

York Neighborhood Association Board of Directors Meeting

Nelson's Market, 514 Potter Street

August 27 2025 Minutes

Approved: Motion _____

Present: Colin Beazley (President), Élan Engel, Erin Vonnahme, Jeremy Ferrera, Mark Ellis Walker (Secretary), Opie Knechtel (Treasurer). **Quorum satisfied.**

Excused: John DeOrio.

Absent: Chris Donaldson (Vice President), Kevin Cussen, Megan Doyle, Paul D'Agnolo, Todd Kleinbrook, Tom Scott.

Guest: Ben Shaklee.

Action Items, both general and for specific Board members, are listed at the end of the Minutes.

The meeting began informally at 6:28pm with a quick recap by Colin of a recent tour for the Mayor's Neighborhood Advisory Commission (MNAC) of examples of "middle housing" throughout the Lettered Streets neighborhood. He passed around a 12-page tour guide the MNAC members were given for it, illustrating the range of housing types covered in that term.

1. Annual Picnic Planning

The annual picnic will be held from 4 to 7pm on September 6, the Saturday after Labor Day, at Harriet Spanel Park as usual with a potluck gathering and piñata. The Grateful Dead cover band Wild Geese of the West, who were a hit at last year's event, are committed to playing two sets with a break in between for the children's events. Hardware Sales is providing the generator for their sound system, and Élan is looking into obtaining a hay bale to obscure it and provide atmosphere.

There was a quick brainstorming discussion of what games to provide, whether for kids or adults, and it was agreed by consensus that if anyone can provide a classic cornhole set they should bring it.

Colin reiterated an emailed request to the Board that each member forward his announcement of the event to 5 to 10 neighbors to ensure that word gets out.

[Mark sez: My apologies to the Board for how much detail is included in this next section, but it covers some "lessons learned" stuff that it seems to me will be important to have documented for future reference.]

Ben Shaklee, co-owner of Nelson's Market now with his wife Urania, gave the Board some important insights into the issues the Whatcom County Health and Community Services Department had about the York Yard Crawl, which they had rather alarmed us by raising at the last minute upon learning that the YNA was sponsoring some event at which the public would be served food (as though we haven't been doing this for decades in other contexts), and he presented them in the context of how we could address those issues in what we say about in promotion and provide at the event. His first recommendation was a simple hand-wash station consisting of a drink dispenser filled with sufficiently hot water accessed by a turned petcock valve or a spigot and with a separate dispenser of hand

sanitizer; one was selected online right then and there for Nelson's to purchase and provide for use beyond the picnic. Board members volunteered to purchase the sanitizer and paper towels, and Ben offered to bring food-service gloves that would further improve our compliance with Health Department rules.

It was determined that the event is too imminent for us to rent a port-a-potty without paying exorbitant prices, but we should do so in the future and get a sponsor to pay for it.

Food offerings were discussed, starting with a determination as to how many hot dogs should be supplied as compared to last year (120 was agreed upon), and Jeremy volunteered to bring meat-alternative fare. Colin will get basic ketchup/mustard condiments at Costco, and others are to bring seltzers, sodas, and such for beverages. Ben also recommended that we provide trash/compost bins so that the park's one trash can isn't both overloaded and filled with stuff that could be recycled. The status and availability of grills was discussed, and Opie offered the use of a gas-powered griddle she has. Lastly, Colin will contact Tom to get the YNA bin of event stuff such as napkins, paper bowls and plates, and plastic cutlery.

2. General Meeting Thoughts

Colin opined that we should have one more General Meeting this year before Election Day (November 4) and notify City Council candidates that they may attend, as four or five have inquired already about doing so. Board members should send him suggestions for topics and/or speakers as soon as possible so arrangements can be made.

3. Newsletter Status

Mark gave a recap on the status of the September *Yorker* newsletter, which went to print this afternoon and should be available for distribution starting Friday morning. It is a very full issue with many relevant and timely news items, so he walked us through its contents so we'd be aware of them before encountering neighbors while delivering copies and thus be able to point out what might be of interest (such as the Way Station article being pertinent to Downtown-area York businesses).

The intention is to get one more issue out this year, with a target distribution window of mid-November ahead of students going on Thanksgiving break on the 27th. He suggested a general deadline of the end of the first week of November for content contributions and will contact people about possible stories and features soon.

4. Other Updates

The floor was then open to all to provide updates on other local matters. These included the accidental June fire that gutted one of the two buildings of an eight-unit apartment complex at 1401 James Street, about which Ben had some insight to share. The buildings are apparently managed by a state-level mental-health organization. Élan reported that, after a long period of the building just standing empty and in ruins, there is now some official restoration effort under way at the site.

Erin gave a quick update on the Bellingham Food Bank's status and how YNA can best shepherd resources to it at the December Holiday Party, noting that financial contributions are much more useful to them than donated food items because the former can be leveraged to effect in their overall fundraising efforts. Signage featuring a YNA-specific QR code for would-be donors to scan could help document how York neighbors contribute to the Food Bank in this way.

On a related note, it was acknowledged that the Holiday Party planning conversation should begin now, especially the lining up of sponsors for the various aspects that would otherwise entail expenses. Whether the event should be held on the first or the second Saturday in December was raised as a question but not resolved, so Colin should check with Tom in case he's already booked Cramer Classics for either of those dates.

The meeting adjourned at 7:34pm.

General Action Items:

- Forward Colin's email announcing the Annual Picnic to 5 to 10 neighbors to help ensure word of it gets out and encourage attendance. Individual Board members who offered to purchase or rent resources for the picnic should do so ahead of the event.
- Please deliver *Yorkers* to your blocks before Wednesday, September 3, to ensure good turnout at the picnic.
- Send any suggestions for topics and/or guests for a late-October General YNA Meeting to Colin as soon as possible so he can reach out to relevant parties.
- Contributions of content for the November newsletter should be sent to Mark by the 7th of November at the very latest.

Individual Action Items:

Colin:

- Get the YNA bin of event supplies from Tom for use at the picnic.
- Check with Tom about booking Cramer Classics for the December wagon ride and whether the 6th or the 13th would be better if available.

Mark:

- Produce one last issue of the newsletter for the year, to come out in November, promoting the Holiday Party and Wagon Rides.
- Transcribe and distribute minutes for this meeting for Board review.

Élan:

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Erin:

- At the Bellingham Food Bank, establish a YNA-specific web page and/or donation channel so a QR code posted at the Holiday Party can stamp donations as being from York neighbors.

Respectfully submitted, Mark Ellis Walker, Secretary.