



FAIRFIELD GONZALES
COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION
the place to connect

February 26, 2025

Dear Gonzales Neighbourhood Association,

We would like to respond to an email that you sent on February 10 to your mailing list (see appendix). The Gonzales Neighbourhood Association (GNA) is of course free to advocate for its own interests. However, your email contains errors and omissions about the FGCA that we would like to correct.

Our role in Gonzales:

FGCA is the community association for both Fairfield and Gonzales. We take this work seriously and work hard to make both neighbourhoods a great place to live, work, and play. You stated in your email that Margaret Jenkins School is the heart of the Gonzales community. Although our main centre is in Fairfield, we operate a large Out of School Care program in Gonzales at Margaret Jenkins School, connecting us with many of Gonzales' families over our 34 years caring for its youngest residents. FGCA brings vibrancy to Gonzales through events and projects that we host or sponsor, such as Neighbourhood Yard Sale Day, Gonzales Sunset Beach Party, block parties, asset mapping, Indigenous storytelling, and placemaking initiatives. FGCA advocates, often successfully, for Gonzales' needs on issues like traffic calming, transit, homelessness, and infrastructure. We also serve all residents of Gonzales through our programs at Fairfield Gonzales Community Place, including affordable camps, recreation, and food supports. We bring the voice of Gonzales residents to Mayor and Council through channels like our land use meetings and the hugely successful Neighbourhood Priorities Forum we hosted in Gonzales last year. FGCA will continue to do this work in Gonzales, for and with Gonzales residents.

Specific misinformation and omissions in GNA's email of February 10:

GNA's email states:

"During this [Neighbourhood Plan] process, representatives from Gonzales met with the Board of the Fairfield Gonzales Community Association (FGCA) twice to seek advice and/or assistance.

Unfortunately, the Board declined our request with some of the reasons given as follows:

- *Some Board members were worried about losing their Charitable Tax Status; and*
- *The majority of the Board members (9 out of 12) lived in Fairfield and as one board member said "he was not interested in reading the draft Gonzales Plan"*

FGCA in fact provided assistance and support. We offered the group that became GNA free space to meet and organize. In September of 2018, when GNA asked FGCA to support a delay of the plan



1330 FAIRFIELD RD. VICTORIA, BC V8S 5J1

Tel. 250.382.4604 Fax 250.382.4613

www.fairfieldcommunity.ca

place@fairfieldcommunity.ca



to allow further review, FGCA [passed a motion](#) to support their request. However, we did not send a letter to the City because the City had already [passed a motion](#) to delay the process within the next few weeks.

- FGCA's charitable status was likely mentioned but this is an oversimplification of the Board's consideration of how this relates to our activities. What it means is that all our activities must have clear public benefit, and we consider this when deciding what activities to undertake.
- We would like to have documentation of one of our board members saying, "he was not interested in reading the draft Gonzales Plan". This does not represent any position our Board has ever taken.

GNA's email states:

"The GNA currently has more members/supporters in Gonzales than the FGCA"

- We question how GNA arrived at this conclusion. The GNA references the number of letters written to Council to support it after it mounted a campaign. However, since FGCA mounted no campaign, the comparison does not make sense. FGCA proposed a process to measure actual support for each organization when the two organizations entered mediation (see below), but GNA rejected this idea.

GNA's email states:

"Even though the FGCA has a budget of 3 million dollars and receives money for each Gonzales resident, none of this money has been spent to create local events in the Gonzales neighbourhood in all those years."

- We do have events and activities that take place in Gonzales, which GNA is aware of. Much of the neighbourhood funding GNA references is spent on communications so that all residents know what's happening at the FGCA and at the City: the Observer newspaper which is mailed out to Gonzales households, our website, email, and social media channels. Other funding is spent on events including those held in Gonzales (Neighbourhood Yard Sale, Neighbourhood Priorities Forum, Gonzales Sunset Beach Party, and other events and projects over the years). We also host annual events for families attending FGCA programs at Margaret Jenkins, and we spend over half a million dollars each year on delivering programs directly in Gonzales at Margaret Jenkins Elementary.

