

Commons Coordinating Council (CCC) gabriolacommonscouncil@gmail.com

Notes for Meeting of Feb.4, 2014

Present: Deborah Ferens, Linnet Kartan, Guy Mireau, Cheryl Bailey, Judith Roux, Patrick Roux, Bob McKechnie, Dolores Escudero, John Van Praet, Louise Amuir, Kit Szanto, George Szanto, Rebecca Furnell, Muriel Wiens, Stef Marrie, Shelagh Huston

Co-facilitators: Stef Marrie & Muriel Weins

Recorder: Shelagh Huston, Conflict Prevention and Resolution Team

Next CCC meeting: Tuesday, Mar. 4, 2014

Recorder for next meeting: (team & rep.) Trails & Green Spaces

Meeting Agenda:

1. Team, Project & Group Reports, including Team top three priorities for projects to be funded.
2. 20 Minute Discussion: Allocation of project funds.
3. Follow-up from previous meetings
 1. **Smart Meters** - All members will be invited to attend February's meeting to discuss their informed opinions on Smart Meters.
 2. **Communication** (report from group reviewing Members list)
 3. **Website** (report from group working on page by page review)
4. **Additional Items arising** from this meeting:
 - need to confirm adoption of Decision-making and Consensus policies next time (send out with minutes)
 - The Events Team has requested time during the March meeting to discuss dates for the 2014 events.
 - Teams and volunteers will bring budget numbers for as many as possible of the current suggestion list to the next meeting, to help with decision-making. FMT will report on farm stand cost, PMT on septic costs, and Rebecca on painting the entrance.
 - follow-up items from previous meetings that were not discussed:
 - Communication (report from group reviewing Members list) No discussion.
 - Website (report from group working on page by page review) No discussion.

5. Attachments:

- a) **Decision-making & Consensus policy documents**
- b)
- c)

Ongoing Discussion Topics - for 20-minute discussions:

- A. How to function without a Communications Liaison until someone steps into the role.
- B. "Personal Benefit" at the Commons
- C. Sustainability Building
- D. Signage

- F. Recognizing contributions
 - G. How do we decide what gets sent out to membership?
 - H. Website Update (will receive information package from Hans/Heide)
 - J. How do we orient people to the Commons?
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1. Team, Project & Group Reports

Reports included each Team's top three priorities for projects to be funded. These are discussed below under the **20 Minute discussion: Allocation of project funds.**

Commons Coordinating Council (rep: Stef Marrie)

Request to confirm adoption of Decision-making and Consensus policies at the next meeting.

Communications

no report

CPR (rep: Muriel Weins)

CPR is still finding our way.

- Next Meeting: Wed 12, 10 am

Covenant

no report

Event Planning & Volunteers (rep: Stef Marrie)

The Healing Arts Fair at the Commons, upcoming this Sunday February 9, is a privately organized event, run by the participants. Events Team member Stef Marrie misunderstood the intent of the organizer, Michele FireRiverHeart, to run the Healing Arts Fair as a fundraiser for the Commons. When the event was announced at Council in June, it sounded as though Michele wished to create a new event in cooperation with the Commons. The report from the first meeting indicated that the Healing Arts Fair would be organized and operated by the participants.

Unfortunately, Stef Marrie had hoped that this event would replace the Trades Fair. The interest from vendors and visitors at the 2013 event indicated that the Trades Fair should be a bi-annual event. The discussion following this news included:

- some disappointment that there would only be four fundraising events at the Commons this year
- discussion as to whether the Healing Arts Fair should remain a privately organized event
- suggestion that perhaps the pot-luck and get-together usually held during the Equinox could be turned into a fund-raising event.

The Events Team has requested time during the March meeting to discuss dates for the 2014 events.

- Next Meeting:

Farm Management (rep: Judith Roux)

FMT members have been away a lot recently. Work continues, with nothing requiring discussion.

- Next Meeting: Monday 10th 4 pm

Grant Writing

no report

Infrastructure (rep: Guy Mireau)

Guy suggested that an energy audit of the Commons is needed. This idea has not yet been discussed within the Infrastructure Team, so is not ready for Council's consideration. However, Guy mentioned that we used >32,000 Kw last year, so better conservation and efficiency is needed. He suggested we find out if we need to upgrade some equipment, determine who/what is using the power, etc , and determine what funding would be needed for the audit. This item will be considered by the Infrastructure team.

