

# Grandview board 'too far left'

By Naoibh O'Connor  
Staff writer

A GRANDVIEW-Woodlands resident wants to see the area council that represents her neighbourhood deposed, arguing it's stacked with left-wing board members who don't reflect the wishes of the community.

Mary-Lynn Burke has lived in the district for 23 years and says the council's current six-member board often purports to speak on behalf of people who don't share its views. The board is up for re-election at the Grandview-Woodland Area Council's annual general meeting Feb. 4.

As evidence of the group's failure to acknowledge dissenting opinion, Burke points to a recent letter the group sent to politicians and the media, slamming the Vancouver Police Department's proposal to install 23 video surveillance cameras. According to Burke, only four of the six board members showed up to the council's monthly meeting, where the decision was made to draft the letter. Four spectators, including Burke, also attended, and voiced their opposition. Despite that, Burke said the

board approved the letter, which called the camera plan "a serious and unwarranted infringement on the civil and privacy rights of citizens of Vancouver."

That infuriated Burke and her fellow spectators. "We weren't taking a stand on the cameras; we just said they shouldn't be speaking on the behalf of the community," she said. "They're a narrowly focused group. Commercial Drive is pretty diverse and I would like to see it reflected in the association."

But board member Eric Doherty said that although the board meeting was poorly attended, the area council received support for the letter during an October public forum attended by about 70 residents. He said it's impossible for any organization to represent every view in a community, adding he's not surprised by the criticism, since the council has been more active than in previous years, organizing five public forums and discussing concerns ranging from water privatization to racial profiling. It also took a stand against moving the community policing office into larger quarters in Grandview Park. "We're doing things, and if



Mary-Lynn Burke: "They're so left they're right."

you're doing things, somebody is going to be unhappy."

Burke said the area council shifted to the left about a year ago when most of the previous board was unseated in what she calls a "takeover by a special interest group." She said the new leadership tends to focus on global issues like poverty, rather than local issues. Attendance at meetings has dwindled, in part because people are fed up, she added.

"I've made the comment before: They're so left they're right. And they think we're fascists."

Doherty said the area council should deal with local and regional issues of interest to the community. "[Critics] think we should restrict our issues to those that don't cross the border into other neighbourhoods. But in order for it to be effective, it has to be broad," he said. "My suspicion is people in the area want an area council that is

active and will work actively on neighbourhood issues as well as regional issues."

One of the local concerns dealt with by the council, he pointed out, was to put benches back in the park, a request from local seniors.

Burke, however, argues the community would be better served if at least some of the members are unseated during the annual general meeting next month. She fears changes proposed for the organization's constitution will be approved unless residents fight the plans. One of the changes being considered is to the stated purposes of the society: "to recognize that our community is built on land stolen from the indigenous people of this area and to work to reverse this injustice."

Doherty said that statement comes from an early draft, which has changed slightly, although the gist remains the same. He said the community is home to one of the largest concentrations of urban aboriginal people in Canada, yet they don't participate politically. Doherty said the council wants to encourage involvement of Natives.

The AGM is set for 7 p.m. at the Britannia Community Centre Feb. 4.

## letters

# Grandview-Woodlands council listens to local concerns

To the editor:

In her letter ("Grandview-Woodlands not represented by area council," Jan. 30) Linda Chinn chose to criticize me, and the Grandview-Woodland Area Council (GWAC), for dealing

with issues that concern many people in our neighbourhood. One of the key ways we do this is by holding forums where people can discuss issues, gain a deeper understanding of other peoples' points of

view, and hopefully to decide to take action.

On Oct. 22, GWAC held a public forum titled Public Space and Policing, which was one of our best attended forums of the year, with an overflow crowd of about

70 people in attendance. I attended this forum (contrary to Chinn's claim that I was not there) and learned a lot from the constructive discussion that followed the short introduction by the invited speakers.

The discussion naturally dealt with Grandview-Woodlands in its geographical context, adjoining the Downtown Eastside and sharing some of the same problems such as poverty, a shortage of affordable housing, a lack of park space, and drug addiction.

Our neighbourhood is now threatened with devastating and mean-spirited cuts to the social programs that many residents depend on. School lunch programs, bus passes for seniors, health care and social assistance policies play a crucial role here in the second poorest

area of the city. Or is this only a "Downtown Eastside issue" that GWAC should not deal with?

It is up to the people who live or work in Grandview-Woodland to decide.

All community members (including "those of us who are longterm residents") will have an opportunity to set action priorities, and elect a new board to carry them out, at the GWAC annual general meeting Feb. 4 at 7 p.m. in the Britannia High School cafeteria—look for the signs.

ERIC DOHERTY,  
VANCOUVER

## Area council election upset

**Grandview goes right**

**By Naoibh O'Connor**  
Staff writer

THE GRANDVIEW Woodlands Area Council swung to the right earlier this month after an election unseated many of its left-wing board members.

In late January, Mary Lynn Burke, who's lived in the community for the past 23 years, complained a radical left element had taken over the council, espousing politics not shared by the majority and often focusing on global rather than local issues. Burke wanted to see a politically diverse collection of residents elected to the 12-member board, which sits for a one-year term.

More than 75 people attended the council's annual general meeting Feb. 4, far more than the handful that attend the independent community organization's monthly meetings.

By the end of the evening, only three members from the previous council were re-elected. Burke, who won a spot on the board, said the new council represents a broader political spectrum that includes left, right and centre. "It would have been wrong if all of [the left wingers] had been voted off," she added. "I think the three previous board members that got on will be OK to work with."

Re-elected board member Eric Doherty said a number of last year's members didn't stand for this year's vote. A large contingent from the local community policing office who favoured change also showed up, he said, adding to the electoral swing. Doherty believes the fact so many people attended the general meeting doesn't mean the community was unhappy with the previous council. "I would hope people showed up because they wanted to accomplish something positive," he said.

Like Burke, Paul Mosca, one of the new board members, said the changed board signals a new direction for the council. "I would hope that it stays closer to the centre than it has in the past."

Although the next meeting isn't until the first Monday in March, Mosca wants board members to focus on local concerns such as transportation, traffic and minimizing the effects of provincial budget cuts—issues Doherty said he's also interested in addressing.

Meanwhile, Burke, also a volunteer with the community policing office, wants all the neighbourhood groups including the policing office and the business association to combine their resources, a joint effort she thinks is possible with the new blood on the council.

"It's not so extreme so I think we'll get some good work done this year," she said.

The next meeting of the council is March 4, 7 p.m. at Britannia Community Centre.