

Commons Coordinating Council

Notes of Meeting, April 2, 2019

Co-convening: Heather Menzies and Maya Ruggles

Notes: Stuart Wulff

Present: Bob Andrew, Deb Ferens, Jinny Hayes, Kim Kasasian, Alison Fitzgerald, Carol Hemrich, Brenda Fowler, Patsy Ludwick, Heather Menzies, Maya Ruggles, K.Louise Vincent, Stuart Wulff

Notices to go back to teams:

1. The Communications Team needs someone to take over doing the communique.
2. The Finance Team wants teams' input on their financial needs. Right now, extra money is slated to go to Comm. team (\$1,000) and PMT (\$3,000).
3. The Tool Library wants everyone to know they're ready to proceed with the pergola. Any thoughts/suggestions are welcome.
4. All gardeners to be informed of likely water shortages this summer and need to conserve.

Maya gave a welcome message in Hul'q'umi'num and Heather gratefully acknowledged our presence on unceded Snuneymuwx territory.

Heather acknowledged all the thought and work that went into the hedge lowering. Laura-Jean Kelly and Cameron Murray contributed some of their professional time to the work pro bono. Many people contributed to the planning including Bob Andrew, David Skinner, Maya Ruggles and Dave Lightly. David's gentle and inclusive approach during the public consultations were particularly useful. Bob said that the work is about one third done, i.e. the hedge cutting, but landscaping and paths development is still to be done.

20 Minute Discussion (led by Deb Ferens)

Deb presented the financial statements as of February 28. Financial year (FY) ends March 31. Almost all funds showing as current surplus are actually restricted funds for various teams and projects, as well as the funds donated by AGES and designated for starting a legacy fund and other purposes. A lot of money is being spent in March, so the picture is relatively tight – nothing causing the Finance Team immediate concerns, but we will need to think about how to raise undesignated funds. About 40 sustaining donors ended their support with the mortgage paid off, but about 70 donors chose to continue as sustaining donors, with donations going to support ongoing operating costs. We aim to end each FY with \$20,000 in reserve to cover operating costs in the following FY and we should achieve that this year.

Allocations – At the end of every FY, the Events Team keeps about \$1000 as seed money for the next year out of the funds raised through the Commons signature fundraising events. The rest gets allocated to other teams/projects in need. About \$4,000 will be available to allocate. The Finance Team recommends that the Communications Team get \$1,000 and the Property Management Team gets \$3,000. The Finance Team thinks there may be around \$10,000 in discretionary funds available out of operating funds and is recommending that

some portion is put towards infrastructure needs like the water supply. The actual amount will be decided once final numbers are known.

Discussion

- Is there an emergency/contingency fund? Answer: No.
- Stuart – Sees the two highest priorities as starting to develop a contingency fund and infrastructure, especially water.
- Bob – The cistern is a priority and RDN funding isn't likely coming through this year, so this is going to delay action. Funds to support earlier action would be welcome. Some equipment in the kitchen needs replacement. Bob would also like to find a way to monitor who is actually using electricity so we can better assign and recover costs.
- Heather – There may be some expenses around getting a covenant holder.
- K. Louise – What about increasing education in the community, getting deeper into our mandate as the commons.
- Deb – Are there any objections to the recommendations? None were expressed.
- K.Louise – Can this go back to the teams in case a team has needs we aren't aware of.

It was agreed to consult teams, but to also note the priorities that the Finance Team and Council are recommending, unless there are other critical needs.

Allocation decisions will be finalized at the May meeting. Deb noted that the Communications Team submitted a budget. Teams don't need to have a budget, but this could be something teams would want to consider re improving planning. Deb noted that there is a guide for teams to help them prepare their budgets. General congratulations were extended to Deb and the Finance Team for their excellent work.

Team and Group Reports

Covenant Team (rep: K.Louise)

- The biggest task before the team's work is complete is finding a covenant holder. They were hoping that maybe GALTT could play that role, but GALTT doesn't want to do that. The covenant also needs to go to the Agricultural Land Commission for their approval; it is ready to go but can't go until we have a covenant holder.
- We are going ahead with a stewardship plan even before registration of the covenant.
- Heather – This is bigger than just a conservation covenant. We are looking at responsible use of land by people.

