

# Gabriola Commons COUNCIL

## Notes from the meeting of June 7, 2016

**Present: Facilitators:** K. Louise Vincent and Rebecca Furnell **Recording Team:** Infrastructure Kit Szanto, George Szanto, Bob Andrew, David Lightly, Judith Roux, Alison Fitzgerald, Muriel Wiens, HawkOwl, Patrick Roux, Deb Ferens, John Peirce, Charles Silva, Jill Elcock, Sharon Arnell, Brenda Fowler, brief appearance by Cpl. Markus Muntener.

### A. TEAM REPORTS

- **Sharing the Commons Team** (Kit and Judith) **Next meeting Wed. June 15 at 10 am**  
- Commons Bookings Coordinator urgently needed from June 24 to July 8! Note for Communique. Mary Wilson is backing up Gloria Filax as she returns to teach at U of A, but both will be away for 2 weeks. We need new volunteers to train for this key position ([commonsbookings@gmail.com](mailto:commonsbookings@gmail.com)).  
- New potters (Pam and Kate) are joining Christos in planning for a community pottery on the Commons. (Details next Council)
- **Trails and Green Spaces Team** (Kit) Meetings as needed at Saturday am workbees  
Camp Miriam volunteers will be returning from July 6 to August 18 to engage in “community service” on Gabriola (including the Commons, Namaste Gardens and the Descanso Bay Campground.) The Commons has always played a key role in organizing this, with appreciation for the massive help the campers have given, working enthusiastically with the TAGS team toward the eradication of invasive Daphne laureola. Kit Szanto has taken on the organizing of the visits this year and would love to hear from anyone able to take part in guiding the campers. ([kszanto@telus.net](mailto:kszanto@telus.net))
- **Grant Writing Team** (George) Meetings as needed  
Application for funding to complete Phase One Parking project has been submitted to Farm Credit Canada (Agri-spirit Fund). We will hear back in August.
- **Infrastructure Team** (Judith) Meeting Monday June 13 at 4:30  
Report next Council
- **Conflict Prevention and Resolution Team** (Dave Lightly) **Next meeting June 9 10 am**  
Good discussions are happenings at meetings:  
- Fred Harris introduced Japanese technique of assessing a “problem” (requires all to explore what is good as well as what is bad about a situation.)  
- Role playing is helpful in experiential learning.
- **Gabriola Commons Foundation Trustees** (Alison) **Next meeting Thurs. June 9**  
Discussions on Legacy Fund and agreement with AGES
- **Long Range Planning Team** (Deb) Next meeting tba  
Planning is underway for the Commons’ third community workshop on July 10. After “From Dream to Design” in 2005 and “Visions and Voices” in 2010, this workshop will focus on taking stock of what has been accomplished and planning for the next stages. Details in an upcoming Communique.

- **Property Management team (John) Next meeting June 8 at 5 pm**

Main focus is on water (see 20 minute discussion notes following). Access to workshop also an issue.

- **Covenant Team (Deb) Next meeting Tues. June 14 at 2:30 (at the campground!)**

With the payoff of the mortgage on the Commons within sight, this team is under pressure to complete the work on the Commons Covenant:

- Work on the 2nd draft wording of the covenant
- Base Line Inventory – recording is ongoing of:
  - The biomapping of the 22 ecosystem polygons has seen 4 seasons of recorded details
  - Details of the built facilities
  - Community use
- Stewardship Plan (based on the values elaborated in the Covenant), must be part of registration of the covenant on the title of the Gabriola Commons at the Land Registry Office, once the mortgage is lifted..
- We are still seeking covenant holders open to the unconventional nature of a Commons covenant.
- Retreat is planned in early 2017 to complete the project.

- **Farm Management Team (Sharon Arnell) Next meeting: Monday June 27 at 9:30 am**

- Water is a major issue and a proposal for alternative irrigation days is being drafted. Major mulching will help reduce need for frequent watering
- Need for signage about dogs (i.e. NO dogs in gardens; Dogs on leash and under control on Commons; owners to pick up after their dogs.)

Note: signs seldom work unless humour is used (e.g. “Dogs must keep their humans on a leash!”)

- Note that allotment gardens are “private” and produce is not free for anyone to take.
- Issue with sharing of space on the Commons (PMT and FMT concerns to be raised at next Sharing the Commons Team and LRP meetings)
- Events: Tour d’ Coop (June 12 from 10 to 4) Tour of amazing chicken coops on Gabriola (see pamphlet at Raven or website: [Filament.ca](http://Filament.ca) \tour for more info. Donations made will go to FMT)
- Mid-week Market at the Commons: every Wednesday afternoon from 2 to 3:30 pm under the timber frame building. Island growers featured with fresh produce. Great ambiance with kids actually playing!

