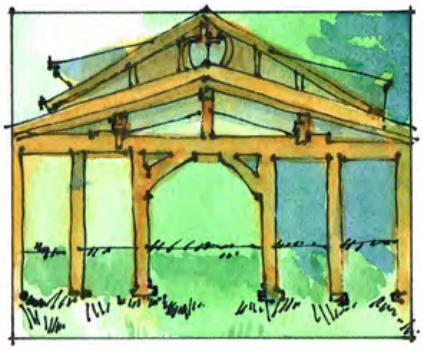


Notes

September 5, 2023 at the commons farmhouse

COMMONS COUNCIL

Presence
Heather, Kim, Bob, Jinny, Don, Diane, Betty, Dave, Shirley, Max, Robin, Cameron
facilitation/ Heather notes/ Cameron

Huy ch q'u
We expressed gratitude for the wonders and diversity of the commons landscape.

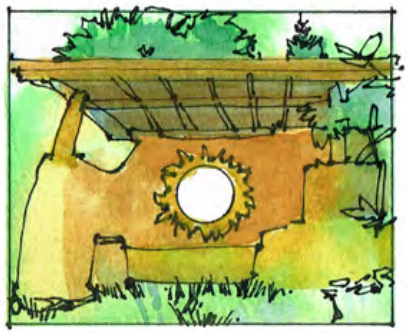
Participation
Kim presented ideas to engage new participants in stewardship of the commons.
Schedules may be reconsidered as weekly, monthly or annual involvements, beyond the current Saturday morning programme. Participants may choose favourite ways to care for the commons. Special programmes, such as windfall clearing, or creating a viewpoint at the pond may be considered.
The goat barn reinvention may also be considered a long range project.

Max suggested ideas to engage the community in storytelling aspects of the commons with themes of climate change adaptations, food security initiatives, and enabling community endeavours. The fall fair will be a showcase for many aspects of the commons.
The Farm to Table Feast is another event to interpret the commons to the community.

Communications may include: the monthly communique, social media blasts, an illustrated poster to say the commons needs you, or a conversational approach in the style of Ken Capon.

Dave highlighted aspects of the commons working well, such as: the new south siding on the workshop, orchard production, blueberry sales, south gardens, engaging community events...

Don advocated for engaging young members of the Commons.
Betty suggested family workshops and discussions, with the apple juicing programme.



Reports

Council discussion is outlined in sans serif. *Written reports are set in italics.*

Trustees

Deb prepared the trustee report, as presented by Cameron.
Finance
The year end has been completed and submitted to the Accountant.
Trustees have purchased a defibulator for placement in the farm house.
Legal
Memoranda of Understanding have been completed with all groups on the commons.
And a MOU with Namaste community gardens is also in progress.
Trustees are coordinating with Galtt on trail license agreements.
Covenant
Discussions are in progress with Islands Trust and Cascadia Commons Trust Society.
Encampments
Trustees are coordinating a meeting with village neighbours for shared approaches.
People for a Healthy Community
Trustees met with the PHC board for a social meeting to compare approaches.
Annual General Meeting
An autumn meeting is in preparation and the nominating committee welcomes candidates.

Trustees – Report to Council
by Deb Ferens

Finance
Year-end complete and submitted to Accountant for year-end review
Trustees are pursuing the purchase of a defribulator to site in the Farmhouse. The funds would come from capital reserve funds.

Legal
Memorandums of Understanding: Gloria taking over MOUs from Deb. All MOUs are up to date except Namaste which Gloria is in follow-up
GaLTT licence – the Trustees will follow up on the legal aspects of a trail license as this possibility develops (Heather will speak to this in more detail in her report)

Covenant
Still pursuing Covenant Holder – waiting to hear back from the Gabriola Local Trust Committee regarding their interest in being a signatory to the Covenant; Covenant team following up with Cascadia Commons Trust Society to become a covenant holder. Encampments – Cameron drafting letter to neighbours regarding illegal camping. Would like to have a village wide response and a meeting to discuss.

PHC
The Trustees and the PHC Board had a very nice social gathering on Tues Aug 8 to get to know new members on both boards and to share information.

