

Vancouver and District Area Council General Meeting – Sept 9, 2020

Via Zoom Video Call due to Covid-19 pandemic

In Attendance:

Todd Smith (President, AGR 20044), Crystal Isaac (Vice President, UTE 20027), Jen Horsley (Secretary, UPCE 20095), Andre Bessette (UHEW 20729), Warren Wulff (UCTE 20088), Damir Moric (CEIU 20937), Aaron Chang (Treasurer, CEIU 20938), Anne-Marie Friesen (UHEW 20729), Marion McClarty (UNE 20150), Terri Lee (AGR 20044), Denzel John Ache (UTE 20027), Joanne Chevalier (CEIU 20944), Donna Odne (AGR 20044), Jamey Mills (REVP), Monica Urrutia - Staff

Regrets: none received

Meeting started at 6:00 PM, Called to Order at 6:02 PM

Agenda:

1. Presentation on BCFORUM by Sam Wiese (Cancelled)
2. Prior Minutes
 - a. June 3, 2020
3. Ratify motion
 - a. Motion to support Hogan's Alley Society, passed by e-vote in June
4. Business Arising from the Previous Minutes
5. Standing Updates
 - a. Financial Report
 - b. Metro Vancouver Alliance
 - i. New Base MVA Membership Amount
 - c. Phoenix
 - d. COVID-19
 - e. Vancouver Just Recovery
 - i. Consideration to adopt "[Vancouver Just Recovery Statement on Defunding the VPD and Supporting Black and Vulnerable Communities](#)"
6. Affiliate Reports
7. New Business
 - a. Election to fill vacancy of 2nd Vice-President (Term ends at VDAC AGM in 2021)
 - b. *BCFed Political Action Training Session October 2, 2020 (added at opening of meeting)*
 - c. *Membership Engagement Proposal (added at opening of meeting)*
8. Round Table
9. Next Meeting November 18, 2020

Welcome & Acknowledgement – Todd opened the meeting with the acknowledgement of the traditional territories of the Musqueam, Squamish and Tseil-Waututh.

Before the meeting was called to order, the floor was given to Jamey to present a Regional Recognition Award to Andre Bessette and to give the members an update on Covid-19 and the PSAC, bargaining, and Phoenix.

Andre was nominated for the Community Champion Award by Todd Smith, President of the Vancouver and District Area Council. Jamey read out the Nomination:

“André has years of experience in activism supporting Indigenous youth and broader Indigenous communities. He currently serves on the board of the Urban Native Youth Association in Vancouver whose mission is to celebrate and empower Indigenous youth. André continues to be involved in his communities through various non-profit and advocacy opportunities whenever they arise. This important good work has been brought into his union through the Vancouver and District Area Council, his local, and his component. Through André's dedication to his community and involvement in his union he has worked with the Vancouver and District Area Council to develop and adopt a progressive solidarity statement with the Wet'suwet'en people, has brought forward successful motions to the Vancouver and District Area Council to support a just recovery from COVID-19 on the municipal level in Vancouver, represents the Vancouver and District Area Council at the Vancouver Just Recovery Coalition, and continues to find ways to bring his passion and dedication for his communities and his union involvement together for the benefit of our members and the broader community. André's voice, participation, and contributions to the union have had an immediate and important impact through increasing our awareness of issues, encouraging and enabling action on issues, promoting engagement with communities, and supporting community events.”

The members of the Area Council congratulated Andre and he thanked the Council for the Nomination.

Jamey briefly discussed the current bargaining updates, including which units are in ratification and the Phoenix damages package. He asked that members continue to bring forward any Covid-19 concerns in their workplaces that are not being addressed or that they have questions about. Jamey then opened the floor to questions.

Andre shared that he had had a successful meeting with a director at Environment Canada regarding making Indigenous learning and awareness courses mandatory at the CSP Level at Environment Canada, and he was wondering how to have this learning go wider into the broader Government of Canada. Jamey suggested contacting the Indigenous People's Circle and asked if Andre could send him (Jamey) and email with more details that he could take to the AEC or NBOD.

Jamey turned the floor back over to Todd and left the meeting.

