

VOICE NEW WESTMINSTER

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 22, 2008

12th STREET NEIGHBOURHOOD SOCIETY DISSOLVED BY REGISTRAR FOR NON-COMPLIANCE WITH SOCIETY ACT

New Westminster, BC – *Voice New Westminister* is calling on New Westminister City Council to hold an emergency meeting to deal with the issue of the 12th Street Neighbourhood Society and the \$100,000.00 the Society received from the City three and a half years ago for the “12th Street Building Façade Improvement Grant Program.”

Late last week, *Voice New Westminister* learned that the 12th Street Neighbourhood Society was dissolved by the Registrar of societies on February 22nd for non-compliance with the Society Act—an action not taken lightly by the Registrar.

Voice New Westminister President Blair Armitage says, given the seriousness of this situation and the substantial sum of public money involved, council needs to immediately take whatever steps are necessary to obtain information regarding the financial affairs of the Society and to ensure there has not been any impropriety.

Armitage says an emergency meeting is needed to deal with the 12th Street Neighbourhood Society issue because City Council does not have another scheduled meeting until May 5th and there is some urgency to the matter.

“*Voice* has been concerned for some time about the operations of the 12th Street Neighbourhood Society,” Armitage said, adding that *Voice* has been receiving information over the past year from former directors of the 12th Street Neighbourhood Society who chose to leave the Society because of irregular operating practices.

“One former 12th Street director advised us he was told to leave the 12th Street Society after raising the issue of non-compliance with the Societies Act and improper record keeping by the Society,” said Armitage.

Armitage says that although *Voice New Westminister* typically defers to individual neighbourhoods on neighbourhood-specific issues, in the case of the 12th Street Neighbourhood Society’s non-compliance with the Act and the Society’s formal dissolution by the Registrar the issue is now of city-wide concern as the Society received a \$100,000.00 grant from the City.

In light of the concerns that were being raised about the 12th Street Neighbourhood Society by former 12th Street Society directors, Armitage says *Voice* recently requested—under freedom of information legislation—that the City provide *Voice* with the financial records of the 12th Street Neighbourhood Society. In response to this FOI request, *Voice* was told that the City had no records on file.

“The City of New Westminister designated the 12th Street Neighbourhood Society as the steward of a substantial amount of money,” Armitage explained while adding that the 12th Street Neighbourhood Society’s flagrantly negligent behaviour is astonishing to *Voice New Westminister*.

“We believe this kind of negligence would alarm the residents and taxpayers of New Westminster as much as it has alarmed us.”

Armitage says ***Voice*** is also aware that a letter was sent to the 12th Street Neighbourhood Society on April 10, 2007 by the City’s Director of Finance which instructed the Society to file annual reports and annually audited or reviewed financial statements with the City—instructions which appear to have gone unheeded.

“We find it astonishing that City Council has not followed through on its own directive to the 12th Street Neighbourhood Society to file annual reports and annually audited or reviewed financial statements,” said Armitage. “The hardworking tax payers of this city must be protected and ***Voice*** is demanding that the City immediately recover whatever remaining monies there may be from the original \$100,000.00 grant to the 12th Street Neighbourhood Society.”

Armitage says ***Voice*** would also like Council to restore the original intention of *12th Street Building Façade Improvement Grant Program* which was to provide matching grants for owners and tenants wishing to revitalize the historic commercial appeal of 12th Street.

Voice New Westminster is a broadly-based, non-partisan civic electors group comprised of residents from all parts of the city sharing a common vision for a reinvigorated and sustainable New Westminster.

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For more information, please contact Blair Armitage 604-526-7794 or at info@voicenewwestminster.org

Attachments & Online References

- www.VoiceNewWestminster.org
- Voice New Westminster Letter to Mayor and Council re: non-compliance and dissolution of the 12th Street Neighbour Society (attached)
- April 10, 2007 Letter to 12th Street Neighbourhood Society from Gary Holowatiuk, Director of Finance, City of New Westminster (attached)
- Status Report re: 12th Street Neighbourhood Society – Dissolved/Removed for Failure to File on 22 Feb 2008 (attached)