

Commons Coordinating Council

Notes: May 2, 2023 Meeting

Present:

Gloria Filax (facilitating)

Heather Menzies (note taking)

David Lightly

Bob Andrew

Brenda Joy

Shelagh Huston

Kim Kasasian

Cameron Murray

Brenda Fowler

David Skinner

Don Smardon

Mercedes Martinson

Deb Ferens

Judith Roux

Patrick Roux

Laura Jean Kelly

Tribute (with flowers from Deb) to George Ryan, a regular at PHC, often under-housed, for whom the Commons gave a sense of well being that helped sustain him, Brenda F said. He died on May 1.

Land Acknowledgement by Heather, who shared a story about Dave Bodaly's ancestral connection to the cedar trees on Gabriola, and his looking forward to returning to live here.

20-Minute Discussion: on disrespectful behaviour on the Commons.

David L. (Process Team) began by posing the question: how we can address the recurring problem of aggressive behaviour on the Commons? It's become acceptable to behave in an aggressive way. This causes stress and fear. It's led to people fleeing the Commons. There's been a loss of faith in the Commons' ideals. We will lose standing in the community, and already have. Letting it go on and on makes us complicit. That's the feedback I've been getting. Yet people here are afraid to talk about it.

Do we need a code of conduct (CoC)? And what are the ramifications for bad behaviour? What are the consequences?

Dave L then invited a round of comment and suggestions (full notes of this in complete meeting notes, pasted in with team reports, below)

Action: Next Step.

Dave L. Invited anyone interested in where we take this to attend the next Process Team meeting:

Thursday, May 25 @ 10 a.m. At the Commons (Upstairs, Farmhouse)

The team will lead a discussion on next steps at the June 7 Council meeting.

Bathroom/Port-A-Potty

Background from a PST perspective: based on Don Smardon's report (full text attached, with other reports)

Late last year PST began to discuss the idea of building a public washroom on the commons. There was general support for this. However, the team decided that there was insufficient time to get Commons and regulatory approval before the busy summer season this year. Its interim plan was to rent a Port-A-Potty from May to October and pay for it through outdoor rental fees.

PST brought this to Council in February, and then out to teams. At the March meeting, the team reported to Council that it was about to sign the port-a-potty contract. But later at this meeting, two individuals, Robbie and Patrick, announced that they wanted to create a project team to go ahead with the public washroom on their own.

By April Council, work was under way and by the 1st of May the doors were open and the washroom was ready for use. PST felt blindsided, and wondered what it had missed. "We didn't realize we needed to defend ourselves from others on the Commons."

The washroom was built in record time. This was made possible by ignoring process, both external and internal. External requirements like: was a building permit required; Public Health regulation, inquiring whether our zoning will allow public toilets. Will our liability insurance cover us? What about the rats?

The internal costs to the Commons are unpredictable. However, most members have left PST, so it's no longer functioning. Also, PST is left wondering what has happened to our decision-making process. "Maybe we should do away with teams and run everything from Council. It seems to have worked well for the public toilet initiative."

There also seems to have been little discussion in regard to, for example, who is going to maintain this washroom? This will put a huge burden on our volunteers. It will need to be cleaned daily and resupplied with paper towels, toilet paper, Naloxone kits and a needle dump.

There is a possibility that The Commons may not have the resources to run and maintain a public washroom. This needs to be discussed.

Discussion:

During the full and frank discussion that followed, there was acknowledgment (by Patrick Roux) that Commons process had not been followed, and an apology was given (by Patrick) for having seized the initiative and run with it "too fast." Some details were clarified, and the discussion ended with a sense of things beginning to move forward in a good way, with one person who had withdrawn from the Commons and the PST signalling an intention to return. (Complete notes on this discussion can be found, in the complete meeting notes, pasted in below.)

