

Summer Trust Update

While summer is normally a quiet time for local Island Trust happenings, a very well attended community information meeting August 17th got things hopping. Our topics were targeted reviews of our OCP and bylaws regarding island accommodation and density.

We learned many things at the meeting, including your trustee's inability to forecast the number of attendees, which saw the lounge area overflowing. Over 85 islanders showed up, as well as some visitors (including a Federal MP).

There was a lively, intelligent and respectful discourse, and we were delighted with the dialogue between Saturna-ites at the break. While the meeting was just part of our consultation, what we heard there was that more accommodation on island was necessary but that it should be done thoughtfully and in a way (for tourist accommodation) that the few remaining guest facilities were not disadvantaged. We also heard that if additional densities were deemed necessary, they should not be "removed" from the park but created.

All of these things are easy to talk about but the "devil is in the details" when attempting to draft new guidelines. And frankly, we are laggards in this regard. The Municipal Act recommends OCP reviews every five years. Many other Trust areas have gone through full reviews, and many more targeted reviews. And none have had the significant change in land use that our island has. Not to mention our ageing population (oldest in the Trust area), and the fact of only two kids registered in our elementary school next month. Clearly, doing nothing would be an abdication of our responsibilities. So we will continue to consult as we expeditiously prepare drafts for consideration. And it is our absolute intention to do whatever we can to help stem the exodus of young people from our island, and encourage the economic vitality necessary for a sustainable Saturna.

Trustee Brent attended two committee meetings in August, beginning with Trust Programs. Trust Programs has compiled a list of over 100 documents from 42 different (local) sources pertaining to water resources and conservation, and will post these to their website shortly. We are also looking to host a session bringing regional entities together whose interests are economic sustainability, with the intent that best practices be shared. And we continue our efforts to lobby for ferry funding similar to the gov't support provided other provincial transportation networks. While it is still early in the budget cycle for much of anything newsworthy from the Financial Planning Committee meeting, Trustee Brent recorded his vigorous opposition to a recommendation (to Trust Council) that local trust area fees be increased by 10%. This was felt the wrong message to send after a decade of massive tax increases to fund the Trust, a significant current surplus and declining economic activity on our islands.

Trustee Janszen also attended two meetings. The first was the Local Planning Committee meeting where, among other things, we were given an update one of our projects, which also involved water (and yes, there is coordination between the two committees on this

topic). The purpose of the project is to develop regulations and a toolkit that uses planning tools to protect water quality and quantity and to develop a model development permit area bylaw in regards to water conservation.

We were given brief that gave us a look the vast amount of resources available in this field and the many different approaches that are being used across the province. We were assured that the work being done by staff is not meant to “reinvent the wheel” but to glean the aspects of what has already been done and is applicable to the Islands Trust situation. The regulations and toolkit developed will be tailored for the Islands Trust and built on the research already conducted and on what is occurring on the Islands currently. They will be general in nature with the ability of each island to tailor it to their specific situations.

All three of the Trust Council's standing committees meet the month before Trust Council so we can report to Trust Council where we stand with the various tasks we are committed to.

Trustee Janszen's second meeting was the Gulf Islands National Park Reserve Parks Advisory Board where we had hoped to finally lay to rest the draft management plan for the Park that we have been working for what seems like a very long time. It has been the focus of the meetings since Pam joined the Board in early 2012 and it had already been in progress for some time. However, that was not to be, although we keep getting closer and believe when we finally finish we will have a very good document indeed. Our next meeting is September 18th so maybe.....

Pam also chatted with Todd Shannon of Parks (who was up until recently acting Superintendent) to convey some of the concerns expressed about the proposed Southern Strait of Georgia National Marine Conservation Area. The desire of Saturna to be consulted by Parks was also delivered and it is hoped we can convene a meeting in the future. We will be sure to keep you updated.

And speaking of meetings, we are off to Lasqueti Island next month for the first Trust Council Meeting there in about 30 years. It should be quite an adventure, if for no other reason than it is accessible by passenger ferry only so we will all be leaving our cars behind. I guess Pam will do her best work on her not so strong “pack light” skills, and Paul will have to go “cold turkey” from his various electronic dependencies, as Lasqueti is off-grid.

And last, but never least, in fact most important of all, remember to join us at the Rec Centre Lounge at 12:30 on September 26 for our Local Trust Committee meeting. We will have received the results of the surveys and will begin to forge forward with our plans. We firmly believe in setting our sights high and then tempering them with a strong dose of positive thinking :) Hope to see you there!