- **People for a Healthy Community (Brenda)**

Note newly painted equipment shed (thanks to Cathy for great artistry!)

- **Signage Team (Rebecca)**

- We’re in discussion with the Islands Trust planner over regulations on size of proposed Commons signs.
- HawkOwl has volunteered to take part in signage.
- Funding: To date Council has seen agreement on \$2,500 (from the funds allocated to Commons projects) for the signage project. The whole project is estimated to cost \$5,000. George and Kit have launched a challenge: they would agree to contribute \$1,250 toward the project if it can be matched! Many thanks for this generous proposal! (Note: if the sum is not fully matched the offer is rescinded.) On the spot, Charles promised to contribute \$100. **We will promote the challenge in the next communiqué.**

## **B. 20 Minute discussion on WATER ISSUES (John and Patrick)**

(For graphs see attachment on Water)

Drinking water A normal consumption of drinking water at the Commons averages around 300 gallons per day (gpd). With the early dry spell this spring, readings of water consumption began showing levels as high as 900 gpd. The taps were removed from the two faucets on the north side of the farm house and the level next day dropped immediately to 75 gpd! (Note that the tap on the south side of the house remains accessible for small quantities.) An issue for discussion is the unexamined role of the Commons in answering community needs. Note the broader question of community stewardship of water, mapping sources and establishing reservoirs. (Subject for Sustainable Gabriola discussion?)

The well at the Commons taps in to a generous aquifer; nevertheless a prolonged drought can be a game-changer with long lasting effects on the whole eco-system. (Water tests early last fall revealed some sediment indicative of stress.) We need to balance our usage, with a clear assessment of our priorities, recognizing that the natural environment will suffer if we ignore this.

Irrigation water The pond at the Commons when first created, could hold 800,000 gallons, with a 12-foot depth at its deepest point. The montmorillonite clay of the marshland is porous and acts like a sponge, allowing the water level over the whole area to rise and fall with seasonal evaporation. The beaver are our allies here, carefully shoring up the sides of the pond.

Since 2006, with water pumped up from the pond, we have developed two large projects of allotment gardens as well as an orchard and two gardens stewarded by the Farm Team. A graph showing the annual rise and fall of the pond over the past five years reveals a disturbing trend: each year the level in the pond has dropped to a greater depth and at an earlier time in the summer. This cannot continue without doing irreparable damage.

Three recommendations are proposed:

1. For drinking water: continue to close taps on the north side of the house
- 2, Monitor the pond and take action, notifying community gardeners clearly:
  - when the water level drops to 3 feet, we set serious water conservation measures\* in place;
  - when the water level drops to 2 feet we shut down the whole system.
3. Focus on current and future water issues when planning at the Infrastructure and Long Range Planning levels.

\* Conservation measures proposed by the Farm Team include strict watering times, with alternate days for north/south gardens. Mulching should become mandatory

**Note:** This proposal should be shared at the Communiqué level and distributed to each team  
Community water issues could be a topic for Sustainable Gabriola to take on as an initiative, with broad community input.

## **C. 20 Minute discussion on SAFETY**

Recent concern about dogs running off leash on the Commons came to a head with the report from a woman in the North Gardens who came to water in the later afternoon in the presence of 3 men seated in the shelter of the cob wall, allegedly smoking crack, with an unleashed pit bull dog. She had had the experience of being seriously attacked by a dog, realized she was alone in the garden and felt a fear strong enough to make her stay in the garden until the men left. When she shared her experience with another gardener afterward, she heard that others had felt similarly intimidated and is seriously considering no longer coming to the Commons.

As another gardener has said, speaking of the same group: “Their attitude of aggressive indifference when asked to secure dogs is disturbing, and makes me reluctant to speak up.”. Dogs have reportedly lunged at people at different times on the Commons, and requests to keep them on a leash have been greeted with hostility. Others stories report encountering the men and dogs while walking the path to the Village and feeling unsafe. Not only women are experiencing this; men reported a dramatic adrenalin reaction when the situation is “charged”, particularly when one’s past history includes assault by a dog. It was also noted that this is a community-wide issue, not just a problem on the Commons.

At this point in the discussion, Corporal Markus Muntener made a timely appearance. He stressed the need to contact the RCMP saying he had heard rumours of the concern, but no actual report had been made. (Call 911 and stay on the line to get someone at the dispatch centre.)

What action to take? Several ideas were floated:

- call the RCMP, particularly when blatant illegal activity is happening (including sleeping in the woods)
- set up “companion” patrols of 2 or 3 people for a while to be present when people are likely to be alone in their gardens.
- write a snarl in the *Sunder*
- let the men know how others feel. Try for a non-adversarial approach (their rudeness may be a defensive reaction to being challenged.)
- surveillance cameras
- take down the hedge (lack of visibility from the street creates a sense of vulnerability when alone) This was emphasized. Park planners know to create open spaces to make parks safe.
- Brenda has banned dog s on PHC days to minimize risk to small children, but this is only during a short period in the week. She will talk to the men, expressing the impact they and their pit bull have on vulnerable people.