Agenda:

Todd proposed the addition of two items to the agenda under new business. BCFed Political Action Training and Membership Engagement Proposal. The Agenda was moved with the additions by Andre and seconded by Crystal. (M/S/C) Andre/Crystal

Ratification:

For the minutes the email motion to support the Hogan's Alley Society was ratified, motion was as follows:

I recognize that Friday, Juneteenth, is a celebration for all Black people across America who fought and succeeded in ending slavery. We all know the state the world is in and how much farther we need to push against Anti-Black Racism. I wish everyone a powerful and celebratory Juneteenth!

As I brought up in our last VDAC meeting. I think it is important that we support and recognize the struggle that our Black members face on a daily basis. We are all in charge of defeating Racism in our homes, workplaces, and public spaces.

In recognition of the long and arduous battle that Black people live with: I move to donate \$250 to the [Hogan's Alley Society](#) who are "convening, cultivating, sustaining African diaspora / descent culture" in the Vancouver area. [Here is an article](#) where they envision reclaiming Hogan's Alley, a traditionally Black neighborhood that was destroyed by the Georgia Viaduct.

Business Arising:

There was no business arising from the previous minutes.

Standing Reports:

Finances:

Aaron sent the finance report and budget via email before the meeting:

Below are the expenses to date (2020-09-09):

Amount	Reason	Category
\$ 46.71	CLIFF	A
\$ 86.00	VAC meeting 2020-02-26	B
\$ 174.55	Winter School expense	C

The current account balance is \$3388.98.

I hope the information will help VAC make decisions on the expenses to be passed.

M/S/C (Aaron/Warren)

Phoenix Damages:

Jamey referred to this at the opening, Todd asked if there were any further comment/questions. No one responded with anything.

Covid-19:

Todd said there were no new updates to report. Opened the floor to the members to speak. Anne Marie mentioned that her employer, Environment Canada was coming out with a mask mandate for the workplace and asked what other people's workplaces were doing. Aaron said there was currently no mask mandate in his workplace unless you are working in close proximity with others. Warren said the same as Aaron, there is no mask mandate unless working in close proximity and his employer is providing masks.

Damir spoke about his workplace at Harbour Centre, a Service Canada processing centre. The employer is mobilizing everyone by providing laptops, docking stations and cell phones. Processing workers are not going back to the office for a while. Accommodations are being provided for those working at home, for example sit/stand desks, this is still be worked on. Everyone who has been provided with a laptop is being asked to clear out their workstations at Harbour Centre so that the employer is able to spread out those who are required to be in the office.

Aaron noted that a safety concern that has been brought up as people are returning to the office is the increased level of violence and aggression that has been happening in downtown Vancouver. Aaron also mentioned that there is an issue with toilets in the workplace that do not have lids, the BCCDC has recommended that toilet lids should be down in order to lessen the spread of the virus.

Andre spoke about the Return to Work plans that are going through the OSH committee at his workplace. He recommended that anyone who has a chance to attend, view the plan documents or contribute to them do so as there are simple things being overlooked because the plans are coming from above and from people who don't do the jobs, so don't know what to include.

Approval of Previous Minutes, June 2020

Warren noted there were errors in the spelling of his name and component. With changes, (M/S/C) Jen/Warren

Metro Vancouver Alliance:

Todd asked Jen to give a description of the work the MVA does for the new members on the call. Jen read from the MVA website:

“Metro Vancouver Alliance is a broad-based alliance of community groups, labour, faith and educational institutions working together for the common good.

Broad-based community organizations operate on the principle of *‘power before program’*. In other words, they build strong relationships amongst diverse groups in the community. Those groups then come together to listen to their members’ concerns and to agree on issues that can be worked on together. This ensures that the alliances are sustainable over the long term and that members work on those issues that concretely matter most to them. Members develop leadership skills and learn “the art of politics” through active engagement and participation.

MVA is based on a model of community organizing pioneered by the [Industrial Areas Foundation \(IAF\)](#). Founded by Saul Alinsky in the 1930’s, IAF has over 60 active community alliances across the US, Canada, the UK, Germany and Australia.”

Jen has not been able to attend due to her work and committee commitments, however, she also spoke about MVA’s recent activities and upcoming activities. In July and at the time this VDAC meeting was being held, the MVA had held Delegate’s Workshops to catch up on the progress of the rebuild and relaunch of the MVA. The workshops were described as:

The MVA discussed putting relational trust at the centre of our organizing and explored different areas where trust can help us build relational power. Together we made respective commitments to put this into practice in four areas of focus:

1. Inside our institutions, by building a core team of leaders who will attend the MVA Delegates Assembly.
2. With a neighbouring organization, by meeting with a nearby institution that is different from ours and inviting them to the Delegates Assembly.

