

## Commons Council Notes May 2, 2017

**Present:** Facilitators: John Peirce, Sharon Pattison  
Rebecca Furnell, Kit Szanto, Bob Andrew, Muriel Wiens, David Lightly, Jinny Hayes, Louise Amuir, Deb Ferens, Alison Fitzgerald, Judith Plant, K. Louise Vincent, Judith Roux (recorder for Covenant Team)

Note: New facilitator needed from July to December.

**1. 20 minute discussion:** Governance and Consensus: Decision-making at the Commons  
Led by K. Louise) see attachments, including an exploration by Robbie Huston.

We need to be clear about the role of Council and the decision-making process:

- **Council** is the heart of the organization, a place/moment to share ideas and information in a spirit of strong inclusivity. It is part of a vibrant, political community movement, with principles rooted in sharing.
- **Stewardship** is based on long-term sharing of the responsibility of caring for the Commons, a relational rather than regulatory process based on a clear code of ethics, growing stronger over time.
- **Process:** How do things get done? A new idea can come from anyone, be presented at the Sharing the Commons Team to see there is “fit” and then be aired at Council, where information is given about the idea and support or concerns expressed. Notes on the discussion at Council are circulated to the Teams, where further discussion happens and is relayed back to be heard at the following Council. If there is consensus about the idea it is up to the originator of the idea to take it further, finding energy and funding to make it happen and engaging any interested people. Progress on the idea is reported back at Council.
- If there wasn't consensus at Council during the discussion of the idea then more time is given to go back through the team input stage to dig deeper. Our decision-making model outlines the process for expressing disagreement or even blocking the idea..

At this point, open discussion flourished on the subject of consensus (leaving much to be addressed formally at a further point.) Since it was observed that tracking what is discussed is an important part of the recording of Council meetings, the key points of this discussion follows:

- It is not at Council that decisions are made, but rather at the Team level, informed by the discussion and recommendations coming from Council.
- Question: Is the consensus decision-making process followed at the team level? Answer. YES!
- It was observed that this follows the Permaculture model.
- Reaching for consensus is part of the decision-making process. **How** it is reached is significant. It is important to take the time and actively seek to hear from all present, encouraging those who may be reluctant to speak in public.

- **Blocking:** It is important to support those who would block but find it tortuous to take an “unpopular” stand. It was observed that people could drop away from the Commons rather than express dissent. The need to belong can trump one’s need to state one’s truth.
- The Quaker tradition treats blocking very seriously, a tool to be rarely used. (i.e. the earlier stages in the decision-making process are given the time and commitment needed.)
- **Unconscious Influence:**
  - Many active in the Commons have a professional background and are used to “getting their own way”, unconsciously exerting influence.
  - “Tribalism” – coming from a shared world view - helps groups reach consensus, but may make it difficult to express a “minority opinion”. On some issues consensus can’t be reached because of a difference in culture.
- We need to become more mindful in the decision making process and check our assumptions. Tools: **more time, kindness, respect.**
- K. Louise will create a succinct document about the decision-making process to take to the Sharing the Commons Team (including an earlier document by Rebecca)
- Observation: you can’t necessarily “get it” from a text. You need to live it.
- Practice the art of disagreeing, perhaps with the coloured hats method. (“Rock the boat”.)

## 2. TEAM REPORTS:

- **Kitchen Stewards** (contact Sharon Pattison)
  - The revenue from rentals is not yet meeting the costs of operating the kitchen (electricity, propane..) Ongoing discussion on fundraising ideas and workshops.
  - Comparison of rental fees with other Community Kitchens suggest that ours should be increased to: \$20 /hour, \$50 per ½ day, \$100/full day. Decision will be effective July 1.
  - Survey to be taken around at the Spring Fair regarding the community’s ideas about the Community Kitchen.
  - Requests for renting the Kitchen along with the grounds – a subject to raise with the Sharing the Commons Team.
  - Letter of support was given to the Agi Society’s Field to Table Feast for a grant which will raise funds for our kitchen: large pots, bowls, serving platters etc.

**Next meeting: June 5 at 10 am in the Kitchen**
- **Sharing the Commons** (contact Gloria Filax)
  - Urgent need for a second to Gloria in Booking the Commons. To find out what is needed, talk to Gloria at [gfilax@shaw.ca](mailto:gfilax@shaw.ca) (Thanks to Mary Wilson for backup!)
  - Coordinating roles: Bookings and Finance Team. Bookings will inform Finance Team about rentals of space, but cannot engage in collecting the funds needed to cover overhead. New bookings/financial mini team in formation.
  - Booking use of outdoor space is becoming popular! At what point do we charge rental fee (i.e. for use of bathrooms, water, and parking?)

