

York Neighborhood Association General Membership Meeting

Nelson's Market, 514 Potter Street

May 28 2025 Minutes

Approved: Motion 2026-03-26.1 ✓

Present: YNA Board members Colin Beazley (President), Élan Engel, Erin Vonnahme, John DeOrio, Kevin Cussen, Mark Ellis Walker (Secretary), Paul D'Agnolo, Tom Scott. **Quorum satisfied.**

Guests: Chris Roselli of Western Washington University as presenter, plus five neighbors.

The meeting began at 6:34pm with round-robin introductions.

1. Chris Roselli on the State of the University

Our guest Chris Roselli, Director of Community Relations at WWU, gave an informal assessment of "the state of the university," speaking not of WWU specifically but Washington colleges in general. Concerns include a big budget gap (~\$13,000) as well as layoffs and program cuts, so it's a status of still recovering. Tuition will go up, but the percentage of that is limited by the state to just a few.

A much-needed new Engineering building has just been finished, and Biology and Chemistry facility needs are now being addressed with a new Sciences building coming. A new Longhouse is in construction, intending to be open in the fall, sited partly in the arboretum and on Lummi land. Guest Eric Baumgarten opined that a new Childhood Development Center is badly needed, as it has been growing for the first time in decades but has had only 59 spaces available for the past 54 years. Of relevance to our neighborhood's student population is a Student Success and Development center (student services and welcoming) now in the design stages, to come to the south end of campus.

WWU's Move Out Madness campaign was addressed briefly; Julia Burns who was our go-to person for that is now with the City of Bellingham. They couldn't get funding to repeat their Couchella furniture-recycling program this year. The YNA should help inform students of the illegality of dumping furniture on sidewalks and of resources to help make that unnecessary such as Sanitary Services Company's (SSC) pickup services for mattresses and such. Chris also notes that the City's SeeClickFix interface for getting junk removed works great, as Yorkers have reported too, and that the City is still providing Pack It Out signs free of charge through the Public Works Department.

Chris spoke of the status of student housing growth, much of it now built off campus but also with some on-campus buildings expanding their capacity as well as the introduction of alternative multiperson options.

As to how York could help welcome and orient its incoming student population, Chris mentioned that the next main opportunity WWU is hosting is the one-day Fall Info Fair at the beginning of the school year, on Monday, September 22.

2. Changes to City Planning Process

Colin described how the state's recent legislation regarding urban planning impacts Bellingham's historically neighborhood-grown-plans approach by mandating a flipping around of that arrangement

so that the neighborhoods will have to develop according to what the City directs as required by the state. To mitigate this change somewhat in their own interests, neighborhoods will need to be proactive in representing themselves and their local interests and core values (e.g., shared use of our public-space assets by our population's various constituencies). We must keep up our civic engagement with the City to advocate for York in that way and be a *partner* with them.

Also, the urban-planning means of the Mayor's Neighborhood Advisory Commission (MNAC), which meets monthly, is not being abandoned; it's just the City's planning model that will be changing. But Colin also noted that the online Engage Bellingham interface is, and will continue to be, a strong vehicle more representative of the whole neighborhood representation than MNAC alone.

Élan noted that the urban-development scene is much more aggressive now than even ten years ago but added that Mayor Lund is doing the utmost to not let it get out of control and the City Council members are listening and engaging and will answer and act. Colin helpfully added that that development push isn't eyeing York much but rather where land is available. There was then much discussion of historic land use in town as compared to what will be required to happen in Bellingham.

3. Rock Hill Park Updates

A work party will be held at the park this Saturday, the 31st. John will bring stuff to occupy kids, and the Parks Department supplies coffee. There's mulch already there on site.

As for the Rock Hill Park Refresh, a Design Review meeting will take place on the 10th of June at the Parks & Recreation office at City Hall. The design is at the 90% stage, with work on the park anticipated to be completed in late 2026. He noted that, beyond what the City will be officially implementing, York neighbors could still do—guerilla-style, on our own as the park was created and developed originally—projects the City can't commit any budget to tackle.

4. Dumpster Day Planning Status

Guest, former YNA Board member, and longtime "Dumpster Queen" volunteer Carolyn Mulder made a pitch for more volunteers for the June 28 event, both during and after (e.g., taking retrieved tires to Les Schwab and returning shopping carts to Fred Meyer. She reported that Ridwell wouldn't be able to participate in person but will supply information for interested parties. Erin noted that the Bellingham Food Bank will take food items such as those being abandoned by students moving out.

5. Other Items

Thatch asked what the Board's other current activities are, such as grant-related projects. Colin briefly recapped our park signage and the tree giveaway project, which were 2024 Small & Simple Grant ones. Thatch indicated that it would be good to have more Welcome signs at key entry locations such as at the south end of the James Street bridge over Whatcom Creek where much traffic turns east to the I-5 underpass.

The meeting adjourned at 8:02pm.

Individual Action Items:

Mark:

- Per a suggestion/request from Carolyn Mulder, add to the YNA website information and links to WWU's Basic Needs Hub.
- Transcribe and distribute minutes for this meeting for Board review.

Respectfully submitted, Mark Ellis Walker, Secretary.