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THETIS ISLAND SHORELINE PROJECT

Public Consultation Summary and Recommendations



REPORT

Submitted to:

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THETIS ISLAND SHORELINE PROTECTION PROJECT

1.0 OPEN HOUSE SUMMARY

Date: Wednesday, March 20.

Location: Thetis Island Forbes Hall.

Islands Trust Representatives: Aleksandra Brzozowski, Island Planner.

Local Trust Committee Trustees: Sue French, Peter Luckham, Ken Hancock.

Golder Associates staff: David Reid, James van Hemert and Sarah Cloherty.

The agenda for the open house included:

- a) Introductions;
- b) Information Presentation by the Consultants;
- c) Short Question and Answer Clarification Session;
- d) Small Group Workshop; and
- e) Reporting by Small Groups in Plenary.

1.1 Group Feedback Forms:

The approximately 25 individuals attending the Thetis Shoreline Protection Project Open House were divided into four groups of five to six people. Each group was provided with a feedback form¹ on which groups could record their thoughts on specific coastal issues and reflect on proposed draft guidelines for a draft Marine Shore Lands Development Permit Area. Three of the groups recorded their thoughts on the feedback forms, summarized below.

1.1.1 Coastal Issues

Participants were asked to rank the following coastal issues from 1-4 (1=not at all important, 2=not very important, 3=important 4=very important).

- Preserve ecological functions;
- Minimize disruption of natural features;
- Balance development with ecological conservation;

¹ Survey Questionnaire is available as Appendix A to this report.



- Maintain public use and access;
- Adapt to climate change;
- Protect development from hazards; and
- Develop compatible marinas.

The ranking was almost completely unanimous as the groups ranked each of the issues as “3—important.” One group ranked *protect development from hazards* as “4--very important.” One group commented that “education is important.”

1.1.2 Sea Level Rise

Participants were asked to state whether they *supported, didn't support or supported with refinements* the idea to consider sea level rise in development proposals.

Two groups selected *support with refinements*, and one included the following comment:

- Refinement meaning specific to each site, including monitoring the actual rise in levels to adjust according to changes.

The third group selected *support* and provided the following comments:

- Unavoidable reality, but how to enforce?
- How onerous if not enforceable?

1.1.3 Shoreline Protection

The participants were asked:

- a) If they supported the extension of shoreline protection to include the entire shoreline of Thetis Island (support, don't support or support with refinements); and
- b) How far inland should shoreline protection extend landward of the natural boundary (15m, 30m, other)?

One group chose *do not support* regarding the extension of shoreline protection and commented:

- Not ready to decide, more education required.

This group selected “*other*” in response to how far inland shoreline protection should extend, and commented:

- Depends on type of shoreline. May be instances where we would recommend 15 or 30m.



Another group selected *support with refinements* regarding the extension of shoreline protection and commented:

- I disagree with extension of shoreline protection.

This group selected “*other*” in response to how far inland shoreline protection should extend and included the following comments:

- Education purposes agree to 30 meter boundary.
- 7.5m meter boundary (2 people).
- Burden greater on those who do not have the money to develop within 15m regulation setback.
- Allows 7.5m extra to develop in.
- Agree to 15m boundary (2 people).

The third group chose *support* for the extension of shoreline protection and commented:

- “Why make exceptions along the shoreline?”
- Put it everywhere!

This group selected *30m landward of the natural boundary* in response to how far inland shoreline protection should extend.

1.1.4 Exemptions

The open house attendees were provided with the draft list of exempt activities and asked whether they *support*, *support with refinements* or *don't support the exemptions*.

One group chose to not answer the question.

One group selected *support with refinements* and commented:

- Exempt sewage systems which are meeting current standards and practices.

The third group selected *support* and commented:

- They “understand why, but don't agree” with proposed exemptions for g) farm operations as defined in the Farm Practices Protection... and h) Forest management activities.



1.1.5 Activities

Participants were provided with the following list of activities that could be addressed in the shoreline protection area and asked to select the ones they believed should require development permits.

- Subdivision;
- Building- new and alteration;
- Structures;
- Land Alteration; and/or
- Other (please specify).

One group commented:

- Need more education on stewardship of shoreline before going to a development permit process.

Another group selected *subdivision* and *building- new and alteration* and also provided the following comments:

- Not structures to be included, or expand the definition of structures (1 person).
- Agree with land alteration as being required (2 agreed).
- Why Not Best Practices for each island- used as an alternative to having to do a development permit.

The third group did not select any activities, however; they did include an additional suggested activity requiring development permit “drainage onto the beach” and made the following comments about the activity *land alteration*:

- Herbicides, including landscaping, what level of alteration, to discourage terracing.

The remainder of the feedback form was not completed by any of the groups as discussion on the previous questions used all the allotted time and also because many felt that answering the questions would suggest that they were in agreement with an approach to pursue development permits.

1.1.6 Plenary discussion

After the small groups discussed and filled out the feedback form, the participants further discussed their feedback as a large group.

