

VBCOA AGM 2025 - July 13th, 2025

Board Reports

1. President's Report - Nancy Sarchuk

Thanks to all three of you and a big thanks to Ian Fish who couldn't be here today but completed our team of five. In some ways, we weren't the most likely of boards. We came from different professional backgrounds, different histories at VB and, yes, at times, different points of view. But I think that it's a real testament to the five of us that we were able to pull together and, when it counted and on the big questions, found ways of being unanimously aligned behind our mandate, on what is important to our membership and what was necessary for our association.

And we worked hard. Twenty-one Sunday morning meetings! And that doesn't even scratch the surface. In smaller breakout groups, we hammered out the communications protocol and platforms, wrote and rewrote our Zoning Bylaw 1651 submission, and devoted more time than made sense to the creation of the new Proposed Constitution and Bylaws.

We committed early on to the idea of regular updates for members, which were time-consuming, but were, we thought, an optimal way to connect with membership and let everyone know what we were working on. Along with posts to Facebook and Instagram throughout the year, we feel confident that the membership was kept well in the loop. Certainly, your overwhelmingly positive comments to the board, via email, made us feel like we were on the right track. And we're excited about a real uptick in interest in the VBCOA as attested by to the numbers of cottage owners requesting to become members and a spike in Instagram followers, among other signs. We definitely want to grow the membership so that all 1370 VRA lots are fairly represented in the Association, but that's a big ask and we'd be happy to gain a few hundred more members in the coming years.

But back to this term. We started the year by announcing our priorities in our first update, setting the stage by saying,

"On our early agenda this year are some important administrative housekeeping overhauls - revitalizing and rebooting protocols and communications - plus a membership drive, all the while keeping an eye on zoning bylaws, shoreline issues and actively working with experts on developing wildfire mitigation practices." VBCOA August 2024 update

I'm happy to report that we did all this and much, much more.

Not only did we work on keeping you informed, we further increased board transparency by sharing with members any major communications we were undertaking in their name. For example, formal submissions or letters to council were systematically circulated to our VBCOA community and, of course, in files like the Bylaws, we reached out directly for your feedback. Internally we set up an automatic forwarding system to all board members for ingoing and outgoing emails ensuring no board member missed a thing.

But the issues we worked on were not just administrative in nature. As Blake mentioned, the Zoning Bylaws were an important file, but the VBCOA was also very aware of the urgent need to increase the presence of wildfire risk mitigation in our list of priorities. To that end, the VBCOA lent its support to any and all of the council-approved FireSmart™ volunteer initiatives which targeted the removal of deadfall in public spaces throughout the VRA. These initiatives are critically important at a time of increasing wildfire threat - the smoke of the last few days is just another reminder. And these group events have the added bonus of increasing community engagement and collaboration. We also rallied behind a pilot project proposal through the 2 Billion Trees program. Reforestation through the procurement and planting of wildfire resistant species is going to become more important to combat the increasing impact of disease and climate on our boreal canopy. I'm not sure where council is at with that file, but we're hoping for support.

And what else? We sent word to members about options and thoughts on a proposed parking lot expansion, included them in a police survey, asked them to step up for the Dr's office clean-up and to Walk for Water. We wholeheartedly supported Joanne's brilliant Welcome Letter which addressed an ongoing lack of community information for visitors. We fielded media questions about taxes and crimes, reached out to different levels of government to gain insight into issues, made connections with comparable associations for ideas on how best to continue building our own association, we researched everything from zoning setbacks to proxy voting, and I personally answered more member questions and wrote more email responses to members than I could count.

Throughout all this, we tasked ourselves with drafting an updated and comprehensive set of bylaws that we hope will guide the VBCOA for years to come. It became clear early on in our term - once we'd all had a chance to actually read the existing, somewhat rudimentary, Bylaws in depth - that we would have to start at the very foundation of the Association if we were going to continue to evolve it.

So, we started with that original document - holding on to the historic intent where possible - and then went to work looking at current standardized formats to help us bring our version up to date. We scoured dozens of bylaws from associations within the province and across Canada to see how theirs were set up and then cross-checked with Robert's Rules of Conduct for compatibility. We also sought out some informal and much-appreciated legal advice that helped us to draft a professional, yet accessible document. Finally, we applied our own 'insiders' view of how the Association has functioned over the years to ensure that these bylaws would best represent the specific context of the VBCOA. We wanted to balance a clear governing structure without over-regulating every aspect of board life. For anyone who's been on the board, the demands are many and not always easy or straightforward and some amount of latitude is essential for a well-functioning board.