GNA's email omits:

Mediation:





FAIRFIELD GONZALES
COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION
the place to connect

The City surveyed residents in 2021 about whether the FGCA should continue to operate the Community Association Land Use Committee (CALUC) for Gonzales or it should change to the GNA. The results of the survey were inconclusive, so the City asked the two organizations to enter into mediation. FGCA proposed many options to move forward during the mediation process which were not accepted by GNA. In addition, GNA had been actively disparaging the FGCA and individual Board members in public forums, and it was important to FGCA that this activity ceased.

The results of the mediation process were received by Council in 2022 and are available in Council minutes [here](#). The two agreements that were reached are:

- i. GNA and FGCA agree not to disparage one another publicly.
- ii. FGCA and GNA agree to continue to work together collaboratively and informally for the residents of their respective neighbourhoods.

FGCA continues to honour the agreements reached in the mediation process. We assert that the email that GNA sent to its members on February 10 breaches the agreement reached in our mediation process and undoes all the good work that members of both FGCA and GNA have done to build positive relations.

GNA's efforts to intentionally misrepresent the FGCA do not reflect the kind of community that we want to live, work, and play in. We will continue to meet with, support, and collaborate with the GNA, as we do with many other community-based organizations, and we ask that GNA return to honouring the terms of the mediation agreement that we reached together and correct the misinformation that was sent to its list.

In community,

Quinn Fletcher, President and Gonzales resident

On behalf of the Board of Directors

cc. Victoria Mayor and Council



1330 FAIRFIELD RD. VICTORIA, BC V8S 5J1

Tel. 250.382.4604 Fax 250.382.4613

www.fairfieldcommunity.ca

place@fairfieldcommunity.ca



Appendix: Email sent Feb 10 by GNA to its mailing list.

Purpose of the Gonzales Neighbourhood Association

Dear Gonzales Neighbour,

This email is to update all new members and subscribers on the purpose of the Gonzales Neighbourhood Association (GNA) and our efforts to encourage the city to establish a separate Neighbourhood Association (NA) for Gonzales.

Here is a summary. If you are interested in reading in more detail, please continue to the end.

Short Summary

There are many reasons why Gonzales should have its own Neighbourhood Association (listed below). Still, it can be summed up in a couple of sentences:

- It would allow Gonzales residents to have a voice when speaking to Mayor and Council and staff; and
- A recognized Association would create more Gonzales-based community events thereby cultivating community spirit.

Councillor Matt Dell was our neighbourhood liaison for the past two years. The board requested Councillor Dell to move our neighbourhood proposal forward to council for consideration, but he refused. We were clear that we are promoting the establishment of a neighbourhood Association that may or may not include our current Board members. The new entity could be composed of newly elected individuals. **The current board strongly believes that establishing a stand-alone Neighbourhood Association for Gonzales is the right thing for the city to do for the community.** Jeremy Caradonna was recently appointed as the Gonzales neighbourhood liaison for the next two years and we will press him on this issue. Should Gonzales have its own recognized Neighbourhood Association, there would be per capita operating funding available. The current funding formula for neighbourhoods would give Gonzales approximately \$7000 annually. There is also a potential \$20,000 grant to conduct community activities.

Long Version

A Voice for Gonzales Residents

The Gonzales Neighbourhood Association (GNA) came into existence in response to the draft neighbourhood plan the city was proposing for our community in 2017. For over a year, neighbours from all corners of Gonzales met informally about the plan and wrote to council concerning its shortcomings.

During this process, representatives from Gonzales met with the Board of the Fairfield Gonzales Community Association (FGCA) twice to seek advice and/or assistance. Unfortunately, the Board declined our request with some of the reasons given as follows:

- Some Board members were worried about losing their Charitable Tax Status; and





- The majority of the Board members (9 out of 12) lived in Fairfield and as one board member said “he was not interested in reading the draft Gonzales Plan”

It was clear that Gonzales residents would be on their own trying to get the ear of the council and staff on one of the most important documents to shape the community. In 2018, the Gonzales Neighbourhood Association (GNA) was incorporated as a non-profit organization in the Province of BC.