3. With other leaders at a virtual leadership institute or reconciliation training.
4. As a member of MVA's sponsorship team.

These workshops were put on in preparation for the Delegates Assembly which will be taking place on Tuesday September 22, 2020 from 6-8 pm, which members of the VDAC are able to attend. To attend please register on the MVA website (provided to members during the meeting) <http://www.metvanalliance.org/calendar> . The Assembly will include the AGM, which was postponed from the spring due to the pandemic as well as learning from each other what our 2020 listening season has revealed so far, and about the trainings and projects in the works. The Board will provide a brief Annual Report for 2019, and hold elections for new Directors.

Vancouver Just Recovery Coalition:

Andre described the Coalition for new members of VDAC. It is an intersectional coalition looking at the impact of the pandemic on people without homes, social supports and food security. The coalition has a municipal focus on recovery and fighting against possible austerity budgets which might come out of the pandemic. More information can be found on their website, <https://www.vancouverjustrecovery.ca/> . Andre also noted that he had recently had a meeting with the chairs of the Coalition, Kimberly Wong and Matthew Norris as well as Neal Adolph from the United Way.

The VDAC had signed on to the coalition's joint statement since our last meeting, and Andre led a discussion about the possibility of the VDAC signing on to the coalition's statement regarding defunding the police. Todd read out the statement at the opening of the discussion.

"Vancouver Just Recovery Statement on Defunding the VPD and Supporting Black and Vulnerable Communities

June 10, 2020

The Vancouver Just Recovery Coalition stands in solidarity with the Black Lives Matter Vancouver (BLMV) statement calling on the city to dismantle systems of violence and oppression. BLMV's statement is viewable [here](#).

The Vancouver Just Recovery Coalition is calling on the City of Vancouver and the Ministry of Public Safety & Solicitor General to begin a process to defund the Vancouver Police Department (VPD) and repurpose these resources to community-led frontline organizations to address poverty, mental health, drug addiction and homelessness, and to implement the necessary transparency, accountability, and democratic governance and budgetary frameworks to begin rebuilding public trust in the VPD.

The VPD currently occupies 21% of the city's budget, representing \$340 million, which is a \$134 million increase over the 2008 VPD operating budget.

Vancouver is still reeling from the impacts of COVID-19, with many of these impacts being disproportionately felt by vulnerable and marginalized communities. These same communities are also most negatively impacted by annual increases to the police budget, resulting in over policing and increased street presence.

The VPD has a long history of discriminatory practices and have failed to build trust and keep vulnerable communities safe. Community advocates have identified troubling trends which highlight VPD's practice in disproportionately "carding" Indigenous peoples, and the use of heavy-handed tactics in the DTES.

Two weeks ago, the city identified a number of critical social programs and services that will be subject to cuts and reductions as the city struggles to balance its post-COVID budget. Yet despite a request to reduce their budget by 1%, equaling roughly \$3 million, the VPD has refused to make any cuts to their operating budget.

The Vancouver Just Recovery Coalition is calling for the re-purposing of VPD funds to reduce the impacts of the COVID pandemic on vulnerable communities.

We need to defund police to allow cities to create budgets which reflect our community's priorities. We need to untie the hands of our elected officials and prioritize responsive, just, and representative services and policy which effectively respond to the needs of our communities.

The police have failed to protect and ensure the safety of Vancouver's vulnerable communities while benefiting from annual budget increases. These funds could be better used by community-based organizations providing frontline services tackling issues pertaining to poverty, discrimination, mental health, and addictions. The direct injection of these much needed funds into frontline organizations will equally allow for a decrease in the demand for a police presence while providing a rise in the quality of life of these communities by supporting the provision of appropriate services and programs to respond to their specific circumstances without relying on the use of violence and punishment."

Andre put forward a motion that the Vancouver and District Area Council endorse the Vancouver Just Recovery Statement on Defunding the VPD and Supporting Black and Vulnerable Communities.

