

THE CAMPUS RESIDENT

Published by the University Neighbourhoods Association

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JANUARY 27, 2020

Softball Team Dreams of Diamond in Nobel Park



Members of UBC Women's Softball Team – Nicole, Gabby and Mia – at the UBC Athletics and Recreation information session on the proposed Nobel Park upgrade. Please see story on Page 3.

Board Backs Expansion of Community Engagement Policy

Wide-ranging debate about community projects takes place at Board meeting; new chair of UNA sets creative tone

John Tompkins
Editor

The Board of Directors of the UNA got squarely behind the idea of enhanced community engagement at their meeting January 21.

New UNA Board Chair Richard Watson set the tone for the evening by saying he understood creativity was why he was elected at the annual UNA meeting in November. He talked of “stimulating creativity”, and this approach seemed to sit well with Directors.

The Directors listed several projects that might be supported to enhance community life at UBC.

Resident Director Terry Mullen proposed \$100,000 – \$150,000 be set aside to initially fund worthy community projects.

Mr. Mullen also suggested that the community gardens project – deluged with applicants – might be expanded to include a grant of five acres from UBC Farm for residents to grow food on.

Mr. Mullen recalled hearing from a member of the UNA staff that 150 residents were now on the waiting list for a community garden plot at UBC. Maybe plots could be found for a 100 of these residents to start with, Mr. Mullen said. A lawyer, he wondered “if we could get five acres of land from UBC Farm” for use in small scale gardening vegetables. “I think this would be creative,” he said.

A motion for the UNA to expand its community gardens program received strong support at the Board meeting. It passed unanimously.

Creativity in the art of community engagement also featured strongly in the ideas of other Directors.

Carole Jolly, a UBC Appointed Director, spoke warmly about many projects she has been involved in during her years at UBC. Ms. Jolly said any fund at the UNA might do well to model itself on the Utown@UBC Community Grant program operated by UBC Campus and Community Planning. UTown@UBC Community Grants award up to \$1,000 for projects that foster community building and connectedness on campus or in the Musqueam community.

Mr. Mullen said some of the UNA funds might be used to fund a beneficial ‘town and gown’ scenario at UBC – to reflect the unity of UNA and UBC.

PUBLIC CONSULTATION:

Wesbrook Place Neighbourhood Plan – Minor Amendments

Additional Faculty and Staff Housing

Join us to provide input on proposed minor amendments to the Wesbrook Place Neighbourhood Plan. UBC is exploring these amendments to allow for the delivery of up to 500 more units of faculty-staff housing units, within existing Plan densities.



Provide your input online or in person

FEBRUARY 10-24

Online Survey:
planning.ubc.ca/wesbrookplace

Public Open House:
February 11, 4:30pm to 6:30pm
Wesbrook Village Community Centre
3335 Webber Lane

Questions?

Contact Aviva Savelson, Senior Manager, Public Engagement
aviva.savelson@ubc.ca or 604 822 0273

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Campus + Community Planning



UNA Community Garden.
Photo credit Terry Mullen, Hawthorn Place resident.

UNA Board Completes Annual Review of Committees and Working Groups

Directors of the University Neighbourhoods Association approved the Terms of Reference of its several Committees and Working Groups at a meeting January 21.

As of this date, the Board has three Committees and two Working Groups:

- Finance & Audit Committee
- Governance & Human Resources Committee
- UNA Negotiating Committee
- UNA Bylaw Review Working Group 2018–Phase 2
- UNA Working Group–AMS.

According to the Terms of Reference, the purpose of the Board Standing Committee on Finance & Audit Committee – an advisory committee to the Board – is “to oversee the financial health of the UNA and make recommendations to the Board on management of the UNA’s finances.” This is the Committee that will oversee the annual budget process and preparation of the monthly financial statements.

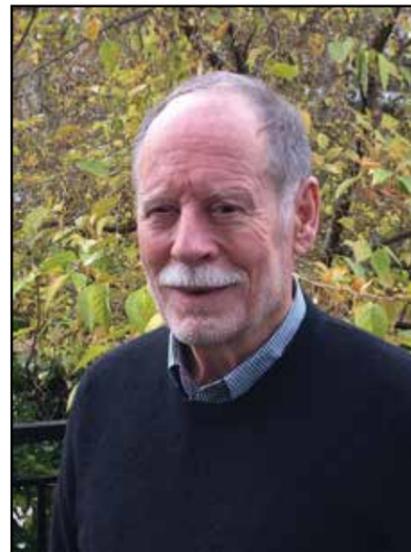
Under the Terms of Reference for the Board Standing Committee on Governance and Human Resources, the Committee’s purpose is “to serve as the focal point for UNA Board consideration of UNA policies and programs related to governance of the UNA, and related to Human Resources policies and practices.”