We believe these Bylaws level the playing field and create an environment where the same rules apply to all. They establish requirements that foster greater transparency both within the board and throughout the membership. Advance notice for main motions, as one example, provides stakeholders with the opportunity to be prepared and to consider a motion before it's formally presented. This, in turn, allows for informed-decision making and prevents unexpected situations at the AGM. It also ensures fairness and transparency, as it gives everyone a chance to be heard and considered. It's just one of many provisions that will make the Association a better-functioning, more streamlined organization and a more welcoming environment.

Using a comprehensive future approach, with a goal of bringing the Association into 2025 and beyond, we believe we have a document that, while not perfect, will provide a solid foundation for the Association. And no matter what possible flaws it may contain (I'd like to think they are very few), it will be an enormous improvement on the actual state-of-affairs. It is our belief that the Proposed VBCOA Constitution and Bylaws are an essential framework for a viable, productive and impactful VBCOA. And remember, there is always room for future amendments. But we'd appeal to everyone to give them a pass today.

Looking ahead, there's still more to do, of course. If our Bylaws are adopted, we will start a process of officially registering Voting Members, so that we can, at long last, draft a verified Voting Members email list. And that will open its own doors. Once we have a list in place we will be able to increase targeted board-membership interactions with the potential for outreach like a membership-wide survey as one way of gaining further insight into the priorities of our members. We'd hoped to get that far this term, but wasn't in the cards. Still, it's an exciting prospect to look ahead to.

So, a lot more to do for the incoming board.

It's been a year of huge strides and positive progress for the Association.

Our entire board should be proud of what we've accomplished and I thank each and every one of them for all that they've contributed.

Thank you.

2. Zoning Bylaw Committee Report - Blake Taylor

Our board would like to congratulate the Council for completing Zoning Bylaw 1651. We worked extensively this year on by-laws for the VBCOA and know how challenging it can be. Without Nancy Sarchuk's capable and energetic leadership we would have not been able to complete the task.

In terms of council's Zoning Bylaws, we did what we could to advocate in the best interests of the VRA. Amongst consultations with council members, we also had a number of meetings with Andrei Friesen of Landmark Planning who served as Planning Consultant to Council. We made a formal submission to council with our thoughts on the Bylaw and sent a delegation to the October Public Hearing. We followed that with a letter to council in which we asked them to further strengthen the language regarding private structures on public land. If there is 'No climbing on the banks', we said, 'there should be no building either'. We took this position because we recognized a notable increase in the number of illegal staircases that have been built on public land without appropriate process and because of their effect in destabilizing the bank - which is most definitely not to the community's advantage. The VBCOA Board supports bank and beach stabilization for the good of all in the community.

And while we wanted some more specific elements in the bylaw, including clearer language with regards to these kinds of structures, nevertheless there are significant gains made as the VBCOA accomplished several positive outcomes for the VRA .

I would like to thank Sean Taylor former Co-President of the VBCOA whose research and consultations laid the groundwork for these outcomes.

In particular there are 3 clauses that benefit the VRA in terms of maintaining our unique character:

2:13 Erosion and slope instability areas now have the advantage of acknowledgement and connection to our development plan with its emphasis on shoreline protection.

*2:14 Riparian Areas now conforms to the **Provincial Planning Act** and introduces both environmental impact assessment and, **the geotechnical assessments** that Steve Topping the consulting Engineer for the Shoreline Advisory Committee insists are essential for assessing structures on our shoreline.*

2.18 Protection and retention of trees now provides stronger protections for forest cover and vegetation including the incorporation of environmental impact assessment and tree surveys . This provides protections for our multi-layered forest and we know that tree canopy retains soil moisture and significantly lowers ground temperatures - critical in these over-heated times.

So, we thank Council for creating this bylaw and trust that you will enforce this and other related bylaws for the benefit of the VRA and the entire RM.

Thank you.

Incidentally, I cited two resources when answering questions:

Tree Canopy:

<https://www.fs.usda.gov/research/docs/webinars/urban-forests/microclimate-heat-islands/slides-troy.pdf>

Shoreline Structures:

<https://www.fs.usda.gov/research/docs/webinars/urban-forests/microclimate-heat-islands/slides-troy.pdf>

3. Communications Committee Report - Brad Scott

The VBCOA launched a new website this year - VBCOA Official - an anchor platform which provides the membership with all the essentials about who we are and what we do, along with key documents, links and contact information. And although it does not include ongoing updates, we worked with Lighthouse Web Creations to create an accessible and user-friendly site, filled with stunning images that capture the unique beauty of VB.

We are also now on Instagram - @vbcoa_official - which, along with our existing Facebook page, provides current news and information to members. In keeping with a clear mandate from membership at the 2024 AGM, both platforms are comment free.