AGM
Date to be determined – sometimes in the fall
Nominating Committee reviewing and referring possible Trustee candidates.
Year End Financial Reports need to be completed and received from the Accountant.

Fall Fair
Shirley, Max & Robin outlined preparations for the Fall Fair, for September 17.
Dave Bodaly will provide a Snuneymuxw welcome address to begin the Fair.
The website fallfair.ca provides competition categories and squash race guidelines.
The Sounder has published an outline article.
Coordination with the commons kitchen stewards is also in progress.

Process
Dave presented that a process team report is in progress. The intention is to start commons team discussion. The approach is toward finding agreement, rather than setting a code of conduct.

Farm
Heather reported on discussions with galtt about a coordinated approach to trail maintenance for the north to south boardwalk and for the new commons connection to Huxley park.
A memorandum of understanding is in preparation, with the trustees.
Heather reported a meeting with Andreas Khare of Poetry Gabriola.
Discussions concerned the goat barn as a flexible space for activities for the sound symposium and for the fall fair.
Discussion followed about the condition of the barn.
Don recommended a structural review.
Jinny noted that the website is currently ambiguous about the availability of the barn.
Judith has been successful with farm gate sales of blueberries.
Heather has also prepared a draft outline of rotating facilitators and secretaries for new commons council meetings.

Farm Team - Report to Council
by Heather Menzies

Judith has been spearheading the 'farmgate' sales of produce (blueberries, apples, figs, tomatoes) and processed food (sauerkraut). She report sales of $340 for August, of which $285 is being turned over to the Finance Team; recording such revenues is relevant for reporting to

the ALC. Some of the revenue has been retained as cash in hand for making change. Plus $80 went to reimburse Heather who had paid that total out of her own pocket to soup chefs, in keeping with this team having taken on responsibility to reimburse soup chefs for expenses. The team would prefer to have soup chef expenses paid by the Finance Team.

Betty Kehler, assisted by Leanne Duncan, is offering apple juicing at the Commons, proposing to charge $1. a litre, up from 75 cents last year. The first pressing was this past Saturday, Sept. 2nd, with a good response to the small 'classified' ad Betty placed in the Sounder.

She also sent me a feedback report from the mothers with children gardening program she spearheaded in the Kitchen Garden this Spring, an excerpt from which I include here:

"This is the feedback I got from the mothers of young children when we were doing a workshop on making and preserving pasta sauce. There were 3 of the more enthusiastic women who want to become more food secure. I asked them what would make the Commons a more friendly place that they would like to participate in.
They're really enjoying and learning from our garden at the Commons kitchen garden and now preserving various kinds of foods. They would like to have a mentor program whereby experienced gardeners are matched up with a couple of beginners and intermediate gardeners to continue learning, and if possible, to have the mentors and mentees living in the same area. They'd like to have the Commons put out a monthly calendar of events taking place and to register and pay online if possible. Something like the recreational organization of Gabriola.

They have a limited amount of time but this would be a good start they said."

Stewardship
Bob presented property stewardship team projects.
Waterworks required an update and adjustments to restore the potable water supply. An alternative back up system is also in progress, to meet Vancouver Island Health Authority requirements. The pond is stationary at 3' depth of water at present. Rainwater has raised the level in the reservoir. And Don is assessing solar system efficiency.

Bookings
Bob presented the bookings update, as prepared by Deb.
Janice prepares bookings for the farmhouse.
Lino continues with bookings for the open air spaces; while seeking a new volunteer.
The farmhouse and open spaces have brought close to 1,200.00 in fees from April to June.
Bookings funds are redirected to the property stewardship team for maintenance expenses.
Janice, Lino, Suzi and Deb meet twice a year to review bookings operations.

Bookings Team - Report to Council
by Deb Ferens

Janice continues to do the bookings for the Farmhouse.
Lino continues to do the bookings for the outdoor spaces until a replacement is secured and he will be ready to move on. There are a couple of people interested but asked for more time and information in order to think about it.
Finances: The Farmhouse and the Outdoor spaces have brought in close to $1200 fees in the period Apr 1, 2023 to June 30, 2023. These funds are directed to PST for maintenance and repair type expenses.
Janice, Lino, Suzi (financial reconciliation) and Deb meet twice a year to review bookings operations, once in the spring and once in the fall.