In July 2019 the GNA Board wrote a letter to Mayor and Council asking them to consider creating a stand-alone Neighbourhood Association for Gonzales. The letter as well as the Mayor’s response and a letter from the FGCA can be viewed at: www.gonzalesna.ca

Background

The city should recognize Gonzales as a separate neighbourhood from Fairfield for the following reasons:

1. Size - Fairfield/Gonzales catchment currently has 17,000 residents and a geography that extends from the downtown core to the Oak Bay Border which is too large for one neighbourhood association to effectively manage. The current population of the Fairfield Gonzales neighbourhood is very similar to the population of Oak Bay. That is not a neighbourhood; that is a city. The population of Gonzales is 4,200 which puts us in the middle population size for the various neighbourhoods in Victoria. For comparison sake, Gonzales has roughly the same population as Rockland which has its own Neighbourhood Association; South Jubilee is half the size of Gonzales and also has its own Association. It seems reasonable that a neighbourhood of our size be represented by a Board that is composed 100% by Board members who live in Gonzales.

2. Board - the majority of the Fairfield Gonzales Community Association (FGCA) Board live in Fairfield. At the last FGCA AGM, 3 people from Gonzales were elected to the Board of 13 members. Gonzales's issues will always be secondary to those issues in Fairfield.

3. Community Hub - The GNA has arranged to have association meetings at St. Jean Baptiste Church at 307 Richmond Ave. The Church already offers daycare and is regularly used for neighbourhood events. There is the possibility of another neighbourhood hub should Glenlyon Norfolk School follow through on the redevelopment plans they have shared with the community.

4. Representation - The GNA currently has more members/supporters in Gonzales than the FGCA which became demonstrably clear in 2021. When the council asked all City of Victoria residents to comment on whether Gonzales should have a stand-alone Association the results were as follows:

A total of 348 people participated in this survey.

- 32% of survey respondents live in Gonzales.
- 20% of survey respondents live in Fairfield.
- 12% of survey respondents live in Rockland.

Of those 348 people 169 (48%) said the council should recognize the Gonzales Neighbourhood Association as representative of the Gonzales neighbourhood. In addition, close to 50 letters of support from Gonzales residents were sent in at that time asking for this same thing. This is quite extraordinary as public





engagement is notoriously low regarding civic affairs; yet 50 residents thought this issue was important enough to send in a letter of support. This is despite the fact the GNA has practically non-existent funding; and is run entirely by volunteers. To our knowledge there was not one letter asking for the status quo to remain as is.

5. Community Events - *In 2023 the GNA organized a truly community-styled event with the Gonzales Lantern Festival followed the next year with the Gonzales Children's Festival. The Lantern Festival was the first community-oriented event held in Gonzales in the last 25 years. Even though the FGCA has a budget of 3 million dollars and receives money for each Gonzales resident, none of this money has been spent to create local events in the Gonzales neighbourhood in all those years.*

6. Neighbourhood Plan - *It was recognized by the city in 2002 that the geography and population of Fairfield and Gonzales combined were too big and diverse to be addressed through one plan; which led to the creation of a separate Gonzales plan. It seems that it would be eminently sensible to align neighbourhood boundaries with those of city planning units, and therefore, to establish Gonzales as a stand-alone Neighbourhood Association. Every map on the City of Victoria website and in all areas of planning, Gonzales is listed as a separate neighbourhood. In the 1980s, Rockland was also part of the Fairfield Community Association and Council at the time honoured that communities request to be considered as a separate entity. We are asking the same for Gonzales.*

7. Community Character - *Gonzales has its own community character separate from Fairfield. The heart of the community is Margaret Jenkins School. Virtually every family in Gonzales falls within the Margaret Jenkins catchment. This means that families become well connected and children grow up together and make life-long friends. This, along with other factors, has made our community the stable, safe, child-oriented one that it is today.*

