

South Pender Island Trustee Report:

The second informal gathering with trustees and South Pender residents furthered the conversation about priorities and concerns. Both Cameron and myself appreciate the thoughts and opinions from those who attended and plan on continuing these meetings. We have two members of our community, Gordie Duncan and Richard Friesen, who have volunteered to sit on our Advisory Planning Commission (APC), and we are asking for others to serve as well. Please contact either trustee if interested. We also had the first formal Local Trust Committee meeting (Feb 1), with our Chair, Laura Patrick, (from Salt Spring), and our planner Robert Kojima present. Not much to report; no new applications or business.

Having spent time working with the other Pender Islands trustees, I am optimistic and gratified that our communities have trustees who are dedicated and prepared to work collaboratively, on your behalf, to resolve many issues that have been ignored for too long and are all the more difficult to resolve as a result. They include bylaw enforcement, maintaining our rural character, determining appropriate density and carrying capacity to ensure future sustainability. We also face external pressures from tourism, governments hungry for revenue, development interests, and climate change. We have obligations to First Nations to respect.

Responding adequately to all these issues will ultimately come down to a single and very difficult question. How much are you prepared to give up to achieve sustainability, to maintain our rural character and lifestyle, and to respond to climate change? Are we prepared to put community needs ahead of our personal desires? These are personal considerations but have community wide implications. They will require difficult, and at times controversial, discussions but we must engage them nevertheless. In my conversations with people, most recognize we have to do something, particularly in the way we are impacting our environment, but are unsure of where to begin let alone what can be done. Many want to present our community as an example of how we can live sustainably which is an impressive and honourable goal, but it is not without compromise and sacrifice.

I have served a few terms as trustee for the Islands Trust representing South Pender since 1982, although not continuous. I took a long break from the late 1990's until last November's election. Upon returning to Council I found staff numbers have increased from 10 to 55, the budget has increased more than 8 fold, and Council's agenda has exploded to virtually impossible levels of comprehension for the 26 member Council to make informed decisions within the two days allotted for the quarterly meetings. More complicated processes and procedures, too many legal considerations emanating from recent provincial legislation, and a continuing push to expand the Trust's jurisdiction, has evolved slowly over time hamstringing our ability to accomplish many of our goals.

If we have all recognized the problems, what about the solutions? To a certain extent we have accepted and expected, government to take responsibility for too much of our lives. We have chosen to step aside and allow "top down" governance rather than the participatory "ground up" model. The current trustees' aim is to change that but we need our community's support far beyond the election. I'm sure we have all experienced how disheartening and difficult it is to attempt to carry on a conversation with someone who does not respond. The decisions your trustees make will affect your lifestyle and property, and for that reason alone, we ask that you become actively involved in the land use planning of these islands. Procrastination and/or apathy will not solve any problems, they are the problem.

We have an advantage over other regions with respect to land use. We have the Islands Trust Act. What we do not have is a focus, or the necessary commitment, to its statutory object; not in Trust Council,

and not in our communities. Whether we decide to change our behaviour, our values, and our attitudes, or choose not to, is our singular challenge.

Join in the conversation through www.penderislandtrust.org and help your trustees begin this debate. We can do little without your guidance and support.

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