
Gabriola Commons Foundation

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting June 26, 2010

1. **Welcome – Bill Pope**

Motion to approve the minutes of last year's Annual General meeting

Moved by Linda St.Clair, seconded by Yetta Lees Strasdine – approved by consensus

2. **Introduction of the Board – Bill Pope**

George Szanto, Judith Roux, Bob Andrew, Hans van Kessel, Doug McKnight, Christine Gagnon, Christine Purfield, Bill Pope

3. **Report from the Chair of the Board of Trustees –George Szanto**

Last year in the Chair's report I called the 2008-2009 year in the history of the Gabriola Commons Foundation "remarkable," and so it had been. But for this present report it is necessary to find an even more substantial adjective to describe the 2009-2010 year, because the past twelve months have been doubly, or triply, remarkable. "Astonishing" wouldn't quite do it, nor could even "outstanding." Because the group of events since the last Commons' AGM—each in its own way important—together has made for a truly extraordinary year.

Last summer saw two activities, one smart and philosophical, the other perhaps naively enthusiastic yet highly practical. Heather Menzies presented the Commons with a talk and a dialogue which set our Commons in the context of the larger commons, how a commons functions, and the nature of its value. At about the same time a group of us got together—and this is the naïve part—to start a Grant Writing team, to try to get some free money. The team began close to home with an application to the Nanaimo Community Foundation for a grant which would begin the transformation of the old Cheese Plant into a community kitchen. We added together our projected expenses for the initial prep work—plumbing, gas, electricity—and came up with an asking sum of \$13,350. One day I received a call from a certain Gordon Hussey, the president of the Foundation: could he come over to Gabriola and take a look at this project. He did, and Judith Roux and I took him around, a fine Saturday afternoon which had brought out a good number of Commons members. After many introductions he took his leave, saying he had never seen a project which involved so many volunteers with such powerful enthusiasm. Several weeks later I received a second phone call from him, telling me that the Foundation had awarded us a grant of \$13,000. The additional \$350 was not included, he said, because the Foundation's accountant preferred rounded off numbers.

The grant from the Nanaimo Community Foundation was the first of three this year. The fall saw the erection of a donated timber-frame structure from the Island School of Building Arts. This will become a multi-purpose facility, for storing some of our agricultural equipment, as well as a space for displaying sustainable building systems and alternative energies. To prepare the foundation and complete the roof we received a generous grant of \$15,000 from the Coastal Community Credit Union Spirit Fund. Later the Evergreen Foundation in Toronto granted \$5,000 to eliminate some alarmingly invasive species on the Commons, daphne and broom, which have been displacing plants natural to the Gulf Islands, and to replace the invaders with native species.

Several volunteers have participated in the kitchen transformation, the timber frame structure and the invasive species eradication, but we need more volunteers if we are to complete these projects in time. And this volunteerism is in keeping with continuous growth in Commons membership, having recently topped the 800 mark. Of these, 170 of you are making monthly contributions which pay the ongoing mortgage.

Having come to the mortgage brings me to the single most important event of the year we are ending. On June 7th the Gabriola Commons Foundation officially accepted from AGES, the Amazing Grace Ecological Society, the property known as the Gabriola Commons—and of course the mortgage. We on the Foundation thank AGES for this—I'll say it again—this *extraordinary* gift, from the bottom our collective heart. This means that the Commons now officially belongs to the people of Gabriola. A striking revolution has taken place in a very short space of time—only five years from the inception of a Steering Committee held together by shared dreams, determined if stumbling progress and homemade glue, to now, the Gabriola Commons Foundation, a non-profit society with charitable status, providing a benefit to the community which has been recognized by the BC Assessment authority through an exemption from property taxes. The property exchange ceremony will take place in just a few minutes.

As I said, the Commons exists within the B.C. legal system. We hope and expect that in a very short time the Commons will exist also under the mandate of the Islands Trust, with our zoning designated as Commons Zoning. This will be a new form of zoning not seen before in this country. This is because all land in Canada is owned either privately, or by one or another level of government. The only exception is First Nations land. Now we can look forward to a fourth category of ownership, Commons Zoning, land held in common by a collective group of people, specifically in our case the people of Gabriola. The by-law changes to bring this about were first requested by the Commons three years ago. Over that time we have been working with the Islands Trust to create the necessary understanding and language, and the Trust has been generous in allowing the necessary time to bring this new form of zoning into existence. The by-law has been given two readings, and passed unanimously. In several weeks there will be a public hearing so that all of Gabriola can provide input.

