

York Neighborhood Association Board of Directors Meeting

Aslan Brewing Company (Mezzanine), 1330 North Forest Street

January 28 2026 Minutes

Approved: Motion 2026-03-26.1 ✓

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

Excused: Chris Donaldson (Vice President), Kevin Cussen.

Absent: Jeremy Ferrera, John DeOrio, Megan Doyle, Paul D'Agnolo, Todd Kleinbrook, Tom Scott.

Guests: WWU Urban Planning students Lilli and Sarah.

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

The meeting began at 6:37pm.

1. 2024 Small & Simple Grant Update

As of last week, Colin reports, our Small & Simple Grant for historical interpretive signage at our two parks has now been accomplished with the installation of the panels on their bulletin-board kiosks. After Mark completed their designs in early December, they were printed earlier this month and installed by the Parks Department.

2. MNAC/Mayor Update

The Mayor's Neighborhood Advisory Commission (MNAC) is being partly superseded, and Mayor Lund has issued her Mayor's 2026 Legislative Agenda for Bellingham. Budget constraints and cutbacks are reaching as far as the reduction of the number of high-school periods.

The City has just this week published the mandated Bellingham Plan update, which largely focuses on addressing housing needs. Guest and potential Student Liaison member of the Board Lilli Kihlstrom has already prepared for another group a user-friendly summation of the update and offered to share it with the Board to help us get up to speed on its key aspects.

There was also a side discussion around the pervasive anxiety felt by neighborhoods regarding recent immigration raids, with some sharing of resources such as one called C2C for organizing neighborhood people in the event of such interventions by ICE (which have been very much in the headlines this past month).

3. Your YNA Commitment, Involvements, Interests

Colin asked for a quick round-robin survey of how the current Board members saw their YNA involvement in the coming year. All present indicated they intended to stay on the Board, although Mark does not wish to act as Secretary for a fourth consecutive year and Chris (polled earlier by Colin) and Opie are open to having others take the VP and Treasurer posts; Colin himself does intend to continue as President and hopes to grow the Board by a few members, especially as some are

largely inactive. Nominations can be presented at the February General Membership Meeting, and that positions are open should be publicized in the upcoming newsletter as well as via social media.

Activities of individual interest include our annual events and possibly adding to them such as gatherings and concerts at our parks. Erin can't be in town for Dumpster Day this year but will cochair it with Carolyn Mulder, and Élan will be out of town for much of the summer but will continue representing us at MNAC meetings. Mark will continue to helm the newsletter.

There was a stimulating discussion of the YNA's tech side and online presence, starting with Erin expressing her hope that we can properly document the IT side of our processes such as the ownership and access of the YNA website. This led to the revisiting of our lack of an organized communications strategy, a situation which sees the website, newsletter, and social-media arms of the effort largely acting independently and without coordination or even seeing much of the other's output. It was noted that we do have a Google Workspace account/subscription (?) and that we should be using it to this end. Lilli volunteered to take charge of rebooting the YNA's Instagram/email arrangement.

As to the longstanding question as to whether to migrate the website to a WordPress or equivalent platform that could be maintained and contributed to more easily by many Board members having access and authority to do so, Mark opined that 1. it was essential that this be properly *envisioned* first, and that it is to be representative of the YNA and not some neighborhood bulletin board or social-media environment, and 2. if it does switch from its more loosely/freely maintained HTML-editing context, he can be of assistance but would not wish to be its webmaster. The discussion effectively ended by Mark suggesting that Board members give thought to what they feel the website and/or overall communications effort should include and look like and then pool those at a subsequent meeting.

4. Treasurer's Report

Opie had good numbers to report pretty much all around, with our financial situation in good shape as shown by her spreadsheets of 2025 numbers as compared to 2026 forecasts. The newsletter continues to be a significant contributor to the YNA budget, both through advertiser revenue and City grant monies for it. Merchandise sales (hats) also contributed, as would stickers this year.

In the 2026 outlook, she allocated \$1,500 for the event to celebrate the installation of new playground equipment at Rock Hill Park late next summer (ideally the Rock Out at Rock Hill concert Élan and Kevin are particularly gung-ho on) but noted that another \$500 could be used if it were dual-purposed to serve as the Annual Picnic.

5. Project Neighborly Grant

The City's "Small and Simple Grant" program is being replaced by something called Project Neighborly Grant administrated by another entity (the Whatcom Community Foundation). These have a different emphasis, more on drawing neighbors together, and different parameters such as (as noted by Élan) that corporate matching of grant funds would now be an option we could pursue. In seeking a grant, such matching could be presented as local partnering with, for example, the YWCA or Paper Whale.

The deadline for submitting Project Neighborly Grant proposals is February 23, so Colin proposed to compile and distribute to us a list of ideas for them and asked that Board members respond promptly with input and reactions to help him prepare something to submit.

6. Newsletter Update

Mark regretted to report that his extensive involvement with the production and promotion of the Anchorage Folk Festival has prevented him from doing his usual intended outreach to City departments and other potential contributors of content for the February issue he has in mind but that he anticipates being able to tackle that in the coming week. In turn, this will mean the newsletter won't go out early enough to publicize the General Meeting in late February. He canvassed the present Board members for other general content ideas and what individuals would be willing to commit to providing, and many such options were indeed amassed.

One suggestion, tying back in to the aforementioned stickers-merch intention, was to include in this issue a dual children's feature: in part a little story on Élan's son's seed-sales mini-business, but then also a pitch for kids to submit York-themed designs for us to consider to feature on stickers to sell.

7. February General Meeting

Ideas for presentation topics and speakers were discussed briefly, with Colin noting that the City's Community Streets Program would be a good one. Lilli indicated that she can present something summarizing the Bellingham Plan update and how this process will replace neighborhood plans.

The meeting adjourned at 8:00pm.

Please note that, due to a scheduling conflict at Nelson's Market, Board meetings will now take place on Thursdays rather than Wednesdays.

General Action Items:

- Respond ASAP to a forthcoming list from Colin of ideas for Project Neighborly Grant proposals.
- Contributions of content for the February newsletter should be sent to Mark by February 9.

Individual Action Items:**Chris:**

- Pitch on social media for joining the Board and becoming officers.

Colin:

- Reach out to the people who arrange Elizabeth Park's events for tips on City-rule-compliant arrangements we could follow.
- Produce a piece on local educators for the newsletter, along with the usual President's feature.
- Compile and distribute to the Board a list of ideas for Project Neighborly Grant proposals.

Lilli:

- Reboot YNA Instagram presence and pitch on social media for joining the Board and becoming officers.
- Share with the Board your user-friendly summation of the Bellingham Plan update.

Mark:

- Produce February newsletter, including a pitch for joining the Board and becoming officers.
- Add YNA social-media links to the website, and post Opie's Treasurer-report documents too.
- Write a short bullet-list summation of what the Secretary role involves and supply it to Colin ASAP.
- Transcribe and distribute minutes for this meeting for Board review.

Opie:

- Write a short bullet-list summation of what the Treasurer role involves and supply it to Colin ASAP.

Respectfully submitted, Mark Ellis Walker, Secretary.