The following general comments were taken from that discussion:

- This process is moving too quickly from education to regulations. Expand the education component.
- Insufficient representation of the community at this workshop and up to this point.
- The presentation last week (information session about Green Shores Mapping) was very informative.



- Last week was about education. It feels like we missed a step by jumping to the regulations already.
- Would like to repeat the education component a number of times and ensure all the waterfront owners are involved (concern about timing of workshop because those unable to take time off work and seasonal property owners were not in attendance).
- Rather be educated about how to properly care for shoreline (stewardship) than have regulations imposed.
- Not in support, need more information.
- Inequity for waterfront owners because they already have higher taxes, etc.
- Hesitation to “nail down” a decision.
- Concern about the end purpose of the document.
- “We all want to do a good job”.
- Work as a community (Thetis Island) to develop their own regulations.
- Different approaches for different Islands—customize for Thetis Island.
- Concern about regulations being enforced.
- No one likes regulations but they’re in place to protect everyone.
- Promote best practices for construction professions.
- More detail needed on land alteration.
- Regulations don’t go far enough.
- Some believe we can’t get regulations in place soon enough.
- Some support for a 30m setback.
- Shoreline protection is a separate issue from sea level rise.
- Good examples of soft to hard protection measures.

1.1.7 The major themes drawn from this discussion:

- Majority of attendees believe regulations are premature at this time.
- More education is needed.
- More consultation is needed with those affected.
- Address equity issues: home owners may be unduly burdened for relatively small projects compared to developers.
- Focus on stewardship and best practices.
- Place sea level rise in the right context: don’t overplay this as the major rationale to address shoreline protection.
- Recognize personal responsibility in stewardship.



2.0 DISCUSSION

As your consultants, we agree that more time is needed for education and public consultation and that ultimately any program must have wide-spread community support to ensure its success. Tools to promote and ensure stewardship of the shorelines should be equitable and have a reasonable nexus between the relative impact and the cost of compliance.

Although it is tempting to go no further than education and voluntary guidelines, we strongly advise that regulatory “teeth” will ultimately be needed to avoid the cumulative impact of “mistakes,” misjudgements, and poor site planning that inevitably will occur in the absence of the design, care, and review process that is triggered by regulatory oversight.

3.0 RECOMMENDED OPTIONS FOR MOVING FORWARD

Education & Consultation

- 1) More **education on “green shores” approaches** to shoreline stewardship is a top priority regardless of direction on guidelines and regulation.
- 2) Following a more widespread information and education program, undertake a **survey**, similar to the draft provided in Appendix A., in order to further engage the community in exploring the range of options available and to give elected officials and planning staff useful feedback.
- 3) When education has provided a solid foundation, the Local Trust Committee could consider a range of more pro-active options including voluntary guidelines, advisory services, Green Shores program, development permit area guidelines, and zoning standards.

Voluntary guidelines and advisory services

- 1) **Prepare guidelines** within which land alterations and construction may occur without permits.
- 2) Prepare a **citizen’s guide** to living in harmony with the shoreline that identifies guidelines within which land alterations and limited construction may occur without permits.
- 3) Provide **staff advisory services** to residents seeking to modify their shoreline property or build within established guidelines.

Green Shores for Homes Program

- 1) Develop an **incentive based “Green Shores” permitting approach** for new homes, home additions and land alterations, which could include, for example:
 - a. Coastal Development Rating System – inspired by the LEED™ Green Building rating system.
 - b. Pilot Projects - test the rating system and provide examples for users.
 - c. Design Examples – greener alternatives for shoreline protection.
 - d. Outreach Program – to user communities (developers, professionals, local government, NGO’s) through workshops, presentations and issue sheets.



Development Permit Area Guidelines

Enact development permit area guidelines for subdivision, new construction that requires building permits, and for proposed shoreline armouring (seawalls, rock riprap or similar shoreline hardening) only. Draft language has been developed and can be amended to suit the particular needs and aspirations of Thetis Island residents.

Establishing minimum horizontal 15 m wide area within which the Development Permit Area is applicable (not a setback) upland from the Natural Boundary of the sea is recommended generally. Depending on the shoreline type and topography, this extent can be adjusted upward or downward and in the case of bluffs or steep terrain, a vertical dimension may be more appropriate.

Zoning Bylaw Standards

Zoning standards such as setbacks and building footprints can be amended to provide greater protection to sensitive areas such as shorelines. In some respects this is a reasonably inexpensive and straightforward way to manage development. However, zoning setbacks typically apply only to buildings and not to landscape alterations such as terracing, retaining walls, tree removal or regrading. Changes such as a greater setback for buildings and structures is most useful for new construction, but also will create new nonconformities in existing buildings. Zoning is a blunt instrument and should only be used in conjunction with the other tools available.

Closure

We trust that the information contained in this report meets your present requirements. Please contact us if you have any questions or concerns regarding the above.

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