Reports:

A. Governance Review:

Deb presented a report from the Governance Review group that emerged from the January Commons Review, with a number of proposals plus a draft of a Commons Governance Charter. (See below). She also shared a flip-chart schematic depicting four factors acting as gravitational forces in organization's field of operations: functional; understandable, open and flexible. The Gov. Group thinks we need these elements for the Commons to work, and also that we err on the side of being open and flexible, and lose a bit on the understandable and functional side of things.

No real discussion. One suggestion: that the proposals be part of a larger discussion touching on all the proposed changes to Commons governance, including the number of and responsibilities of team. .

B. Team Reports:

See below for reports from those teams that had reports this month:

PST: After Kim gave the PST report, Bob added: Kim doing an incredible job of mapping the various infrastructure systems on the Commons. Also, sees enough progress on the issue that was partly why he stepped away from the Commons, and would like to return, including to the PST.

South Gardens: Before giving her report, Brenda J told Kim that she was "horrified" at what the team is having to contend with re unauthorized camping and garbage left on the Commons. (See report, below)

Kitchen Stewards: Patrick's report below.

Farm Team: Judith's report below.

Grant-writing Team: Judith's report attached. Since current grant seeking is for installing an elevator in the farmhouse, discussion ensued, in support of moving forward with this despite the increased cost.

Important that we make the whole building accessible. This is an opportunity to re-think the whole foyer layout. "Interior landscape." Brenda F. Suggested creating a renovation committee, pulling in all the people who use the building. Cameron volunteered to participate in this.

C. Affiliate Reports:

PHC: Brenda reported that VIHA has re-certified the farmhouse kitchen for water.

Closing:

Gloria offered big thanks to Jinny for all the work she has done on the Communications Team. Volunteer recruitment continues to be huge, especially getting young people involved.

Commons Coordinating Council (full, official version of notes)

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Do we need a code of conduct (CoC)? And what are the ramifications for bad behaviour? What are the consequences?

Dave L then invited a round of comment and suggestions, beginning on his left

Discussion:

Brenda J: Observed that there is a problem. Mentioned an incident they'd had in the South Gardens, resulting in their drafting principles for respectful discussion. It's stayed in draft form. Still, policies need support. It's about changing a culture and it requires a lot of time and effort. A CoC is a good start.

Kim K.: It has been hard to be on the Commons; it's been toxic. PST is a vital team, but we're down to two people (from five) now. Has personally seen attacks. The worst has been toward Brenda F., and none of us has done anything. The problem is urgent; something should have been done months ago. We've lost people. A CoC is a good place to start.

Shelagh: Makes me sad that people are feeling threatened or are leaving because we don't have a way of dealing with conflict. It's a necessary part of our self-governance. But rather than a CoC, suggest an 'agreement' we all agree to abide by (as participants in the Commons). Also need to address what if someone refuses to go along with it. Process for enforcement needed too.

Brenda F.: Sees the erosion of the place of the Commons in the community. Also, a loss of the leadership the Commons could be providing. The whole community needs the capacity and the passion the Commons represents.

Bob: Nice to hear the passion for the Commons, and willingness to talk about this. Thanks to process team for taking leadership in this discussion, and the trustees for acknowledging there's a problem. Too much bad behaviour has been let go. We've lost good people ...There are people who are afraid to come here. Don't understand why the Commons can't deal with things like this. Boundaries are important; it's become clear in this instance. If you don't set boundaries, we have no way of dealing with their breach. Prefers 'agreement' over CoC, which seems top-down. It also needs to be assigned to some body, and that should be the trustees because it could slide into legal matters; though they could turn to the Process Team...There has to be consequences – e.g. please apologize all the way to expulsion.

The Commons should be a place where all people are treated with dignity and respect. I don't want any more people to leave.

David S.: As someone who participates in Saturday work bees and lunches, has been sensing the spirit of the Commons going down. Wants to facilitate and help.

Don: We seem unprepared to name names. Personally witnessed the attack on Brenda F. Went back to the notes from the PST meeting (where it happened) and was horrified that there was no mention of this. Was horrified because he had been the one taking the notes. We're afraid to get someone in trouble. So we stifle ourselves, and it goes on and the behaviour comes back.

