

Visions & Voices

Gabriola Commons

June 10-12, 2011

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Topic: Band Shell / Fair Ground

Convenor: Ken Capon and Victor Antony

Session Participants:

Odette Laramee, Guy Mireau, Sean Jackson, Dyan Dunsmore Farley, Charlotte Cameron (recorder)

Highlights of Brilliant Discussion:

Dreams of a covered band shell for music and spectacular events: concerts of all kinds, fundraisers, theatre productions, poetry readings, private functions such as weddings, birthdays, political and public awareness events, environmental rallies, children's festivals, spring and fall fairs, dances, flea markets and garage sales, craft sales, equestrian events

Location discussion – several possibilities

Potential to have multiple events happening simultaneously.

It could become a focal point for the commons.

Possibilities to raise money for Commons, concerts etc.

Financing

Fundraising ideas: Need budget and plan for raising funds.

Private sector sponsorship welcome, but no donors' name on structure, just acknowledgement.

Topic: Elder Eco-Village

Convenor: Heide Brown

Session Participants:

Shelagh Huston, Susan Yeend, Siki McIvor, Carol Hemrich, David Soy, Mary Aitken, Sue McManus, David Carrington, Hawkowl, Kit Szanto, Veronica Hartman, Cameron Murray, Alison Fitzgerald, Gill Elcock, Eimar Hall, Patsy Ludwick, Kathryn Molloy, Yetta Lees, and Jillian Hovey (visitor to island, expert in ecohousing process and permaculture)

Highlights of Brilliant Discussion:

Concerns were expressed about a continuum of care for seniors within the community, from support for seniors living independently, to assisted living, full nursing care, hospice, and eventual burial on Commons land

Are we trying to deal with too much at once? Should we concentrate energy on practical details for a limited facility of 24 units on Commons land?

Should the “elderly” be isolated from larger community? Could design facilitate use by seniors of the Commons projects, including such things as an Alzheimer’s Garden?

Acknowledgement of fear of the size/cost of project, of potential conflict getting to the goal, of burnout by core members.

Desire to open the discussion to the community at large: how to do that? Design the PROCESS first, with a series of discussions to create a common vision, then bring in professionals to lead weekend workshops and help determine the practical plan, including cost, schedule, and quality of project.

Conflicts re getting building started as a priority and creating a network of groups with more focussed concerns (caregivers’ support, hospice, alternate projects on different properties)

Resources – information already gathered from VIHA and Islands Trust, and general approval for a 24-unit project on the Commons Land, though zoning application required once a design is ready.

Jillian Hovey: A professional consultant on Ecohousing, on Gabriola for a course at Haven; could offer guidance on process, and conduct weekend workshops. Available for discussion/advice on process this weekend only, at end of Saturday afternoon or Sunday.

The Seniors' Co-housing Handbook, published by New Society – a step-by-step guide – authors available for workshops

Proposal to call a meeting at the Commons in the near future, open to all participants in original discussions and today's group; Sue McManus and Patsy Ludwick will inform by e-mail.

Topic: How to raise enough money to pay off the Common's mortgage?

Convenor: George Szanto

Session Participants:

Sharon Pattison, Yetta Lees, E.J. Hurst, Doug McKnight, Muriel Wiens, Steph Marrie, Mary Wilson, Louise Amuir, Ann Buttrick, Linda St.Clair

Highlights of Brilliant Discussion:

Need to re-form the Fund Raising Team

--George volunteered to convene a meeting

--Need to send out a call to all members

--Those present who indicated an interest are: Yetta Strasline, Steph Marrie, Ann Buttrick, E.J. Hurst and Louise Amuir for specific tasks

Important that people have confidence in the Commons financial management process, the controls and reporting of budgets and expenses being transparent (on the web?)

Identifying both immediate and long term fund raising processes.

1. could low income housing provide an income flow?
2. obtain loan from no interest Muslim Banks
3. legacy planning
4. could we create income ourselves as a non profit?
5. approach those individuals/organizations who have financial resources and offer appropriate returns (recognition and thanks)
6. utilize investment expertise such as Walidi Ali, George Von Westarp etc.

Topic: How many buildings would be too many?

