



**GOVERNANCE TASK FORCE
PUBLIC CONSULTATION MEETING NOTES
PENDER ISLANDS MEETING CONSULTATION
Saturday, May 12, 2007 at 1:30 p.m.
Anglican Parish Hall, North Pender Island**

PRESENT:

Kim Benson, Chair, Islands Trust Council
Gary Steeves, North Pender Island Local Trustee
Ken Hancock, North Pender Island Local Trustee
John Henshaw, South Pender Island Local Trustee
Linda Adams, Chief Administrative Officer (CAO)
Fiona Pogue, Recorder

There were approximately 30 members of the public in attendance.

After the presentations from the Islands Trust Council Chair, Kim Benson, and the Chief Administrative Officer of the Islands Trust, Linda Adams, questions and comments were invited from the public.

Don Harrison – commented that the whole process seemed to be focused on Salt Spring Island. He wondered if it would be possible to limit the number of applications that the Salt Spring Trustees needed to deal with in a given term.

CAO of the Islands Trust Linda Adams responded that any local government must consider any application that comes in, although they are not required to take it further. There are many types of permits and applications and all must be considered and cannot be stopped from coming in if the area is zoned, the applicant has met the requirements and has applied. It is possible to “downzone” and some areas make minimum lot sizes bigger to accomplish this.

Don Harrison – commented that Pender Island used to be one island and we split it. Could it be possible to split Salt Spring Island in a similar way?

Linda Adams replied that that question has been brought up but that it would be very complicated and in addition the province is understood to be resistant to moving any lines on the map.

Don Harrison – asked about the possibility of an “Islands Regional District”?

Linda Adams replied that the province didn’t want to go there as it could be quite cumbersome.

Em Round – had concerns about Salt Spring Island or other islands incorporating and what this would mean to Pender Island. He felt that the decision making for the Trustees was worthy of more representation as the burden on the elected Trustee was great. Salt Spring Island was worthy of a “mini-council of 5” and the rest of the islands would have the same opportunity if they reached a certain population. He mentioned that already Salt Spring Island Trustees are financially compensated differently so the idea of Salt Spring being an “anomaly” was nothing new. He made another point about improving the process of appointing the Advisory Planning Commission so that its referrals were more fair.

Sarah Steele – commented that on Option 2 and 3 she finds it to be overkill. She felt that Option 3, where the island decides the number of Trustees, would be too controversial in the community. She felt that Option 1 was good, she’d like to see it be made long-term or otherwise in 10 or 20 years we would be back at the table. She thought that anything over a population of 9000 should get more representation, in other words to make it a higher population threshold.

Michael Sketch - thought that it was a reasonable premise that both checks and balances – and balance itself – are implicit in the intent of the Islands Trust Act.

- He commented that we now have a 2 to 1 ratio of on-island to “arms length” off-island Trust Executive/ Local Trust Committee composition, and that a change to that balance should be very carefully considered.
- He suggested the use of a long term “Trustee Emeritus” body, elected by Trust Council and with a distinct emphasis on the emeritus aspect. From that body an additional Salt Spring Trustee or two might be chosen, the Local Trust Committee then consisting of 4 locally elected Salt Spring residents, 1 Islands Trust Chair appointed member from the Trust executive, and 1 or 2 Islands Trust Chair appointed members from the “trustee emeritus” body which might be a component of the Trust Executive.

Don Harrison – questioned what the process would be regarding the large number of applications on Salt Spring and whether there would still be 2 or 4 trustees reviewing all the applications.

Linda Adams answered that the Salt Spring Local Trust Committee would still be one decision making body.

Don Harrison – wondered how the work load would be lessened if all the Trustees have to review all the applications.

Gary Steeves – added that on Salt Spring there are over 100 community organizations and there are problems when Trustees are asked to attend so many meetings. He felt that 4 Trustees would be more capable of attending to a wide variety of views.

Victor Jones – commented that the Task Force should identify the mandate and change that first. If the observation on Page 14 that “place before people does not hold today” is

not addressed then it will be a continual scourge until it is solved. He thinks we should have 4 Trustees on Pender Island right now, that we may not have 100 community groups but 1000 viewpoints. With 4 Trustees there could be informal discussions that don't constitute a forum, and that this is a huge issue. He didn't understand what they've done as Option 1 a and b and Option 2 do not correlate to the back of the report, and wanted to know which option did they want people to consider?