People for a Healthy Community (rep: Brenda Fowler & Carol Hemrich)

- Hard work has been done cleaning up a mold problem in the building, but they discovered that the building has no vapour barrier between the floor and the foundation. There may be further mold problems.
- PHC has plots in the North Gardens and Namaste Gardens for food production. They replaced several boundaries for garden beds so they are safer for children. They are talking to other users re replacing three broken water barrels with a cistern. They are also starting to talk about making the greenhouses more efficient.
- PHC participated in a housing survey and will sit on Islands Trust's housing committee.
- PHC is talking to PMT and the Share the Commons Team re adding an 8 ft. X 8 ft. extension to the Food Bank part of the building and installing refrigeration/freezer capacity to increase their food storage. This is part of a broader program re waste diversion and

funding has been received from Food Banks Canada, but must be used by the end of May, thus an urgency re decision making. The proposal was circulated to teams and PMT has coordinated gathering of responses. Bob suggested finishing team reports, then having further discussion on this. Agreed.

Trustees for Gabriola Commons Foundation (rep: Bob Andrew)

- The trustees are keeping a watchful eye on the covenant work.
- They are dealing with the PHC lease. A new lease needs to be signed in 3 months.
- They are working with the Share the Commons Team re a policy on renting the outdoors. Currently there is no policy or consistent practice.
- They are looking at power related revenue from solar panels.
- Jinny – They asked for feedback about the PHC lease; did they get any? Yes.

Property Management (rep: Bob Andrew)

- There is lots of fixing going on all the time. Saturday work bees are very helpful.
- The painting and related improvements inside is continuing. There have been major improvements to the large meeting room. The front entrance area is still being worked on.
- Robert Huston is installing gratis a new sound system.
- There are concerns re very high propane consumption in the last couple of months. It is a high priority to figure out why, leaks or whatever, and get it fixed.
- The water pump is regularly shutting down and it is difficult to figure out why. They have been told that, if flow is too high, the pump will shut down. They will install a flow regulator and see if that fixes the problem.
- RDN has decided to allocate community funds to the walkway, not Commons water, so PMT is scrambling to find funding. Given recent low precipitation, we could have a serious water problem this summer and run out of water. Jinny asked if gardeners have been warned. There was a problem last year with gardeners being surprised when water ran out. Bob said that the PMT told the Farm Team last year. Stuart thought the problem wasn't at the level of PMT to Farm Team, but with communicating to gardeners. E.g. in the South Gardens there was no steering committee last year and communication with gardeners was weak. This year we're already raising with gardeners an improved water protocol and warning of likely water rationing. Kim suggested having a sign with some form of gauge showing the current water level. Other comments were supportive of this. Bob said that this would need to be posted in several places.
- PHC's cisterns are functional this year.
- Kim – They will distill down some basic info re how the Commons functions and post on several display boards on walls.

Gabriola Tool Library (rep: Patsy Ludwick)

- GTL will participate in the spring fair and will be selling surplus tools to raise funds. They will also have a membership drive to raise funds to cover operational costs.
- The hedge cutting means that the back of the GTL shed is now visible from the road. They are looking at adding a sign on the back of the building.
- They plan to build a small pergola with benches so people can sit, somewhat different from the original pergola plan. Patsy asked who they need to talk to re getting this approved. The answer was that the basic plan had already been approved by Council and that they just needed to work out the changes with PMT. Communication with all teams should remind people that this will be happening. Patsy will draft for Jinny to circulate.

Signage (rep: Jinny Hayes)

- With a lot changing on the Commons, they will wait to see what signage might be appropriate after things settle down. They also have no funds at present.

Communications (rep: Jinny Hayes)

- Team welcomed a new team member, Jan Pullinger.
- Website: Jinny requested the 20-minute discussion at next Council meeting for her and Jennie Shillingford to introduce the new website: challenges, idea, deletions, additions.
- Logo: Rose Boulton's student drawings have not yet arrived. Jinny has contacted her re progress. These are to be used as a springboard for a brainstorming session.
- Sounder articles: outline of monthly articles for the coming year has been started by Nancy Heatherington Peirce; all contributions welcome!
- Spring Fair: Kim Kasasian has suggested that we offer Commons tours during the Fair. Jinny will organize and let the Events Team know.
- There are many more things COM could be doing to promote communications and information flow within the Commons and between the Commons and the community, but human-power is the limiting factor.
- Communiqué: Stef would like to be relieved of this responsibility soon. At present, Rebecca is her backup. Any volunteers?
- Brochure: This needs to be updated and copies will likely run out in the Fall. Will need the new logo.
- Budget: A draft budget was sent to the Finance Team. \$700 was requested from the \$4000 Events Team funds.
- Library: Due to redecoration in the former Commons Office, the books have been compressed beyond "browse-ability", and it is now unclear how the library should/could be used. Please let COM know your views on whether or not the Commons should have a library: communications@gabriolacommons.ca. Kim suggested setting up a small "leave a book, take a book" facility that could be self-managed.