Discussion followed:

Damir asked if the Vancouver Just Recovery Coalition was asking only for the 1% of funds referred to in the statement or would it be asking for something else?

Andre replied that they (VJRC) are asking us to think about changing the way we look at funding and the yearly increases of policing budgets which saw a huge jump during the 2010 Olympics and were never decreased after that event. The goal is to have the funding redistributed to frontline organizations who do preventative work in the community, which would reduce the burden on policing.

Warren said we should strongly support not just defunding, but redistributing, moving the money to repurpose funds. Police are being involved in non-criminal events due to over-policing, it would be better to redistribute the funding to crisis-intervention services. Warren thanked Andre for bringing the motion forward.

Marion said that she is totally in support of the motion, and asked if the statement is specific to Vancouver and the VPD? She further asked if we would be able to make a motion that would be more general to all police forces in our area of jurisdiction?

It was noted that that might be something that could be addressed through the National Just Recovery organization, but that it would be brought to the Coalition.

Todd said that he had looked at the Just Recovery for All website and had not seen PSAC as a supporter, he would bring that to the REVP to bring to the AEC.

Andre mentioned that the BCFed had also released their own statement on a just recovery and he was hoping that all of these bodies will come together against austerity budgets.

Motion:

That the VDAC support and sign on to the Vancouver Just Recovery Statement on Defunding the VPD and Supporting Black and Vulnerable Communities.

M/S/C Andre/Jen

Affiliate Reports

Aaron submitted his report via email and spoke briefly to it.

There have been biweekly workplace reintegration update meetings between the union and the management to discuss the status of reintegration and to monitor the supply of masks, cleaning products.

IRCC offices in Vancouver are scheduled to re-open during the week of [October 5, 2020](#); however, the current state of the pandemic in BC is concerning because BC has the 3rd highest rate of active cases and the current number of active cases exceed the record earlier in 2020.

One of the items to be followed up is installation of toilet lids. Per BC CDC guidance, toilet lids should be down during flushing; however, at the office, the toilets have no lid.

<http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19/about-covid-19/if-you-are-sick>

In addition, downtown Vancouver is witnessing an increase in the level of violence and aggression. The safety issue was brought to the attention of IRCC DM, but the DM does not know an immediate solution to it.

Jen spoke about what is going on with her employer, Purolator. Due to higher volumes, she had agreed to allow Teamsters members who are on modified duties to work in one of the swamped areas of the depot, and there were still some temporary employees being utilized in this area, which has lead to some issues over assignment of overtime. Her members are still required to apply for CERB/EI if they are required to be on leave due to Covid issues, the employer is not providing paid leaves and is relying on the government to pay employees who are off. There have been a few exposures, none have been considered high-risk and none have lead to outbreaks. Reusable non-medical masks have been provided, up to 5 per year.

New Business

Todd told the council that an email had gone out to all of the Area Councils requesting participants for the upcoming political action training being offered by the BCFed. One of the stipulations to participation is a commitment from the participants to be involved in upcoming membership engagement activities around the upcoming provincial election, whether that occurs at the regular date or sooner. Todd read out the description of the training from the email:

the BC Federation of Labour (BCFED) just announced that they will be hosting a one-day, online political action training on Friday, October 2nd. The focus of this training is to learn more about the BCFED's vision for economic recovery and how members can be politically active in their communities. This is particularly important now because the political decisions today will have lasting impacts on the future of our province. The training will include guest speakers, skill-based training sessions, and group conversations.

The email also mentioned several target ridings that they were hoping the area councils might be able to provide participants from, for the VDAC those include, Burnaby North, Burnaby Lougheed, Burnaby Deer Lake, Vancouver Fraserview, North Vancouver Lonsdale, Port Moody Coquitlam and Coquitlam Burke Mountain.

Todd mentioned that as the Chair of the Regional Council Political Action Committee he would already be attending and asked if anyone else would be interested.

Warren asked if the group that would be working around the election was already formed or if we have to seek them out?

Todd answered that there are still not solid plans because of Covid and there isn't certainty around when an election will be called.

Terri said that from her past experience, depending on what happens, in the past we used to go into the PSAC office and have a script from the BCFed to make calls to members, might be adjusted for Covid protocols.

