



Residents' Association of Strawberry Vale, Marigold and Glanford

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The Residents' Association of Strawberry Vale, Marigold and Glanford (RASVMG) is a volunteer run organization that seeks to collaborate with residents, local business owners, institutions and the District of Saanich to facilitate engagement, discussion, information-sharing and community consultation on subjects of mutual interest; land use, planning proposals, community-building and issues affecting the community's well-being. It organizes community events; Music-in-the-Park, All Candidates meetings, United Way Community Round Tables and Telus' Day of Caring.

At the 2019 AGM, the association's Board increased from three to eight directors, and now spans four generations. For several years, the association has been moving from traditional communication methods to contemporary communication methods in order to reach its growing multi-generational membership. The association will aim to email occasional newsletters for those preferring traditional communication and, in keeping with the times, post the newsletter on the association's updated website for perusing at one's leisure:

Website: www.rasvmg.org

For those less familiar with technology, simply click on the above link. Be sure to check out the website and get familiar with its fresh new look and the way it is organized. Your feedback is important for assisting the board with meeting its continual improvement objective and your feedback is welcome. You are also invited submit your own news items, ideas for stories or photographs for posting on the website by sending an email to info.rasvmg@gmail.com.

Panama Flats

With so many challenges and changes in the RASVMG community, the board proposed rallying the membership around a positive initiative at the 2019 AGM –

with all three communities represented, Panama Flats was voted the clear winner. As a result, the Board's monthly meetings continue to discuss Panama Flats' initiatives, recently attending a council meeting recommending the Flats to be included in the Farmland Trust. The Board is also focusing on the trail along the Colquitz River at Panama Flats which is heavily used; however, often impassable during the fall and winter months when the Flats flood with water. The Board asked Saanich to budget for trail improvements this fiscal year to allow the trail to remain passable year-round: Saanich responded that presently there are no funds available for this project; however, Saanich's recent focus on transferring the Flats into a Farmland Trust may be the barrier to moving forward. Council recently passed a motion by Planning and Development staff, endorsed by the CAO, to have Panama Flats moved into a Farmland Trust, which has not been established (see February 10, Council Meeting on Saanich's website.) The next steps will be to investigate the costs associated with the proposed Farmland Trust initiative.



The walking trail along the Colquitz River in Panama Flats is often impassable during winter.
Photo Credit: Kevin Brown

The Board asked Saanich to publish Panama Flats artifacts and these are now available on Saanich's website, including the presentation previously delivered at an RASVMG quarterly information session in 2013 which some of you may recall. One of these documents is the Panama Flats Concept Plan, used as one of the supporting documents for councils' recent Farmland Trust recommendation and discussion - leading one to believe the plan was in fact approved at some point: RASVMG is in

the process of investigating. The document can be found on the Saanich website, by following the pages for Parks and Park Projects. Panama Flats has its own tab or simply click the links from the RASVMG website under the Community Info tab.

On the Panama Flats page, you will find a link to the concept plan, and related documents, including information panels used by Saanich staff at a public information session, held in 2013, to gather public input. One item of note is a report from an on-line survey done in 2013 asking for public opinion about the Flats. The survey revealed, for example, that the respondents' interest in the Flats was 87% in natural environment (not defined), and 35% in farming. An application to include another 14 hectares of the flats into agricultural land reserve was rejected by the Land Commission: leaving the original 8 hectares of the Flats only within the land reserve. RASVMG has posted the original Panama Flats survey to gather updated information on the community's interests and use of Panama Flats. Please complete the survey and help spread the word for others to participate. RASVMG's goal is to have 500 survey participants (almost double the original survey) in order to determine whether the community's vision for the future of Panama Flats and priorities have changed since 2013.

At last summer's Music in the Park, some of you expressed interest in being part of the Board's Panama Flats project. While the scope of the project and next steps are in the early planning stages, the information the Board has found (above) you may find very interesting and well worth the read. You can make a difference by taking the [survey](#) and helping to spread the word about the survey to others – the results will be of great value for future discussions with Saanich. The Board is also seeking volunteer expertise from the community to discuss a range of Panama Flat issues from biodiversity and endangered species to flood plain management and drainage costs associated with potential farming. If you re interested, please email info.rasvmg@gmail.com.

Affordable Housing Initiative

The Board is following the recent Saanich council proposal to slow the local area plan renewal in favour of addressing affordable housing. The local area plan for members within the RASVMG boundaries is the Carey Area plan, which has been in place since 1999. It can be found on the RASVMG website, under the Community Info tab. The plan contains drawings, maps and population statistics dating back as far as 1996. The full implications of the new focus from Council on Strawberry Vale, Marigold or the Glanford areas, is not known; other than the current local area plan will remain in place for a few more years. RASVMG continue to follow the initiative. One item of note is the misconception that affordable housing specifically

targets the homeless; however, more the majority of affordable housing is actually needed to support the declining middle class workforce – if the next generation cannot afford to live in Saanich, they will not be working in Saanich. There are several proven development strategies for the early provisioning of co-funded workforce affordable housing (for example Squamish) and if the local area plan were updated sooner locations for these initiatives could be strategically identified.

Saanich also recommended a reduction to Development Cost Charges (DCC's) for developers building affordable rental housing. RASVMG also addressed this issue at Council. While the association supports affordable housing for the workforce, it does not support the reduction of DCC's collected and needed to maintain the existing infrastructure, which is declining and struggling for funding. It was extremely disappointing to hear that the only recommendation put forth by Saanich to make up the deficit for was to increase property taxes (the same suggestion was also made for resolving the deficit for farming for Panama Flats.)

2020 Music in the Park August 4th, 2020

Music in the Park continues to be a huge success and preparation for this summer's event are underway. If you are interested in volunteering at the event, please send an email to info.rasvmg@gmail.com.