- Next Meeting: ?

Learning Opportunities

no report

Property Management (rep: Patrick Roux)

PMT have been busy with details.

- Next Meeting: ?

Sharing the Commons (rep: Kit Szanto)

STC's last meeting was postponed to January 15, and we spent some significant time discussing issues raised at the last Council meeting.

New business included a land use application from Jenni Gehlbach for GALTT dated December 6/13. They would like space for a small storage shed for their equipment. STC's initial discussion suggests that it should be moveable (i.e. a metal shed and should be no larger than 100 sq. ft. so as not to require a building permit. Location might be the north face of the goat barn, discreet and close to parking. GALTT to cover any insurance of shed and contents. STC sent it on to: Property Mgmt, Long Range Planning and Infrastructure for final decision. Susan will notify Jenni. Jenni's e-mail address (for final decision please) is: jenni_gehlback @telus.net or 247-7858.

At our meeting tomorrow, Feb.5, we will be discussing an application from GabEnergy, an application which has been sent out to all STC members.

- Next Meeting: February 5, 2014 at 10:30 a.m. in the "dining room."

Trails and Green Spaces (rep: Kit Szanto)

TAGS very seldom has meetings but there are always a few stalwart TAGS folk who come to Saturday work bees and find new patches of Daphne and broom without fail, pull out all we can in the 2 hours and enjoy the time together. We continue that work and are also adding gravel to the east/west connector trail. The funding for the trail is sufficient for the current work. Martha has also cleared a trail to the cedar grove (cathedral grove) from the large cleared space in the woods adjacent to the labyrinth, making it somewhat easier to find.

We always welcome anyone who would like to join us.

- Next Meeting: ?

Trustees for Gabriola Commons Foundation

no report

PROJECTS:

Community Kitchen

no report

Island Connections

no report

Labyrinth

no report

Sustainability Centre

no report

GROUPS:

People for a Healthy Community

no report

Poetry Gabriola

no report

2. Notes from 20-Minute Discussion:

(By consensus of the participants, this discussion was held following the Smart Meter discussion, to accommodate those members who came especially for SM topic.)

Current topic: Projects to be funded by the \$14,486 allocated by donations.

Deb Ferens explained the sources of the \$14,486 available for allocation.

The following suggestions compiled during 2013 had been previously circulated among teams, who were asked to choose their top three priorities:

- “You are here” site plans at 3 or 4 entry points to the Commons (plus small handout versions)
- Septic field for Community Kitchen completion
- Parking lot expansion – new parking area between barn and the road
- Blinds for upstairs rooms
- Barn Storage Shed
- Upgrade water system with new UV Filters
- Finish east/west connector pathway
- More exterior lighting
- More welcoming and informative entrance

- Beautification of building interior, include interior lighting
- Elevator
- Farmgate/Info stand
- Recognition party

Deb has been compiling Team responses, plus a number of Teams reported on their top priority choices at the meeting. After discussion, the septic field and the farm-gate stand are the top two choices, followed by improving the entrance, and farm equipment storage.

Discussion points included:

- The “You are here” site plans have \$2000 allocated already, and Council agreed the first site plan should be put up as soon as possible at the main entrance, leaving other entrances for a later date.
- It was pointed out that choosing priorities is difficult in the absence of budget figures. Teams and volunteers will bring budget numbers for as many as possible of the current suggestion list to the next meeting, to help with decision-making. FMT will report on farm stand cost, PMT on septic costs, and Rebecca on painting the entrance.
- The septic field has strong support, but is likely to cost at least \$25,000, more than the entire amount currently available for allocation. A grant application for septic may be needed.
- Some other suggestions for choices were made, such as a contingency fund, but will be included in future choice-making.

3. Discussion on follow-up items from previous meetings:

1. Smart Meters

All members were invited to attend February’s meeting to discuss their informed opinions on Smart Meters. This was a continuation of the discussion at the January Council meeting.