Andre mentioned that he had done the engagement work with the BCFed in a previous election and would be interested. Warren said he had done similar training before, and it might be a rehash, but he could attend without cost to the PSAC as it falls on his compressed workday. Andre said he would like to attend. Todd said he would let Kristin know that Andre would be the Area Councils delegate, Jen suggested that Warren's name also be mentioned so that he would be able to register as well. Todd also reminded everyone that some of our Collective Agreements have a Volunteer Day clause, and it is up to the member how they want to utilize it.

Membership Engagement Proposal

Todd gave a history of how the proposal had come forward from the Area Councils & Committee Summit that had been held via Zoom in July. The proposal had been sent to Kristin for preliminary costing. The proposal is to do a physical mailout to members in our jurisdiction to remind them that there are still union activities taking place, to speak about the need for a just recovery from the economic fall-out of the pandemic and to push for the world we want in the aftermath. Other topics to be included would be bargaining victories and a part about taking a step towards reconciliation by

making meaningful territorial acknowledgements. Andre also mentioned that we would like to include a small swag item such as a sticker and a postcard about just recovery or an upcoming election. Someone (Todd??) mentioned that if we put in materials from Vancouver Just Recovery, it would not necessarily be relevant to all the members in our catchment. Jen said that there might be materials from the Labour Day launch from the CLC campaign if we weren't able to use something from Just Recovery or election materials weren't ready.

Todd wanted to make sure to acknowledge and thank the Executive Assistant to the REVP, Kristin Schneider for her assistance and costing of the proposal. There are a couple of options, we would need to send out approximately 5,000 letters to reach the members we represent, at a base cost of approximately \$1,400.00. The difference in costing comes in how we decide to do the actual mailout.

- 1) Use Mail-O-Matic who would address, stuff, seal and mail the envelopes for us. They have some specifications on the size of the materials to be included. It is the more expensive and easier option, cost is approximately \$3,266.63 based on the letters being pre-created and the materials being to their specifications. To do this option we would need to ask for additional funding from the REVP's office.
- 2) We stuff the envelopes ourselves, which would require us to come up with a plan to distribute the materials to volunteers, likely be done at home to observe social distancing and because the PSAC office is not yet open.

One question that will need to be addressed so that a sticker can be designed, what messaging do we want?

Discussion was opened to the floor, Todd asked if people like the idea.

Terri said that she would be willing to help with envelope stuffing, if it comes to that. She said that Patrick could design a sticker for us. Andre said that at the Summit there had been a lot of discussion around whether a mailout is a good idea, whether it is effective, also around paper and waste. He said we need to be sure to craft a message that is designed with respect that it is a tangible way to reach out to more members than an email. Andre continued on to say that the content is the most important thing, that we needed to be focused and genuine. Todd said that anyone who is interested in participating should reach out to him and he would create a WhatsApp group for communication. He called on everyone to think about a sticker message that would be applicable across the region, it should be timely and relevant. Monica suggested it might be a good idea to include a contest or a draw to get a sense of how many people actually opened the letter.

How do we pay for the proposal? It would come out of the Political Action line item, which currently has \$2693.00 available.

Andre put the motion to the floor.

Move that the Vancouver and District Area Council allow the Political Action group to use up to the full amount available in the Political Action line item of the budget towards the Member Engagement Mailout Project.

M/S/C (Andre, Marion)

Election for Vacancy on the Executive

Sky Belt vacated the position of 2nd Vice President of the Vancouver and District Area Council, and we need to hold an election to fill this position for the remainder of the term, which will end at our next AGM in 2021. Todd turned the Chair over to Monica to explain the process and run the election.

Andre Bessette was nominated by Marion, second by Jen – Acclaimed

Round Table

Todd reminded the Area Council about the upcoming Solidarity Saturday on September 19, 2020. He had made a video message for the event. He also thanked Monica & Hetty for continuing to put together the Action Wednesday emails over the summer and into the fall. Todd congratulated Marion on her Affirmation to the position of a Metro Vancouver representative on Regional Council.

Monica talked about the online education sessions that had been held earlier in the year and that they were on pause due to the online ratification meetings that were currently being held. The education sessions were still being worked on and should be expected to resume with new materials/topics in the late fall/early winter.

Andre was sworn in to his new office on the VDAC.

Next Meeting November 18, 2020 @ 6PM.

Motion to Adjourn M/S/C Andre/Warren 8:05 pm.