- Composting toilets: Need to more toilets for the outdoor events (including Fairs etc.) Perhaps Poetry Gabriola would be interested and the Timber Frame already has a composting toilet inscribed in its plans.
- Discussion continued on potential storage options for community groups.
- Fix-it Fair - at Spring Fair (upstairs) and Tool Library – Donations of tools can be made at the Village (book) Library on May 27

**Next meeting: May 17 at 10:00**

- **Farm Management Team** (contact Judith R.)
  - Concern about irrigation needs this summer. Note to be sent out early.
  - Note to allotment gardeners: between the untimely frosts (Spring and Fall) and the increasingly lengthy droughts, we cannot expect to successfully engage in winter gardening
  - Goal to increase our inventory of seeds for planting and use by soup chefs. Sale of seed packs at the Spring Fair, asking for 50% of crop back. Calling for a volunteer bean counter! (Contact Sharon Arnell)
  - Apple Juicing: urgent need for volunteer to work with Christine over the two months of Apple juicing time this fall.
  - Mid Week Market at the Commons begins on Wednesday May 24 from 1 to 3 pm
- **Covenant Team** (contact K. Louise)
  - Intensive work is continuing on the final draft of the Covenant, with the intention of passing it to lawyer Tim Leaden for comments and advice. **Full day work on May 14.**
- **Gabriola Commons Foundation Trustees** (Rep. Judith Plant)
  - Working on requirements under the new Societies Act: The “unalterable clause” in the Constitution has been moved to the By-laws.
  - Nominating Team is inviting candidates for two positions as Trustees.
  - First annual review of Commons/GERTIE (Steven Earle with Allie Charon) No change proposed to the MoU.
  - Annual lease review with PHC (Linda St. Clair)
  - Transfer of mortgage from AGES to GCF has been set up. (George and Linda)
  - Safety and security: keys to be discussed in June/July.
  - Recordkeeping – Dave Lightly setting up drop box for documents.
  - Field Guide to the Commons can be viewed on the website (where?)

**Next meeting: May 9 at 2 pm**

- **Conflict Prevention and Resolution Team** (contact: Louise)
  - Research project questions:
    - What do you find interesting about the Commons?
    - What would make you leave?

- The hedge! At the Spring Fair Louise will be extending an “incendiary” invitation to the community to bring their passion to talk about the hedge on Saturday May 13 from 1 to 4, using the “hats” model for exploring opinions and ideas. (Note for Communique)  
Note: Let Work bee Soup Chefs know if you are coming at noon for the soup just before.)  
(Contact Steve O’Neill (steveo’neill@shaw.ca)

- **Signage Team** (contact Jinny Hayes)
  - Installation of entrance signs nearly completed at four entrances
  - Big Signs – hoping “book-end signs” will be done by summer
  - “You are here” map also planned for the summer.
  - H/C parking signs and “deal with your dog” signs (thanks to Peter Joyes) installed.
- **Property Management Team**  
Looking forward to Charles’ return.
- **Events Team** (Rebecca) Come to the Spring Fair! on May 7 from 10 to 2.  
Set up on Saturday at 1:30; take down on Sunday from 2 to 3.
- **Communication Team** (Jinny)
  - Welcome Wagon starting up again. Contact Jinny if you’d like to do a shift.
  - Website in progress (David Szanto may help Jinny)
  - Potential articles solicited for the Sounder:
    1. Hedge
    2. Hugelculture (talk to Terry Stonehouse (terrystonehouse@shaw.ca)
    3. Mid-week market
    4. Global culture
    5. Workshops and courses (talk to Sharon Pattison)
    6. Philippa Brown (goal keeper and cheese maker from early pre-Commons days)

### 3. Business Arising

- **GERTIE - First year review.** Comments:
  - Concern about continued parking of Gertie buses around the Community Kitchen
    - Particularly over the winter (for electrical plug in during cold period)
    - By Doug Robertson needing hard surface for repairing
  - Concern about roots of big Arbutus: traffic continuing to use shortcut to GERTIE office (Get advice from arborist Jeff Reitkirk or other local arborists)
  - Drivers coming to use bathroom in Kitchen leave dirty floor (+ cost of paper towels)

**Response: Note to be sent to GERTIE coordinator**

General statement that, with these concerns addressed, we are happy with GERTIE being here for the 3 years of the lease.
- **Community Storage**

Request from Lions to consider alternative location for storage for community organizations. Brief discussion with divided opinions, mainly on aesthetics. To be continued (6-Hat discussion needed!)

**4. New Business:**

- Commons Accessory Commercial zoning – tabled

**Proposed 20 Min. discussion topics:**

**June:** Access to the Commons (security, keys)

**July:** Smoking at the Commons (allowed? Where?)

**Next Council: June 6. Recorder: CPR**