With respect to governance, the Committee will “review the overall governance structure on a regular basis, identifying any areas of concern and recommending changes to the UNA Board as appropriate, based on good governance practices.” It will liaise with UBC on matters related to the above – “as appropriate, and subject to guidance from the Board.”

With respect to Human Resources, the Committee will “review and forward to the Board recommendations for approval or amendment of any human resources policies, recruitment practices, compensation schedules, benefits packages or other reports submitted to them by the Executive Director for review.” The Governance and Human Resources



Richard Watson



Terry Mullen



Matthew Delumpa

Committee is an advisory committee to the Board; it does not have decision making authority.

The mandate of the UNA Negotiating Committee is to:

- Negotiate with UBC changes to the *Neighbours’ Agreement 2015* to bring the agreement into conformity with the proposed amendments to the UNA bylaws.
- Address any concerns of UBC arising out of the removal of UBC Appointed Directors from the UNA Board.

The UNA Bylaw Review Working Group 2018–Phase 2 is a subcommittee under the UNA Board of Directors. The purpose of this Working Group is to consider the recommendations of the UNA Bylaw Committee–Phase 1 and respond to the UNA Board’s Strategic Plan goal of governance, which includes an exploration of opportunities to evolve governance in a way that meets the needs of a growing community.

The purpose of the Working Group–AMS is to work with representatives of the Alma Mater Society (AMS) to craft an agreement based on the six propositions for approval by the UNA Board. (Please see story below.)

Committees and Working Groups of the Board

(as of January 21, 2020)

Finance & Audit Committee

Matthew Delumpa – Chair

Jane Kang
Tor Album

Richard Watson

Staff: Interim Co-Executive Directors
Finance Manager
Board Secretary

Governance & Human Resources Committee

Richard Watson – Chair

Murray McCutcheon
Carole Jolly

Staff: Interim Co-Executive Directors
Board Secretary

UNA Negotiating Committee

(Board Approved Oct. 16, 2019)

Terry Mullen – Chair
Murray McCutcheon

Bill Holmes – UNA Resident at Large

Mike Feely – UNA Resident at Large
Staff: As Needed

UNA Bylaw Review Working Group 2018 – Phase 2

(Board Approved Nov. 19, 2019)

Terry Mullen – Chair

Richard Watson

Bill Holmes – UNA Resident at Large

Mike Feely – UNA Resident at Large

Laura Cottle – UNA Resident at Large

Carole Jolly (non-voting)

Staff: Interim Co-Executive Director
(Wegland Sit)

UNA Working Group – AMS

(Board approved Oct. 16, 2019)

Terry Mullen

Carole Jolly

Matthew Delumpa

Staff: As Needed

UNA and UBC Alma Mater Society (Students): Establishing New Opportunities for Collaboration

University Neighbourhoods Association (UNA) and UBC Alma Mater Society (AMS) continue negotiations that started last year, following the proposed amendments to the UNA bylaw eliminating positions of AMS Appointed Director and two UBC Appointed Directors from the UNA Board.

Responding to the proposed changes in the UNA Board composition, AMS expressed concern that elimination of a student representative on the UNA Board “removes the voice for an already under-engaged population and creates an inequity within the community.”

Both parties will jointly endeavour to bring

a draft agreement – on how they will work together – to the UNA Board at the upcoming February 18 meeting. If deemed appropriate, ratification will follow discussion.

The following six propositions – endorsed by the UNA Board in November 2019 – will serve as a framework for creating a formal relationship between the UNA and the Alma Mater Society.

1. The AMS shall have the right to propose motions to be voted on at an open meeting of the UNA Board, and the AMS shall have the right to speak to, and debate, such motions, provided that the motions and material in support shall be included in the Board agenda/package in accordance with

normal UNA Board procedures.

2. The AMS shall have the right, but not the obligation, to appoint a person of its choosing to sit on any committee of the UNA, including the Finance Committee, and such person shall have the right to vote.

At the discretion of the AMS, the UNA shall have a reciprocal right to appoint a person to an AMS committee.

3. The AMS shall have the right to present a report at each UNA Board meeting in the same manner as the Director of Electoral Area A, UBC Properties Trust, and Campus and Community Planning.

4. The AMS shall have the right to convene, at a mutually convenient time, a meeting of delegates of the AMS with the UNA Board, such meetings to be held twice a year or, in extraordinary circumstances, more frequently.

