



**GOVERNANCE TASK FORCE
PUBLIC CONSULTATION MEETING NOTES
DENMAN ISLAND MEETING CONSULTATION
HELD AT 7:30 P.M. ON TUESDAY, MAY 1ST, 2007
AT THE DENMAN ISLAND COMMUNITY HALL
1196 NORTHWEST ROAD, DENMAN ISLAND, BC**

PRESENT:

Louise Bell	Local Trustee
David Graham	Local Trustee
Gillian Saxby	Policy Analyst
Linda Adams	Chief Administrative Officer
Kim Benson	Chair, Islands Trust Council
Corinne Bjorge	Minute Taker

There were 25 members of the public in attendance.

Trustee Graham brought the meeting to order and introduced the other Trust members.

Trust Council Chair Benson began the meeting by explaining the history behind the Trust Council's Strategic Plan and the "Excellence in Governance" initiative. She explained there were three priorities set by Trust Council, and that the current priority was to seek ways to improve political representation in the Islands Trust Area. Trust Council Chair Benson said that under Islands Trust Act, the only way to change representation was through amendments to the provincial legislation and a June deadline had been set for recommendations to the Province. She reviewed the Islands Trust Mandate and she reviewed the current political structure, with each Trust area electing two Trustees, plus an appointed chair from the Executive Committee.

Trust Council Chair Benson compared specific figures regarding island size, property assessment folios, permanent population and Islands Trust revenue by taxation between the Gulf Islands. She said that representation, as well as resource allocation, was seen as creating a sustainable, strong Islands Trust.

Islands Trust Chief Administrative Officer Linda Adams said the Islands Trust had hired an independent consultant to review the political representation question. She said she would review three of the options that were identified, plus the status quo and added that the Trust Council was still open to new suggestions, ideas and options.

She said that under Option 1:

Saltspring Island would have a total of four Local Trustees, all of whom would sit at Trust Council. Their Local Trust Committee would be 5 members, including a chair. The legislation would be amended so that either A) any Local Trust area with population

exceeding (for example) 7,500 would also elect 4 trustees or B) having four trustees would be identified as an “exception” that applied to the Salt Spring Local Trust area only.

She said that under Option 2:

Every Local Trust area would elect four Trustees, but only two would sit at Trust Council. Every Local Trust Committee would then have a total of five members.

She said that under Option 3:

Every Local Trust area would get to decide themselves whether to have four trustees or two trustees.

She said that Option 4 was the status quo:

Every Local Trust area elects two Trustees, creating 24 local Trustees and 2 municipal Trustees who also all sit on the Trust Council. Bowen Island has a 7 person council, but sends two members to the Trust Council.

Trust Chief Administrative Officer Linda Adams said the next step would be compiling feedback from the communities, all of which would be made available to the public. She said that from this information, the Task Force would make a recommendation to the Trust Council. The next step would be to make a request to the Province. The Province would then decide if and how they want to proceed and legislative amendments would be debated in the spring of 2008. If approved, those amendments would be in place in November of 2008.

Trust Council Chair Benson opened the meeting up for questions.

Herb Jones asked whether the Governance Task Force had a preferred option.

Trust Council Chair Benson said they had indicated a preference for option 1B.

Mr. Jones asked who comprised the task force.

Trust Council Chair Benson said that 13 members of the 26 member Trust Council volunteered to sit on the Governance Task Force.

Dan Stoneman asked if the task force looked at the board governance structure and if the executive review issues were then brought to the Board.

Trust Council Chair Benson said the Trust worked with a reverse structure. She said the 26 Trustees made decisions and then the elected 4 person Executive Committee made sure that Trust Council's wishes were being implemented.

Mr. Stoneman asked about the monitoring policies for staff.

Chief Administrative Officer Adams said that there were different kinds of monitoring policies in place, but that council members received monitoring reports on a systematic basis.

Mr. Stoneman asked whether this was an issue that the task force addressed.

Chief Administrative Officer Adams said that because Trust Council had adopted a Strategic Plan, that every Trust employee would have a work plan that was tied to the Strategic Plan.

Derek Hood asked whether it was necessary to tie the number of residents (islands with over 7,500 people) to the request for two additional Trustees. He asked whether it wouldn't be easier to just delegate two more Trustees for Saltspring.

Trust Council Chair Benson said the Task Force had considered whether the change in the number of Trustees should be applied to all Trust areas.

Mr. Hood asked whether it wouldn't be more meaningful if the minimum number required for additional Trustees was lowered.

Trust Council Chair Benson said that in general it was felt that the Trust area works really well, except for concerns generated by Saltspring.

Trustee Bell said that if more Trust areas fell into the "over-7,500" category, it would throw out the idea of equal representation. She said it was probably more satisfactory to focus on issue of Saltspring as an exception.

Bill Warren asked whether the provincial government was supportive of the Islands Trust and whether there was any connection at a federal level.

Chief Administrative Officer Adams said that there wasn't a relationship to the federal government in regards to local governance. She said there hadn't been a sense that there was a lack of support from the province in regards to the Islands Trust.