To guarantee that the Commons will continue to remain undiminished and enriched for those who follow us, the Foundation is creating a covenant which will ensure that the land and its institutions will remain the property of Gabriolans in perpetuity. The Covenant Team has been working on this document for three years and I can say with pleasure that a first draft of the Gabriola Commons covenant will be completed by the team in the next couple of weeks. The covenant holders will be The Land Conservancy of British Columbia and another covenant holder likely based on Gabriola.

A few important issues, before the final one. Over the past year the Farm Team has seen an impressive increase in the number of allotment gardens on the land since many Gabriolans recognize the importance of growing their own food. The number of monthly donors has grown, and several ongoing donors have increased the amount they are giving, even in these difficult economic times. The press coverage given the Commons over the year has been substantial, and we very much appreciate it, just as we value the ongoing support of Gabriola businesses. We are forming important links with other Gabriola community organizations such as PHC, Sustainable Gabriola and GaLTT, whose cedar boardwalk on the Commons has become a favourite pathway for many walkers.

So. The Commons now owns the land. And the mortgage. Over the last year much of our energy was given to methods for paying down that mortgage. There have been some important

fund-raising efforts—Victor Anthony’s concert for the Commons, the raffle for the electric bike, the trade show, the Commons dinners, for all of which we are deeply grateful. In this coming year we will double and redouble our efforts, in large and small ways, to reduce the mortgage. It’s my hope that we are about to move into, to borrow and modify a phrase from friends, The Year of the Commons.

Remember. Without the 800-plus of us who have given the Commons our time, our labour and our support, without the 170 of us who are making monthly contributions, without the 12 of us who are guaranteeing the mortgage, and most significantly without AGES, without all of us there would be no Commons.

On a personal note I would like to say, as I am leaving the Foundation Board and my role as chair, that over the year the Board has dealt with a diverse range of issues, some complicated and difficult, others a joy, all filtered through our personal perceptions and predilections. We have worked through these concerns with, if I may say so, intelligence and generosity. So I give a very large thanks to the members of the Board for making my and each others’ jobs not only easier but often a pleasure. Enjoy your work next year as I have enjoyed working with you.

Thank you.

[George has finished his term on the Board of Trustees.]

4. **Treasurer's Report – Christine Purfield, CGA**

April 1, 2009 - March 31, 2010

(full financial statements are available online at www.gabriolacommons.ca)

ASSETS & LIABILITIES

- There’s not much change from the 2009 fiscal year. Our assets increased by gifts in kind, most notably the timber frame structure donated by Island School of Building Arts; cash on hand at the end of the fiscal year was \$67,612 - \$24,000 of which related to cash received from grants that have yet to be spent.
- There is an accounts receivable of \$5,419, representing monies owed to the Foundation. The receivable is considered collectable.
- \$11,082 has been placed in a “restricted fund” account and represents money fundraised by the Farm Management team but not spent in the fiscal year, funds raised specifically for the Community Kitchen Project that remained unspent at the end of the year, and \$5,393 designated towards the mortgage pay down.
- There are no outstanding liabilities to others at the end of the fiscal year, with the exception of the \$90,000 payable to AGES. This loan was subsequently retired when the Commons Foundation took over the mortgage on the Commons property in June 2010.

REVENUE:

- Total revenue for the year amounted to \$96,904 – an increase of 33,840 over the previous fiscal year.
- Revenue consisted of donations (\$51,884), rental income (\$19,096), gifts in kind (\$14,400), fundraising (\$4,857), and other income (\$6,667).
- Cash donations amounted to \$51,884, up from \$42,115 in the previous fiscal year.

EXPENSES:

- Total expenses amounted to \$75,877 (including depreciation), up \$8,397 over the previous fiscal year. Depreciation in 2010 amounted to \$14,468. There was no depreciation recognized in 2009.
- The major expense was the mortgage payments to AGES amounting to \$39,120.

SUBSEQUENT EVENTS AND OTHER NOTES:

- Net income for 2010 \$21,027 (including \$14,400 gifts-in-kind and \$5,419 recognized as revenue but not yet collected)
- The mortgage was transferred to the Commons Foundation in early June 2010. The amount is \$490,000 with monthly payments of 2,421. The mortgage is held by VanCity Credit Union.
- At the time of payout, the Commons paid \$13,425 down on the mortgage to reduce the balance owing.
- In 2010 we received notification from BC Assessment Authority that the property was exempt from property taxes for the 2010 calendar year. This exemption generally expires every three years, at which time we will apply for a further three years.
- \$8,000 has been placed in a one-year non-redeemable term deposit for the assurance of our generous mortgage guarantors.

The treasurer's report was accepted by consensus.

5. Transfer of Property Title

Heide Brown and Judith Roux conducted a brief ceremony to recognize the legal transfer of title of the Gabriola Commons property from AGES to the Gabriola Commons Foundation.