5. The UNA shall, at the request of the AMS, use its best efforts to secure for the AMS the right to participate in UNA–UBC Executive Quarterly Meetings

6. The UNA shall, at the request of the AMS, use its best efforts to secure for the AMS an observer position on the UNA–UBC Liaison Committee (currently the UBC Neighbourhoods Liaison Committee).

THE CAMPUS RESIDENT

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UNA Election Reveals Flaw in System

Charles R. Menzies, PhD
Member of UBC Board
of Governors;
Professor, UBC Department of
Anthropology and Institute for the
Oceans and Fisheries

In this election, there were three candidates residing in Hawthorn Place (among six candidates running in total for three seats on the Board). Also, there was already one Resident Director on the Board residing in Hawthorn Place. This meant that right from the start, only two of the three Hawthorn Place candidates could possibly be elected this time around.

Zheng (Jane) Kang, Wesbrook Place – 455 votes
James Ellis, Wesbrook Place – 336 votes
Qing Wang, Wesbrook Place – 245 votes.

If we were operating on a ward system, this would be okay. But we are not – it’s an at-large system.

There are many strange things about the University Neighbourhoods Association at UBC.

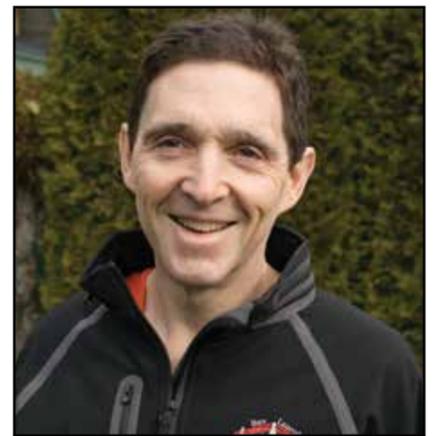
The recent (November) election of Resident Directors to the UNA Board reveals the sad reality that this particular first-past-the-post system doesn’t always reward candidates who receive the most votes: rather, candidates can win a seat simply due to where in the UNA they live.

The list below illustrates my point. Based on 2,756 valid votes, the full result of the vote count is as follows (the names of the candidates elected are in bold face):

Murray McCutcheon, Hawthorn Place – 627 votes
Richard Watson, Hawthorn Place – 594 votes
Martin Guhn, Hawthorn Place – 469 votes

What has happened is that a failed candidate now sits as Director on the UNA Board – simply because this candidate lives in the neighbourhood other than Hawthorn Place.

Add this to the practice of appointing directors when an elected director resigns plus the long-standing practice of unelected appointed student and university direc-



Charles Menzies

tors, and it should be clear that what UBC considers democracy is seriously flawed.

Disclaimer: Charles Menzies is a faculty member, Governor at UBC and a former UNA Director. The opinions and observations Professor Menzies expresses in this article are his personal ones and in no way represent the official views of the University, the UBC Board of Governors or the UNA.

Keep in mind this is an at-large system – there are no wards or constituencies. But there is a rule in the UNA bylaws that limits the number of directors from any one residential neighbourhood to three.

For more balanced representation, not more than three (3) Resident Directors may be resident in any single Local Area.

UNA Bylaws, Section 5.4(a)

Nobel Park Diamond: Plan to Come Soon

UBC Athletics and Recreation invited the community to attend an informal information session about the proposed Nobel Park upgrade

The students who play for the UBC Women’s Softball Team see an underused patch of grass in the University Neighbourhoods as their dream practice field.

Members of the team put on a ‘show and tell’ at the Wesbrook Community Centre on January 23.

At the event, the team members explained how the field in Nobel Park – part of Wesbrook Place neighbourhood – would be such a boon if it could be reconditioned to form their practice pitch. Currently, the girls said, they have to travel all the way to Softball City in South Surrey to practise and play home games.

Those few members of the public who attended the presentation put forth – or seemed to put forth – no objections to the proposed upgrade.

The team already travels far to play away-from-home games – in Oregon, Washington, Idaho and Montana. An away-from-home game, for example, entails the

following travel: departure from UBC by charter bus on a Thursday evening, games on Friday and Saturday, return by bus to UBC on Sunday.

Now add travel to Softball City in South Surrey for midweek practice and home games, and the travel miles add up. All members of the team live on campus at UBC, and all would like to travel less while indulging their passion for softball.

Aided by the Department of Athletics & Recreation, the UBC Women’s Softball Team has embarked on a plan to raise up to \$500,000 over the next six months to fund upgrading the field and facilities at Nobel Park. They presented an early draft of their plan to UNA Board of Directors in November and will present a more formal plan in the coming months, possibly as early as the February 18 UNA Board meeting.