Max Gamble said he thought that equal representation was extremely important. He said that giving one island special treatment could lead to resentment, in the same way that favouring different provinces leads to resentment. He said the issues of Saltspring were quite different from Denman and that each of the islands had its own precious character.

Jennifer Balke asked whether the task force had thought of reflecting the provincial system of representation.

Chief Administrative Officer Adams said that she believed the consultant did consider representation by population, but explained reasons why it wasn't preferred.

Ms. Balke said the current lines dividing Trust areas were arbitrary and that some islands were divided into two separate Trust areas. She suggested dividing Saltspring into north and south areas, or east and west areas. She said it would maintain the representation of two Trustees per Trust area and would lessen the area that each Trustee was responsible for.

Chief Administrative Officer Adams said this could create a great deal more work coming up with two different Official Community plans and two sets of land use bylaws and may be very confusing.

Trust Council Chair Benson said the Provincial Ministry had indicated they preferred that the map wasn't changed. She said that if the Trust area lines were moved that problems could be created by people who felt their interests were impacted. She said there were also other implications to moving the Trust area lines including impacts on the Natural Area Tax Exemption Program.

Duart Campbell said he was a resident of Saltspring who felt compelled to come and hear what residents of other islands thought. He said he shared the concern that giving Saltspring two more representatives than the other islands seemed to devalue the whole concept of a federation. He said that increasing the number of Trustees didn't solve the other problems that Saltspring faced such as having to put out penny jars to raise money for crosswalk lights. He said it might be helpful if Saltspring reconsidered the Bowen example of becoming a municipality, but stayed within the Trust area. He said by doing so, it would preserve municipal issues and preserve Trust issues.

Trust Council Chair Benson said that Saltspring went through an incorporation study in June 2002 and 70% of island residents said "no" to incorporating at that time. She said that at the last Saltspring election two trustees ran on a platform of not wanting to incorporate as a municipality and they were elected.

Pat McLaughlin asked whether adding to the number of staff members working on Saltspring was a better way to deal with the workload of the Trustees.

Trust Council Chair Benson said that Saltspring had one of the Trust offices with staff right on their island to deal with the workload.

Ms. McLaughlin asked whether the staffing was not sufficient to deal with their island.

Trust Council Chair Benson said it was also an issue of having enough Trustees to have a broad representation of Trust areas.

Harlene Holm said the Trust setup was one of the few democratic ones in Canada. She indicated that the task force consultant had said the mandate is oriented to place, not to people. She said if the point was preserving and protecting areas, there shouldn't be a consideration of population. Ms. Holm said part of the problem was taxation and that the provincial government was off-loading all its obligations. Ms. Holm said she preferred the status quo option because of its emphasis on the dual role of Trustees having a vision beyond one particular community. She said she liked that Trust committees were made up of only three people because it meant that the quorum rule prohibiting them from meeting outside of Local Trust Committee meetings forced them to engage the community more often for input.

Graham Brazier said he concurred with Ms. Holm. He said he was struck by the difference between the consultant's view of what the Islands Trust ought to be, and the view of the Trustees. He said the structure of the Trust organization is tied to the principle of place before people. He said he didn't see that the task force recommendations were embedded in a principle and that it demonstrated a weakness in the recommendations. He said he felt that Ms. McLaughlin's question wasn't answered and that he wasn't convinced that Saltspring's problems weren't mainly administrative in nature, and not political.

Trust Council Chair Benson said the problem was reflected in the fact that Saltspring represented such a large percentage of the geography of the Trust area. She said that as past chair of Saltspring, she could feel a sense of the anomaly. She said she felt that these adjustments were not interfering with the principles of the Trust and that it would have other effects. Two more trustees serving on Council would give each of them more time to sit on committees.

Mr. Stoneman said the object of government is to bring a balanced view of the community to the table and that the mandate of preservation conflicted with the basic value of government. He said a great deal of trouble was created when the Trustees were given land use authority alongside the stated value of preservation.

Trustee Bell said the actual wording of the mandate was “to preserve and protect its unique amenities and environment” which was open to some interpretation. She said some people interpret the definition as land conservation but that it wasn’t solely that and that it was up to Trustees and constituents to make that interpretation. She said that was where the issues of sustainable communities and the work that goes beyond protecting land belonged.

Mr. Stoneman said the objective was laudable and that if the legislation was expanded to temper with the explanation of obligation, that Trustees would be more credible in the community. He said he felt the North Lands proposal was an example of a group going directly to the people first to solicit public support before approaching Trustees whose mandate was to preserve the land.

Chief Administrative Officer Adams said that many proponents are encouraged to go out and test the waters before proceeding with their applications. She said that each community needs to decide whether the proposal is the right way to preserve and protect their community. She said Mr. Stoneman raised an interesting point that no where else was local government constrained by provincial mandate.

Mr. Stoneman said that the Trustees fulfilled an advocacy position rather than a position of local government.

Mr. Campbell said the proposed solutions weren’t addressing the problems of Saltspring residents. He said he keeps thinking that other islands will tell Saltspring to solve the problem for themselves.

The public was told that they were welcome to fill out the on-line questionnaire, attend further meetings or submit written comments by the May 21st deadline.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:40 p.m.