

**GABRIOLA COMMONS COORDINATING COUNCIL**  
**NOTES OF MEETING – December 3rd, 2019**

**Co-Facilitators:** Linda St. Claire & Louis Amuir

**Notes:** Events Team

**Present:** Brenda F., Nadine M., David L., Diane S., Heather M., Don S., Bob A., Stephanie M., Monica T., Stuart W., David S., Judith R., Patrick R., Maya R., Deborah F.

**Opening:** Louise began the meeting at 7:00pm with introductions. An acknowledgement of the honour & privilege of meeting on unceded Snuneymuxw First Nations land was made, with a recommendation for everyone to take time to visit their website at [www.snuneymuxw.ca](http://www.snuneymuxw.ca) .

**20 Minute Discussion:** Should the Commons act as the Municipal Water Supplier for folks in need, what challenges does this present and how would it be managed?

- The school and campground acted in this capacity in the past, and were shut down by VIHA, due to regulations concerning liability.
- Liability is a concern if anyone became ill after drinking water acquired from the Commons.
- The Commons has only one well to support all of the activities here, including PHC weekly events and community gardens.
- This is where reality and ideals collide as both legal and physical concerns take precedence.
- Scott Colburne (Islands Trust) and Vanessa Craig (RDN) were approached with this question and advised that it would cost millions for the RDN to support a public water supply, due to the public process
- A valve has been installed inside the PHC kitchen to shut water off from the outside tap when PHC is not inside. To date, this valve has not been used. Brenda Fowler mentioned that PHC public events take place three times a week, at which time, folks take small amounts of water in small vessels. There is no way to know what happens when there is no one on site. She suggested that everyone at PHC and Commons get into the habit of checking the kitchen valve, and shutting it off when there is going to be no one in the building.
- The amount of water taken weekly is currently unknown; however, data from a few years ago when the front tap was left on, indicate that it was hundreds of gallons over weekends alone.
- How do we steward the need for water in this time when the results of climate change are upon us? Fear and anger among folks on Gabriola is evident during the dry summers when wells start to go dry.
- What is the Commons able to do, both short term and long term?
- Short term – perhaps use the Nesters fundraising program to provide tickets whereby folks could purchase water at Nesters.
- Long term - The water issue should be a community political concern. There are many island organizations that could work on a water supply for all, but someone needs to start the conversation. Louise Amuir, Linda St. Claire, Bob Andrew and Judith Roux have agreed to unplug the dam and get a discussion flowing among the community and organizations that may be able to play key roles in the water issue on Gabriola.

**Team Reports:**

- a) Finance Team (Deb F.) Next meeting, Monday, Dec.16/19 @ 12:30 pm
- b) Commons Design Project (draft name) (Maya Ruggles) Next meeting Jan.10/19 @ 4 pm.

Report to Council – Dec. 2 2019

Attending: Bob Andrew, Kim Kasasian, Jinny Hayes, Maya Ruggles, Don Smardon, Cameron Murray, Judith Roux (first half of mtg), LJ Kelly (last half of mtg)

Start discussion:

- to reconceptualize the space:
  - ref. map: from West Parking lot entrance to Rollo Hedge-line, from South edge of House, Cob Wall, Kitchen Garden to North Rd.
  - a spine along this east-west corridor
- motivated by
  - Workbees/PMT dealing with well-head and parking
  - desire for better welcome/ info area
- to consider:
  - flow and activity places for people
    - people with various kinds of accessibility issues
    - design space for connectedness between various human uses (resting, conversing, planning, growing, making, fixing, celebrating, learning)
      - to protect and enhance our ecological, agricultural and social spaces on the Commons
  - flow and storage of vehicles:
    - including strollers, bikes, scooters, wheelchairs, emergency vehicles, buses, cars, trucks, tractors, and freight
    - load/unload, drop-off/delivery, emergency response, accessibility, general parking
  - entrances/ arrival:
    - pedestrian and vehicle
    - welcome and information (display?)
    - how do entrances/arrival intersect with spatial uses? Between flow and activity?
  - Other projects – ongoing, in the works:
    - Reservoir/ water system
    - Hedge
    - Info ‘kiosk’/ ‘triangle’
    - Kitchen, and other facilities – Dining area
    - Woodshop and Pottery Studio
    - Goat Barn
- To come:
  - Design Project next meeting: Friday, January 10<sup>th</sup>, 4pm
  - Designing Charrette: Saturday, January 18<sup>th</sup>, 1 to 4 pm, in the Big Room (facilitated by Laura Jean and Cameron)
  - Communicating with Council and Teams (LRP)
  - Communications with our neighbours: PHC, GERTIE, Tool Library, School, Rollo
  - Requesting other perspectives: e.g. designing with an accessibility lens
  - Seek Coast Salish First Nations perspective

c) Reservoir Project (Judith R.)

