

Gabriola Commons Council Notes—February 2, 2016

Present: Bob Andrew, Fay Weller, Brenda Fowler, Louise Amuir, George Szanto, Kit Szanto, John Peirce, Deb Ferens, Maya Ruggles, Rebecca Furnell, Maggie Mooney, Judith Roux, K. Louise Vincent

Facilitator: Judith **Notes:** K. Louise

Agenda:

1. Team Reports
2. Infrastructure/solar project
3. Signage
4. Water
5. Financial Report
6. Vibes Watcher
7. Co-facilitator list
8. Unallocated Funds
9. Poetry Yurt
10. Open time
11. Topics for 20 minute discussion

Judith opened with question from Muriel Wiens.: Is it ‘uncommoning’ to have a pre-set agenda? Discussion: Consensus that an agenda was preferred, kept the meeting focused, & provided opportunity for information/preparatory thinking ahead of meetings. Open time for discussions already part of meetings. Guidelines for facilitation also available (created a few years ago.)

Kit: Room for new material; Bob: Room for non-specific agenda George: Need for continuity;

John: Imperative there’s an agenda Rebecca: Haven’t we always had an agenda and process, this evolved, can forget this. What’s uncommon about an agenda?

Maya: Completely supportive of having an agenda and tracking. Curious how, why not having an agenda has come forward.

Judith reminding the meeting we need to renew list of facilitators – Rebecca volunteered (for a later date). John Pierce volunteered to co-facilitate next meeting with Judith.

1. Round, introductions and team reports

Covenant Team/Deborah/George: Spring Biomapping coming up on March 19th. Notice going out to Communique and paper. Team will be work-shopping the covenant in March.

Next Meeting Feb. 9th, 2pm.

Long-Range Planning/Deb: Will be writing letter for Gertie soon with apologies for delay. (Send to John for edit/read.

Financial Report/Maya: Report appended.

Questions: John: Are restricted funds allocated to teams: Yes.

Discussion on how we wish to spend allocated funds? (\$4- 6,000).

Question: What is the year end (2015) mortgage amount: \$80,790.00.

George: Raises important question of what to do longer term with donorship. Time for a legacy plan?

John: Are other projects being starved due to mortgage? Good items for long term planning and Spring discussion. Kit: letter to donors, encouraging continued support for the Commons.

Trustees/ Fay: Great retreat, relaxed and expansive discussion. New trustees on board.

Nomination Committee: George and K. Louise: please contact if you have recommendations for future trustees. Liaison for PHC: Fay: good discussion and looking forward to more. Lease is due for renewal this Spring.

Communications/ Rebecca: Disaster proof cabinet's costs have increased. Yes, buy it. There are sufficient allocated funds. Deb: When teams get the budget it's important to pay attention to how we spend the money. Review and report to Council around discrepancies. Transparent and accountable within teams. Report appended.

PHC/Brenda: Happy to attend and not wishing to take Commons time with PHC announcements.

John: Informal liaison with PHC regarding property management.

Property Management/ John: No report tonite.

Sharing the Commons/Kit: Poetry Gabriola wish to give the yurt in entirety to the Commons. Would simplify booking. Molds and moss forming: some trees need to come down. Talk to those who may be sensitive to this. Have discussed amicably already. Are we insured for the Yurt: no.

Deb: Yurt is an asset and has to be valued and added with property assessment and written contract for transfer. This has its challenges: i.e. maintaining care. It's a bigger issue: put it on the agenda for future meeting. Contact teams for input and bring forward viewpoints to Council.

John: Property team could meet with Poetry Gabriola. In the meantime, contact with maintenance.

Maya: Poetry Gabriola has their own insurance: isn't included with Commons value and plan.

Cameron M. is getting information on this (and for Gertie as well).

Maya: Question regarding the pottery collective regarding hydro costs of using the kiln. Judith: it's not set up yet so can't figure that yet. No use of hydro yet.

