

The messy sidewalk along Vancouver Avenue by the White Spot was a concern. It appears the maintenance which is the property's owner's responsibility has fallen by the wayside.

- Nancy Mitchell suggested bringing the issue to the City's Public Safety Committee for discussion when they meet in April.
- It was also suggested that the Clean Team be contacted to suggest a clean-up of the area since they do clean sweeps around 250 Terminal Avenue.

3) AGM Discussion

The NCA Executive also decided to conduct a brief AGM next meeting which will be followed by a regular monthly meeting in April.

- President Karen Kuwica announced the NCA was looking for new Directors/Directors at Large and explained the responsibilities involved. She said that it is a flexible position based on personal availability and areas of interest i.e., Emergency Preparedness, or neighbourhood beautification.
- Suzanne Groulx has volunteered to take nominations for Directors positions and confirmed that she has only received one nomination so far.
- Nancy Mitchell will also send out membership renewal emails before the AGM in April. To vote, at the AGM, you need an active membership.
- Karen Kuwica is also looking into adding close caption for those hard of hearing.

4) Newcastle Neighbourhood Priorities and City Consultation

Nancy Mitchell shared the Newcastle Community Associations previous year's priorities when they met with the City in 2023. Based on a survey of the membership.

- *Traffic calming along Stewart Avenue, Safety & Security, and Promoting the Neighbourhood* were the NCA's top priorities.
- This year's meeting with the City to discuss priorities is on May 22 2024. Should we keep the same priorities or bring some new ones forward. We can only present 3 to the City so we would have to substitute new ones for ones previously brought forward.
- A survey will be distributed to the membership to gather feedback on neighbourhood priorities.
- Suggestions were made by the membership about adding cleanliness and safety around the neighbourhood bus shelters; roadway safety continues to be an issue along Stewart Avenue; and a flashing pedestrian crossing on Stewart Avenue is needed. We also need something to benefit the neighbourhood such as a public space or dog park where neighbours can congregate.

5) Community Garage Sale

President Karen Kuwica suggested a Newcastle-wide garage sale as a possible seasonal event for community engagement.

- Marine Vista already organizes a yearly garage sale for their building along Vancouver Avenue.
- Karen Kuwica suggested a date of early May, before Mothers Day and after the long weekend.
- Residents would participate on an individual basis and be responsible for their own set-up and safety, while a volunteer committee would help organize posters and promote the event.

6) NAPSA Report

Nanaimo Area Public Safety Association (NAPSA) Report

- The NAPSA report highlighted a concerning 400% increase in overdoses in Nanaimo, primarily in the South End, Brechin Hill, Newcastle, and downtown areas.

7) The Save Our Streets Coalition (SOS) Report

- The SOS report focused on retailer experiences with theft, inflation, and the estimated costs of \$842.57 households as a result.
- The report was put together by London Drugs and encompasses over 80 members.

8) Nanaimo Neighbourhood Network Updates

Nancy Mitchell who is the Secretary for the Nanaimo Neighbourhood Network (NNN) informed the membership that starting last fall, the NNN was having more regular meetings. The NNN advocates for the shared interest and goals of recognized neighbourhood associations.

- Neighbourhood Associations are preparing for their annual discussion with the City about neighbourhood priorities May 22 2024.
- The NNN has recommended to the City that there be a standing item on the agenda of the newly created City Public Safety Committee to allow for feedback/ presentations from individual community associations.
- The Community Safety Officer (CSO) program downtown was discussed as was the creation of the Public Safety Committee by the City of Nanaimo.

9) Development Updates

- The City has approved the development application for 17 units at 360 Stewart/ 345 Newcastle.
- BC Housing has secured a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the City of Nanaimo to extend the life of 250 Terminal Avenue for another three years.
- BC Housing has also submitted their rezoning application to the City for 250 Terminal Avenue. An Open House will be held on March 11th from 6-8 PM for public engagement regarding 250 Terminal Avenue. It is important for residents to attend to ensure that 250 Terminal Avenue fits into our community and does not have a negative impact on the neighbourhood.
- BC Housing had withdrawn the proposed commercial space on the ground floor of 250 Terminal Avenue, and they were likely to use stick building during construction rather than modular. However, there still isn't a specific timeline from BC Housing for the construction of a new permanent building.
- There were concerns raised about the potential impact on our community and discrepancies in the plans presented such as a proposed six-foot fence instead of the requested nine-foot fence backing onto Vancouver Avenue residential properties.
- The challenges and plans related to temporary and supportive housing for homeless individuals in the neighbourhood were also discussed.
- The NCA Executive will be asking BC Housing for a meeting as a follow-up to the 250 Terminal Open House.

10) Neighbourhood Update

Irene Wende shared an incident of suspicious activity in their complex. This led to a discussion about the role and presence of Community Safety Officers (CSO's).

11) Block Watch Update

Nancy Mitchell noted improvements in the bylaw reporting system and emphasized the importance of reporting all matters to bylaw due to their close collaboration with the CSO's.

- The City of Nanaimo is also going to increase the staffing level and the budget for CSO's which led to a discussion of the potential tax implications for ratepayers.
- Fred MacDonald expressed concerns about the rise in homelessness and the encroachment on tents on public properties in Nanaimo.
- Karen Kuwica noted that there are over a thousand unhoused individuals in Nanaimo and that the appearance of tents on properties i.e., the parking lot of the McDonald's on Terminal Avenue from 11 PM to 8 AM is a safety measure for unhoused individuals.
- She also emphasized the importance of continuing to report crimes to the RCMP for statistics, despite any fatigue with reporting.

Note: if you see someone who appears to be suffering from mental health distress call the following numbers. 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, April 2, 2024, at 7 PM on Zoom.

Meeting adjourned at 8:30 PM.

Submitted by Belinda Climenhaga