

Gabriola Commons Coordinating Council

Notes from April 7, 2015

Present: John Peirce + Rebecca Furnell (co-facilitators), Jinny Hayes, Sheila Brooke, Patrick Roux, Kit Szanto, Veronica Hartman, Brenda Fowler, Alison Fitzgerald, Linda St.Clair, Judith Roux (note-taker for FMT), Sharon Arnell, Robbie Huston, Shelagh Huston Muriel Wiens,

Out of sequence Events Team notice: **SPRING FAIR Saturday MAY 2 from 10 TO 3 PM**

20 Minute Discussion: Social Enterprise (led by Robbie, responding to idea of island non-profits collectively buying Harvest Thyme to run it as a Social Enterprise)

- Definitions of “social enterprise” emerged:
 - “a non-profit organization using a business model to provide goods or services, with the profit going to a good cause in the community”
 - more precisely: “a distinct entity connected at arms length to the charity supported by the profit from social enterprise initiatives”
- Wide range of comments on:
 - “business model”
 - the commercial focus feels “uncommonsy”, “antithetical to the Commons”
 - however we do rent space, sell farm produce, host craft fairs (with revenue returning to support Commons teams and projects)
 - “the Commons’ decision-making style doesn’t let things happen fast enough for a business”.
 - we are structured on a “human model” - making a profit or paying salaries is not the goal
 - there is a tendency for non-profits to make hiring their own staff become a main purpose in the funding of the non-profit
 - “competition”
 - agreement that it is crucial not to compete with local businesses (a point by LePage who once came to Gabriola to give a workshop on the subject of social enterprise!)
- Summary statement: “We’re not there now, but it helps to talk about this without an axe to grind”

Team Reports:

- **Communications Team:** (Jinny Hayes) Meetings happen by email, coinciding with deadlines for publishing. Three articles in the past 4 weeks have appeared in the Sounder!

Call out to all teams: submit articles on activities to Jinny and contribute ideas for a Commons logo and new slogan (if needed).

Note to teams wanting to advertise events: consider communiqué, but also events listing sponsored by the Chamber of Commerce and Community Bulletin Board (self post, but remember to remove when past.

- **Property Management Team** (rep. Patrick Roux) OPEN INVITATION TO TAKE PART!

There is a huge range of activities and responsibilities included under the heading “general maintenance of grounds and buildings” and the PMT is asking for help in:

- water systems (from well maintenance to water testing (regular filing with Island Health), from pond to irrigation systems, including instant repairs to broken pipes)
- running the Commons booking system, updating the calendar on website, tracking rentals and organizing a trained backup person as needed
- ensuring a basic level of cleanliness and organizing seasonal housekeeping blitzes
- collecting and taking garbage and recycling out for regular pickup
- maintaining systems in working order (replacing fire extinguishers as required etc.)
- stewarding the workbees (including keeping the grass cut and everybody happy!)

Discussion:

- A division of responsibilities has worked well for the Farm Management Team
 - Suggestion: list the different tasks on the Communique and ask people interested in volunteering to contact Patrick (rouxmackay@shaw.ca) or Mary (mary.gabriola@gmail.com) to be trained in specific tasks.
 - We need to ensure team reps are notified when people fill out a “participation” sheet.
 - Note: for overall planning, Infrastructure Team needs to exist independently of the PMT (discussion at Long Range Planning Team for this)
- **Trails and Green Spaces Team** (rep: Kit Szanto) – meets every Saturday morning at workbees, removing invasive species (esp. Daphne laureola and broom) and planning trails.

Everybody welcome!

- **Sharing the Commons Team** (rep Kit) – meets regularly every third Wednesday at 10 am
 - Report on 2 well-attended workshops given by Patrick Olmsted on “Care and Feeding of your musical instrument” and “French Polishing”. A repeat of these workshops as well as others will be offered and publicized.
 - Report by Susan Yates on weekly sessions with the Grade Sevens exploring the eco-systems on the Commons.
 - Discussion on the future of GERTIE: As the pilot study is progressing with flying colours, the question of a permanent home for GERTIE is being considered. Suggestion that we discuss this question at Council (i.e. Can the Commons be the permanent depot for GERTIE?)

- **Covenant Team** (Deb) With the rapid diminishing of the outstanding mortgage, the team is focussing on the Covenant which will be able to take effect when the Commons has free title. An important document will be the Base Line Report, giving a “snapshot” of the land and facilities at the time of the signing of the Covenant. We will compile the data over a year, noting seasonal flora and fauna and determining areas to be protected. The “Biomapping” has begun with enthusiasm and will continue at regular intervals. Recording sheets are available downstairs in the lobby for spontaneous observations. Knowledgeable Gabriolans will be offering workshops, with a first slide show on local birds by Sharon McInnes on Friday May 8 at 7 pm upstairs in the Commons.

