



# ROCKLAND NEIGHBOURHOOD ASSOCIATION

*P.O. Box 5276, Station B, Victoria BC, V8R 6N4*

## Winter 2012 Newsletter

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**Please share a copy of the RNA Newsletter with a neighbour.**

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### GREETINGS FROM CITY HALL

**By Ben Isitt**



Let me begin by extending a warm welcome.

Since taking my oath of office in December and assuming my seat as city councillor and regional director, I have had

the honour of serving as the City of Victoria's Council Liaison to Rockland.

Attending your monthly Rockland Neighbourhood Association meetings and addressing your AGM has allowed me to observe first-hand the passion of Rockland residents and your commitment to protecting the heritage and vitality of this place.

I understand the widespread concern that urban development could undermine the character, charm and special features of distinct neighbourhoods such as Rockland. That is why I have worked with the RNA Land Use Committee to resolve ongoing issues relating to development in the neighbourhood, particularly controversy arising from several properties along Despard Avenue.

During a meeting I facilitate between City Planning staff and the RNA's land use chair, we discussed improvements to Zoning Bylaws and city procedures, including increasing building setbacks and strengthening regulations relating to blasting and soil removal. Changes have already been implemented to limit building height and address other factors that fuelled controversy in the past.

Another land-use issue that is attracting increased interest in Rockland relates to the city's new Garden Suite Policy. This policy has been adopted by Council and is designed to encourage the development of new rental housing while preserving the existing character of neighbourhoods. I strongly support this policy, as a valuable alternative to high-density development that advances the city's affordable housing goals.

I understand that some citizens do not want to see garden suites in Rockland. But my response is that zero change to existing land use is an unacceptable policy, since we have thousands of people in this city in need of affordable rental housing, including seniors, students and working people vital to our local economy. All neighbourhoods have a role to play accommodating an increase in the housing supply.

I am confident that through a policy of encouraging garden suites and safe secondary suites, we can expand the supply of safe and affordable rental housing without transforming the character of established residential neighbourhoods such as Rockland.

Higher density growth in the form of mid-rise buildings are most appropriately located Downtown and in the vast stretch of underutilized land extending north from Downtown to the Saanich border—an area that I have described as “Midtown” in a recent proposal for a master plan (which can be viewed on my website: [www.BenIsitt.ca](http://www.BenIsitt.ca)).

I look forward to continuing the discussion on this and other issues—at your monthly Rockland Neighbourhood Association meetings, in personal correspondence, in the City Council chamber, and in future issues of this newsletter.

*Ben Isitt is a Victoria City Councillor and Regional Director and the City’s Council Liaison to Rockland. In his professional life he is a historian, author and legal scholar. He can be reached at [Ben@Isitt.ca](mailto:Ben@Isitt.ca) or 250-882-9302.*

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**ROCKLAND NEIGHBOURHOOD ASSOCIATION  
HIGHLIGHTS OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL  
MEETING, FEBRUARY 8, 2012  
AT THE GRACE LUTHERAN CHURCH**

The meeting was called to order at 7:38 p.m. There were 56 voting members in attendance.

Motion: to approve the agenda (Dave Clark / Janet Simpson) Carried

President Janet Simpson introduced the Panel members – City of Victoria Councillors Ben Isitt, Shellie Gudgeon and Lisa Helps.

Shellie was asked: What steps can you take to ensure conservation of Rockland heritage?

Designated – (e.g., her home) –strong restrictions on development options.

Registered – less protection, more flexibility

Heightened sense of fear – mega developments – key is keeping the communication open – providing early warning

Deb Day’s planning 101 notes are on Lisa’s website

Infilling of large properties – do we need more restrictive policies?

Supports neighbourhood-appropriate development

Ben Isitt was asked: what to do to protect and increase green space?

Victoria will soon be “built out” once upper harbor is infilled.

There is surplus city-owned land

Look at existing green space that is now in the hands of larger institutions – work for commitments to get longer-term protection – e.g., Government House. Opportunities with Central Middle School green space.

Also steward and nurture pocket woodland garden

Best chance for new space is within the greenways – connections using the city road infrastructure

Ben Isitt answered the question: What solutions for speeding problems Rockland and Richardson; cut-through on Robleda, Despard?