TAGs/Kit: still meeting informally.

Problem of water sharing and misuse. Low in summer. Alison F. suggested a different pipe system so it can be turned off from inside when necessary. Larger question for people who don't have access to fresh water: could be informed when water is available. People who are not in dire need also loading water. Brenda: dire need is difficult to define. Many people come for water from all walks of life. Need to be

mindful of assumptions around class differences of water users.

Maya: pressure on PHC to manage water. Use of water should be a common right. Wider discussion needed: add to topics list.

Suggestion: introduce guidelines for usage and usage times with fair prior warning times.

Grant-Writing/George: We were under budget for the septic project by \$5,000. Wrote Nanaimo Foundation saying we could use the funds for a refrigeration system that cost \$3,800. Nanaimo Foundation covered this. Photo-op Thursday Feb 11 at 3:30 to thank them. Everyone welcome!

On good terms: they would like participation in their satellite sites, one of which is on Gabriola. Meeting is Feb. 22nd at 5 pm. Please consider attending, has implications. Louise and George will be there. Maggie: Gabriola site would not prevent applications to Nanaimo site.

Community Kitchen/ Judith: Testing for water important – every three years. Timely – found a good lab (and reasonable fee - \$220.00) with a Sydney group.

Painting to do, ovens need to be reset for accuracy, may cost a bit.

Question: When is the party?

2. Discussion

Signage options/Rebecca: report appended. Arches and circles. Reviewed two options with opportunity to choose. Great options and great prices. Send out to teams and get responses for decision next meeting. It's time to finally get some signs up. Question: Trust signage bylaws outdated? Fonts: prioritizing first and second choices.

Solar Project – Hydro/ Fay: report appended: Meeting with Hydro to present five options (discussed in report) regarding analogue meters and change with Hydro requiring smart meters for net metering. Given process and length of discussion have chosen option two (radio-off smart meters) “under duress” and lay this issue to rest now. Discussion: John: regarding tariff process, reducing electricity costs, getting more heat pumps. Deb: share this story more widely through Communicate and newspaper article. Just waiting for agreement to come. Include the steps taken and process of how the Commons dealt with this difficult subject.

Vibes Watcher/ Fay: Introduced by the Mudgirls group. There to keep an eye on atmosphere of meeting, watch tension, conflict, gaps, circumstances supporting/ not supporting sharing, sensing what, who is/isn't coming forward. Deb: welcome strengthening tools for communication. Early days of Council we had a similar role. Also, asking some standard questions at the end of the meeting so it becomes process more than people oriented: i.e.: Is there anything left that someone has not brought forward and wishes to? Kit: it's hard to judge, know this in others. CHEAP BFV's: Concerns, hopes, expectations, assumptions, priorities, beliefs, fears, values. Maya: everyone is receiving training in facilitation and vibes watcher. George: bigger problem is those not present. People present don't have difficulty speaking and not speaking when needed. Maya: that might not be the case. Rebecca: role could be self-serving, make training available. Fay: Nonviolence Communication

Model could be learned together and used. K.: Wouldn't want this role to become a default position. Prefer everyone learning and taking responsibility, nonviolence communication model, questions.

3. Agenda next meeting Tuesday March 1 at 7 pm (Recording Team: Events)

- 1) Anthony Holland's library.
 - 2) Signage decision.
 - 3) Poetry Yurt (future? need for electricity, access to water/toilet)
 - 4) Water - sharing Commons' richness in water with community
- scarcity in drought conditions (storage?)
 - 5) Unallocated Funds
 - 6) Legacy Fund
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Signage Taskforce

Feb. 2016

The taskforce has proposals for two types of signs that they are seeking feedback from teams on. The group is ready to move forward with construction after the designs are approved by council.