Convenor: Jinny Hayes

Recorder: Susan Brockley

Session Participants:

Gill Elcock, Susan Brockley, Margaret Taylor, Cheryl Bailey, Mary Rose, Eimer Hall, Jinny Hayes

Highlights of Brilliant Discussion:

Overall “take home messages”:

1. Priority = protecting the agricultural aspects of the land
2. Building and planning for land & people use requires an overall plan

Discussion points:

- Commons is a place for people and for agriculture – now zoned for both
- Currently, there is a hodge-podge of buildings
- Productive agricultural land to be preserved for growing food (i. e., not for buildings, parking, etc.)
- Continue to preserve the agricultural land
- Set this land aside as our own “ALR on the Commons”
- Building space is much needed, for “people activities”, e.g., cultural, storage, meeting, etc.
- If we build too many buildings, we lose arable land, trees, natural environment, aesthetics
- Imperative to keep the land for local food production, permaculture, part of sustainable food (present and future)
- More allotment garden space is needed – What role might Commons have in facilitating allotment gardens at other places on Gabriola? (Note: Various Gabriolans have indicated interest in having allotment gardening on their land.)
- Infrastructure Team is essential in assessing capability, such as electrical, septic, etc.
- What are the controls, the overall plan, set of guidelines, controls? We do need them, including aesthetic considerations – a secure future vs “trust the process” (group consensus)
- Plan and interactions over it would be a series of checks and balances
- Creative use of buildings already there = lower footprint
- Cluster buildings together
- Have multipurpose buildings = “stacking functions”
- More buildings and activities means more parking

Topic: How does learning occur at the Commons and in the wider community? What are the conditions that create vibrant links, learning potential and resource sharing?

Convenor: Patrick, Maya, Hans, Judith, K. Louise

Session Participants:

Cheryl, Sheila

Highlights of Brilliant Discussion:

- Creating an education team, principles of learning, new knowledge, exchange practises
- Creating an “unusual university”, monthly forums that focus topics, mentorships, internships, workshops, experiments, break-out discussions, open learning
- Reclaim knowledge lost to industry, keep our eye on exchange principles
- Exploring non-indoctrination models of learning
- Team for in residence/ out residence workshops, building on what there already is – ie. Sustainability centre, Performing Centre, Farm team, Yurt
- More on people, less on product
- Responding to needs once identified – physical and cultural
- Linking youth with elderly in learning and resource sharing
- Expanding the Circle of Care; deepening partnerships in community
- Open-learning, creating links with different forms of knowledge
- We learn from emergence; this is happening successfully all the time at the Commons
- Communication, relationship, re-skilling
- Focus on intermediate steps, simple learning potentials
- Resource group to organize and elevate capacity for skill and knowledge sharing
- Cultural needs, belonging... as important as shelter, food

Topic: Does anything else need to happen to preserve and protect the native landscape and plants?

Convenor: Susan Brockley

Session Participants:

Only me

Highlights of Brilliant Discussion:

Guiding Principle: ecological sustainability: The assets of the land of the Gabriola commons are used only in ways that respect its ecology.

From the agenda items posted it appeared that perhaps the importance of the land and native plants had been overlooked. I am new so maybe they didn't need to be talked about because they are already protected.

I believe that natural areas of the Commons should be identified and protected. Yes, perhaps some more land will have to be cleared, but some land needs to be left in close to its natural state.

Nature trails (or a nature trail) and interpretive signs could be made so that others could learn more about the eco-systems on the Commons.

Topic: How old is the youngest person here? Does it matter?

Convenor: David Bouvier

Session Participants:

Kathryn Molloy, Elizabeth Beale, Veronica Hartmann, Victor Anthony.

Highlights of Brilliant Discussion:

Since the industrial revolution there has been a disconnect between generations. Today this manifests itself in an oddly contradictory way. We experience a cultural worship of retaining youthfulness in older people while simultaneously discriminating against the young.

Young people are not here with us today because they do not have the time/leisure for such an extended event. We need to schedule events so that they may be more involved in these kinds of discussions. Nonetheless, younger people are involved in the Commons, particularly in gardening. It was speculated that more younger people will probably become involved in this way via the issue of food security.

But, reportedly, some young people have been scared off by what they may perceive as excessive demands for more involvement on their part in other aspects of the Commons, however misconstrued this may have been. Therefore, we must be careful how we frame invitations to participate. This also relates to the issue of how to share knowledge between generations, which in turn involves overcoming a perceived 'sensory disconnect' brought about first by TV for us older folks, which killed intergenerational conversation, and now by the myriad communication technologies such as texting which often seem to be an unsatisfactory substitute for face-to-face communication. There seems, however, to be some evidence that young people themselves are beginning to overcome this problem with the organization of 'flash mobs' etc. via an integration of social media with physical meetings.