Talking with Planning, they are well aware

– have done studies – Richardson speeds OK, Rockland average 45 in a 30 zone.

Solutions – Greenways traffic calming.

City-wide lowering to 40kph on collector?

Lisa Helps added that, in Fernwood, sent a letter and speed limit is 30 the whole way. In Doncaster (west of Hillside) locals made a “speedbump” of pulled dandelions – it didn’t last but pulled the residents together and publicized the issue.

Shellie Gudgeon added that speed readers can change behavior through feedback. Remind commuters through signage or other means.

Lisa Helps was asked how to address Rockland’s need for Floor-space ratios (FSR). – Impact on Despard residents – sense of neighbourhood needs fostering – not just the big house, but the impact on sense of place.

She suggested the use the setbacks to get more energized and rebound.

FSR is a concern. Planning says that R1A zoning does not stipulate maximum floor area. Instead, achieved through set-back requirements. The City has made changes in maximum building height

Development Permit Area #41 – design direction to control semi-attached developments.

Setbacks as a percentage of lot size, rather than a fixed amount.

Further amendments are possible.

Shellie Gudgeon answered the question: what steps to

increase public's appreciation that Rockland is a heritage area that deserves special consideration?

Opportunities for plaques and signage. – Educate the walking public.

If a certain group of properties are like-minded, citizens can create a heritage zone.

Travel and “google” other jurisdictions to see what they have proposed as solutions.

Lisa Helps was asked what to do to ensure RNA Plan is honoured?

Still have a place in the new planning scheme – local area plans (LAP).

The bulk of Rockland falls within the last priority, so there won't be new development pressure. – Development Permit Area #41 is a key tool

John Weaver presented an alternative point of view on speeding and cut-off traffic. Rockland speed limit too low – large stretches are wide, no parking and no traffic – should be 50 kmph until you get to the tricky bits. – Cut-off solutions in Jubilee sends everything to Begbie and Bay Streets, rather than distributing the load more equitably.

Lloyd Ollila noted that the Rockland plan was set up to stop front yard development. Plan has worked in that respect. Would like the plan updated with small amendment. Also Plan was never made a bylaw. Trees and Greenspace – may be impacted by deer browsing pressure. The OCP is bylaw, and LAP will not be bylaw.

Don Hamilton said the Rockland characteristic is large ratio of greenspace to site coverage. Garden Suites, subsidized by grants is going to impact that balance, and parking will be an issue. Densify elsewhere.

Ben Isitt noted that the City has goals around affordable housing, without impacting character in the face of rising land values. Secondary Suites and garden suites have a place. Makes things affordable for homeowners. Real density should be between uptown and downtown.

Guests at the meeting were Ray Lonsdale, Irwin Henderson, Catherine Spencer, and Jamie Hammond, the new Government House Liaison.

OCP – heritage character is often mentioned, but not directly with Rockland (concern).

Also Fort Street corridor LAP will include a 400 m buffer, and that will include a large portion of Rockland in the planning process, for context.

Bob June announced the 150Victoria celebration around

Rockland Linden. There was a general call for volunteers.

Motion Approval of the Minutes of 2011 AGM (DC/LO) carried

Motion Approval of the Committee reports (BB/DC) carried

Members' concerns.

Lloyd Olilla asked on behalf of the Graffiti committee – other jurisdictions have had crackdowns – Nanaimo, Saanich, Colwood. What success?

Ray Lonsdale noted that he is a civil member, not a police officer – Chantal Ziegler is the officer in charge.

It is a priority when it happens. Has to be an actual report, then its tracked in the system – if it is just painted over, or photographed, it still needs to be called in.

Painting on hydro poles would clog the system.

Arrest for graffiti – have to prove who did it – case goes to crown council, and they decide if it should go to court. There are solutions – “septet” environmental manipulation – e.g., lighting.

One member asked about tour busses on St. Charles – concentrated, and slowing to describe a particular feature are a congestion hazard.

The Nominating Committee presented the following slate:

President - Janet Simpson  
Vice-president - Bob June  
Secretary - David Clark  
Treasurer - John Caldwell  
Directors Bill Brooks  
Norman Clark  
John Edwards  
David Hambleton  
Jane Wheatley

All were elected by acclamation.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:05 pm.