Bob McKechnie said that Robbie Huston asked at the last CCC why those opposed to smart meters are opposed, and asked them to explain why the Commons should not have smart meters. Bob offered 12 reasons why not. He introduced himself as a mechanical engineer, with experience of these matters, including as an intervener vs. Duke Point. (His remarks followed these notes, which he provided later for the minutes.)

Why No to a Smart Meter

1. Because they’re sensitive to high frequency harmonics, noise, and transients (whereas analog meters aren’t), they read higher than analog meters for the same electricity consumption; (note from Minute-taker: Bob said that BC Hydro has admitted to 5% higher.)
2. They’re less robust than analog meters - meaning they’ll fail more frequently . . . adding to cost + more time without power while customer waits for repair;
3. They’re made of combustible materials, a lack of proper CSA/UL testing is suspected, and there have been many house fires attributed to sm’s;
4. Whereas BCH contends the electromagnetic radiation from sm’s is safe, many reputable studies (eg - the World Health Organization’s conclusion that such emr is a potential Class B carcinogen) disagree;
5. The signals coming from sm’s can be picked up by anyone with a receiver, meaning burglars and others are only a hacker away from knowing when you’re out, turning off your power, etc.
6. With electronic signature software, sm data recipients (whoever they might be) can get a minute by

minute picture of how you're using electricity in your house. With backdoor microphones (now being found in laptops and smart appliances) the sm can be used to monitor conversations inside one's house;

7. SM's aren't needed to use or sell green energy that you generate. If you use such green energy your analog meter will read less. If you generate more green energy than you can use and don't want to waste it, your best bet is to sell it to your neighbour(s). If you'd rather sell it to BCH, please know pulp mills, Clyde Coates, and many others have been using analog technology to do so for decades ;
8. Studies are showing that sm's do little to promote conservation;
9. While sm's will be helpful if/when Time of Use rates are implemented, TOU rates can be, and have for decades been, determined using analog technology;
10. While sm's will be helpful tracing electricity theft, they can be almost as effective doing so if they're mounted on the pole transformers; ie. - no need to be placed on every house;
11. While sm's will be helpful tracing power-outs, they'll be equally effective doing so if they're mounted near every circuit breaker on the grid; ie. - no need to be on every house;
12. While paying \$35/mo for an analog meter is a good reason to choose a sm, there's no reason to believe that \$35 will be the opt-out fee - the BCUC has yet to decide what the fee will be;
13. The \$1B+ corporate-driven sm program was bought into and decreed as mandatory by the BC Gov't with neither debate in legislature nor public consultation; and
14. In its implementation of the Meters Choice Program BCH inundated ratepayers with incomplete, inaccurate, and misleading information.

Linnat Kartar: health is my main issue against sms. There is no proof of safety. This is untested technology, and we don't know its cumulative effects. BC is behind other jurisdictions: Europe has studied the effects: see the Citizens for Safe Technology website for more information.

Many of us came here looking for a place for safety and simplicity. We don't have a way of measuring all the impacts. Autistic kids need to be away from this. Bees, birds, are affected. We can choose not to have most irradiating devices, but can't choose not to have this one. Most of us can't do w/o electrical power. Standing up against sm's is part of the Commons Charter's aim of 'nourishing the fabric of the community.' If the Commons can hang on and not accept a sm until the current lawsuit against them is settled, that may protect us. Others can join the lawsuit, even if not hypersensitive. We may be able to refuse installation meanwhile. One can get updates on the BCUC process, sign on for the Class Action suit, and find other news both local and international, at: www.citizensforsafetechnology.org .

Guy Mireau: why replace a known with an untested device? I'm concerned with pollinators being affected by electromagnetic radiation. I think the Commons should stand up for some principles, say 'this is more important than money' and find the cost of doing so.

Muriel Weins: I will pay a month's surcharge to continue to allow the Commons to refuse the Smart Meter.

Deb Ferens: 2 other people have also already offered to pay for a month, so up to April is now covered. This discussion arose from the Trustees trying to be responsible financially. In December, we discussed this. Our January Hydro bill has no charge on our analog bill, but mentions a 'legacy charge' of \$2.30/day for each meter. This is a small amount so far, since it has been pro-rated to the date of bill.