A report from Finance indicated that as of Dec.2/19, the generous donations from Gabriolans have brought the fundraising total to \$35,446.26! Permits will be submitted this week, and the team is ready to start construction as soon as that process has been completed.

- d) Electrical Vehicle Charger Proposal (Judith R.) The proposal made to the Commons from Island Futures and the Power Co-op is to build two vehicle chargers on the Commons through a program funded by BC Hydro. Island Futures would complete construction, which will include a donation box. Proceeds from the donations will pay for electricity used and help to fund additional charging stations on the island. Gertie has agreed to act as the onsite employer, which is required to qualify for the BC Hydro program. Approval from the Commons is requested in a timely manner, as the program is awarded on a 'first come' basis.

The proposal went to teams in November, and the following questions and concerns were presented at the Dec.2/19 Council:

- Since Gabriolans will charge their vehicles at home, is this service for visitors?
- Who will provide regular maintenance for the stations?
- Concern that the donation box will create another opportunity for vandalism
- At this time, charging stations are free. Will folks be willing to offer a donation?
- The Commons will lose two parking spaces
- Why does the Commons need to provide charging stations?
- While it's great to support a cleaner energy source, charging stations still use a power source which is largely created by non-renewable resources. What's the point?

While it appears that we have sufficient negative feedback to conclude non-consensus, the Commons process requires that all teams have an opportunity to respond. Sharing the Commons Team is crucial to the final decision, but has not had a chance to meet and weigh in on the proposal. Therefore, the decision has been delayed until Council on Jan.,2020.

- e) South Gardeners (Stuart W.)

- South Gardens had their annual meeting of gardeners in early November.
- A new steering committee was established. Now over 80% of gardeners are contributing time to South Gardens upkeep and management and we were able to transition smoothly to a new committee.
- Stuart has stepped down as committee chair and we are experimenting with a rotating chair this year.
- The first part of the meeting focused on a review of new arrangements put in place this past year. A working group has been struck to look at potential revisions to the agreement and the new steering committee will be reviewing other aspects.
- The second part of the meeting focused on the thefts and vandalism problems. A written report has been received from the Crown Prosecution Service explaining why it was not possible to proceed with the charges against the arrested suspect. This report will be reviewed by the steering committee and the trustees.

- f) Kitchen Stewards (Monica T.)

New Kitchen Stewards are completing the orientation process with Maya; two week rotations of new Steward-pairs have gone well; next meeting of the Kitchen Team is Saturday Dec 7th at 9am.

- g) Trustees (Bob Andrew) Next meeting Tues., Dec.10/19 from 3 – 5 pm

At our first meeting after the AGM the positions of the Trustees were settled as follows:

Co-Chairs: Bob Andrew, Linda Neilson

Secretary: Stuart Wulff

Treasurer: Maya Ruggles

PHC representatives: Don Smardon, David Lightly

MOU's person: Danielle Artuso, Linda Neilson

Insurance (and Key person) Don Smardon

h) Events Team (Steph M.)

Deck the Halls Craft Fair was a great success, with many folks showing up to support the Reservoir Fundraising effort. Targeted fundraising events will be adopted for future, as Gabriolans definitely appreciate knowing where their donations are going. The addition of the Silent Auction proved very popular, and will be a regular part of future events. \$1680 was raised for the Reservoir project, which brought the total needed to the half-way mark.

i) Property Management Team (Don S.)

The electrical system is maxed, and since an upgrade would be very costly, some electrical shedding is recommended. Perhaps heat pumps could replace the baseboards. Over the next year, David Cherneko will be conducting an electrical audit to determine the energy draws. The Signage Project has been passed back to PMT from Communications. This will continue to be a separate project to be advanced as needed. PMT inherited \$800 in funding with the signage project, which will be used to progress the Kiosk project.

j) Tool Library (Diane S.)