It is important to heal the rift between generations that began two centuries ago. First of all, in the very nature of things, we simply cannot continue to rely on a very small group of older people to carry out projects indefinitely. Hence we need to engage younger people's dreams for the commons. So, how can we do this?

Some suggestions were to hold pizza nights (with childcare) and to organize such things as all-ages community dances. In general it was stressed that 'events' are significant attractants for younger people. Further ideas revolved around the idea of creating rituals/rhythms/routine events: First Night, New Years Eve,

Lantern Festival, and summer dinners on the grass were among those mentioned.

Because of the perceived discrimination against the young, it was felt important to encourage the local RCMP to adopt a positive attitude to Commons events involving youths. It was also suggested that there is a core group of active PAC parents at GES who might usefully contribute to the engagement of more young people in the future evolution of the Commons.

In conclusion, it does matter that younger people are absent from these deliberations and, if we wish the Commons to grow and evolve beyond our own lifetimes, we must strive to involve young people with their energy and vision.

Topic: Affordable Housing

Convenor: Kathryn Molloy and Muriel Weins

Session Participants:

Muriel, Kathryn, Siki, David Soy, Shelagh Houston, Carol H, Yetta, Ken C, Kit S, Ann, Mary A, Linda St.C,

Highlights of Brilliant Discussion:

1. Real need for affordable housing
2. Commons is a great location but zoning is restrictive
3. Want to see diversity on the island including different ages, classes (income, education), etc. Diverse social structures will be created by low cost housing.
4. This could serve the community at first and eventually be a revenue stream for the Commons
5. Current OCP language is restrictive although the Trustees are encouraging an application for mixed use (seniors, special needs, low income) and have mentioned The Commons a number of times
6. Question: is there enough space at Commons?
7. Would like to see intergenerational interaction between elders, youth, children and families
8. Economy of scale may be a factor for viability
9. Dream of a sustainability on The commons that includes affordable housing village that demonstrates diversity of people, ecological technologies, communal living
10. One view that there is not enough room at the Commons.
11. A couple others feel that there may not be enough room for both an elder village and multi-dwelling affordable housing mix.
12. Others feel there is adequate space but restrictive zoning – such a project could be done with low ecological footprint (and should be ensured to remain aligned with Commons values and to demonstrate viability
13. Needs a political fight if we want to push for more than 24 units
14. Would like to see this project dovetail with Elder Eco Village – the cost to build all at once would be less than if done separately
15. Idea to use 2 acres of the 26 for low cost housing

Next Steps: this group meets with Elder Eco Village group

Topic: Future gardens/agriculture, to grow or not to grow?

Convenor: Gill and Victor

Session Participants:

Stef, Sharon, Veronica, Gill, Victor, Elizabeth, Jillian, Mary, Eimar, Heide, Muriel, Guy

Highlights of Brilliant Discussion:

- Identify and protect future agricultural land, set aside.
- Do we expand growing areas? Pressures between agr and wild areas.
- Grow a special fundraising product from the commons for sale, e.g. lavender.
- Use permaculture concepts for whole commons incorporating land and people and nature.
- Sharing existing plots to meet demand, share knowledge with new gardeners. Should people have more than 1 plot?
- Find new land off commons to meet future food growing needs.
- Work with private landowners, farmers, parks.
- Commons gardeners could mentor/help with new allotment gardens.
- Commons gardens demonstrate crops that can be grown here, e.g. grains.
- Need for more new energy, danger of burn out.
- Attract younger people. Offer internships, education, work opportunities. Apply for grants. Problem of housing workers on land. Possibilities off-site.
- Providing education to others can make \$\$.
- Give tours to tourists to make \$\$.
- Keep track of amount of food grown on Commons for future useful info, e.g. grants.
- Much food sharing already goes on.
- Value of common knowledge, a resource.

Topic: Workshops

Convenor: Patrick Roux

Session Participants:

Sue McManus, Mary Wilson, Hawk owl, Alison Fitzgerald, David Carrington ,
Cameron Murray

Highlights of Brilliant Discussion:

- Bring people to the common
- Engages people in the learning process
- Support social exchange at the common
- Developed skill of teaching and learning
- Well-organized workshops (themes, communication, promotion, advertising active search for people with skills)
- Example: conversation skill, developed public speech,
- Conflict resolution workshop and other workshops: sharpening tools, use of tools.
- Recommendation meets and starts the first series of workshops with a teaching workshop.