Cheryl Bailey: I agree with the previous speakers. These coercive tactics by BC Hydro should be resisted.

Patrick: Robbie was going to check with BCH, has this happened? We are changing a previous Council decision, may need to consider our process.

Cheryl Bailey: Do we want to enter the lawsuit? under which status?

Judith Roux: the \$35 surcharge has not been agreed to by BCUC yet; their decision will be made around mid-February. In the Interior, where the charge has been imposed already, it's now about \$9, not \$35. This is a real issue; one of our Gertie bus drivers has had to quit because of EMR from devices being carried aboard the bus.

Deb: The Hydro bill lists Commons as a residential customer.

Cheryl: It's easier to stay with the analog meter than go back to it later.

The general consensus was that the Commons is able to continue with its analog meter for the time being, pending BCUC decisions, and currently being funded for any extra charges that may arise. The issue may need to be revisited later, once more information becomes available.

3. Discussion on follow-up items from previous meetings (continued):

2. Communication (report from group reviewing Members list) *No discussion.*

3. Website (report from group working on page by page review) *No discussion.*

4. Additional Items Arising from this meeting:

Possible discussion of the suggestion that the pot-luck and get-together usually held during the Equinox could be turned into a fund-raising event.

5. Attachments:

Decision Making Policy.

Decision Making at the Gabriola Commons

Introduction and Intent:

This document details the general process used for making decisions at the Gabriola Commons. 'Decisions' may include the creation and implementation of new policies or determinations to take action on a topic or activity. This document is not intended to guide consensus process but rather the process that leads up to the point of making a consensus decision.

Informed and effective decision making is possible even within a non-traditional organizational and governance structure such as practiced at the Gabriola Commons.

This style of decision making is premised upon self-organization, and inspired by good information sharing and trust.

The following principles are kept in mind throughout the decision making process:

- Decentralized decision making is practiced at the most appropriate, practical and empowering level, and in such a way that it models the ability of natural systems to self-organize.
- Information about activities and plans is shared in ways which are playful, articulate, accessible and engaging and which enables people to feel enthused and empowered.

- Messages are non-directive, respecting the ability to make a response that is appropriate to a particular situation.

(Modified from Hopkins and Lipman 2009)

Commons Coordinating Council (Council):

A meeting held monthly, attended by representatives from teams and involved groups on the Commons and open to the public. Council acts as a mediating body where involved parties can discuss ideas, issues and current goings-on and initiate cooperation and collaboration. This is the main venue through which new information is passed from team to team and where new decisions are discussed in depth between Commons teams, groups, projects and individual participants before being finalized.

Teams, Projects and Groups:

Teams are groups of individuals who operate on the Commons with a specific mandate. All Commons affairs are attended to by one or more teams rather than being directed in a top-down manner. Teams function independently on the Commons while co-operating with each other to ensure the organization functions effectively. There are also project groups on the Commons which function as teams throughout the duration of a specific project. Additionally, there are several community groups that are active on the Commons property. Members of these groups are encouraged to attend Council so as to stay informed on current affairs.

Representative:

This is the person(s) who attends Council to represent their team, group, project, etc. It is the responsibility of this person to bring the information their team wants heard to Council and to circulate information from Council to their team and, when required, collect input on that information. This person is responsible for following up at Council with their team's input on issues from the previous Council.

The team representative is trusted to speak on behalf of their team when a time-sensitive decision is required to be made at Council when no time is available for team input.

Decision Making:

Decisions which do not affect those outside a single team are made within the team according to the team's mandate, plans and budget. For example: the farm team decides what to plant where within the existing gardens. It is crucial that teams, groups and projects consider the effects of their decisions so as to avoid making decisions that may affect others without going Council.

Decisions which affect multiple teams, groups, projects, etc. are ultimately made at Council, using input from all teams, groups, projects and with direction from the team(s), project(s) or group(s) most affected by the decision or most knowledgeable on the topic. This process is outlined below.