Meanwhile, team members will continue to practise in South Surrey. They also hold on to hopes that the future of practising lies just down Wesbrook Mall from the student buildings in which they live.

The Campus Resident next issue comes out February 24.

The submission deadline is February 17.

Rapid Bus Starts and Ride-Hailing Coming



The first RapidBus R4 arrived in service at UBC in January. The buses on this route travel along 41st Avenue to SW Marine Drive, stopping on W 16th Avenue and on Wesbrook Mall at Agronomy Road, before culminating at UBC Bus Exchange.

For Wesbrook Village residents, the closest stop is on W 16th Avenue – just west of Wesbrook Mall. The R4 runs every 3-6 minutes during peak hours with frequent service at night – every 15 minutes – until 1am. At each stop along the R4 route, large digital displays are installed to show when the next bus will arrive.

UBC Campus and Community Planning informs residents that ride-hailing services, such as Lyft and Uber, are expected to be granted permission to operate in Metro Vancouver in the very near future.

UBC has been working with UNA staff to ensure these services can be accommodated while adhering to Provincial and UBC regulatory permit requirements and licence

agreements. Ride-hailing services will be allowed in designated curbside spaces within the academic campus. The UNA will be responsible to assign designated curbside spaces within their jurisdiction.

UBC anticipates having multiple operators on campus.

Similar to other jurisdictions, UBC will charge ride-hailing companies fees for operating on campus. Fees collected will be used to support programs and infrastructure that encourage sustainable transportation.

Any traffic violations on campus can be reported to UBC Parking at 604-822-6786 or parking.support@ubc.ca



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**SUNDAY
FEBRUARY 16
10am-5pm**

Family Passes \$40+

UTOWN@UBC
THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA
Arts & Culture District

www.utown.ubc.ca/kidsrunubc

UTOWN@UBC **UNA**  **vancouver foundation** | **neighbourhood small grants**

Have a great idea for your community?

UTown@UBC Community Grants support people like you who want to create a more vibrant community at UBC or Musqueam. We provide up to \$1000 for projects that help you connect and engage with one another.

All UBC students, faculty, residents and staff, as well as Musqueam residents are eligible to apply. Applications are online! Deadline to apply is February 10.

utown.ubc.ca/communitygrants

LETTER FROM UBC PRESIDENT

2020 Vision

Happy new year! As we enter 2020 and a new decade of living and working at UBC, I'd like to reflect on the important contribution that our residents make to the UBC community.

The health and wellbeing of UBC are dependent on strong connections between the university and its neighbourhoods. This is explicitly noted in one of the core areas of the UBC Strategic Plan – People and Places – and brought to life in the Plan's thriving communities strategy.

Every day, neighbourhood residents contribute to a thriving community here at UBC. Residents and their families are a vital part of our growing and diverse population, helping to activate our communities, and connecting with one another in meaningful ways.

My family and I love living at UBC and exploring this amazing neighbourhood. Indeed, one of my youngest daughter's favourite activities is riding her bike to school with classmates during Walk 'N Roll to School. On those rides – and on other occasions as we walk or cycle through the neighbourhood – we have made new social connections inside and outside of the classroom. And as a family, we love to attend events such as Neighbours Day to connect with everyone and experience the unique UBC community spirit. I've also had the

privilege of speaking with many of you at University Neighbourhoods Association events.

And in the past year, I learned that neighbourhood residents love to give back! In the 2017/18 annual report, I was pleased to discover that almost 400 people – 300 students and more than 70 other neighbours – volunteered in the community for a total of more than 4,000 hours. Giving back feels good! Being of service to your community helps foster positive mental health and creates a feeling of community connection which helps to make our campus a safer and more welcoming place. Thank you!

I would like to acknowledge the new Board members who have joined the UNA Board following the 2019 election. Congratulations to Zheng (Jane) Kang, Murray McCutcheon and Richard Watson on their recent election as the newest Directors on the UNA Board. And I'd like to express my thanks to the outgoing Directors for their contributions and for their service for multiple terms: Richard Alexander (served three terms and filled a vacancy on Board last summer), Laura Cottle (served two terms) and Ying Zhou, the past Chair (served three terms).