Topic: Engaging The Community

Convenor: EJ Hurst

Session Participants:

Judith Roux, Doug McKnight, Cheryl, Guy, Maya, Mary Rose

Highlights of Brilliant Discussion:

Need to welcome people to the Commons

Feeling of insider/outsider

Newcomers not properly welcomed, everyone knows each other.

Perception of clique-iness due to everyone being friends

Acknowledge and greet new people

Bringing more Groups to the commons – Theatre, Poetry Gabriola, promoting local food and agriculture/food security

What is the message to communicate:

- what is the commons
- want to share the feeling of commons with others – being in a community of like-minded (or not) people
- include all walks/interest. Inclusion not exclusion

Drawing people through new activities

How could we listen to what people want/need?

Asking people to come to us not working as well. Need outreach

Do more work communicating what the commons does, ideas,

Don't just stop at property line and extend into community

Modelling on PHC circle of care in broader sense

Find out why people who have faded away why they are no longer involved

Inclusion – commons as facilitator/trainer in sustainable agriculture, community gardens, training /workshops

Levels of interaction – international, national, regional, local

Communications Team

- weekly e-mail with updates – Maya
- newspaper articles – Doug
- mailbox postings (print e-mail and post on bulletin boards)

Challenges – phone messages, responding to contact in timely manner

LONG discussion about how might a paid position to handle these sorts of things look like and fit into commons model

Payment for someone who does a necessary function & no one else will do.

Does payment then result in volunteers not continuing with the work as perception that they are not needed or the job will be done by employee?

Community Outreach

- it was quite difficult to stay focused on this topic. Conversation tended to return to what could be done at the Commons rather than how the message could be taken out to the community.

Contact first nations and share commons vision

Ideas – a champion for the info boards. Keep up to date, find locations for them to be on display around the island at various location.

- professional centre
- salmon bbq?
- Village
- Medical centre
- School
- Fall fair
- Library
- Farmers market?

Meetings with executives of other community groups to discuss goals and ambitions and reassure as to perceived conflict of interests

Presentations to different areas for different reasons i.e.: chamber of commerce, schools, artists, lions, churches

Sustainability centre – welcome centre with a person there full time

EJ volunteer to present education display to community groups – purpose, to educate about what Commons is and what goals are

Newspapers – goal for 2-3 mentions per week in paper

Letters to editor

Smiles

Value of person to person communications

Go to them, don't expect them to come to you

Communication team – needs more members, how to invite people

Respond to ticks on membership forms with personal approach and phone call

Open volunteer category

Here is what is happening at the Commons this week/month

Topic: Performing Arts Centre

Convenor: David Soy

Session Participants:

David Soy, Odette Laramee, Mark Gisborne, Shawn Jackson, Doug McKnight

Highlights of Brilliant Discussion:

Reasons for having a performing arts centre

- permanent home for many island organizations
- already have sound system donated by McPherson Theatre
- already becoming a cultural centre with the Yurt
- could be used all year long
- will bring more people onto the Commons
- tourist destination
- better use of current facility – Goat Barn

Possible uses

- combination of a market and some performing arts at the same time
- the circus wants to come back
- Dancing Man
- Giant puppets
- public meetings
- school plays and events
- concerts & work shops

How it might look

- have an outdoor stage area; inside / outside venue; weekly jams

Needs

- funding – Heritage Canada Cultural Spaces

Not-for-profit arts and heritage organizations and some governments and agencies can apply for funding for the improvement of physical spaces for artistic creativity, presentation and exhibition, including the renovation and expansion of arts and heritage facilities.

- acoustically up to snuff
- proposal
- need to have input and use the language of finance, performance, engineers, tech people and use the Commons language
- believe it is possible and work towards that happening
- check into insurance liabilities
- self sufficient
- management group to look after all cultural type events
- maybe a transportation network to bring ferry traffic to venue
- check out Chemainus and see how they got to where they are
- ask trustees to strike a committee on the feasibility of a performing arts centre

Topic: How do we involve families/youth/children at the Commons?

