President's Report

2025 JBNA Annual General Meeting

2025 April 08

Trevor Moat
JBNA President

We are living through turbulent times as residents of Victoria, citizens of British Columbia, of Canada, and indeed of the world. Tonight I would like to leave that context behind for a short while, and review with you some of the goodness that has transpired in our corner of the City over the last year.

The JBNA Board took a couple of big steps towards its future at its 2024 AGM. I am referring to the election one year ago of two new members who together reduced the average age of the board by a decade or two, and brought new and much-needed skills, ideas, and rejuvenation to the table. Trevor Woodland took on the role of Treasurer, but unfortunately had to step down mid-year to focus on building and strengthening his business as a luthier and purveyor of fine guitars. Keira Jackson was elected Director at Large, and she is mostly responsible for JBNA's greatly expanded social media content and presence, and the smooth operations of our online meetings.

Early in this year's mandate we commissioned Alieda Blandford to conduct a broad survey of James Bay residents, covering our volunteer programmes, transportation, development, parks, and housing/homelessness issues, closing with some thoughts on what we, the JBNA, could do better. A key finding of that report is that we still have work to do to attract and engage renters and younger residents into JBNA. These will continue to be objectives into the next year.

We also identified the opportunity and need to hire a Community Coordinator. After a thorough search we hired Calen Goulden to fill that position. Calen's enthusiasm and creativity has "gone viral" in the community. Calen manages our recycling programme and launched several new community-building initiatives in the last few months alone.

Calen has been mentored by and works closely with our perennial Volunteer Coordinator and Gardens Lead Kathryn Pankowski. Kathryn is a stranger to no one in James Bay, and the neighbourhood is a more beautiful place for her efforts. The volunteer gardening committee she leads oversees 3 allotment gardens, 4 commons gardens, and 10 fruit/nut trees. This year, the committee hosted plant swaps, garden tours, implemented the Get Growing Victoria programme, and were major contributors to VCAN's seminal Garry Oak EcoSystem Study and Mapping Project.

The JBNA is grateful to the City of Victoria for the funding it receives to support the programmes and activities that Calen and Kathryn have led so successfully.

Two months ago Councilor Matt Dell agreed to take over the role of Council Liaison for James Bay from Councilor Jeremy Caradonna. We appreciate the extra evening time they commit to fulfil this role for our community and for their representation of our interests to City Council.

In particular, I want to acknowledge the role Councilor Caradonna played in addressing the encampments that sprung up in Irving Park a little over a year ago. The loss of access to our town centre neighbourhood park was felt deeply in the community by people of all ages and backgrounds. Councilor Caradonna stick-handled some delicate conversations to help bring the park back to the people, and kept us informed of developments and timing along the way. We are grateful that this important space is back in the public realm in time for spring and the tourist season.

Across Michigan Street from the Park is the not-quite-finished Gas Station, which has been the subject of many social media posts and media interest generally. Activity seems to have picked up in recent months due in no small part to the efforts of James Bay resident Jen Reimer, who raised media interest and launched an on-line petition last year. Rumour has it that fuel will be flowing in early 2026.

On a similar note, Doug Steinburg raised concerns with the City and BCTransit regarding proposed changes to the primary bus turnaround loop in James Bay. The plan would result in the closure of a vehicle lane on Douglas Street and a steady stream of buses traversing three sides of the building at the Douglas/Blanshard intersection. Doug's and Jen's efforts remind me never to forget or under-estimate the need for and value of citizens' advocacy in a functioning and caring society.

Arguably the largest change announced in James Bay last year is the reconstruction of the Belleville Terminal. Work on this large, multi-stage development project began in earnest in the autumn and is expected to run for three years. The JBNA appreciates the regular updates to the community that the project management team provides in advance of significant changes to traffic flows and environment.

Development continues to be on the minds of many James Bay residents. Multi-storey residential projects at 50 Douglas, 350/360 Douglas, 50 Government, 443 Government, 600 Dallas at Government, 131-139 Menzies, 515-519 Rithet, and the proposed 14-storey structure at Kingston/Montreal/Quebec Streets are either through or making their ways through the city process.

Overshadowing all of these developments is the forthcoming adoption of the Official Community Plan, perhaps the most significant change to residential planning imposed on Victoria in living memory. James Bay residents have expressed strong opinions regarding the OCP content and process, and I suspect they will continue to do so in the months to come. The JBNA encourages residents to provide feedback to the City on this and other matters when the opportunities arise. We ask community members to include JBNA in their correspondence to the city so that we can be aware of the issues that affect you.

Finally, I wish to close with my personal thanks to a few people who will not be seeking re-election to the JBNA.

Our Secretary Bob Vander Steen has served a number of critical roles at JBNA over the last two decades, some highly visible, some not. Bob has been our go-to IT person, responsible for maintaining the JBNA website and IT operations. He also has been our membership

coordinator, and has for years been the person most likely to greet attendees as they arrive at our meetings. Behind the scenes, Bob has been the analyst and lead author of numerous studies relating to the cruise ship industry, traffic, air quality, and noise concerns in James Bay. It is fair to say that he has become the local expert on these matters. Much of the technical content available to the public through JBNA has Bob's fingerprints throughout. We are very grateful to Bob for his contributions and to his wife Becky for letting him play with their computer.

Our Vice-President Linda Carlson has also decided not to seek re-election. Linda's organizational efforts kept the Board on-track and prepared the way for the most salient issues to be on the table ahead of time. Linda hasn't been on the Board all that long, but her knowledge of and advocacy for the community is long standing, and will continue, I hope, for many years to come.

Finally, I wish to acknowledge the contributions of our Past President, Tim Van Alstine. I met Tim in 2009 when I bought a character-laden property on Kingston Street, and he delivered the post. Soon after, I found myself attending JBNA meetings and eventually nominated to this Board. Tim delivered mail in James Bay for decades. No one has walked the streets and sidewalks of James Bay as often as Tim has, nor knows their cracks and curbs better. He has been "Minister of Everything" at JBNA for well over 30 years. His connections in the city and across the regional district stretch wide and deep, his knowledge of the James Bay community is encyclopaedic, and his love for it evidently knows no bounds. The JBNA wishes to express its sincere thanks to Tim for his dedication to the community and certainly to JBNA itself, an organization that might well not exist today without his early and persistent commitment to make it work.

Submitted on behalf of the JBNA Board of Directors

- Trevor

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