Together, UBC and the UNA have been working on enhancing our partnership to

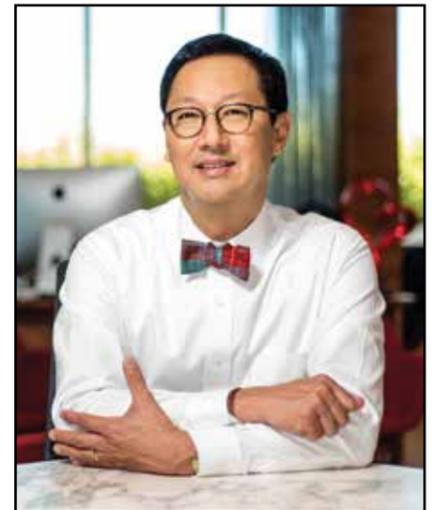
deepen engagement with one another on many initiatives, like joint community programming, community events, and much more. I look forward to continuing this partnership and helping build and shape community with all of you.

Finally, in the spirit of 2020, I'd like to look ahead (as clearly as possible, even if not with 20/20 vision) at a few highlights of the coming year for UBC.

First, I will shortly be announcing the membership of the university's climate emergency advisory committee. By late spring 2020, the committee will consolidate input from both in-person and online consultations into a public report that defines the pillars of climate emergency and outlines recommended actions. The report will be submitted to the new Sustainability Committee of the UBC Board of Governors for consideration. Also, at its April meeting, the UBC Board of Governors will consider how best to move towards full divestment from the fossil fuel industry.

Second, the university will soon be unveiling its Indigenous Strategic Plan. The plan will guide UBC's Indigenous engagement initiatives for years to come.

Finally, we will be continuing to work with the City of Vancouver, Translink and other



Professor Santa J. Ono.
Photo credit Paul Joseph, UBC.

bodies to ensure the extension of the Millennium Line Skytrain line to the UBC Vancouver campus.

These are just some of what we have to look forward to in the coming months. Watch this column for further developments!

Best wishes

Santa J. Ono
President and Vice-Chancellor



The youngest residents and their parents celebrate the joys and benefits of walking and riding during Walk 'N Roll to School event organized by UTown @UBC and University Neighbourhoods Association. Photo credit Andy Fang.

Future of UEL: Governance Study Starts Up at Long Last

Study is designed to help the Province consider options for future state of UEL – an unincorporated community bordering University Neighbourhoods

John Tompkins
Editor

The provincial government has embarked on a plan to study governance on the University Endowment Lands (UEL) – years after the study was requested by residents who believed a municipality and local government were needed to represent this unique community adjacent to UBC.

In recent months, a Request for Proposals (RFP) has gone out from the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing in Victoria for companies – with expertise in the field of municipal governance – to bid on undertaking the long-awaited study, which is expected to take two years to complete at a cost of up to \$300,000 in consulting fees.

The history of the UEL goes back as far as 1925 and traditionally, the community has not lent itself much to debate about government structures. As an unincorporated area, the UEL does not have an elected mayor and municipal council. It's the only urban area in British Columbia to be administered directly by the provincial government.

Until recently, the UEL has been a stable and affluent residential community dominated by single detached homes with very high assessment value. However, significant change is taking place there.

As noted in the RFP, “this traditional First Nation territory and once small urban residential community is changing rapidly and facing population growth, development projects, infrastructure needs, and other pressures.”

The proposed UEL Services, Structure and Governance Study is intended to facilitate a discussion among UEL residents and key interests, helping to identify any potential opportunities to enhance efficient delivery of services that citizens need.

The study will also lay the groundwork for the Province to consider options for the future state of the UEL, such as potentially shifting to a new structure for service provision and jurisdiction that is not based in the Province's direct administration.

As noted also in the RFP, the study has six (6) primary objectives:

- Clarifying the current state of the UEL – developing a full understanding of current service delivery structures to clarify current responsibilities for providing services to and by the UEL.

- Projecting the future state of the UEL – assessing projections for the state of the UEL in 30 years from now given possible population increase or other considerations in order to anticipate future service needs of the UEL.

- Identifying service delivery gaps – laying the groundwork to facilitate closing UEL service delivery gaps and corresponding representation gaps, which can help the community meet service demands and other interests.

- Gathering perspectives of community and others through engagement and exploring interests – undertaking structured conversations on jurisdiction and services to provide a way for the Province to hear from residents and key interests to better understand issues and perspectives around responsibilities and service provision.

- Assessing transition matters – identifying internal (to the Province) and external (to interests) issues and transition implications, and inventory what needs to be resolved, prior to any potential shift in service responsibilities in the UEL.

- Understanding the impacts of change – based on the above inputs, technical analysis, and comparison with similar communities, describing what service delivery and structures might look like under alternative models (e.g., taxes, range of services, and service relationships).