Convenor: Guy Mireau & Susan Yeend

Session Participants:

Guy Mireau, Susan Yeend, David Arnell, Cheryl Bailey, Margaret Taylor, EJ Hurst, Kit Szanto,
Mary Rose, Victor Anthony, George Szanto, Ann, Cameron Murray

Highlights of Brilliant Discussion:

- Interested in seeing more families /youth/children in gardens and in commons in general
- What can we offer these groups? They can also offer their energies to the commons, so a sharing of energies.
- Events, events, events draw families and youth
- many young families came to the circus, it was the first time many had set foot behind the fence.
- Rituals and events are important draw strategies. For example, suggestion of “Dinner on the Ground”, open to everyone, picnic at the commons, bring a blanket, food, musical instruments. Dancing and free play. The first one will be held this Thursday at 6:00 pm.
- Ways to advertise: there are three parent email networks, use email; youth network through email; could also put up notices at schools.
- Suggestions:
- “Kids for the Commons” : activity-based volunteer group of kids thirteen and up, to do work at the Commons. We would need a coordinator to work with the teams.
- Camp Miriam : previously successful. Counsellors have to be instructed as to what is expected of their group, and of the specifics of the activity. We may need more Commons volunteers on site than previously had.
- Possible donation of money for youth tours of the Commons by groups such as Camp Miriam. This could be an opportunity for starting a dialogue as to what the Commons is or represents.
- Get “the Commons” into the school curriculum: offer free field trips, tours of the grounds, bring kids into the gardens, more emphasis on growing things in the schools.
- Let staff at the school know how they can become involved at the Commons; one teacher thinks she needs permission to bring the children onto the grounds. Offer a staff meeting inservice to let staff know possibilities.
- There is a challenge getting high schoolers involved, mostly just evening and weekend availability

- There is an organization in Nanaimo called “Quest”, where high school students write about current issues. They may come to GI to highlight the Commons.

Find out what the Gathering Place is doing with youth.

Learning for high school credits: What we would need is willing teachers to instruct high school skills for credits

Can we identify the needs of family and youth and fill their needs? We all have skills, eg. needlework, gardening, music, tai chi, bread-making, etc. Youth can also be in the position of being the instructor, we can learn from each other. One-to-one learning would work. This would increase communications, involvement, and interactivity.

Young families may be an underserved population. Teaching at the Commons could support them: practical skills that could support young adults, young parents, including money-saving ideas and skills, playgroup.

The Commons can begin to create a “commonwealth”, with respect to economic viability and community support.

Much discussion on specific skills sharing with people under 21 years and over 21 years, as an example:

Dangers of social networking
 Blacksmithing
 Chess
 Choirs (already a children’s choir at the Commons)
 How to market yourself as an artist or musician (V. Anthony)
 Gardening
 Food growers’ skills
 Romance management (? Relationships)
 Handbell choir (all ages activity)

As well, what would the youth be able to offer to teach others?
 Eg. Computer skills

Activities for teen work bees: scything, weedwacking, mowing.
 Could pair work bee with other attractive activity (rap workshop).

Are there physical spaces that are missing on the Commons that would help up to provide a more complete education to youth?

Idea of a Commons Institute?

Idea of a safe teen discussion space for issues to be discussed and addressed in a non-confrontational secure environment. Possible site: yurt

Discussions: “ Ideas for changing the world”, things of interest and things important to teens, creative dialogue

Anne will speak to teens re: this possibility, and about the idea to have teens “friend” us on Facebook

We could invite high school students to Poetry Gabriola-sponsored workshops coming up.

We could provide summer activities- workshops and other opportunities for teens

The Commons could be a Gabriola Island skills depository, a place for skills inventory. There are many experts on GI, we could match those youth with a willing mentor, someone skilled or expert in their area of interest to answer questions, explain concepts, etc.

Mary Wilson (reportedly) may offer a workshop on how to put on a workshop.

Idea to offer other groups on GI, may be able to offer them space on the Commons to offer free introductory workshops to introduce their particular business or service to promote their business and facilitate knowledge-sharing.

Idea to let people know that we have a sense of community to offer to them; that they can find a sense of community, belong in this community.

Idea to consult with young families, youth, etc. regarding when they would be available to participate as a family, busy schedules.

Teens respond to food! Offer pizza, start discussion with teens as to what they need. Communicate through email, facebook.

Opportunity to reach out to home schoolers: there are at least 10 to 15 younger home educated children, and some older, ranging in ages from 4 to 13.