The AGM was held on Sun., Dec.1/19. Three new directors were elected, bringing the total to five. This growth and renewed energy is most welcome.

k) People for a Healthy Community (Brenda Fowler and Nadine Mourao)

Thank you to the Kitchen Stewards for supporting the Spirit Feast and use of the community kitchen on Wednesdays.

Home Hospice has recruited a new group of students for training to help fill the need in our community.

While Brenda is hanging out on the beach in Mexico, Nadine will be covering. Please direct all requests or inquiries to her.

l) Communication Team (Steph M.) Next meeting TBD

1. Website: We have hired Colleen McCarthy to finish the site and add functionality to online Bookings. General colour scheme will be a rich brown and brightish green. An introductory version should be up by the new year. Of course, there will be lots to work on then and ongoing; anything is changeable. Please get requests, suggestions and comments to Jinny at present, COM has funds to cover these costs, but as Stef suggested last Council meeting, additional funding may be transferrable from Events. Is there consensus on this? Deb F responded on behalf of the Finance Team. The process is for the Events Team to send a written request for a transfer of funds to another team, indicating the amount to transfer and reason for the request.

2. Of interest: This precipitated a discussion about a general "Mission/Value Statement"; we have initiate discussion with the Trustees.

3. Logo/identifiable image for Commons: Project: Complete. Tim Gambrill has sent some colour schemes (could be used with adverts, T-shirts, etc.), and has done a letterhead which has

been sent to Trustees. If anyone else wants a letter template, please let Jinny know and it can be emailed to you.

4. Language Statement and Communication Plan: Team is working on these with significant input from Jan Pullinger (who is on the Team). When the bugs are ironed out, it will come to Council. Once ratified, it can be applied to final design and printing of the Info Boards proposed by Kim and Heather M.

5. Sounder articles: Coordinated by Nancy HP. Thanks to Reservoir Group for recent articles with photos.

6. Commons brochure: We have decided to try the rack-card format for a year (these seem to be mainly for the current community and newcomers to Gabriola).

7. COM Mandate: We are working on ours. It was suggested last Council that our process should be that ALL mandate come to Council; we would like a discussion of this as a use of Council time. How will updating be monitored?

**Additional Business:** (Linda St. Claire) Patsy Ludwick has asked for assurance that when a bequest is donated, that all funds are designated to the project of the donor's request. Our policy has always been to honour the request of any donors who specify a particular goal or project.

**Next Meeting:** Tuesday, Jan.7, 2020

**Co-Facilitators:** Bob Andrew and Don Smarden will lead meetings for Jan. – Mar. 2020.

**Minutes:** Farm Management Team

**20 Minute Discussion:** Review of the Process for Decision Making at the Commons, with reference to the discussion of October 2019.

**Minutes Process:** The recommendation to send minutes directly to Jinny H., forgoing the process of sending to meeting participants was adopted.

**Attachments:**

1. Draft Proposal Community Evolution Foundation submitted by Stuart W.



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November 17, 2019

Draft Proposal Community Evolution Foundation

## **The Vision**

The Gabriola Agricultural Co-operative is a vibrant, profitable organization and a catalyst in realizing a more integrated local food system on Gabriola, Mudge and Decourcy Islands. It contributes to holistic systems change, local sustainability and a reduction in our islands' carbon footprint.

We envision a community vested and sustained local food system, including island-based agriculture and value-added processing, that enables expanded consumption of locally grown and processed food products, local control, increased food security and access for all to fresh, healthy local food.

This integrated, high quality, locally owned and operated food system includes a year-round market or store, potentially enhanced value-added local food processing, and increased collaborative marketing of fresh and processed food products on and beyond these islands.

**NB:** The Co-op and its members acknowledge that we live and work on the unceded territory of the Snuneymuxw First Nation. The co-op already works closely with Snuneymuxw community members and is committed to further developing these relationships.