The UEL Services, Structure and Governance Study is part of a larger overall review process. While the study will provide information to help the Province determine options and future steps, it is not expected to recommend options for service provision and jurisdiction.

Meanwhile, residents in the UEL who have been calling for the governance study argue that much of its momentum of six years ago has been long lost due to unfathomable provincial government delay in launching it.

It was the end of 2013 when the UEL Community Advisory Council (CAC) – with community leader Ron Pears as President – approached the provincial government to support and fund a UEL incorporation study. The community feeling was that a municipality was needed.

In the following years, Dave Forsyth, UEL CAC President, earned community praise for his determination to get ‘a mayor and

council’ installed in the UEL.

Responding to Mr. Forsyth in the July 5, 2016 letter Re: UEL Governance, Peter Fassbender, Minister of Community, Sport and Cultural Development, wrote: “While I recognize and appreciate the CAC’s passion for a ‘UEL-only’ municipality, I believe that now is not the time for a study that pre-determines the range of outcomes for governance change...”

“Governance change in such a dynamic environment must be grounded in a very clear understanding of not only all the facts, but also in the interests of the various impacted parties, including service providers such as Metro Vancouver and neighbours such as the City of Vancouver. I believe that further dialogue with those government bodies and others with direct and indirect interests will be needed as we proceed with this process.”

According to the RFP, a survey of UEL residents and fact sheets – published in 2017– “does not provide a fully comprehensive picture of present and projected service and structure needs for the UEL.”

In September 2017, David Eby, MLA for Vancouver-Point Grey and the Attorney General of British Columbia, updated the

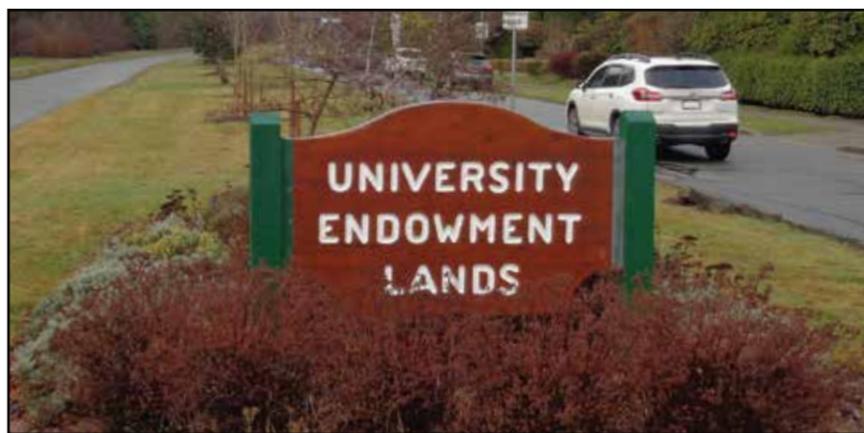
UEL community on changes in local and provincial government representation for the University Endowment Lands and introduced the UEL new ‘Mayor’ Selina Robinson, Minister of the Municipal Affairs and Housing.

In the letter to the UEL CAC, Mr. Eby wrote: “I do not wish to understate the lengthy process of real local government reform. But a journey of a thousand miles begins with the first step. I am honoured and pleased to tell you that I have brought to the Minister’s attention your requests, and we are putting our walking shoes on.”

In a brief interview at a recent CAC social function, Mr. Forsyth – who was born and grew up in the UEL – said he has given up on the political system in the UEL to the point of planning to leave the area.

“The UEL is ungovernable,” Mr. Forsyth said, adding that incorporation with Vancouver is the likely UEL future in the long run.

Current UEL CAC President Claire Huxtable sounded optimistic about the proposed study, saying: “It’s a first step... a good first step.”



UEL FACTS

The UEL is part of the traditional territory of the Musqueam First Nation, who have carried out fishing, hunting, trapping and spiritual activities for thousands of years. Since 1925, UEL community has been administered by the Province.

The community has a population of around 3,200 people. The residents pay property taxes to the provincial government.

The UEL Manager – who is responsible for the day to day administration of the UEL – is appointed by the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

The Community Advisory Council (CAC) – an elected body of seven University Hill residents, independent of the UEL administration – advises the UEL Manager, but the CAC cannot require that any action be taken.

As an unincorporated community, UEL is part of Metro Vancouver Electoral Area A. It operates under the authority of the *University Endowment Land Act* and the *Bylaws and Official Community Plan* made under that Act.

UEL covers 1,200 hectares (3,000 acres) of land between Vancouver (east) and UBC (west) on the Point Grey Peninsula.