Idea of community band: all ages, community-based band rehearsing on the Commons, maybe at the yurt (V. Anthony)

Circus club

Parades – need more

Barn dance: dances in the yurt: social, fun dance experience.

Topic: Creating a community at large

Convenor: David

Session Participants:

David, Victor, Becky, Sarah, Alex, EJ, Kit

Highlights of Brilliant Discussion:

The commons could be a vehicle that connects all the people we live with on Gabriola with a goal or economic purpose that will enable the creation of a real community

How can the commons lead as a community builder?

- Teach life skills (with a focus on attracting youth and children)
- Gathering and sharing resources (people and material) for community well being.

- Cooking, music, livestock knowledge,
 Log splitter, dehydrator, chipper, pressure cooker

There is a need to change our thinking to make simple life skills simple again.
Example cooking beans and lentils

To involve the youth and children of Gabriola we could have lessons from community members that match BC education requirements. This entices teachers with more time for them to teach other topics; children with the opportunity to learn something more exciting than standard curriculum, and brings more of the community to the commons.

Topic: Sustainable Economic Development and The Commons

Convenor: Guy Mireau

Session Participants:

Shawn Jackson, Eimar Hall, Steph Marrie, Mark Gisbourne, Hans, Pollen Heath, Lisa, Elizabeth, and Deborah Hall

Highlights of Brilliant Discussion:

Mandate – the Commons has a requirement to demonstrate agricultural use, and produce for Farm Gate sales.

How can this be developed?

The whole of the Commons is not suitable as agricultural land – there is room for other interests and buildings:

Local markets – there are local vendors with experience of other markets who are looking for opportunities here. The current market at Agi Hall is small and ends early. Perhaps there is an opportunity to offer a market / fair at the Commons offering music, arts, crafts, food with a view to extending sales.

A brief discussion about other ‘market’ options. There are other markets and outlets on the island: Silva Bay on Sunday offers a less formal set up, Twin Beaches attempted a Blue box program etc – not started at this time.

The Commons could offer an environment to share – there could be a table fee or % of sales to Commons?

The mandate is currently being met with the Kitchen Garden, allotment use and the PHC.

There are also events throughout the year for additional sales, revenue.

Broaden discussion – what is sustainable?

Money is not the only sustainable goal. Skills sharing... There has been a successful event offered in the past: Trades and Services Fair. Shawn advised there are plans to offer this on an annual basis – dates and details yet to be determined.

It was suggested one fair might be held at the Commons in the Spring and one fair might be held at the Community Hall in the Fall.

At that time, persons could offer a mini training session or skills sharing session, to be supported by the Commons.

*ALL persons in the community must have a voice and a place in the model of sustainability.

There was discussion including the reality that people may 'live' here but leave to work, or 'work' here but leave to conduct business or to sell.

Not all artists / skilled persons are able to offer mini sessions at a fair. The Fair could offer a platform for introducing an artist / skilled person – then further activities take place at home studio or workshop.

There was a general thought that the strength of the Commons lies in the land – perhaps include formal, guided tours of the gardens, buildings, and working models?

(It was hoped that the informal, 'drop-in' and walk around style would still be encouraged should a formal guided tour be introduced)

Tourist Information Centre – to be housed at the Commons?

Sustainability Building – under construction currently – final use is currently being discussed. Education component is of key interest. It must be sustainable for the artist / skilled person sharing their work.

Food production – we need to increase our knowledge of food production - perhaps a pamphlet of local growers / producers? The Commons could sponsor this project?

Public art – art that lives with you in the landscape. Grants could be available. Could be integrated into Commons land and also in other areas on the island. A developing project.

Final thoughts

Wednesday market / fair to be held on July and August?

Mark has agreed to speak with other vendors to see if there is an interest. He will speak with Hans who will provide a link with Commons. A formal application and proposal would need to be put together if the project were to proceed.

Enthusiasm is a rich resource – let the ideas develop, grow and produce.

Topic: Communicating in the positive. How to include new people and ideas.

Convenor: Veronica Hartman

Session Participants:

Sheila Huston, Sue McManus, Sharon Arnell, Sharon Pattison, Jillian Hovey, Maya Ruggles, Nancy Crozier, Kathryn Molloy, Judith Roux, Siki MacIvor, Hans Van Kessel, Elizabeth, David Carrington, Mary Aitkin, Muriel Wiens

Highlights of Brilliant Discussion:

Common Sense is not common

Sharing Commons knowledge with all who ask.

