

Council of Neighborhood Associations (CNA)
Meeting Minutes
approved on March 9, 2026

Date: February 9, 2026

Location: Online Zoom Meeting

ATTENDING:

Neighborhood Association Representatives:

Peter Guttchen (CNA Chair, Northeast NA); Karen Sweeney (CNA Vice-Chair, Eastside NA); Miles Folks, Dana McAvoy (East Bay Drive NA); Sue Hedrick, Gerald Apple (South Capitol NA); Jennevie Schlemmer (Bigelow NA); Tara Kessel (Wildwood NA); Melissa Allen, Gwendolyn Nehs (Bigelow Highlands NA); Daniel Garcia, Keegan Wulf, Shaina (Downtown NA); Bob Jacobs (Governor Stevens NA); Martha Worster, Donna Holt (Redwood Estates HOA); Larry Dzieza (Nottingham HOA); Grace Fletcher, Kavita Kamat (Southwest Olympia NA); Judy Bardin (Northwest Olympia NA), Hal Darst (Briarwood HOA) Carol Gruen (Lakemoor Drive NA)

Guests:

Tyler Clemens

Agenda Overview

1. Approval of Minutes
2. Chair Election
3. Councilmember Report
4. Community Priorities Forum & Survey Results
5. Neighborhood Matching Grant Updates
6. Neighborhood Reports
7. Next Steps and Grant Coordination

Main Topics Discussed

Approval of Minutes

Minutes approved with one correction: “Capitol” spelling corrected. Thanks to Bob Jacobs for proofreading.

Chair Election

Peter Guttchen (Northeast Neighborhood Association) was elected Chair by unanimous acclaim. No additional nominations were made. Peter, a founding CNA member (2006), shared a vision focused on broader representation, stronger engagement, and partnership with the City.

No volunteers stepped forward for Co-Chair.

Executive Team Introduced

- Chair: Peter Guttchen (Northeast NA)
- Vice Chair: Karen Sweeney (Eastside NA)
- Secretary: Melissa Allen (Bigelow Highlands NA)
- Communications Coordinator Daniel Garcia (Downtown NA)
- Programs & Events Coordinator Grace Fletcher (SWONA)

Action Item: Update CNA website with current officers.

Councilmember Clark Gilman’s Report

Councilmember Gilman highlighted CNA’s participatory work and shared 2026 City priorities relevant to neighborhoods, including expanded community forums, a sidewalk policy review (May), updates to home-occupation standards, food system planning (community gardens, edible landscaping), and new models for cultural event partnerships. He encouraged continued collaboration between the City and neighborhood associations.

Community Priorities Forum & Survey Results (Grace Fletcher)

Overview

- Forum held January 24, 2026 (~150 attendees)
- Survey closed February 1 (143 responses)

- Purpose: Identify neighborhood priorities to inform projects and grants

Top Priorities

1. Food Access (60.2%)
2. Emergency Preparedness & Resilience (59.5%)
3. Safety & Livability (49%)
4. Affordability & Access (50.4%)
5. Mutual Aid & Shared Resources (35.7%)
6. Community Connection & Belonging (33.6%)

Demographics & Learnings Respondents were primarily ages 30–44 and 60–74; 59% homeowners. Long-term residents emphasized safety and preparedness, while renters and newer residents emphasized affordability and access. Strong engagement confirmed the value of the forum and survey for City planning and grant development.

Neighborhood Matching Grant Updates (Brittany Gillia)

- **Deadline:** March 9, 2026
- Two project tracks: year-long or short-term (completed by Dec. 15, 2026)
- Expanded eligibility includes emergency preparedness
- Partnerships encouraged (up to \$8,000 for joint projects)
- EIN now required for all applicants

EIN Support: City-hosted “Lunch & Learn” on February 17 (virtual and in-person).

Application Guidance Use the updated program packet, align responses with the scoring rubric, emphasize collaboration, and seek peer review. Associations were encouraged to explore additional funding sources with attention to eligibility.

Neighborhood Project Highlights

Associations shared project ideas including inclusive communications, emergency preparedness materials, block parties, porch fests, walking maps, community gardens, murals, food access projects, and traffic calming. Multiple associations expressed interest in joint applications and shared events.

Bigelow NA: - Jennevieve Schlemmer(bigelowneighborhood@gmail.com)

Mail inclusive newsletters to all, especially apartment residents, to boost participation. Create/distribute “zine” on emergency preparedness (e.g., CPR, disaster checklists).

Bigelow Highlands NA: - Gwendolyn Nehs (bhna.506.pres@gmail.com)

Annual block party, considering expanding to add other neighborhood get-together activities & to include more than just BHNA. Interested in emergency preparedness

Eastside NA: - Karen Sweeney (klangswweeney@gmail.com)

Annual picnic and block parties (noted attendance growth); New “porch-fest” type event; Developing a neighborhood walking map.

SWONA - Grace Fletcher (swolyna@gmail.com)

Request city support for increased printing after library budget cuts (resources for groups). Community garden beds, garden tool sharing projects.

Informational/identification signage for fruit trees, gleaning and donating to the Food Bank

Downtown NA: - Shaina (Admin@olympiadna.org)

- Mural revival at Artesian Well, working with original artist, seeking wide community input.
- Opportunity for cross-association tabling and shared public engagement at the event including distributing zines & survey results.

Northeast NA - Peter Guttchen (nenavicepresident@gmail.com)

Emergency preparedness "expo" (May 19) - looking to partner with other NAs.

Collaboration with neighborhood artists to design food pantry for the Joy Food Forest.

Speeding mitigation (option to co-apply with other NAs for radar speed signs), Porch Fest - possibly partner with Eastside.

CNA Structure & Process Improvements

Proposals included forming topic-based subcommittees (food access, preparedness, inclusion), increasing public access to CNA meetings to increase transparency, and revisiting Recognized Neighborhood Ordinance, and subarea planning to increase neighborhood representative citywide, and to research other neighborhood program (Eugene, Tacoma, Seattle, etc.) for ideas to improve Olympia’s programs.

Action Items & Next Steps

- Update CNA website with officer list

- Share grant resources and successful application examples
- Support EIN acquisition for all associations
- Facilitate project partnerships and joint applications
- Match survey respondents with neighborhood associations
- Prepare for City Council presentation (tentatively March 3)
- Explore fiscal sponsor options
- Schedule first executive team meeting and communicate next steps

Closing

Thanks were extended to outgoing Chair Larry Dzieza and appreciation expressed for City staff support. Collaboration was emphasized as key to strengthening neighborhood associations.

Next CNA Meeting: Monday, March 9, 2026 | 6:30–8:30 pm

Respectfully Submitted

Melissa Allen

Secretary