Approximately 280 hectares (692 acres) of the land base is made up of residential,

commercial and recreational property with the balance of land accounted for by Pacific Spirit Regional Park.

While the UEL community does experience a high level of redevelopment of its single-family homes, there has been little to no population growth. This will change with the Leləm development that received zoning approval in 2016.

Leləm means ‘home’ in the Musqueam language. The development – adjacent to Pacific Spirit Park – is owned and being developed by the Musqueam First Nation as part of the *Musqueam Reconciliation, Settlement and Benefits Agreement* of 2008. Upon completion, the Leləm development is expected to increase the population by up to 2,500 residents.

There are multiple parties interested in the UEL community, including residents, the Musqueam First Nation, Metro Vancouver, the City of Vancouver, UBC, and various service providers including different provincial agencies.

Two previous restructure studies – done in 1990 and 1995 – considered UEL and UBC campus neighbourhoods together and included options to join Vancouver. A vote was held in 1995 on incorporating the UEL and Hampton Place (the first UNA neighbourhood). The vote was unsuccessful.

What’s in the Name that Doesn’t Make Sense?

The University Endowments Land is not connected to UBC.

The reason why UEL includes the word “endowment” is that the profit generated from the sale or lease of these lands by the provincial government was originally intended to form an endowment, the income from which would help support UBC. No profit appears to ever have been generated yet the misnomer lives on – as does the confusion it creates.

Just as in the City of Vancouver and neighbouring municipalities, residential and commercial properties in the UEL are owned privately.

<http://uelcommunity.com/uel-history/>

Brain Study Group at UHill Secondary: School-led Initiative Promotes Wellbeing

Judy Hyojoo Rhee

Grade 12 student, University Hill Secondary School

‘Mental health’ is a term that has garnered notable attention in recent years. The heightened awareness surrounding mental health issues – especially those concerning youth and young adults – has been followed by increased efforts to addressing the said challenges.

One such effort is being undertaken by the Brain Study Group, a program comprised of students and educators at University Hill Secondary School (UHill). The Group, founded in 2017, aims to promote wellbeing among members of the school community.

On January 20, I visited one of their meetings to find out more about the Group’s work; there, I interviewed four student participants of the program. Here are some replies.

Could you provide an overview of the Brain Study Group?

Julie: Brain Study is an after-school group at UHill that meets weekly on Mondays. We focus on learning about and improving students’ mental health. We achieve this goal by attending conferences, making presentations to educators as well as to UHill students and parents, and participat-



Students and educators of the Brain Study Group at University Hill Secondary School. Photo credit Judy Hyojoo Rhee.

ing in experiments. We are under the guidance of our school principal Mr. McGeer and counsellor Ms. Watanabe.

What specific activities do you partake in as a member of this Group?

Jenny: I recently participated in a school-wide digital detox, where the Group set up a reward system for UHill students to decrease screen time. For example, we had two days for students to stop looking at their phones during class. We also had daily challenges posted on the bulletin and the school’s social media account. An example of a daily challenge was “to not look at your phone while in line”.

What is the relationship between UBC and your program?

Claire: Our Group has a partnership with UBC. We have attended neuroscience clusters at the university and worked with Kimberly Schonert-Reichl from the Faculty of Education. Starting last year, we received lessons from Ella Weik at the Faculty of Medicine, during which she taught us about her research and general scientific methodology. We participated in her current studies about pain in children and youth.

Why do you find the Brain Study Group meaningful?

Julie: Brain Study has provided an environment for me to share my concerns and regularly check-in on how I’m feeling. I think this has helped me stay positive during the most stressful years of high school. At the same time, the opportunities to attend conferences and talks has exposed me to a new perspective of looking at our mental health, which I value very much.

Mikhail: Emotions are an important part of us and are often ignored. Regulating one’s emotions is an important skill to maintain productivity. Students often face high pressure and need these skills to cope. These are the things our Group wants to share with the community.

After the interview, I also spoke with the adult leaders of the Group to hear their thoughts on the program. Mr. McGeer remarked that the significance of the Group was how its activities were conducive to building students’ capacity for personal awareness and responsibility – a core competency outlined by British Columbia’s new educational curriculum.

Ms. Watanabe expressed hope, moreover, that the Group will serve to encourage other schools and institutions in our locality to create similar programs that foster resilience in students. However, the Brain Study Group’s initiatives are designed to positively impact individuals of all ages.

The ultimate goal of the Group, as emphasized by Mr. McGeer and Ms. Watanabe, is to help realize a healthy, thriving community.

