

## Gabriola Commons AGM – October 24, 2015

**Present:** Carol Hemrich, Rebecca Furnell, K. Louise Vincent, Xanon Jensen, Charles Silva, Sharon Arnell, Raymond Tremblay, Deborah Ferens, Alison Fitzgerald, Louise Amuir, Maya Ruggles, Linda St. Clair, Robbie Huston, Cameron Murray, Bob Andrew, Nancy Heatherington-Peirce, Maggie Aldous, Carol Billyard, Muriel Wiens, Heide Brown, Judith Roux

Regrets: George Szanto, Maggie Mooney, Fay Weller

**Minutes:** Louise Amuir

### Introduction: Robbie Huston

Welcome! Thank you all for coming out to join us for the AGM this year. I'm Robbie Huston, one of the co-chairs of the trustees along with Alison Fitzgerald.

The first thing I'd like to do is to explain how and why the AGM is different this year. You'll notice that we're sitting in a circle as we do at council rather than in rows as we always have at the AGM. That's because we are choosing to operate this meeting by consensus, even for the election of trustees. Rows are more efficient, but circles are more equal. Many of us used to think we weren't allowed to hold an AGM this way, but we have learned different this year.

We have also decided to streamline the event by not having each team give an annual report. In the past, there was never enough time to do more than touch on the highlights, and even that took a long time. Teams report every month at council, so anyone who wants to can easily know what is going on. For today, we've invited teams to put up pictures or other information on the walls to celebrate their successes.

We make decisions by consensus, so we hope to elect our new trustees the same way this year. We think we can do this because, in the past, we've never had an excess of candidates or any disagreement about who should serve as a trustee. If that situation holds this year, we can elect our trustees by simply not blocking consensus. If we have extra candidates or a block, we will have to resort to a vote.

Finally, we have changed the meaning of membership. This word, and the ideas that underlie it, have been a difficult issue for us. For one thing, membership implies that not everyone is a member, but it's the Commons. It's for all of us, right? On the other hand, simply declaring everyone a member offends people's civil rights. Once should always be able to choose not to belong to something. To get around these difficulties, we are using the word "participant" to describe anyone at all who comes to the Commons, or gives energy or money or kind thoughts.

The Commons doesn't need "members", but the Gabriola Commons Foundation, whose AGM this is, does. We need a membership list in order to be a non-profit society, but that list from now on will consist of the trustees and the people who attend the AGM, unless they refuse. If you do not wish to be a member of the Gabriola Commons Foundation, just tell Deb and she'll take you off the list.

This year marks the tenth anniversary of the founding of the Commons. What an amazing amount we have accomplished! Following the three pillars of our constitution, we have things to celebrate in all three domains: the natural, the agricultural, and the social/cultural.

We've protected our natural areas and they are thriving, despite the drought. Many species call the Commons home, and the beavers on the pond have kits this year! We've eradicated thousands of invasive and toxic daphne plants and had fun doing it. We've started the baseline reporting project in preparation for establishing the covenant that we have been working on for many years.

On the agricultural side, we've established community gardens, a commons orchard and berry patch, a kitchen garden, all thriving. We've tried growing grain, making hay by hand, potato and squash co-ops, and other collective vegetable growing efforts. At the interface between the agricultural and the cultural, we now have a flourishing farmer's market in the summer and a community kitchen capable of turning our bounty into delicious food.

The community knows us best, however, for our social and cultural efforts. We are and have been home to many small community groups, many, many workshops and courses, and we have provided space for PHC, Poetry Gabriola and GERTIE. We have annual spring and fall fairs, craft sales, and regular boules competitions. Hundreds of people have walked the labyrinth. Now we're busy installing a 10-kilowatt solar array with the help of GabEnergy. And we have, as far as we know, the very first Community Commons zoning in all of Canada! It just doesn't stop. And we never know, despite our long-range plan, what next year will bring.

So take a moment to pat yourself and your neighbour on the back. We've built something special here, something that can last.

There's one more thing I want to say. Ten years ago, Shelagh Huston and Heide Brown took a huge chance on us and put a sizable down payment on the goat farm for Gabriola. That bold move focused the energies of all the people who had been imagining a community property in the heart of the island and began the process that brought the Commons into being. They are our founders, and today, well, yesterday, actually, Shelagh moved away to White Rock. I expect that this is the first AGM she has missed. I know we all wish her and David well in their new life, but we're going to miss them. In addition to getting us started, Shelagh brought us a deep and scholarly understanding of the economics of the commons and intruded many of us to the

Nobel-prize-winning work of Eleanor Ostrum on the topic. She served as a Trustee and as a founding member of the CPR team, among many, many other contributions. Thank you, my dear sister Shelagh, for what you have done for us.

Applause for Shelagh.

### **Financial Report – Deb and Maya**

Financial Statements have been uploaded to the website. K.D. Beausoliel have found them to be in order. The big story is that large anonymous donations have reduced the mortgage by more than \$100,000. And we have approximately \$100,000 left. Donations were also received for projects and operating expenses. Grants were received for a number of infrastructure projects – composting toilet, septic field, solar panels, community kitchen. Nothing owing except the mortgage. Many thanks to Maya Ruggles for Financial Support who will become the new treasurer.

Question from the floor about PHC rent term (Muriel Weins). Their current lease expires March 2016.

Proposal to accept Financial Report: no objections. Accepted by Consensus

### **Trustee Introductions – Alison Fitzgerald**

Thank you to departing Trustees: Robbie Huston, Judith Roux, Deborah Ferens

Continuing: Maya Ruggles, Cameron Murray, Louise Amuir, Fay Weller, Alison Fitzgerald

Nominating Committee found the following people willing to serve terms with the Trustee Team:

K. Louise Vincent, Maggie Mooney, George Szanto, Linda St Clair

Proposal to accept new Trustees by acclamation: no objections.

New slate acclaimed by consensus

### **Suggestion from the floor (Nancy Heatherington Peirce):**

Make a policy decision for procedure for member to nominate someone other than the people chosen by nominating committee. Make the committee known to the public.

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***Thank you for coming. Please join us for tea and cookies and to look at the team displays.***