Linda Adams replied that everything is labeled and in order.

Alma Lightbody – felt that if Salt Spring had 4 representatives then the Council would be weighted and the little guys would get left out. She thought that the Salt Spring work load and the representatives on Council should be separated.

Elly Ross – wondered why the Provincial Government was so limiting. She questioned whether the Task Force was restricted in its initial priorities by the Government, and if the Islands pay all the money then why would this happen?

Kim Benson replied that just getting a hint from the B.C. government that they would put in resources to look at this issue of representation was a big job as it may not have been a priority for them. She said we are looking at our own issues of Governance and that it is difficult to get consensus within a 3 year period. She said that they had to start with the 4 focus areas and that addressing those areas won't improve everything but they are trying to do things better.

Jane Perch – was concerned that the time frame was too short for the Task Force to consider all 4 areas. She felt it didn't bode well for public input and consultation. She was also concerned about the financial implications.

Community Member – thought it would have been better to have done a mail-out to residents as well as non-residents, rather than relying on newspaper advertisements.

John Rumble – asked for an explanation about whether once Salt Spring gets 2 additional Trustees would the 4 persons have 4 votes and therefore control council to an extent.

The answer was that Trust Council would not be controlled as is evident by looking at the Penders where there are already 4 Council members.

Randy Lynch – appreciated where the Task Force was with regard to the Provincial Government and their restrictions. He wondered if there would be an opportunity to revisit the mandate.

The answer was that this is an ongoing discussion but the Task Force is focusing on this issue first and can then revisit other areas of discussion.

Randy Lynch – felt a core issue was the comment about the Trust mandate putting “place before people” and on page 14 it says that this does not hold today. He asked about representation for the taxpayer if the mandate really is “place before people”.

The answering comment was that this was the consultant's view and that the mandate and the policy statement of the Islands Trust consider people to be unique amenities also, but that the demand to develop the Trust area is insatiable. The Local Trust Committees need to balance all the differing interests.

Gary Steeves – stated that at the Governance Task Force the consultant's comment about Place vs People was a huge issue and that most were opposed to the consultant's view.

Em Round – wondered if it would be possible for the 4 Salt Spring trustees to share the council meetings. 4 Trustees, 4 Council meetings allows for the sharing of the experience.

Linda Adams replied that that had been suggested but that there might be problems with continuity if people alternated roles.

Michael Sketch – commented that there must be a balance between people's needs and the environment. He thought a joint Local Trust Area for the Pender Islands would have unintended consequences due to the rural nature of South Pender Island. He also commented that a careful examination of Minute Taking be a topic to be carefully considered by a future Task Force.

Victor Jones – thought that the individual Islands should be given the opportunity to decide about the number of Trustees. He thought this would result in greater flexibility and more sharing of responsibilities.

Randy Lynch – commented that the question of diversity is a core issue on Pender Island and that allowing Pender to have 4 Trustees would be helpful as no one would have a lock on power. He thought that because the financial implications were not great that it would be worth it in order to remove this contentiousness.

Don Harrison – felt that in the future all the islands would have 2 more trustees because it is an issue related more to development potential than to population. He wondered if the workload of the Trustees would be static or dynamic – when Salt Spring is built out would the work load go down.

Kim Benson replied that the workload will always increase where you see development potential as there is always "re-development". The pressure to build will always increase as the population around us increases.

Elly Ross – had confusion about page 14 in the report and wondered about the very different positions of the consultant and the Islands Trust mandate. She thought that if the Task Force did not agree with the consultant then this is a valid issue and the Provincial Government should be approached about it. She thought that if we only deal with what the Government will let us we may be putting a band-aid over more important issues.

Kim Benson commented that the Task Force did disagree with the consultant in some ways but acknowledged that the consultant was looking at the issue while mainly

representing the provincial interest, and looking at arm's length. She said they did not yet know how it would all fit together.

Ken Hancock – stated that the consultant was funded by the Ministry of Community Services and the Trust Council and gave the Task Force a perspective on the provincial viewpoint.

Kim Benson and Linda Adams thanked the public for their comments and input and the meeting was over at approximately 4:20 pm.

Fiona Pogue

Recorder

Kim Benson

Chair