Seniors Start Happy and Healthy New Year

Wesbrook Community Centre offers several new and exciting seniors’ programs this season.

One of the programs is Osteofit, a BC Women’s Hospital certified exercise, education and falls prevention program for individuals with osteoporosis, low bone density and for those who are at risk of fractures and falls. The program aims to provide safe and gentle exercises for people with minimal previous exercise experience.

Osteofit will be introduced by Angie Datt, who teaches gentle and restorative yoga.

To learn more about the Osteofit program and the role of exercise in falls prevention, a group of senior residents gathered in the Wesbrook Community Centre Social Room on Monday, January 20 for a lecture by Debbie Cheong, the Osteofit Provincial Coordinator, BC Women’s Hospital + Health Centre.

In her address, Ms. Cheong said one of the goals of Osteofit is to prevent falls. Falls are one of the most common causes of serious fracture.

“Approximately 30% of individuals over 65 years of age fall at least once per year and about half of them may do so recurrently.”

The weekly Osteofit program at the Wesbrook Community Centre starts Thursday, January 30 (10 am – 11 am) and runs until March 5.

The Seniors Activities and Games volunteer led program – which started during *Your Passport to Wellbeing* program

last year – is continuing. Residents can join the program on Wednesdays from 1–2:30 pm for games in the gym, including walking soccer, croquet and kubb.

The Tai Chi – traditional Chinese martial art – program will return this season, promising to improve your physical and mental wellbeing through graceful, slow movements that promote focus and deep breathing. Register or drop in on Mondays from 10–11 am.

For information about programs at the Old Barn Community Centre & Wesbrook Community Centre, please consult the UNA Program Guide online at www.myuna.ca



Debbie Cheong, the Osteofit Provincial Coordinator, BC Women’s Hospital + Health Centre, practises balance with Angie Datt, Osteofit Instructor at Wesbrook Community Centre.

EAA Director Starts Quarterly Engagement Series

A quarterly series of presentations to local residents on how Metro Vancouver regional government operates started on January 23.

Jen McCucheon, Metro Vancouver Director for Electoral Area A (EAA), founded the series and told two to three dozen UBC and University Endowment Lands residents in attendance at Wesbrook Community Centre:

“Every month, I vote on decisions that im-

pact residents of EAA and our region as a whole, and I am hopeful that by introducing these regular engagement sessions, I will be able to create more opportunities to interact with and hear from residents.”

The first presentation and discussion with four members of Metro Vancouver Staff was under the title *Acting Local: A Regional Climate Action and Environmental Protection Response to our Planet’s Woes*.

Lunar New Year Celebration Goes Ahead After UNA Receives Vancouver Coastal Health Advice

According to the Chinese Horoscope, the year 2020 is going to be a strong, prosperous and lucky one

John Tompkins
Editor

Lunar New Year Celebration took place at the Wesbrook Community Centre on Saturday, January 25. Residents and guests welcomed in the Year of the Rat with music, dances, games, crafts and other exciting activities.

The celebration went ahead after Vancouver Coastal Health (VCH) ruled it was safe to do so.

The UNA reached out to VCH for advice after receiving messages of concern from the community regarding the impact of the new coronavirus – that appeared in Wuhan, China – on the UNA event.

Qiuning Wang, UNA Assistant Recreation Manager, said the Department of Health Protection /Communicable Disease Control at VCH responded that it “is safe to continue with this year’s event and other activities as normal.”

Ms. Wang noted, however, that attendance at the two-hour celebration at the Wesbrook Community Centre was down from the previous year – possibly, because of concerns about the coronavirus.

The event was presented by the 2020 Lunar New Year Working Group, in partnership with Century Dental and Yvonne Lu Group.

According to the Chinese Horoscope, this year is considered a year of new beginnings and renewals and is going to be a strong, prosperous and lucky year for almost all of us. (www.thechinesezodiac.org/horoscope-2020/)

Everyone will show determination regarding their goals, aspirations and even their hobbies. All the actions initiated this year are driven by success. We have to be relentless in order to accomplish our objectives and never let ourselves be discouraged by failure, problems or difficulties.

All throughout 2020, luck is on our side, says the Horoscope, but we need to seize it as soon as it knocks on our door. The Chinese say that nothing scares Lady Luck more than when you doubt her.



Apart from the moments when exhaustion gets too manifest, we all will enjoy good health. Moreover, the second part of 2020 comes with a lot of energy and overall well-

ness. Practising sports is still the best medicine, and it should be prescribed to each of us for improving our health, for longevity and for general wellbeing.

Best Wishes for Luck and Health! Happy Lunar New Year!

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