To sustain a sustainable community one must practice a sustainable communication interchange.

Personal work to recognize that failure is the manure or compost for growth.

When communicating, to recognize everyone holds pieces of the truth.

Use I messages.

Learn skills to tell truth and not withdraw.

Make room for everybody's truth.

Commons room for learning experiences, learning, sharing, caring, to be helpful, kind and compassionate.

Most of the discussion became confidential.

Topic: How do we resolve conflict?

Convenor: Shelagh Huston

Session Participants:

Mary Aitken, Maya Ruggles, Muriel Wiens, Sharon Pattison, Judith Roux, Veronica Hartman, Sue McManus, Alison Fitzgerald, Siki McIvor, Sue Yend, Tsiporah Grignon, Sharon Arnell, Zulis Yalte, Linda St Clair, Jillian Hovey.

Highlights of Brilliant Discussion:

At the Commons, in a sea of good process, there have been occasional squalls which have blown up, needing conflict resolution. The goal is to create a method for handling conflict without having negative consequences. The end-goal – agreement on the process.

Question: How do we manage our inner conflict? Art, music, have been useful. Being open to our own “stuff” give us assistance which can feel like “sacred space”.

A book, “A Difficult Conversation”, is available at the Commons.

How do we keep our rituals alive? - different people leading; defining endings clearly.

Ways of diffusing conflict – humour (if graceful and self directed and not used as a deflector.)

Is it conflict, or projection? One person leaving in high dudgeon is perhaps not an indication of high conflict resolution 25killfulness of the group.

“My story needs to kill your story.” A person’s feelings get hurt over an issue they identify with deeply.

The group participated in a real-time experience of conflict resolution, over the community’s resentment about the high cost of everything, our right and responsibility to raise money, and our unwillingness to impose financially on the community.

Conflict was about a piece of the truth which was not getting out or not received. To get past needing to kill the other’s truth, lead with acknowledgement of the other’s point of view, by paraphrasing it until they agree you’ve heard them accurately.

In the organization, it is important to have more than one “go-to” person to facilitate a conflict.

The danger of peace at all costs is that the avoidance of “heat” leads to social repression of expressions of dismay. The watchdogs in society can thus be silenced, endangering the safety and problem solving skills of the group.

Practical tip – a reminder list at the beginning of meetings, of conflict resolution skills – could be presented by a different person at each meeting.

“Conflict is a doorway to a better understanding of both self and other”
Anger can be seen as just a political expression, and not an attack on the person of the opponent.

Some people use the community to work out their stuff, so we need to mobilize skills, like white blood cells, to effect conflict resolution.

We all react in whatever way is personal to us, but we have the choice of choosing the response we give to the other, which may be very different from our internal reaction.

A foundational skill – Being witness to one’s self, then taking responsibility for one’s behaviour towards others.

Is there an optimum time for conflict resolution, after a disagreement?

Shelagh will set up a team to deal with conflict in the Commons organization.

Additional Notes:

- Come from an open heart vs logical mind
- sincere and authentic
- acknowledge own feeling in order to diffuse and not project
- personal: is there anger/fear present that often underlie conflicted feelings/situations
- acknowledging: feelings/values can be gateways to new ways of seeing/feeling/understanding self/other

Appendix A

Convergence and Action Planning

We all gathered together in the morning to read through the book of proceedings that contained the highlights from our Day 1 discussions.

As a group we did an exercise to choose our topic priorities based on what we had the most energy to move forward with. We chose the top six topic areas and then spent some time looking at the remaining topics to see if they were subtopics or related in any way. The following were our final topic groupings:

- Workshops/Linking/Sharing and the Commons in the Community + Workshops
- How to raise enough dollars to pay off the mortgage
- Future gardens/agriculture + Preserving and protecting native landscape and plants + How many buildings would be too many?
- How can we involve families/youth/children at the Commons + Engaging the community + Creating a Community at Large + Sustainable Economic development at the Commons + Communicating in the positive/How to include new people + Engaging Youth
- Affordable Housing + Elder Eco-Village
- How do we resolve conflict
- Performing Arts Center + Band Shell/Fair Ground (didn't meet, but collected names of those interested)

A topic champion volunteered to convene each group to discuss next steps action planning. Those reports follow here.