- **People for a Healthy Community** (Brenda) Working on the theme of local food production with the Recreation Society, farm groups and elementary school classes (engaged in planting in the PHC plots.) The teachers will be coming to discuss the connection between the school and the Commons. Shelagh and John agreed to represent the Commons at this meeting.

- **Farm Management Team** (Sharon)
 - The Kitchen Stewards and workbee soup chefs are testing the future community kitchen. The soup chefs are working on a cook book giving their secret recipes for the wonderful soups enjoyed each Saturday.
 - The FMT has refined their mandate
 - The Mid-week Market will be launched on Tuesday May 5 (from 2 to 6ish), with an information table at the SPRING FAIR (on Saturday May 2).
 - Orchard news: new apple trees have been planted; something is affecting the plum and almond trees (combination of summer drought and late spring frosts? or a virus? We’re researching). The netting is up over the blueberries and haskaps.
 - Allotment Gardens at Namaste and South Gardens have few free places!
 - Help needed at workbees for the Little Field to prepare for sowing of ground cover on half and squash and cucumber on other half.
 - Kitchen Garden is a thing of beauty! Rhubarb and asparagus may be ready for the first Mid-week Market.

Observation: 2015 is the International Year of the Soil! (It takes 1000 years to create one centimetre of soil.)

- **Gabriola Commons Trustees** (Robbie)

- Thank you party for Commons donors and volunteers was well attended, with perfect weather for the “passport” exploration of the Commons, wine, apple juice and delicious cake.

- Issue of storage of waste vegetable oil by GERTIE on the Commons will be dealt with during the upcoming renewal of our insurance.

- Call for 2 more people to join the nominating committee for new Trustees. Contact Deb (247-8335) .

- Two new projects will be launched within weeks:

The Solar Panel project (with 21 panels ground-mounted along the north fence of the orchard and 19 to be mounted on the roof of the house, which will see a new metal roof replace the old (leaking) roof when weather permits. Funding and planning is in place.

The Septic System (to replace the current failing septic system for the Community Kitchen. Exploration has been ongoing with an environmental engineer and septic installer for an area with the required percolation. A shallow shelf of bedrock extending across much of the upper reaches of the Commons led the engineer to favour the area between the orchard and the Poetry Yurt, below the arbutus and white pine trees. The project has been delayed as we wait for approval of a grant application. More sites are being searched.

As expected, the building inspector could not give an OK for the final inspection stage of the Kitchen until the new septic system is installed and approved. Unexpected was the short deadline given by the inspector for this to happen (or reapply for a new building permit – expensive and lengthy!)

- **Conflict Prevention and Resolution Team:** (Shelagh)

A serious concern about the decision-making process for projects on the Commons was raised, as evidenced by the septic project:

With the time pressure suddenly mounting, the process which had begun over a year ago was short-circuited and one person has been very hurt in the process. She had earlier voiced her strong objection to the possible removal of a small grove of young Douglas firs situated at the site identified by the engineer for the septic field and she should have had the opportunity to take part in a full discussion of the situation. Following the guidelines of our consensus decision- making model, she would have been able to formally block the action. This has not happened yet (but the trees are still standing.)

It was recognized by all at Council that the sense of urgency was not sufficient reason for the omission of good process and a sincere apology will be made to the person who has been hurt by this, with respect for her feeling that trees are sacred. This apology will be repeated at next Council.

Discussion was thoughtful and sensitive to the feelings of the person wronged. Some questions:

- With long term thinking in mind, how do we weave human activity into the natural landscape?
- What process do we put in place to prevent this from happening again? The issue of a possible abuse of power by those undertaking the planning for such a project was raised. Clearly, as has been said repeatedly, there is a need for the formation of a project task force, possibly at the Sharing the Commons or Infrastructure Team table, to share the responsibility and tasks of project planning to avoid this perception..

- **New 20 Minute Discussion Topics:**

Two new subjects for a 20 minute discussion have emerged:

- What process do we put in place to invite and respect all input and at the same time move from the community input stage of planning to the decision-making of action?
- Can the Commons be the long-term home of GERTIE?

Next Meeting: May 5th 7 pm at the Commons

Notes: Long Range Planning

20 Minute discussion: Commons Field Guide (Trustees)