## ROCKLAND AND VICTORIA 150 CELEBRATION



The Rockland Neighbourhood Association applied for a grant to enable it to celebrate “The best that Rockland has to offer” in conjunction with Victoria 150’s celebration. The event will take place on Saturday, September 8, 2012 from noon-4 pm. We received a grant of \$1,000 from the City and the RNA has offered a matching grant to enable the full celebration to go ahead.

The focus of our celebration is to showcase what it is that makes Rockland different from other neighbourhoods in the City, and to bring together the residents in a day-long celebration of history and community.

Rockland is a unique neighbourhood with four cultural nodes not found elsewhere in the City. We have formed partnerships with all four, and they will be active participants in our celebration. The Langham Court Theatre is planning a fashion show “through the ages” that will celebrate fashion over the last 150 years and may show silent movies. The Friends of Government House Gardens will give tours of the extensive gardens. The Art Gallery of Greater Victoria is planning a book launch and a historical display of the home of the Art Gallery. They will also hold an Open House with Rockland artists on site with free admission for Rockland residents. Craigdarroch Castle will be the site of events on the lawn with musicians, children’s activities, croquet matches, etc.

In addition, the Hallmark Heritage Society will bring a display of Rockland’s architectural heritage from the earliest days to the present and members of the Vintage Car Club of Victoria will bring cars from different eras for residents to view. We are hoping to bring in other types of vehicles as well to show the diversity in vehicles over the years.

In the spirit of a “birthday celebration,” we are planning a cake competition with a celebrity judge. Citizens would

bake and decorate a cake and present it for judging. Cakes would then be offered to the guests. We will also distribute copies of our recently-redesigned Rockland neighbourhood walking tours so that visitors can discover for themselves the unique nature of Rockland’s architectural heritage.

The Association intends to promote this event throughout the City, not just in the Rockland neighbourhood, to bring citizens from other areas to discover the flavour of Rockland.

To help promote the September 8th event, we are planning a Rockland Garage Sale on August 18th. At that time we will hand out flyers advertising our event.

-The Langham Theatre is having their Costume and Clothing Sale on July 15. RNA members are encouraged to attend and support our partner.

The organizing committee, including representatives from our partners, is meeting regularly to plan this special event. We would welcome feedback from RNA members – volunteers are most welcome.

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### EARLY RECYCLER LIVED IN ROCKLAND MANSION

As the years have passed, the number of people who remember the original Rockland recycler, Harry Haigh, has decreased. I remember stories my father told me as a child about this “strange character” who lived at 1586 Rockland Avenue.

Harry Haigh was born June 6, 1910 in Leeds, England to Joseph Haigh and Annie Elizabeth Whitwam who had been married at Barley All Saints Church, Yorkshire, England on October 29, 1899. Joseph’s occupation was listed as stone mason while Annie shown as a rag picker. Both their fathers had worked in the local mines. Harry was the couple’s fifth child born in England: his older siblings were Edith (1901), Joe (1902), Fred (1904), and Annie (1906). All are listed in the 1911 England census, residing at North Curzon Street, Gainsborough, Lincolnshire.

In 1912, Joseph Haigh left his family in England and traveled to Canada on the *Tunisian*, arriving in Quebec City on May 27, 1912. He then made his way to Calgary. Later, Annie and the five children departed Liverpool on the *Empress of Ireland*, bound for Saint John, New Brunswick, where they landed on November 23, 1912. Their final destination was listed on the Passenger List was Calgary, Alberta. The family appeared on the 1916

census of Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta living on 36<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE, Calgary. By this time a sixth child, May, had been born. By 1916, the family had moved to Victoria where father Joseph worked as a stonemason during the construction of Christ Church Cathedral. They lived at 1157 Pembroke Street. Over the next twenty years, they moved several times, living at 938 Caledonia Street and 1413 Blanshard Street, finally settling at 734 Pandora Avenue. Joseph continued working as a stonemason while his children Edith, Frederick, Annie, and Joseph Jr. all worked at Cornwell's Bakery, which had two local outlets – 717 Fort Street and 1842 Pandora (Owner Alfred Cornwell lived at this site). Joseph Haigh died on February 15, 1942; his wife Annie outlived him by many years, passing on April 28, 1967.