Mercedes: Like idea of 'agreement,' especially that it should apply to anyone coming onto the Commons property. Enforcement is essential; or what value is it?

Judith: I have nothing to say at this time.

Patrick: It's 2-fold: human behaviour and team behavior, which is about the Commons. We have boundaries in team mandates, but there's no way to check these teams. They're doing what they want when they want. We're incapable of challenging a team.

Name me because I'm at the centre of this.

I have no problem with an agreement.

Deb: Do think there have been attempts to have meeting agreements. Have had some discussions about safety. There have been ebbs and flows of conversation on this.

Laura Jean: Amazed that we're all here and are talking about it. Shows we're willing to think this through. Grateful that Patrick and Judith are here; Brenda F. Too.

Heather: Glad we're breaking the silence on this. Supports having 'agreement' but also need mechanisms of accountability.

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We brought this to Council in February, and then out to teams. At the March meeting, the team reported to Council that it was about to sign the port-a-potty contract. But later at this meeting, two individuals, Robbie and Patrick, announced that they wanted to create a project team to go ahead with the public washroom on their own.

We were blindsided. In the corporate world this would be called a hostile takeover.

By April Council, work was under way and by the 1st of May the doors were open and the washroom was ready for use. What was it that PST had missed? We didn't realize we needed to defend ourselves from others on the Commons.

I once heard this saying quoted by a then respected commoner, that "efficiency is the enemy of resilience". I think this applies here. The washroom was built in record time. This was made possible by ignoring process, both external and internal.

The external requirements like: was a building permit required; Public Health regulation, inquiring whether our zoning will allow public toilets. Will our liability insurance cover us? What about the rats?

The internal costs to the Commons are unpredictable. However, most members have left PST, so it's no longer functioning. Perhaps it's no longer required. What has happened to our decision-making process? Maybe we should do away with teams and run everything from Council. It seems to have worked well for the public toilet initiative.

There also seems to have been little discussion in regard to, for example, who is going to maintain this washroom? This will put a huge burden on our volunteers. It will need to be cleaned daily and resupplied with paper towels, toilet paper, Naloxone kits and a needle dump.

There is a possibility that The Commons may not have the resources to run and maintain a public washroom. This needs to be discussed.

Discussion:

Patrick R: VIHA had said that the kitchen bathroom couldn't be used by the public. We needed to do something. The price of porta potty rentals is up. We didn't move any walls. We didn't challenge any bylaws.

Shelagh: Sought clarification on 2 points: 1, that the portapotty was meant to address the kitchen bathroom non-access at least in the short term; 2, who took the initiative: if not PST, what team?

Patrick: Said he was "absolutely sorry" that "we went too fast" with the public toilet project.

Gloria: Stepping away from facilitator role to speak as member of Finance and Trustees teams: At Finance, we were asking, who's doing this? Where's the money coming from? Bills were coming in. It was in March that Robbie and Patrick brought the idea to council. Meanwhile, PST had brought the portapotty proposal back; it was ready to sign an agreement.

It's a process issue. We have the field guide for process. Their idea (public toilet) was supposed to come to council twice. Because it goes out to the teams. You consult with any team that's affected. Did they talk to PST? The integrity of PST was compromised. PST thought they were fulfilling their mandate. And there's supposed to be a proposal submitted to STC. (The Sharing the Commons team helps in creating a new project team.) Maybe I'm old-fashioned and we don't need to follow rules anymore.

Patrick: I acknowledge I didn't follow process. Someone at Arbutus was saying someone was checking things being put on the Commons account. There is no cost. (It became clear through the discussion that Patrick has assumed the costs personally.)

Bob: It was extremely disruptive to the PST. Where was the consultation? I was flummoxed at the way it happened. I would like to see an apology for what was done without going through any commons processes.

Kim: Patrick came to a PST meeting (last summer, with Brenda F.) but was so intimidating; we all left shaken and appalled. Communication broke down after that.

