



**The FGCA is hosting a General Meeting of the members on April 12, 2021. The purpose of the meeting is to pass some changes to our constitution and bylaws, which govern us as a non-profit society and a registered charity. These changes must be approved by 2/3 of the voting members present at the meeting. This document provides some background information about the changes. If you still have questions, get in touch! Contact Vanya McDonell, Co-Executive Director, at [vmcdonell@fairfieldcommunity.ca](mailto:vmcdonell@fairfieldcommunity.ca)**

### **What is our constitution?**

Our constitution consists of our name and our purposes. We are required to have it as a registered non-profit society in BC and as a registered charity in Canada. Because we are a charity, Canada's Charities Directorate needs to approve it. Our purposes must limit us to only activities that are charitable, or a small amount of activities that are 'incidental and ancillary' to our charitable activities, such as administration.

### **What are charitable activities?**

There are no hard and fast rules for what is charitable, but the Charities Directorate has developed guidelines for charitable activities. These fall into four categories:

- the relief of poverty,
- the advancement of education,
- the advancement of religion, and
- other purposes that benefit the community in a way the courts have said is charitable.

### **Why are we changing the constitution?**

In 2020, the FGCA received a letter from the Charities Directorate. Although our constitution had previously been approved by the Charities Directorate, the letter explained that our purposes are too broad and do not limit us to charitable activities. The letter suggested new purposes for our constitution. We have done a lot of research and attained the advice of a lawyer. Upon her advice, we are proposing to adopt the purposes that the Charities Directorate suggested, with one addition of a research purpose. The research purpose will cover activities where we research community needs, opinions, and issues, like the Community Association Land Use Committee, Neighbourhood Improvement Committee, and the Community Inspiration Project.

### **What will the constitution changes mean?**

The FGCA is always guided by our mission, vision, values, constitution, and bylaws. These changes will not change what we do, but will mean that the FGCA has clearer language around what activities it engages in.

### **What are our bylaws?**

Our bylaws outline the way we operate as a registered BC Society. The BC Societies Act provides the overarching framework for how BC Societies operate, and then our bylaws provide information that is specific to our society, such as membership eligibility and board structure.



### **What changes are we making?**

We are making 2 changes.

The first is to add the Governance Chair to the Executive Committee. This will ensure that the Board continues to provide good governance to the Society. Many non-profits have this structure. The second is to add a non-profit clause. This was directed by the Charities Directorate in their letter to us.

### **What do these changes mean?**

This means the Governance Chair will be elected by the Board like the other officers and will be part of the Executive Committee's meetings and decision-making. The Governance Chair has been included in Executive Committee meetings for several years; this just formalizes it.

We didn't have any of our committees defined in our bylaws, so this change also means we need to define at least the Executive Committee and the Governance Committee in the bylaws. We added the Finance Committee as the third core standing committee of the Society. This means we must always have these committees unless we change the bylaws; other committees can come and go as the Board see fit.

The non-profit clause will not change anything for us.