Please discuss this at your team meetings and bring recommendations back to the July Council

NEXT COUNCIL: July 5, 2016 at 7 pm

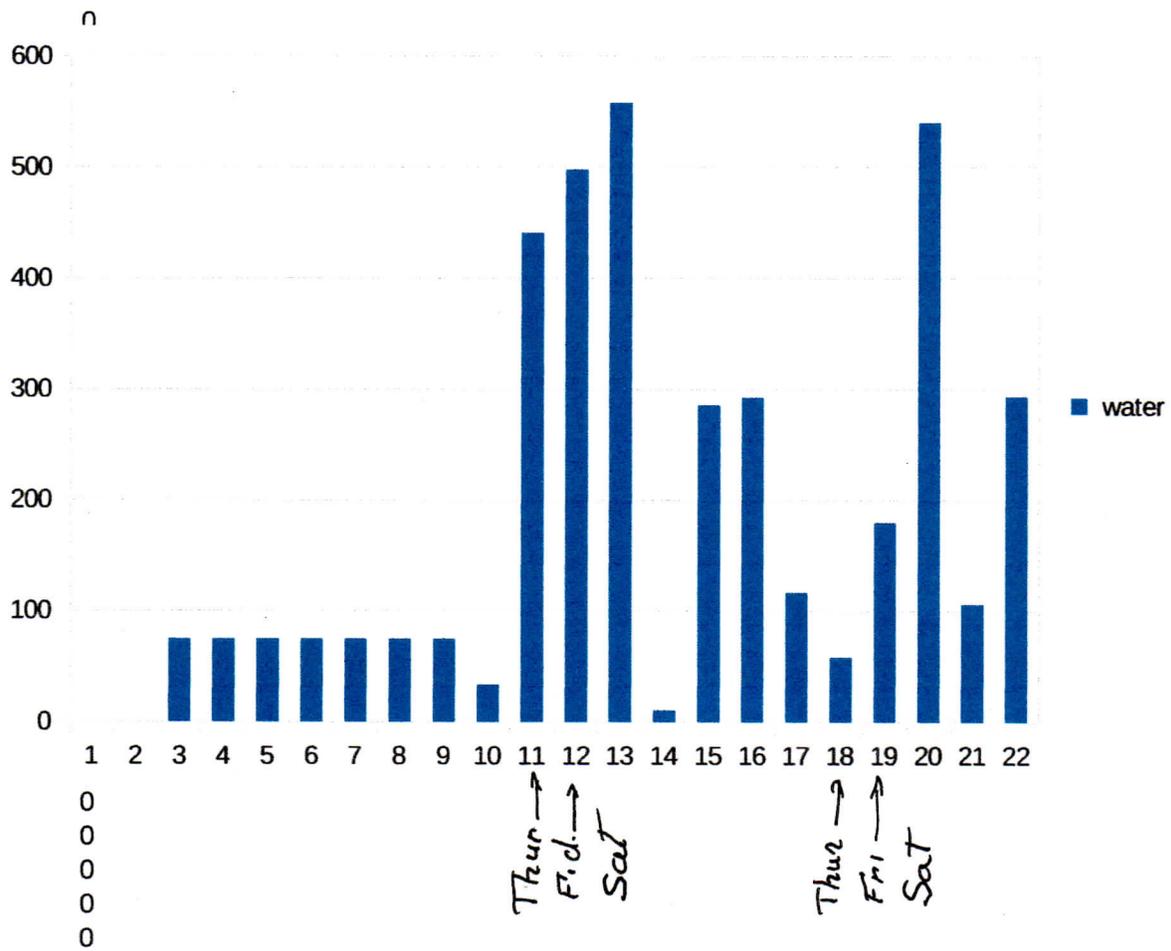
Recording Team: Learning Opportunities

A last-minute flash question for all teams from the Property Management Team:

After serious discussion the PMT would like to propose that the dishwasher donated to the kitchen of the farm house NOT be installed. Their reasoning:

- In an older dishwasher, not regularly used, the piping will get rigid, crack and leak. (Apparently leaking dishwashers are the prime cause of all residential damage claims to insurance companies!)
- Careful hand washing of dishes (cups etc.) works.
- Past experience showed that the earlier dishwasher would frequently need to be run half full , to deal with the few cups accumulating. This is wasteful of water.

Do we agree? Please come to next Council with your response!



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# Gabriola Commons Pond

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