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Bathroom/Port-A-Potty **a PST perspective: Don Smardon**

Background

Late last year we at PST began to discuss the idea of building a public washroom on the commons. We decided that there was insufficient time to get Commons and regulatory approval before the busy summer season.

Our plan was to rent a Port-A-Potty from May to October and pay for it through outdoor rental fees. We brought this to Council in February and then out to teams. It was to come back to Council in March. But at this meeting, PST's initiative was dumped in favour of a plan put forward by Robbie and Patrick. This was claimed to be greener and quicker. Much quicker. In the corporate world this would be called a hostile takeover. What could go wrong?

By April Council, work was under way and by the 1st of May the doors were open and the washroom was ready for use. What was it that PST had missed? We didn't realize we needed to defend ourselves from others on the Commons. We were blindsided.

I once heard this saying quoted by a then respected commoner, that "efficiency is the enemy of resilience". I think this applies here. The washroom was built in record time. This was made possible by ignoring process, both external and internal.

The external requirements like: a building permit, Public Health regulation, enquiring whether our zoning will allow public toilets, were likely ignored. Will our liability insurance cover us? What about the rats?

The internal costs are unpredictable. Most members have left PST, so it's no longer functioning. Perhaps it's no longer required. What has happened to our decision-making process. Maybe we should do away with teams and run everything from Council. It seems to have worked well for the public toilet initiative.

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Governance Group Report & Draft Charter

Report to Council

May 2, 2023

From: Commons Review Governance Group

Members: Bob Andrew, Deb Ferens, Jinny Hayes (facilitating), Shelagh Huston, Judith Roux, K.Louise Vincent. Ex-officio: Heide Brown, Alison Fitzgerald, Doug Scott.

Background:

- The group met three times since the January Commons Review sessions
- Reports and verbatim flip chart sheets from January Commons Review sessions

Considerations

- Eleanor Ostrom (self governance and self organization)
- David Bollier (dynamics of peer governance, shared decision making)
- Homework included: looking at other Gabriola organizations governance structures and value words; personal thoughts on governance; Social Charter information; Rotating Leadership and Responsibility (Chinn); Doughnut Economics (Raworth); limits & boundaries; defining leadership; form follow function; structure/chaos; commoning historical context.
- Shelagh's diagram re: qualities of organizational/governance tensions: functionality, openness, flexibility; understandable.

Proposal:

- Create a Commons Governance Charter (using templates from Commons literature)
- Create a Council Team of 3-5 commoners to steward/caretake Council needs such as facilitation roles, note-taking, distributing council notes, sending pertinent Council notices (next meeting date; issues for consideration, and point of contact for community questions, attending Council etc.) and "holding" key Commons reference documents such as Governance Charter, Field Guide, etc)
- Change the Council agenda format. Suggested: Instead of Team Reports and 20 minute discussions, move to a more dynamic information sharing around themes. Suggested themes: a) ecological values/needs of the land, b) agricultural/farming/gardening values/needs of the land; c) people participation/access to the land (community, community groups, sharing the land, caring for the public/community spaces.)
- Review the Field Guide to make it more relevant and timely for reference: update, revise as needed. Perhaps two documents are needed: one to guide Trustees and one for Commoners, newcomers, etc.

Timeline:

- Implement changes over the next four to six months

Costs

- Printing materials
- Communication costs (both internal and external outward to the Community)

Next Meeting: Monday, May 8 at 2:30. Conversation room Commons Farmhouse

(Commons) Governance Charter - DRAFT

A declaration of intent (to hold the Gabriola Commons in trust for beneficiaries of the land and for future generations.)

Purpose: To operationalize the interests and practices of a Commons and the rights and incentives of a community for the management and protection of its common resources.

1. Historical Claims

- The Gabriola Commons, purchased and gifted to the community in 2005, is a 26 acre property located in the village center containing a mature forest, a wetland, agricultural values, facilities and green spaces for community benefit.
- The Gabriola Commons is on the traditional territory of the Snuneymeux First Nations.
- The Gabriola Commons is part of a woven, interconnected Earth-system, vital for life for all living beings and community, dependent on a stable and resilient planet.