## **Key Challenges, Gaps and Opportunities**

Currently Gabriola and neighbouring islands have a non-integrated, but significant and growing number of farmers and food processors who lack access to a year-round local market and a means of ongoing collaboration through which to identify and meet collective needs. There have been discussions going back more than a decade about the need for a more integrated and expanded local food system. A variety of initiatives have taken place on a mostly ad hoc basis, some by the Co-op and its members, some by other individuals and organizations. The nature and size of these initiatives has limited efforts to grow the local food system.

The current dominant corporate supermarket model extracts revenues from the Island, giving little consideration to or support for locally based producers. The product mix includes fewer and fewer BC products. The climate crisis has accelerated the shift in community values and understanding of food security and there is a palpable interest in a more localized food system.

The Co-op was formed in 1932 and has contributed in various ways to supporting local agricultural enterprises. Its most important current initiatives are two seasonal farmers' markets and stewardship of our Agricultural Hall. Over several decades the Co-op had lost much of its original purpose; a recent renaissance driven by a new board is bringing the Co-op back to its roots, positioning the Co-op as the fulcrum point in realignment of our local food system. Key limitations are capacity and resources.

## **Goals**

- 1) Capacity building - to enhance the overall governance and operational capacity of the Co-op.
- 2) Community engagement: to determine how best to develop an integrated and significantly enhanced local food system on the islands. This would include some modest complementary research.
- 3) Project development - to develop specific business plans and initiate rezoning of the existing Co-op property, which is currently zoned institutional.

## **Objectives**

- 1) Capacity building will

- update the MOA and rules, policies and processes to meet the current Co-op vision and goals.
- include board training in co-op governance, co-op management and financial literacy.
- develop a long-term strategic plan for the co-operative.
- create a communication plan and update communication tools.

## 2) Community engagement will

- inventory existing farms and food processors, what they produce, their capacity and gaps.
- identify producer and consumer needs and potential strategies to meet them.
- look at the potential for expanding value-added processing through collaboration.
- explore community support for a year-round market/store and online marketing.
- undertake research to determine the viability of identified options.

## 3) Project development will

- review zoning options that support the Co-op's long-term goals and initiate rezoning.
- develop specific business plans for selected initiatives.

### **Current Context**

The Co-op has an acre of donated land in a prime location, at the entrance to the village. An aging, sub-standard building is located on the property. Until recently, the Co-op was largely seen as this property and building (the "Agi Hall") where a seasonal and successful Saturday farmers' market is hosted.

Over the past two years, board members have worked to return the co-op to its co-operative roots, connect it with the broader co-op movement, and solidify and update its operational side. Equally important, the co-op has taken steps to re-engage with its membership.

The Co-op has added a second weekly summer market, a very popular mid-week evening market that features both seller stalls and dinners made from locally grown or raised food. This initiative is co-sponsored with the Gabriola Commons and hosted on the Commons. A government/BC Association of Farmers' Markets coupon program has made approximately \$12,000 of fresh local food available to low income families while augmenting farm incomes by the same amount.

The co-op has also done some board training and has made a strong start on rewriting and revising internal documents and practices that are badly outdated. It has begun to resolve urgent legal, financial and infrastructure issues. The Co-op has also joined the BC Co-operative Association and the BC Association of Farmers' Markets.

All of these initiatives have potential to be expanded, as do several other small programs (e.g. a food box program) offered by other groups that could be integrated into a larger and synergistic food hub anchored by the Co-op.

Revitalizing the Co-op has been a major undertaking and there is much yet to do. As well as continuing to build much-needed capacity, the Co-op wants to create long-term strategic and financial plans. At present, the Co-op is marginally self-sustaining on a day to day basis, and with support, it can become a vibrant agent for the kind of change the community has long wanted in its food system.

### **Assets, Constraints, Opportunities**

#### **Assets:**

- 250 members
- strong directors, with a growing number of people interested in serving on the board
- excellent part-time staff
- high level of community interest in an integrated local food supply and year-round fresh food
- community history of self-help and collaboration (community bus service, community health clinic, community commons, recycling organization ...)
- 1 acre of debt-free land and an old building that generates revenue for the co-op from rentals, markets, etc.
- young farmers increasing on the island and retiring farmers sharing knowledge and their land
- growing support for the Co-op as it renews and rebuilds itself
- good level of interest in the Co-op from the agriculture community
- growing partnerships with the Gabriola Commons for the mid-week market and other events
- matching support from the Chamber of Commerce for business-related planning