The group proposes the following signs:

- Two large signs (roughly 4' high x 8' wide) mounted on cedar posts with a small roof above. One sign would sit at each end of the property, parallel with the road and with the lower end of the sign toward the edge of the property (creating a sort of extended arch from one end to the other). These signs would cost approximately \$2000-\$3000 for both depending on the materials used for the text.
 - Acrylic Letters ~\$2000 total for two signs
 - Metal Letters ~\$3000 total for two signs
 - Routed and Painted ~ ? (waiting on quote from Ron Crown)
- 4 signs – one at each entrance to the Commons (final location of main entrance yet to be determined). These signs would consist of a wood circle mounted inside a metal hoop (wood circle made by Ron Crown using computer router and black epoxy fill, metal hoop prepared by Jeff Pounds). Each circle would indicate the entrance (Ex. Main, East, etc). Changeable wood rectangles would be mounted below the circles to indicate facilities within each entrance (ex. Community Kitchen, parking, weekly market, etc.). Cost for 4 of these signs would be approximately \$2000 including some extra rectangular inserts
 - Note: the wood circles would be made the same way as the stools on the large table with swinging stools at MadRonas. Seeing these might help you get a good visual.

Total cost for all 6 proposed signs is estimated at \$5000 or less.

Several fonts were presented at Feb 2016 Council and the most popular choices were:

- **Kristen - 675 Gabriola Commons**
- **Tomus - 675 Gabriola Commons**

Drawings will be emailed as attachments to the Feb council notes.

Please have your team email feedback to furnellr@gmail.com or bring it to March 2016 Council.

Thank you!!

Gabriola Commons Infrastructure Team Special meeting January 29, 2016

Present: Bob Andrew, Guy Mireau, John Peirce, Patrick Roux, Judith Roux, Charles Silva with Bob McKechnie and Fay Weller

Focus: The Commons' Solar installation and BC Hydro – getting to “on”

Background:

A 10kW solar system has been installed on the Commons with funding from Bullfrog Energy and the Community Works Fund (through the RDN) and with design, sourcing and technical support from GabEnergy and expertise and labour from Solar Den. A volunteer crew has built a structure to support half of the panels (to demonstrate ground-mounting), while the other half were installed on the roof of the farm house.

This project was funded on the basis of an understanding: that the two analog meters could be retained and approved for final hook-up with BC Hydro, with Commons paying a legacy fee for manual reading of meters.

Several factors caused the project to be delayed (the need to replace the roof of the house before proceeding and a long drought and concern for fire safety which prevented the completion of the ground-mounted structure until rainfall.) During this delay, new regulations were issued by BC Hydro requiring that analog meters be replaced by digital “Smart” meters for any net metering program.

Why the resistance to Smartmeters from the Commons? A number of discussions (at several Councils and at a special focussed meeting) revealed a strong desire to avoid the installation of a Smart meter on the Commons based on several reasons:

- Those extremely sensitive to Electromagnetic Radiation are unable to be in the presence of EMR without suffering physical pain and illness. Since the Commons is intended to welcome anyone in the community, it was strongly expressed that we should avoid a situation which would be permanently producing EMR. (To

accommodate these individuals currently, we can turn off any sources of EMR which might currently be operating.)

- The smartmeters themselves are the subject of controversy and a class action lawsuit based on the possible fire hazard they present, the threat to individual privacy with a potential abuse of the information gathered and a perceived inaccuracy in the recording (comparing data on Hydro invoices from analog and digital meters)

Current Situation:

Bob McKechnie and Fay Weller have been in contact with BC Hydro's net metering administration regarding the Gabriola Commons' desire to retain our analogue meters while receiving solar energy from the 10kW installation. After a lengthy conference, it seems that the status quo will not be acceptable to BC Hydro. We were given the opportunity to consider four options:

Option 1: BC Hydro will pay all of the expenses that we have incurred to date (solar panels, building structure, electrician) if we decide not to go with any of the following options.

Option 2: We apply for net metering, get a radio off meter, and put up a fire proof box around the meter.

Option 3: We go off the grid with the solar panels – solar panel energy would go directly to high load uses.