When an issue does not fall within the mandate of a specific team, group or project, or is important to many, representatives can 'draft' a recommendation or decision together. Occasionally a short-term task force made up of members of various teams, projects, groups or interested individuals may form to research or examine the issue and bring forth recommendations to Council.

Decision Making Process

A team, person, group, project, etc. has an issue that requires a decision to be made that has

repercussions outside their own sphere on the Commons:

The recommendation, or “draft”, for a decision comes from the team(s), projects(s) or groups(s) whose mandate(s) the decision falls within as this is the group of people who are the most informed on the given topic and most able to provide an appropriate solution or plan. For example: following the decision making process outlined below, the Farm Team might initiate the placement of a new garden. The ‘draft’ decision process might involve the Trails and Green Spaces team as well.

A. Drafting a recommendation:

Information is brought to the Commons Council meeting by the representative for discussion. A recommendation for a policy, action, etc. may be brought instead of a question or issue. (skip to B in this case).

1. At Council the issue is discussed and it is determined if there are other teams, groups, projects or individuals that should be involved in drafting a recommendation for a policy, action, etc.
2. The involved parties form a task force to work up a draft plan of action, policy, etc. using their own knowledge and input from discussion at Council.
3. The involved parties, bring this draft to the next Council meeting for discussion and circulation.

B. Circulating the recommendation:

Representatives circulate the draft recommendation to their team members and collect input. Because this is an inherently slow decision making process it is vital that team reps are doing this promptly, so that unreasonable delay is not created in decision making.

C. Making a decision:

At the following Council meeting representatives discuss input and the recommendation is either:

- Adopted and made final through consensus (based on input as presented by the representatives).
- Amended and re-circulated for further discussion/input (back to B).
- Dropped if it is found to be unnecessary and/or unpopular.

A final decision is made based on a consensus model as outlined in the trustee handbook policy on consensus decision making.

D. Circulating the Decision and Follow up:

The decision and any pertinent information is circulated by representatives to their teams, groups, projects, and also through Council minutes, which may be sent out by representatives and are posted monthly on the Commons website.

Trustees are responsible for updating the Trustee Handbook with new policies or changes to existing policies.

Once a decision is given the “green light” it is imperative that reports and updates are regularly submitted to Council as the project or activity progresses. This communication allows members to be up to date with current goings on and to monitor any changes to the original decision.

References:

Hopkins, Rob & Peter Lipman. 2009. The Transition Network Ltd. Who We Are And What We Do Version 1.0

Consensus Policy DRAFT.

Policy: Consensus Decision Making

Date: May 21, 2008 Revisions (date): Jan 14, 2009, June 2, 2011, and Aug 2, 2013

DRAFT

Policy Statement:

“Consensus decision-making will be used at all Society meetings”. (Foundation By Laws Part 6.33)

Unity does not mean unanimity; it means the best general agreement possible in a reasonable time period.

Procedure:

1. Introduce the proposal.
2. Clarify questions and call for concerns.
3. Amend and modify the proposal through more discussion, or withdraw if there is no support at all.
4. The facilitator of the meeting will then ask for any further changes, reservations, or objections. The following options are ways to indicate a lack of support for a proposal or decision:
 - Non-support – I don’t see the need for this, but I will go along.
 - Reservations – I think this may be a mistake, but I can live with it.
 - Standing aside – I personally can’t support this, but I won’t stop others.
 - Blocking – I cannot support this or allow the group to support this.
5. If there are no further amendments or objections, the decision will be accepted.
6. If a proposal is blocked, the decision making process is suspended until a resolution process is activated.
7. Resolution Process:
 - Blockers are given the opportunity to present reasons for blocking which must be clearly stated and recorded.
 - Reasons for blocking must meet criteria that demonstrate the decision would: jeopardize the legal existence of the Commons; place the Commons in an untenable financial position; create irreversible impacts on the land and the environment (Do No Harm), constitute unethical or imprudent behaviour.
 - After an agreed upon time frame to consider the blocking in light of the criteria, the issue is re-

introduced for a decision. If the new information does not persuade other members to change the decision, the decision goes ahead.

- If the block does not meet the criteria but raises some concerns, the group should consider moving forward cautiously with the decision and action.
- The nature of the block and the blockers will go on record along with the decision.