#### **Constraints:**

- outdated MOA and Rules, policies, procedures and governance structures
- largely inactive membership
- weak communication, outdated tools
- lack of board and member education and training - financial literacy, co-op governance, etc
- lack of strategic plan and business plans
- inappropriate current land zoning (institutional)
- minimal financial resources – inadequate to undertake community engagement, strategic planning, board training, and to realize a year-round market and growth of value-added sector.
- old building that will need major upgrades or replacement in 5 years

#### **Opportunities:**

- growing demand for year-round co-op market/store.
- existing successful enterprises – Supply Line Organics (food buying club), existing fresh produce hub, and local bakery all interested in marketing through the Co-op
- offer of a free partly built timber frame building from local school
- partner with Commons on more events (e.g. spring and fall fairs)
- cold storage and dry bulk storage for farmers.
- co-op location is ideal for a visitor centre, community bus and bio-diesel, as tenants

#### **Outline of a Plan**

This is intended to be a one year project. Further development and implementation of the enterprises/initiatives that are identified out of this project would constitute a second project.

The first stage of the project would focus on internal development of the Co-op. A priority need is to update the Co-op's incorporation documents and restructure the governance and membership engagement towards becoming a thriving, for-profit co-operative enterprise with a not-for-profit subsidiary. The co-op will house the current and potential enterprises and provide member services while the non-profit will support various community engagement and education programs. Assuming charitable status could be obtained, the non-profit would be able to facilitate fundraising for various

initiatives. Some research is needed to figure out the best structure for the non-profit and how it is linked to the Co-op.

This first stage would also include Board training, initial strategic planning and development of a communications plan. We see strategic planning beginning at this stage, focusing on strategic development of the co-op, and then continuing in the third stage, once the second stage community engagement has helped to prioritize directions for development of the local food system.

The second stage (initial work could overlap with the first stage) would focus on gathering the input for future development of the local food system, including the Co-op's role as a food hub within that system. One aspect would involve data gathering to develop a full picture of the local food system as it exists, including potential unutilized and underutilized resources within that system. A wide process of community engagement would solicit producer and consumer input regarding priority needs and potential strategies. Some research would take place into the most likely strategies. For example, other local food enterprises have already experimented with online marketing and we can learn from their experience.

The third stage would begin to operationalize the way forward. Further strategic planning would prioritize the initiatives to be developed and develop a broad plan to advance these initiatives. Specific business plans would need to be developed for the initial enterprise(s) to be developed. The current zoning of the Co-op's land has already proven to be an impediment and change must be sought. Re-zoning is likely to be a two years process, so should be started as soon as possible. The pros and cons of the two options, commercial or industrial, will be explored and a decision made, then the application will begin. This process could begin along with earlier components of the project and continue through and beyond the timeframe of this project.

Several options have already been identified for potential development and/or expansion. The community engagement process will allow these ideas to be tested with both producers and consumers, as well as provide an opportunity to surface other ideas for development of the local food system. Options under consideration include:

- developing a year-round indoor market and food hub, including a store, café, an expansion of the current farmers' market, food storage and potentially other infrastructure.
- some form of online market, both as an interim step towards developing a year-round market and as something that could later complement the physical market and food hub. The online market could integrate and scale up a variety of existing initiatives. It would also enhance potential to market islands products to Nanaimo and mid-Vancouver Island.
- co-operative/collaborative enterprises in value-added food processing.
- integrating and scaling up a food box program.
- developing partnerships with Vancouver Island organizations to facilitate marketing in both directions.

### **Next Steps**

The Co-op is at a critical juncture. A partnership with the Community Evolution Foundation would provide essential support that would enable the Co-op to take vital next steps:

- updating its policies and systems;
- enhancing capacity;
- gathering critical data about the existing local food system;

- consulting widely within the islands community to clarify needs and suggested strategies to address those needs;
- research on prioritized options for enterprise development;
- strategic and business planning;
- initiating re-zoning of the Co-op's land.

If CEF expresses a willingness to consider partnering with the Co-op, we would flesh out this pre-proposal to provide a detailed project proposal, including an implementation plan and budget. We can also supply a number of letters of support from a range of key organizations and individuals.