Governance
Jinny requested that teams review the draft outline, as prepared by the governance team and provide comments for consideration next week.
Individual responses are also welcome.

Discussion followed about three elements of the commons:
A agricultural landscapes,
B biodiverse natural ecosystems
C cultural gathering places
While council discussion may be oriented to the three ABC aspects; commons teams would carry on with the current thematic format.

The grant writing team is currently working on an approach for accessibility funding to provide an elevator and the associated circulation patterns, to update the farmhouse and to provide universal accessibility.

Governance Team - Report to Council
by Jiny Hayes

The Governance Review Group is proposing the following governance structure actions for team consideration and comments:

Create a Commons Peer Governance Document
Create a Council Team to attend to Council needs such as facilitation, note taking, distributing notes, sending Council notices, and caretaking pertinent reference documents

Change the Council agenda format to create a more dynamic sharing of information centered around themes such as:

a) ecological values/needs of the land; b) agricultural/farming/gardening activities and values ; c) public/community spaces - multipurpose uses of the land.
Gather, review and update if necessary, Relevant Documents (eg, Field Guide, Zoning Bylaws, GCF Constitution & Bylaws, etc.)

Timeline: Upon agreement, implement changes gently and mindfully over a four to six month period. Longer if necessary. Costs: Minimal (paper, copying, communication)

Gabriola Commons: Peer Governance Document
This Peer Governance document upholds guidelines and agreements that promote caring for the land and the people: ecology, agriculture, the people who steward it directly and the Gabriola community which benefits from the green spaces and places to gather.

Background
The Gabriola Commons:
Is part of a global commons and is, "a broad set of resources, natural and cultural, that are shared by many people" (International Association for the Study of the Commons).
Was established in 2005 and 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.
"Is a unique and distinct property on Gabriola Island. Managed as a community commons by a community-based, volunteer association, it is a place where sustainability, community, and agriculture meet. The Commons is intended to exist in perpetuity for the benefit of the community, a community legacy serving community needs" (GI LTC Bylaw No. 258 – Gabriola Official Community Plan).
Is on the traditional, unceded territory of the Snuneymeux First Nations.
Is part of a woven, interconnected Earth-system, vital for life for all living beings and community, dependent on a stable and resilient planet.

Peer Governance
works within the Commons, is "order without law" (Bollier & Helfrich, p.119). It is a dialectic between culture and structure.
has clear organizational forms and regularities.
articulates the relationships and interconnectedness among ecological sustainability, agriculture practices and the people who work and play on the Commons.
includes clear statements about ethics, values and agreements (such as a Code of conduct).
outlines how to care for the land, the people, the environment
establishes boundaries [work, behaviour, being in relation]
articulates structures and processes of shared decision-making.
defines shared intentions (such as organic food production, control of invasive species).
has a process for naming and resolving differences and accountability for conflict resolution and redress of grievances
has a process of monitoring and evaluation of the stewardship of the land

Principles and Agreements
Contributing Freely: individual contributions depend first and foremost on what people can truly give.
Valuing Diversity: drawing upon everyone's experiences and motivations and respecting the individuality of diverse members while forging an ethic of solidarity.
Cultivating shared purpose and values: through collective reflection, traditions, celebrations and participation in all kinds of activities.
Authentic participation: Individuals contribute by doing something they truly enjoy; the most helpful questions are "what do we have" and "what is possible with what is available here and now" (Bollier & Helfrich, p. xx).
Practicing gentle reciprocity; what matters is a feeling of fairness.
Participative Decision Making: decision making processes encourage open discussion and actively elicit people's deeper, often unstated, concerns (Bollier & Helfrich, pp. 139-140).

Preserving relationships in addressing conflicts; there is an honest transparent reckoning of conflict or violation, in a spirit of respect and concern for all the people involved.
Meaningful togetherness: meeting regularly, sharing deeply, celebrating successes, candidly assessing failures.
Trusting the deep wisdom of situated knowledge: observing and interacting with the land to creatively respond to change and experiences on the land.
Deepening communication with nature: Interacting with nature as consciously helpful protectors and stewards.