2. Fair Access and Participation

- a declaration of the users' rights to organize and participate in the development of new institutions and rules;
- The charter gives all users, managers and producers of a commons an opportunity to voice the expectations and responsibilities emerging from their rights to these common goods.
- a description of the existing users, boundaries, power and control of a commons
- a statement of the entitlements and responsibilities of users, managers, and producers of the commons
- a statement of equitably shared benefits, quality standards and safeguards
- a code of ethics and common values

3. Protection and Stewardship

- a quantifiable understanding of the land and its significant values
- a means of matching the rules of provision and appropriation to local conditions
- There is a framework for democratic and transparent decision-making and participation
- There is accountability for conflict resolution and redress of grievances
- There is a process of monitoring and evaluation of the stewardship of the land

PST REPORT TO COUNCIL: by Kim Kasasian

Hedge – fertilizing done. Still needs mulch on both sides ready for summer heat. Feel free to help move chips to the hedge.

Systems mapping (water, electrics etc.) and posting of info – we are working on this.

South wall of workshop – stalled for lack of PST members.

This came from the Fire Dept - *We are teaming up with North Oyster fire, Cedar fire department, and the BC wildfire service to do a training exercise in the area. We wish to use the commons grounds, and or one of the buildings to set up sprinkler systems to protect the area from a mock wildland fire. We will also be using the Rollo Center, Elementary School, and Cox park. There won't be any impact to your buildings or operations, aside from some firefighters running around with hoses.*

Camping on commons

We cleared a camp site twice before – was equally as bad.

Now no one is camping there, but the pile of stuff is back non-the-less and continues to grow.

Stolen stuff - laptop, cell phone, several empty wallets, power tools and piles of perfectly good clothes (which GIRO says were stolen from there). Also credit cards and a scale for weighing drugs.

I went to the camp with Cont. Biggar – says it is all stolen stuff.

He pointed out that clearing the pile of stuff is dangerous because there could be needles etc

He also said that there had been a similar pile of stuff on the Folklife land.

He suggested that we check the property frequently and let him know about any issues.

Over the winter someone got into the locked timberframe and started a fire inside the upstairs room, presumably in a BBQ. They burned right through the floor.

On April 8th we arrived to the workbee and found someone camping under the timberframe in a sort of room made from tarps. They had fire making equipment and a propane tank.

There have been fires started in the Commons forest – found 4 so far.

There is a second camp in the forest. It is small, tidy and clean.

There are several issues:

Camping is excluded by Commons zoning.

It is a miserable, dangerous and depressing task to clear a camp.

Pooping in the forest and the carpark, as well as in the campsites.

The labour needed to clear a camp.

The cost of garbage disposal.

The time needed to take the garbage to Nanaimo.

Fire concerns

PST does not have the time or energy to deal with this.

Nor is there time at workbees.

RCMP can't do anything unless requested to do so by the owner.

So this has been handed over to the trustees.

South Commons Allotment Garden
May 2023 Report to the Commons Coordinating Council

Date: May 2, 2023

SCG Council Representative: Brenda Joy, SCG Co-ordinating Committee (CoCo) Member

The SCG is coming alive for another season of allotment gardening...