Harry appeared listed in several city directories, but it was common knowledge that he left home at 17 and worked for the B. C. Electric at Jordan River, renewing the flume at the company's power plant, and then in a sawmill the company operated. During his short stint at this job, he saved enough money to buy a truck and some Shetland ponies. He sold pony rides at fairs and picnics, but his main source of income was from a private garbage collection business in which he collected the things that were being discarded, sorted out the useable items, then sold them. He made enough money to afford a house at 624 Gorge Road and put men to work sorting out household refuse. He was constantly in trouble with city authorities for having a cluttered yard.

Harry ran for Mayor in 1951, garnering 750 votes, but losing to Claude Harrison. He tried for an Alderman's position in 1952, gained 2,200 votes, but still lost. That put an end to a colourful civic election career.

He bought the mansion called *Piermont* at 1586 Rockland Avenue in 1952. He claimed in a later newspaper interview that he had made the purchase "while the real estate people were sleeping." The mansion had been built in 1906 and it was likely that Harry never knew its history. The original owner, Sidney John Langley Pitts, was a wholesale grocer and importer who had a very successful business. In 1901, he owned 13 properties with a total value of \$54,299. By 1904 he was living on St. Charles with other merchant princes and other members of the business establishment. In 1906, he had this mansion built in the Tudor Revival style so common in Rockland. Pitts lived here until his death on August 1, 1942.

Shortly after Harry Haigh moved in, City staffers called the 2.5-acre property a "repository for a vast heap of junk". He was taken to court – over 100 appearances in total – and usually succeeded in getting his way. Among the items

listed as being in his yard in one of the many lawsuits were: kitchen sinks, broken TV antennas, angle irons, stained-glass windows, tins, bottles, rusty bolts, a dilapidated cabin trunk, rusty ice skates, and pieces of railway track. He once came across 200 tons of discarded coal in a dump and transported it to his home. After selling some – and being fined \$300 by the City – he left about 25 tons under his front steps. He often brought unemployed men over to his mansion and showed them how to make money from other people's junk, just as he had done.

By October 31, 1963, Harry had had enough of the City of Victoria and was prepared to sell his 20-room house and the 2.5-acres of land for \$75,000. Harry made the news again on March 23, 1964 when he announced that he would be leaving 1586 Rockland by the end of May. He also noted that he was having problems with the Saanich building inspector at his newly acquired property at 5860 West Saanich Road. He had sold the Piermont property to Belvedere Estates and nearby residents worried about what the new owner intended to do with the property (The house was eventually demolished and the land was subdivided into lots for new homes). Before he left, Harry auctioned off everything he had accumulated. He had decided to sell the Saanich property and planned to go to Harrison Hot Springs for a while noting, "All this fighting with the building inspector has been bad for my health."

Eventually, Harry moved to Sidney, then back to Victoria where he died on December 6, 1982, living at 2120 Ridge Road, of pneumonia and malnutrition. Although the death certificate shows him as "married," there is no public record of a marriage. It should be noted that the accuracy of other details on the certificate were not entirely accurate as the information was provided by a friend.

Harry Haigh was definitely ahead of his time and I often wonder how he would have functioned in our modern world where we are encouraged to "reduce, reuse and recycle."





## ISN'T SPRING WONDERFUL?

### RNA BOARD OF DIRECTORS – 2012-2013

President: Janet Simpson  
Vice President: Bob June  
Secretary: David Clark  
Treasurer: John Caldwell  
Directors: Bill Brooks  
Norman Clark  
John Edwards  
David Hambleton  
Jane Wheatley

### RNA Email Server List

Would you like to hear more about events in Rockland?  
Please join the neighbours list through the RNA website at  
[www.rockland.bc.ca](http://www.rockland.bc.ca).

### ABOUT THIS NEWSLETTER

The Rockland Neighbourhood Association Newsletter is published three to four times a year. It is distributed electronically to all members. Submissions from members on issues of interest are always accepted and photos are particularly welcome.

#### **Deadlines for the upcoming issues are:**

Summer 2012 - July 15, 2012  
Autumn 2012 - October 15, 2012

All submissions should be sent to Communication Chair  
John Edwards - [jcsedwards@gmail.com](mailto:jcsedwards@gmail.com).