As well, we prioritized regular email updates to membership to keep the everyone informed all year long and our VBCOA Board email address was kept busy with questions and comments from the membership throughout the term.

4. Secretary/Treasurer's Report - Joanne Gibson

4a. Treasurer's Report - Joanne Gibson

As you may know, The VBCOA is an unincorporated volunteer Association, one which has no membership fees. In other words, we have no money.

Yet, each year, members of the VBCOA Board absorb some minor costs. This term, we had the development and 'yearly hosting' of our new *VBCOA official* website, as well as some costs for incidentals.

This term, July 2024 - July 2025, the VBCOA incurred a deficit of \$545.90 (all invoices archived in VBCOA records):

Invoice 2602	Lighthouse Web Creations	\$262.50
Invoice 2603	Lighthouse Web Creations	\$183.75
Incidentals:	printing/paper/ink	\$99.65
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Paid for by VBCOA board members		-\$545.90

We certainly didn't mind covering a few expenses, but on a go-forward basis, it's not ideal. Perhaps a discussion about membership fees is in our future, but in the meantime, it would be so appreciated if the membership could cover our costs for this past year and, in a best-case scenario, it would be amazing to establish a small kitty for the next board too.

So, if you appreciate the work of the VBCOA and would like to chip in, any cash contributions would be welcome. There is a donation box at the door.

Thank you.

4b. Secretary's Report - Joanne Gibson

1. The VBCOA began around the cottage kitchen table discussing challenges about whether to allow electricity and whether to build a water plant. Didn't we all love going to the water pumps and carrying heavy buckets of water back to our cottages ... in the dark?
2. Today, our RM community and the VRA continue to be challenged by Climate Change, Shoreline Erosion, Fire Mitigation and Reforestation, Safety, Accessibility, Volunteerism and many other important issues.
3. Today's "Walk for Water" proves that we can all work and walk together to protect the water and shores of Lake Winnipeg, our beautiful sand beaches and our beloved family cottages.
4. Today, we are asking you, both our Cottage Owners and Associate Members, to reach out to your neighbors and encourage membership in the VBCOA. Your new Board will need more volunteer support to complete the challenges ahead. Sadly, our VB Community Club too, has experienced a lack of new volunteers as many of the old volunteers are still doing their best to volunteer but we are aging out. Where did the Flea Market go? The Dog Show? ... and almost ... The Children's Masquerade this year!
5. Please encourage all your neighbors to join us and please be certain that they sign up for their safety during an emergency to VB CONNECT on the RMVB Council Website - victoriabeach.ca
6. Also please feel free to pick up on the table by the Club Entrance, a VB Welcome Guide and a Fire Smart Information Booklet or simply scan the Fire Smart QR code with your phone or goggle – firesmartcanada.ca Learn about the Fire Smart Neighborhood Recognition Program.

In closing, I would like to thank all the Volunteers who have put their name forward to run for the new VBCOA 2025-2026 Board. You all have so much talent to offer the VBCOA and we are very blessed to have you all on board as we move forward into the challenges ahead.

I would also like to say thank you to all my fellow Board members for your dedication and friendship. It has been a privilege getting to know and work with you all.

Blake Taylor, thank you for your many years of dedication and leadership to the VBCOA. I wish you and your family every success as you continue to work on the 2 Billion Trees Project for the RMVB.

Ian Fish, we miss him today but we know that his work with Manitoba Hydro in fighting fires in Northern Manitoba and educating people in England has kept him very busy. We wish him a safe return to the beach soon.

Now, VB Yacht Club Commodore Brad Scott, fellow VMC Grad, we have been so lucky this year to have you on our Board. It has been especially wonderful to have a permanent resident on board, especially during the winter months and your expertise has been vital to us moving forward this year. All the very best as you continue to lead the VB Yacht Club into 2026.

And finally, I would like to thank especially, our awesome president, Nancy Sarchuk, for her wisdom and expertise. Nancy, your dedicated leadership and friendship during this very challenging year has been exceptional. You were the glue that kept us together! You have really worked hard and I can't believe how many emails and newsletters you have written this year to keep our VBCOA members informed. Thank you for being so caring and willing to volunteer once again for this very challenging job. We would not have accomplished as much without you. Together, our Board, under your exceptional leadership have weathered the storms. When the wind wasn't at our back, we all adjusted our sails and forced onward. It has been an honor to meet you and so many wonderful VBCOA Board Members, both past and present and future. I wish you all, everyone here today, every success and happiness in all your future endeavors. Please plan to volunteer this year or next year for your favorite project and encourage others.

Now let's get our new Bylaws passed and approved!