- 27 Apr - 6-800 sweet pea starters planted out on in the sweet pea plots, all of which were home grown courtesy of **Doug Scott, Anne Poschmann, Jane and Blair Mann** during the last 6 weeks from the seeds harvested in the fall. More SP plantings to come later.
- 28 Apr - the back SP plot was rebuilt on Friday thanks to volunteers, **John and Jamie**. A new raised bed (old one destroyed by rot and parking lot construction), and a new structure for new SP trellis 20' long x 7' high were constructed.
- 4 new quarter sized raised beds were created by sub-dividing a larger plot, to attract more gardeners and ease the burden of gardeners wanting to cut back. Thanks to volunteers, **Ailene Warner and Kevin Chopin** for their work on this.
- All SCG plots are rented except one half plot and one quarter plot.
- Thanks to **Patrick Roux** for turning on our water, so we could give the newly planted sweet peas a wee dram to speed them on their way after they went in the ground - MUCH APPRECIATED - by them and by the many other starter foods being planted out now by South Gardeners.
- Apr 30 - Doug Scott met yesterday with Heather Menzies to discuss holding a couple of get-to-know-you events, one this month and one later in the summer, one in the new Timber-frame upstairs and one in the South Gardens. They are thinking of some sort of pot luck lunch or perhaps a wine & cheese or something, to compare notes and share knowledge. To be discussed further at the SCG next CoCo meeting on May 10.
- Continued thanks to **Kevin Chopin** for taking on mowing and trimming the SCG grass for yet another year. Also thanks to **Micheal Smith** for providing maintenance on the lawn mowing and weed trimming equipment.

Kitchen Report

Hi all

The kitchen is in good functioning order.

I just received from Mary the ongoing discussion that booking has with the Agi for the wednesday market.

I will meet with Robby soon.

We had a meeting with Health Gill Lucko and gave a list of produce authorised without permits.

She confirms the need for a permit for vendors ect.

She mentioned that the well was not secure (I did it but we need a better lock to make it inaccessible)

She asked about the filters(when are they changed) and for a report from Nicolas about which Kitchen is tested.

Can somebody pass the information to the Kitchen steward Please.

The toilet for the kitchen could be closed for the public especially for events under 50 people Since we now have a toilet outside.

No need for portable toilets for events under 50 people; we actually save \$1500 for six months.

Fire suppressant for kitchen and fire extinguishers inspected but the report still marks the deficiencies of a GFI to be installed

It was installed a year ago after the last inspection.

And last the kitchen is going to change the battery of the generator you will understand that the water even in a power outage is essential for the Commons and the Commons Kitchen also power is for the food in the fridge and the frizers (It would be good to have a build in generator lets include that in a bigger plan).

Patrick

May 2, 2023

Attachment : Farm Team Report to Council

Team members: David Arnell, Betty Kehler, Bob Martin, Patrick Roux, Judith Roux , Heather Menzies (Note: farmers don't like meetings, so reports and discussions are oral)

Community Allotment Gardens: Entering spring at last!
with full sun!

- **North Gardens**

- PHC

- Community all plots registered

- **South Gardens**

- **Namaste**

Commons Farm Team

- **Little Field** (exotics and more with David Arnell)

- **Kitchen Garden:** (source of ingredients for Saturday workbee lunches).

- Garden sculpture for Earth Day (Bob M)

- New project - Moms and Kids garden together (Betty)

- Follow-up after Robbie's demonstration on producing **bio-char:**

Research establishing parallel gardens with and without bio-char.

- Orchards:

Apples (note: invasion of tent caterpillars despite frequent removal of egg cases during pruning)

Blueberries and Haskaps

Olive trees donated 5 years ago. The cold temperatures of last winter has killed one.

Fig orchard (donated and planted by Kim). All appear to have succumbed to the cold winter. The two old fig trees are OK.

May 2, 2023

Attachment : Grant Writing Team. Report to Council

Team members: George Szanto, Judith Roux, Stef Marrie

Research has continued on a long-term project addressing accessibility on the Commons, with specific attention focussing on the Farmhouse. A broad range of events (from craft fairs to training in a number of technical areas or slide shows offered by island travellers) are offered on the upper floor with only a stairway to permit people to attend. This makes it impossible for community members with mobility issues to participate.

An elevator appears to be the only solution and the GW Team has explored all possibilities, looking at specific models satisfying CSA rules. At the same time we have confirmed that the foyer in the Farmhouse would permit the installation with no restrictions. The need for an elevator was raised over five years ago when the question of accessibility was front and centre with COVID. At that time the cost with installation was \$28,000. Now the price has doubled.

We are at a point where a good discussion needs to happen, along with the overall planning of the goat barn complex.