



## Arrowsmith Residents Association (ARA)

### Minutes of the General Meeting

**Date:** October 14, 2025

**Location:** Heritage Hall, Coombs Fairgrounds, 1014 Ford Rd. Coombs BC

**Chair:** Rotating Chair- Dirk Becker

**Recorder:** Holly Heppner

Complimentary refreshments provided before the meeting by ARA

#### 1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at approximately 7:00 p.m. The Chair welcomed attendees and thanked everyone for participating.

#### 2. Approval of Previous Minutes

- The previous meeting minutes were made available on the Facebook page, website, and at the meeting.
- **Motion:** To approve the minutes as presented.
  - **Moved by:** Ken Bowerman
  - **Seconded by:** Brad McArthur
  - **Carried unanimously.** David Karras Abstained

### 3. ARA Update

- The Area F Residents Association (ARA) remains a pending nonprofit society application due to ongoing job action.
- Current Board members were introduced:
  - **Miranda Scott**, Director
  - **Dirk Becker**, Director
  - **Jolene Chantrell**, Treasurer
  - **Jennah Stavroff**, Director
  - **Earl Billingsley**, Director
  - **Holly Heppner**, Secretary
  - **Nicole Shaw**, volunteer support/member.
- The group continues to operate with a **rotating chair system** so all board members learn meeting and administrative duties.
- Annual membership fees were discussed to cover hall rental and refreshments.

### 4. Communications and Information Guidelines

The Chair reminded members of the importance of accuracy and inclusivity in community communications.

- Information shared via email or social media should include references or citations (“Wikipedia-style”) to avoid misinformation or conflict.
- The group agreed to use respectful, factual language when posting or distributing updates.

### Attendance of Elected Officials

The meeting included an extended discussion and formal motion regarding how to handle participation by **elected officials or public representatives**.

#### Summary of Discussion:

- Members debated whether meetings should be open to all or limited when officials (MLA, MP, RDN Director, etc.) attend.
- Consensus: meetings are open, but officials must identify their capacity—whether attending **as an elected official** or **as a private resident**.

- Officials may present in their official capacity at the beginning of meetings (up to 10 minutes), provided they are on the agenda.
- If sensitive matters arise, the Chair may ask them to step outside during discussion.

**Motion:**

“The ARA welcomes all elected officials as guest speakers in their official capacity at the beginning of meetings to provide community updates.

Unless scheduled on the agenda, they will attend as residents and follow the same participation rules as other attendees.”

- **Moved by:** Jennah Stavroff
- **Seconded by:** Dirk Becker
- **Carried:** majority

Further clarification:

- Alternates (e.g., RDN alternates) are considered citizens unless formally acting in the Director’s absence.
- This policy will be posted on the ARA website/Facebook for public reference.

## 5. Taxpayers Alliance Presentation

**Speaker:** Brad McArthur (on behalf of Wayne [last name not captured])

**Overview:**

- The *RDN Taxpayers Alliance* is a regional network of residents’ associations working together to increase transparency and accountability within the Regional District of Nanaimo (RDN).
- Key concerns:
  - Rapid increases in RDN management wages and staffing levels (reported 78% growth over 5 years).
  - Major cost overruns on capital projects (e.g., French Creek sewer plant rising from \$34M to \$143M; Dashwood Fire Hall from \$4M to ~\$9M).
  - Lack of clear business cases and community consultation for large expenditures.
  - Escalating property taxes are projected, to increase 67% over five years.

- “Reserve contributions” reportedly redirecting \$34M annually into unallocated funds.

#### **Fire Services:**

- Brad McArthur and local members expressed concern over inefficiencies and lack of transparency after RDN assumed control of volunteer fire departments (Coombs and Dashwood).
- Noted that local societies must remain strong to maintain community control.
- Leanne Salter, RDN Director, has reportedly acknowledged excessive administrative fees.

#### **Parks and Recreation:**

- Findings indicate that many “community parks” listed in Area F’s plan are small or non-existent.
- Questions were raised about where the \$600,000 annual parks budget is being allocated.

#### **Hamilton Marsh:**

- Members expressed alarm over the \$30M land purchase, citing overvaluation and lack of RDN experience managing wetlands.

#### **Discussion Notes:**

- Former RDN Director Julian Fell added context on staff wages, political structure, and historic decision-making at the RDN.
- Members agreed that ongoing collaboration through the Alliance was important.
- **Action:** ARA will coordinate through Miranda (current chair) to receive Alliance updates and distribute to members.
- Petition support was discussed; draft versions will circulate once finalized.

## **6. School District Update**

**Speaker:** Julie Austin, SD69 Trustee for Area F

- The **Integrated Child & Youth Team** funding was withdrawn by the Health Authority, affecting local mental health support for students. Julie thanked the ARA for drafting a letter of support urging reinstatement.
- Regarding **French Creek School**:
  - The school district can no longer afford to maintain the unused property.
  - The district supports keeping the property in **public hands**, with the RDN currently the only interested public entity.
  - Julie **will provide a copy** of the building condition report (2023) for ARA records.
  - She confirmed that any future sale or transfer by the RDN would likely require a **referendum**.

#### **Transportation Update:**

- New bus tracking software is operational; parents must download the app to receive alerts. Accessibility for families without smartphones remains a challenge.

#### **Community Support:**

- Julie welcomed feedback and community input, noting that Leanne Salter often advocates Area F interests at the board level.

## **7. Update The Errington Memorial Hall**

Susanne Pursley sends her regrets

## **8. Advisory Committee Vacancies**

The RDN is accepting applications for the following volunteer committees:

- Agricultural Advisory Committee
- Parks and Open Spaces Committee
- Drinking Water and Watershed Protection Committee
- Terms: approximately three meetings per year, with reimbursement for fuel.
- **Application deadline:** October 31, 2025.

## 9. Open Discussion/ Parks report card -Brad McArthur

- Discussions of report cards presented by Brad McArthur

## 10. French Creek School Property Referendum Discussion

- Discussion centered on whether Area F should support purchasing the **French Creek School** property via referendum.
- General consensus: the purchase would preserve public land for community use, but concerns were raised about:
  - Timing amid potential Area F incorporation.
  - Financial implications for taxpayers.
  - Risk of resale into private hands (confirmed would require public referendum).

### Key Analogy from Jennah Stavroff:

“It’s like buying a new car when you’re talking about divorce—perhaps we should pause major purchases until incorporation outcomes are known.”

No formal motion was recorded; discussion to continue at future meetings.

Brad McArthur has a report of the estimated cost of the repairs required for the FC school.

## 11. BC Integrated Child and Youth Team letter

Jennah Stavroff spoke about the removal of the Child and Youth Team program and firing of the Team leader by VIHA without consultation of the governing body who created this program. Jennah is requesting ARA to support the Qualicum School District PAC with an

official letter from the ARA (please see attached draft ) to be sent to the Minister of Health

Josie Osborne. Josie Osborne is also our local MLA.

- **Moved by:** Dirk Becker
- **Seconded by:** Miranda Scott
- **Carried.:** by majority

#### **Open group discussion**

- Members discussed linking the Alliance website once finalized.
- ARA and Alliance websites are both in progress; links will be shared once active.
- The next meeting will include updates on the Memorial Hall from Suzanne (deferred).

## **Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 9:07 p.m.

**Next Member Meeting:** 13 Jan 2026 ( 10 March 2026, 12 May 2023, & 9 June 2026 AGM)

**Next Ex Board Meeting :**12 November 2025,( 10 Feb 2026 & 14 April 2026 Additional TBD)