Beloved Community
From KL: The CPTR Director of Diversity, Equity and Belonging, Shirley Strong, (California Institute of Integral Studies & Center for Psychedelic Therapies and Research), defines Beloved Community as an inclusive, interrelated consciousness based on love, justice, responsibility, shared power, and a deep respect for all people, places and things that radically transforms individuals and restructures institutions.

Recruitment - Report to Council
by Kim Kasasian

Firstly, recruitment is reliant on effective communication.
Heather and I have been talking about alternative ways of communicating.
Looking at simple ways to reach out to people rather than expecting them to look for info on the website eg Gabriola Bulletin Board.

We all know that every Gabriola organization is having trouble getting volunteers, but I don't see anywhere struggling as hard to get volunteers as the Commons.

Why is this?

1/ The PHC/Commons confusion. Eg I was recently told by a Gabriola resident that the Commons is so lucky to have an enormous number of volunteers and paid staff. Not the first time I've heard this.
2/ When volunteering comes up we invite people to the workbees, which is fine but limiting.
What if they work on Saturday.
Or have to take the kids to sports.
Or don't have the time to turn up to workbees.

We need to have an array of ways in which people can volunteer:

They could do one run to the dump, or offer a morning of painting, or clean the gutters each year. Their one job.
They could take a tiny job like weeding the bed by the road – 10 mins when they are passing by.
They could be on a list for helping with occasional larger jobs – like the South wall of the workshop.
A retired engineer might be on a list for giving us advice when we need it.
Some people absolutely love to use a ride-on mower, weed whacker or power washer, but wouldn't be interested in anything else.
We could have a couple of special workbees each year where we have coffee, cookies and childcare – create a fun, community atmosphere.
When an out of the ordinary job comes up we could put out a general request – like cleaning up all the branches after a big storm.
There are some valuable projects that we just can't manage. Eg. The school has been wanting a viewing platform for the pond so that the kids can study the pondlife. We could say to the school that they need to get together a team of handy parents to design and build the platform with the Commons OK-ing the plans.
There are people who love to organize community events but wouldn't be interested in any other involvement.

SUGGEST A JOB THAT WOULD SUIT YOU!

My feeling is we have got stuck in our thinking.
It is time to stop trying to recruit people in the same way we have always done, and expect a different result.

The same goes for communication.

Communications - Report to Council
by Heather Menzies

Wrote another Sounder piece, and added it as blog to website. Added material from Max on Fall Fair. Started work on slightly revising website copy in three theme areas to highlight teams associated with them; will circulate these suggested revisions to relevant teams.

Anticipating further communications initiatives around need for active recruitment. Continuing to learn while fielding emails sent to 'info@' including one raising fire concerns re. the unauthorized sleeping rough/camping in woods, and a delightful one from a trans community in N.S. wanting to learn from us as they create a commons on 12 acres of land. Others interested in joining a zoom follow-up call?

Related subjects:
Helped set up a meeting at the Commons, drawing people from 3 teams (Trails & Green Spaces; Sharing the Commons; and Trustees) with three people from GaLLT (led by current head, Hugh Skinner) to discuss GaLLT trail licensing on our trails. (Other team members to follow up: trustees re. 2 licenses right away; and Trails & Gr. Spaces re. a possible collaborative GaLLT-Commons working group to share not only trail maintenance but caring for the habitat and biodiversity through which the trails run.

Sharing the Commons - Report to Council
by Heather Menzies

Goat Barn
Met with Andreas Kahre, and also Bob Andrew with PST, to look at Goat Barn to ascertain if it could be available for some public use. (Agreed it could be.)
Carried on meeting to discuss need to set up a goat barn team & in a follow-up meeting (Heather with Andreas) drafted a mandate for such a team, setting out an incremental approach to upgrading the space.

Farm to Table Feast
Met with Lynn Bowerman to sign the rental agreement for the outdoor spaces needed for this event, and to talk through how it will unfold. Agreed to ensure that someone would talk about the Commons, and volunteered to do this. (Plan is to use it as a recruitment opportunity—whoever speaks.)