6. Confirmation of the Appointment of Two Trustees

The Board requested that the appointments made during the past fiscal year be approved: Christine Purfield for a 3 year term and Linda St. Clair for a 1 year term.

Confirmed by consensus

7. Elections: The board nominated two members for election to the board:

Victor Anthony

Shelagh Huston

Each elected by consensus

8. Discussion about Number of Trustees & their Selection

The Board suggested that the number of Trustees be limited to ten members as it might otherwise become unwieldy.

Discussion followed and it was agreed that this recommendation was intended to be effective for the ensuing year. An official change to the by-laws would have to be appropriately made at the next Annual Meeting in order for this recommendation to be ongoing.

There was also some discussion about whether specific attributes were required for a member to serve on the board. Agreed that this may be desirable but not spelled out.

A recommendation to the board that an independent nomination committee be established for future elections of trustees was made.

9. **Nominations for Trustee**

A call was made for nominations from the floor. There were some nominations but as none of the nominees were willing to stand, nominations were closed.

10. **Commons Coordinating Council Report – Doug McKnight**

- Developed a mandate, objectives and strategies for the group, along with the process of meetings as well as the responsibilities of the members.
 - Welcomed new teams and task forces to the council. Trails and Green Spaces, Sustainability Center, Raffle Team
 - The Council is continuing to evolve to meet the needs of the community
- The Council meets the first Tuesday of every month at 7 pm upstairs at the Commons. Everyone is welcome and we look forward to as many perspectives on the development of the Commons that are willingly shared.

11. **Team Reports**

Communications – Hans van Kessel

Purpose: promote awareness of and participation in the Gabriola Commons

Highlights of Past year:

- new website created
- improved frequency and content of newspaper articles & news about Commons
- updated the general Commons brochure
- acquired several new enthusiastic members of the team

Plans for Upcoming year:

- increase information to the public, particularly more information about nature and workings of the Commons (via newspaper articles, brochures, newsletters)
- expand website to include major projects and history

Share The Commons – Linda St. Clair

Purpose: to review and facilitate requests from groups wishing to utilize the grounds, facilities or create new structures on the Gabriola Commons for use on a regular basis.

Highlights of Past Year:

- Mandate and application forms created and streamlined
- Two major projects have been initiated—the Sustainability Centre and the Community kitchen
- Several groups including the Boy Scouts, PAWS have applied for and had their requests accepted (one for land use and the other for emergency use of barn).
- A Labyrinth is being developed and *Commonsounds* held several walking and listening sessions

Plans for the Upcoming year:

- Work with groups and help them integrate into the Commons
- Support the initiative of Poetry Gabriola's proposal for yurt to give artists creative / rehearsal space

Property Management – Roger Gouin

Past Year: new floor in office & washroom; painted office; new storage room; new bookings person; balcony railings replaced

Present: new PMT Coordinator; south entrance buildup; parking lot repairs; seeking Mac computer

This Years' focus: landscaping for front entrance; build database for maintenance purposes; attract volunteers for maintenance and landscaping

Trails & Green Spaces – Victor Anthony

Victor reported on this new team whose mandate is essentially to improve access to the Commons while simultaneously defending against access which in some way might damage or endanger the ecological balance of the property.

Two major projects under way:

- i) Removal of Daphne
- ii) eco-mapping of the whole property

Fundraising – Christine Gagnon

Christine reported that 502 tickets had been sold for the raffle of the electric scooter etc. As that is barely enough to cover the expense of the raffle it is essential that more tickets be sold. A plea was made for more volunteers at the Saturday Farmers' Market, particularly for the transporting of the scooter to and fro.

Farm – Susan Yeend

30 trees in orchard; over 100 blueberries; community garden includes individual plots, children's garden, seniors' garden with raised beds, PHC is growing food for the food bank, vole metal fencing installed, underground irrigation installed.

Kitchen garden is used for heritage beans and potatoes, artichokes grown from seed; the lower allotment area increased from 23 to 53 400sq.ft. areas - irrigation with taps to each allotment have been added. An experimental grain growing area includes a large number of species of grains. Apple juice was made and a number of workshops held. A plea for more volunteers was made.

12. Questions from the Floor

Highlights:

What are the limits of the Foundation Board?

- i) Land Use
- ii) raising money to pay mortgage etc.
- iii) legal issues
- iv) finance
- v) covenant

Policies required regarding:

- i) volunteer versus paid labour
- ii) commercial ventures on the property with some of the proceeds going to the Commons. This question was referred to the Commons Council

iii) Nominations process: as reported earlier in the minutes in the section on elections

13. Adjournment.

Celebration of Land Title Transfer & refreshments followed.