Option 4: Connect through the interconnections group. This is for IPPs and producers of energy that are larger than we are. Unfortunately it would cost a fair bit - \$5000 for a screening study, \$7500 for a deposit, \$60,000 for a specialized meter.

Option 5: Challenge BCH's right to disallow us from using our analogs before the BCUC.

Discussion and proposals:

Option 1: If we don't proceed with any of the other options, BC Hydro would cover the cost of the expenses to date (and permit us to reimburse the funders.)

- Would we be required to undo the existing installation? Not clearly spelled out, but possibly.

- It is unlikely that we could somehow operate with any semblance of what is now in place.

- There would likely be a significant loss of credibility with the funders and in the community.

Option 2: Applying for net metering, replacing our two analogs with smart-meters. We have the option of "radio-off" which eliminates the EMR problem, but still involves a fee of \$22.50 per meter for the manual reading this would require (but a lower amount than with analog meter).

- An idea: If we accept option 2 as above with radio-off, we are in a certain bargaining position to be able to request that we not be charged a legacy fee, and instead file a regular (monthly?) reading with them.

- Since there is an ongoing legal challenge to the BC Utilities Commission, the outcome could affect us. It was suggested that we could accept the smart meter w/ radio off option “under duress”, with a possible reversal depending on the outcome of the litigation.

- Note: If we were able to obtain a non-digital bi-directional meter (the way net metering was done before the smartmeter days) it is not impossible that this would be acceptable. The Net Metering administrator actually researched this option, but was unable to find any such meters available.

- It would be interesting to set up a project comparing the accuracy of analog and smart meters, with the TED (since anecdotal reports indicate that the installation of smartmeters tends to bring an increase in monthly billing.

- The concern that smartmeters have been associated with house fires would lead us to isolate the whole meter installation from the highly flammable cedar siding of the woodwork shop and in the closet of PHC. The RDN has agreed to cover the cost of such fire-proofing.

- There is a promise from BC Hydro that, with the “radio-off” version they would ensure the meters would be installed without a transmitter (which could have been turned on by BCH without our knowledge)

- An observation from Guy was one to consider: that the two analog meters be retained, both linked to a smart meter located far enough away for the EMR not to be a factor (question about technical feasibility.)

Option 3 We’d go partially off the grid with the energy coming from the solar panels going directly to high energy uses. This option implies that we continue with the existing analog s and panels for the lower uses and continue to pay the “fine” for the manual meter reading.

- This would probably not meet the RDN’s requirements. To be assessed.

- It is not clear that the heavy loads (compressors) could start on just the solar panels because of heavy starting currents needed. Batteries would likely be required.

- It is likely that we would not use all of the power that could be produced because we would have no way of matching loads to power production. Batteries, a couple of inverters, and charging equipment could do the matching.

- This would leave us in better shape if there was a power outage.

- We will be doing a TED (The Energy Detective) analysis on our appliances with a heavy draw.

Option 4 Joining the Independent Power Producers – is expensive and we’re not at that level!

Option 5: Challenge BCH’s right to disallow us from using our analogs before the BCUC based on a) being grandfathered by Alevtina’s Dec/14 email, and b) there being nothing in the Tariff that justifies the disallowance. Bob McKechnie offered to be the lead on this.