Topic: Workshops/Learning/Sharing

Topic Champion: Patrick

Who Will Assist:

Patrick Roux, Steph Marrie, Sandra Thomson, Siki McIvor, Sharon Pattison, Maya Ruggles, Guy & Cheryl Mireau, Victor Anthony

Next Steps:

- Need publicity
- First workshop: how to run a workshop/organization/speaking ?Mary Wilson
- Proactive development of a series of workshops/ solicit experts
- Connect with appropriate teams for advertising and facilitation (booking/property management/communication)
- Need Community Outreach Team:
 - Education/Workshops
 - Community involvement
 - Performing Arts
- Need to follow up with volunteers (Steph)
 - Immediate call to new sign ups
 - Specific jobs identified for events
- Need guidelines for a Community Outreach Team
- First meeting to discuss creating Community Outreach Team to occur at next meeting of Property Management Team on Wed. June 15 at 1 p.m.

Topic: Paying off the mortgage

Topic Champion: George Szanto

Who Will Assist:

Ken Capon, Linda St Clair, Ann Buttrick, Mary Rose, Jinny Hayes, Yetta Lees, Victor Anthony (email loop), Kit Szanto, Zulis Yalte, Guy & Cheryl Mireau

Next Steps:

- I) Long Term: Legacy
- II) Interest-free loans or equivalent for high interest saving account rate at CCCU
 - could be reclaimed when mortgage is paid off
 - could reduce the term of the mortgage

Advice: get from accountant/legal (Ali?)

- I) How
- II) Alternatives
- III) Implications
- IV) In case of death
- V) Suggestions of how people could do this
- III) Monthly donor expanding
- IV) Major Donors how?
- V) Corporate donors how?

How?

Can be done by raising awareness via:

Welcome Wagon/Real Estate/ - have a package

Who are the people who are passionate about the Commons – enlightened self-interest

Topic: Agriculture/Preserve and Protect

Topic Champion: Victor Anthony

Who will Assist:

Guy & Cheryl Mireau, Sharon Arnell

Immediate Next Steps:

Transparency

The Farm Team and the group focused on protecting and preserving need to meet together soon.

Topic: Engaging and sustaining a diverse community
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Topic Champion: Kathryn Molloy

Who Will Assist:

Dave Arnell - engaging families through E.P.

Mary Rose – how to include new people

Cheryl – email loop

Victor – email loop

Next Steps:

1. Reopen the discussion about paid staff (eg: answer the phone to ensure call back to community enquiry, some youth paid jobs—events paid jobs, grant writing, managing community kitchen, etc.)
2. Engage Community Outreach Team

3. Consider more social enterprises on property (or based on the Commons): lavender, mustards, etc (more jobs) – consider co-op models
4. Discuss what limits on growth we would like to see at the Commons in terms of engagement.
5. Outreach to: Print: magazine, Realtors, Welcome Wagon

Events: Circus, etc
 Visitor Centre
 Hire Summer Student
 Educational Events/Workshops

6. Get an objective facilitator to interview and report back on those who have left the Commons to find out why and what we could do differently to maintain engagement.

Topic: Co-Housing – affordable/elder

Topic Champion: Heide Brown

Who Will Assist:

Alison Fitzgerald, Siki McIvor, Patsy Ludwick

Inform: Carol Hemrich, Kathryn Molloy, Yetta Lees, Guy Mireau

Next Steps:

Meetings:

- rotating convenors
- ask two questions each time
- open to all who have already expressed interest
- open to new participants/larger community
- information gathering and dissemination
 - legal questions
 - grants for feasibility study
 - backing for open forums

Next Meeting: Afternoon meeting. Walk the site. Share log. Patsy book large room for Wed. June 22, 3:00 p.m.

Agenda: Kathryn – précis of research, circle of care for seniors

Cameron Murray – design session to follow

Kit/Yetta/Alison – Share the Commons Team

Heide – Sharon re: grant research

Topic: How do we resolve conflict

Topic Champion: Shelagh Huston

Who Will Assist:

Sharon Patterson, Yetta Lees, Doug McKnight, Maya Ruggles, Siki McIvor, HawkOwl, Muriel Wiens, Sharon Arnell, Mary Aitken, Patsy Ludwick, Guy & Cheryl Mireau

Next Steps:

Orientation for new people brochure
Conflict Resolution Team or Ombudspeople

Topic: Performing Arts/Band Shell

Who Will Help:

K. Louise, Judith, Mary Rose, Sharon A., Guy & Cheryl (send info)