South Gardens (rep: Stuart Wulff)

- They have a lot of new gardeners this year, including lots of young people.
- There is also lots of new energy for work tasks from both returning and new gardeners.
- Given the theft and vandalism problems at South Gardens, and RCMP recommendations, the steering committee conducted a consultation with gardeners about possible installation of a monitoring camera on the main gate. 31 questionnaires were returned, with a large majority, though not all, supporting the camera. As a result, the steering committee will be bringing a proposal to the Farm Team and Council for consideration. What will be proposed is a single camera focused on the main gate and taking still photos. Photos would only be reviewable by the garden stewards and only if there is an incident. Photos will periodically be deleted.

Finance (rep: Deb Ferens)

- Gertie will be paying a share of hydro costs for their use of office space in the goat barn
- South Gardens have paid two years of water fees – 2017 and 2018.
- There is a lack of alignment between bookings in the Woodworking Shop and income coming in. They would like to see a consistent rental agreement template for how all space rentals on the Commons are handled.
- Next meeting: Monday, April 15

Share the Commons (Heather)

- There will be a proposal coming to Council (likely May meeting), from the Agricultural co-op to expand the mid-week market into a multi-faceted family event with more than just vegetable sales.
- Heather helped organize a meeting of people interested in the goat barn project, representing all the major cultural groups that might use the finished performing arts centre. They talked through design options, getting user input and next steps. It was thought that people who attended the meeting would become a basis of a steering committee to move this forward. They also talked about use of the existing goat barn during the immediate period.
- Bob – There is a terrific amount of excitement around this project, and from organizations with significant fundraising capacity. The Arts Council will be coming to explain how they intend to do Cultivate this year, making baby steps in improving the existing facility.
- Deb – She wants to be invited to discussion re the goat barn as she has concerns and questions for the group.
- Maya – Others also have concerns.
- Heather - Dave Lightly suggested at our last meeting that when the discussion gets to a certain point, then press the pause button and have a serious wider discussion.

Farm Team (rep: Heather Menzies)

- A pilot project is being initiated with the kitchen garden to bring young farmers to the Commons and gardening. Five mentors have been lined up. They don't have gardeners yet, but there was an article in the last issue of the *Sounder* introducing the project. They are also looking at promotion through the school.
- The team has new members: Emily Schrier and Betty Kehlu.

Resumed Discussion of PHC plans for Building Expansion

Bob – This came to PMT and other teams were asked for input. Bob collated responses:

- There was complete support for PHC's zero waste program. On that basis, there was complete support for building this addition.
- There were various questions/concerns re the process for how this was being dealt with and about broader planning issues for the Commons re how we handle facility expansions/additions.
- There were questions re people coming to the Commons already having funding but not having talked with the Commons first re getting agreement to the project.
- There is a need for any group that wants to come in and do stuff on the Commons to have a formalized long term plan for what they want in their future relationship with the Commons so we can all plan and make decisions accordingly. This is especially important re PHC given that it is such a major player on the Commons. The Commons also needs to have its own long term plan.
- There is also a question re the gradually increasing Commons footprint and piecemeal development of building projects.
- PHC Board needs to better understand the Commons and what it requires.
- How will this affect the lease?
- How will rodent control be handled , given this is food?
- What if a group builds, then in future leaves the Commons, with structures potentially left behind? This should be in the agreement between the group and the Commons.

- What impact will this have on power consumption?

Bob – This specific project became a tipping point re identifying a series of broader issues re development of the Commons and involvement of other organizations.

Deb – The Finance Team discussed this. Their main concern was power costs and that there should be a usage monitor put in as part of building. Every building has a zoning footprint – we should be OK but this must be checked.

Brenda – PHC wants to change the ratio re the amount of produce going to food and want to distribute broadly into the community. They haven't had a rodent problem this year, but are taking steps to address this in how the addition is constructed. Funding cycle versus planning cycle is a systemic issue. Maybe the solution to that is to have the long range planning. PHC always assumes they will pay the power costs. Any improvements belong to the landlord (Commons) by their agreement. The size of this shouldn't create a problem for zoning limit.

Jinny asked if the fridges and freezers would be used for more than the Zero Waste Program and the answer was that PHC doesn't differentiate. Jinny responded that saving more food would go into more hot lunches, etc.

Heather asked Bob where we're at. He said that all comments were supportive of this project so they can start. But it has raised these broader issues for consideration re the future.

In conclusion Council agreed it is a go.

Next Meeting Date & Adjournment

Next Meeting: May 7 at 7:00 pm

Note-taking: PMT

Communications can do the 20 Minutes Discussion next time to present the new website.

Subject for a future 20 Minutes Discussion: long-range planning, consider the overall commons footprint and the limits to adding or adding onto existing structures. Also, long-range from the perspective of time and the time required for commons decision making.