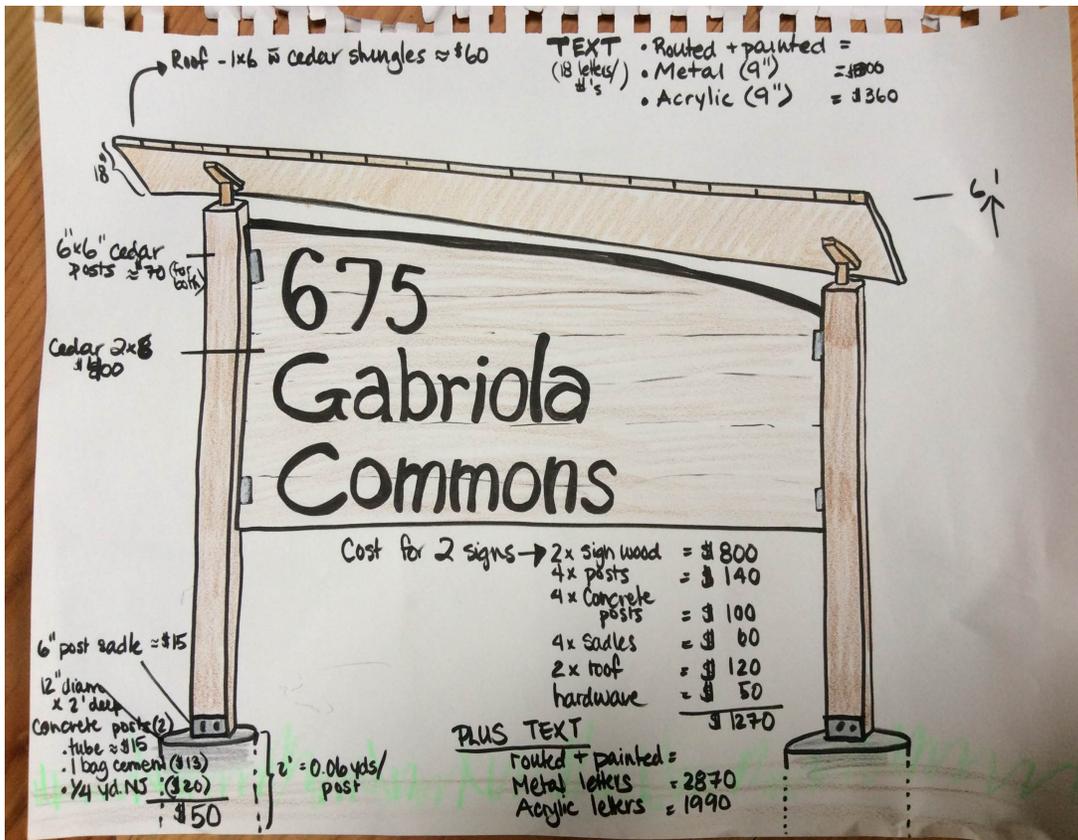
There was unanimity around the table that we propose Option 2, with radio-off, with fireproofing of the installation and with the statement that this is being agreed

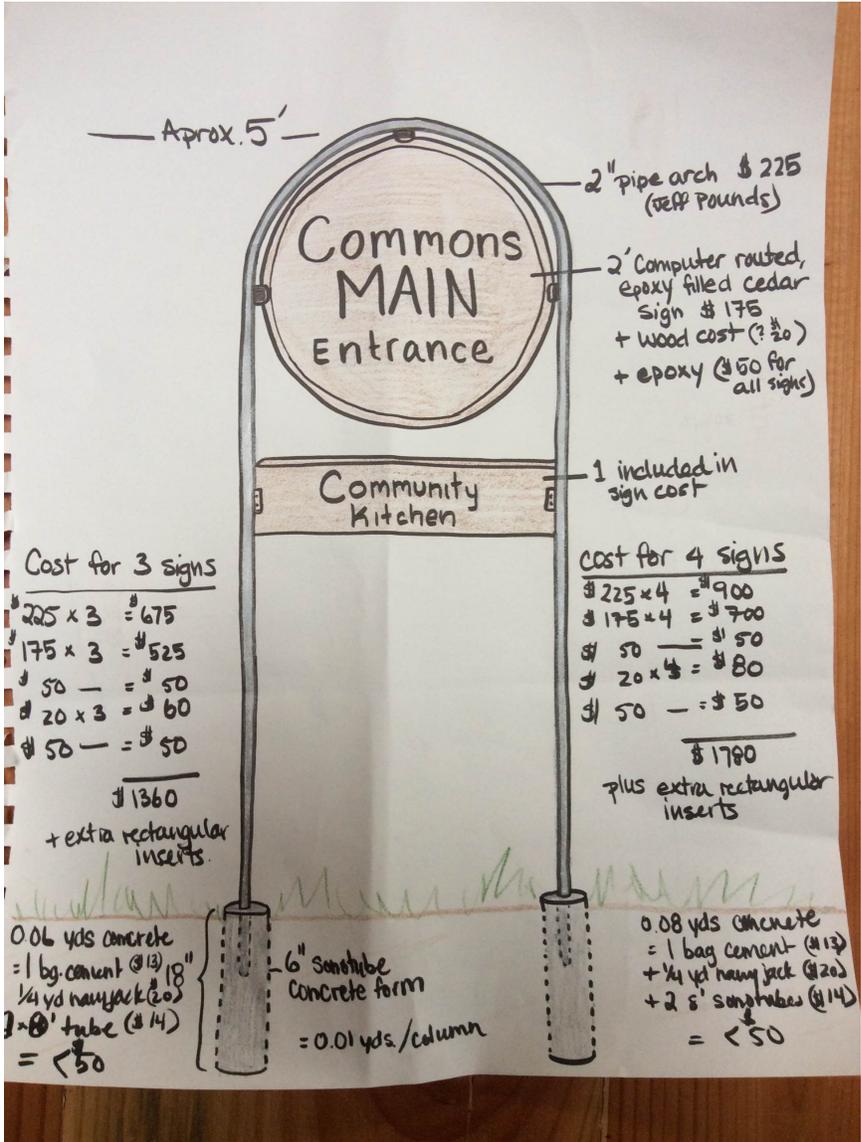
upon “under duress” and can be reversed depending on the outcome of the case before the BCUC. Option 5 would also be carried out, parallel to Option 2. I would still bargain for eliminating the fee in exchange for our manual reading and reporting of energy use; however, BC Hydro may argue that they want the power use data that is broken down by hourly consumption.

Recommendation:

The Infrastructure Team recommends to the Commons Council that we apply for net metering with two “radio-off” smart meters, which will each be charged a reading fee of \$22,50 per month. In the letter of application, we will make it clear that we are agreeing to the use of smart meters “under duress”, and we reserve the right to return to analog meters should future regulations allow us to do so. Further, we will build fireproof enclosures for both smart meters and install our own measuring equipment on a test basis to determine if the smart meters are measuring consumption accurately. We should be able to start up the solar arrays as soon as our net metering application is approved and the meters changed as the electrical inspector will then be able to sign off on our installation.

At the same time we recommend challenging BC Hydro’s right to disallow us from using our analog meters through the BC Utilities Commission (BCUC).





— Aprox. 5' —

2" pipe arch \$ 225
(Jeff Pounds)

2' Computer routed,
epoxy filled cedar
sign \$ 175
+ wood cost (? \$20)
+ epoxy (\$50 for
all signs)

1 included in
sign cost

Cost for 3 signs

\$ 225 x 3 = \$ 675
\$ 175 x 3 = \$ 525
\$ 50 — = \$ 50
\$ 20 x 3 = \$ 60
\$ 50 — = \$ 50

\$ 1360

+ extra rectangular
inserts.

Cost for 4 signs

\$ 225 x 4 = \$ 900
\$ 175 x 4 = \$ 700
\$ 50 — = \$ 50
\$ 20 x 4 = \$ 80
\$ 50 — = \$ 50

\$ 1780

plus extra rectangular
inserts

0.06 yds concrete
= 1 bag cement (\$13)
1/4 yd heavy jack (\$20)
3 x 6" tube (\$14)
= \$ 50

6" sandtube
concrete form
= 0.01 yds./column

0.08 yds concrete
= 1 bag cement (\$13)
+ 1/4 yd heavy jack (\$20)
+ 2 x 6" sandtubes (\$14)
= \$ 50