Minutes of the Gabriola Commons Council

Monthly Meeting

7 November 2023

Participation: Jinny Hayes (Facilitator), Deb Ferens (Co-Facilitator), Brenda Joy, Linda King, Betty Kehler, Penelope Bahr, Don Smardon, Kim Kasasian, Bob Andrew, Brent O'Malley (Notes)

Agenda

1) Welcome and Agenda
2) Acknowledgement
3) Meeting Overview
4) Leftover Items
    a. Cleaning the goat barn
    b. Peer governance document
5) Team and Affiliate Reports
    a. Agriculture
    b. Ecology
    c. Community
6) Closing
    a. Comments and Appreciations

We began with introductions including recognizing three people in attendance for the first time, Linda, Penelope and Brent. Brent agreed to take Notes.

Jinny highlighted that the format for the meeting would be slightly different than in the past, with each team represented aligning to one or more of the 3 key components in the Commons; Agriculture, Ecology or Community/Cultural.

Deb offered a First Nations acknowledgement, citing one truth and one reconciliation.

Jinny began by soliciting from those team members present which key component most aligns with the work a team is doing. The foci broke down as follows:

Agriculture	Farm Team; Finance
Ecology	Finance
Community/Cultural	Finance; Governance; Property Stewardship; South Gardens; Process Team; Kitchen

It stands to reason that some teams' mandates cross among the three areas of protection. The Commons has a lot of teams and some are not active or their representatives do not attend Council. So the question becomes whether we might be able to amalgamate teams and still be able to steward the land, amenities and people well.

Teams Reports

Farm Team (Betty)
Betty reported on what was happening at Namaste Farm, the affiliate community garden that is not an actual part of The Commons. There are 35 plots available at Namaste for community members to use. There are a total of 105 plots, including those in the South. North and Namaste Gardens.

- Mothers with young children had recently visited Namaste.
- Sessions were held on canning, freeze drying, soup making and fermentation.
- Work was done on the paths between the beds laying down cardboard and woodchips.
- A workshop on pruning was held.

The biannual Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) is coming up for renewal between the owner of Namaste, Cosmo, and the Commons. There was a brief discussion on issues such as liability insurance.

Property Stewardship (Bob)

- PST is changing the combination of locks on buildings (not the house lock) for security reasons.
- The Goat Barn bathroom had to be closed and will be open again when: we put in a new door and lock; we figure out how /when to keep it open and for who, and who is responsible for cleaning it.
- There is a new cistern by the main parking lot, trickling off from the well. This is a VIHA requirement for water security in case we have severe drought and the well (our only source of potable water) goes dry. The well lines will be directed through the cistern thus leaving a backup of 2000 gallons at any given time.
- PST is working with the Kitchen Stewards to find replacements for the ailing Garland ovens (over 50 years old) and getting the Convection oven repaired.
- The reservoir has been draining recently and we will track down the leak. Everyone must become more water conscious.

South Gardens (Brenda Joy)

- One gardener, who has been a long time member of the South Garden, has not followed through on their commitment or responsibilities as a steward of one of the garden plots. This year the plot was not really used at all. There is a long documented history of this individual failing to meet expectations, and a long waiting list of people who would love to be able to work a plot in the garden.
- The decision was made by the South Garden Coordinating Committee to not renew this individual's access to a garden plot next year. A gently worded letter is to be sent out in the near future to this person explaining the decision. There is concern that this person may react negatively to this news, and possibly "go public."
- The Council members present at this meeting were unanimously in support of the decision by the South Garden to proceed as proposed.

Process Team (Brenda Joy)

- At their last meeting, the Process Team discussed how to address disagreements within the Commons working teams and individuals.

- The proposal was made to form a small, short term working group of approximately 6 people with experience in conflict management and resolution to develop policy documents that can be used to assist in resolving conflicts. This team would report to the Process Team and then to the Council.
- Once a document is established, the team would be dissolved.
- Brenda asked if there were any concerns with this approach and if there were any volunteers who would like to participate.
- It was felt that this request should be forwarded to the various teams with the hope of soliciting volunteers and gaining different perspectives.

Note: there are currently 24 identified teams operating within the Commons. Each team has a point person who, with varying amounts of consistency and reliability, shares information (such as Council Notes) with the team members. It would be though this sharing of information that the Process Team might solicit participation in this short term working group.

Jinny requested that Brenda and the Process Team keep the Peer Governance Group in the loop on this.

- Brenda also noted that currently there is no volunteer appreciation process and the thought was expressed that this could be very beneficial.

Kitchen Stewards Team (Brent)

- There are currently 4 new kitchen stewards and we are working quickly to try to get up to speed on what our responsibilities are.
- Bob was acknowledged for his invaluable assistance in liaising with an electrician who is performing a needs analysis of the kitchen.
- We are hoping that we might be able to obtain grants or fundraising capital to offset some large anticipated capital expenses such as new (or new to us) stoves to replace the 50+ year old Garlands that are currently being used. The old stoves do not have replacement parts and are a potential hazard.
- We hope to arrange for a deep clean of the kitchen within the next month hopefully assisted by the two groups currently using the kitchen on a regular basis.

Trustees (Deb)

- Elevator for Farmhouse Entry - 2 grants have been applied for.
- Defibrillator – installed in the Farmhouse Entry.
- Memorandum of Understanding: Namaste Garden MOU has been updated and signed
- GaLTT Trail Licence
    - The recommendation has been previously brought to Council by Sharing the Commons and Trails and Green Spaces, and initial contact between GaLTT and Kim (PST).
    - The Trustees have met with GaLTT president (Hugh Skinner) and 2 GaLTT Trails members (Barry and Tom) to review a Trail Licence Agreement. Next step is a final review of the Agreement by the Trustees before signing.
- Gabriola Commons Foundation Annual General Meeting: Nov 19 at 2 pm in the Farmhouse Big Room.
- Insurance Renewal: Trustees are in discussion and contact with Insurance Provider Megson Fitzpatrick to finalize details.

- Encampments:
    - Sadly, there was a death in a tent on the Commons around 2 weeks ago.
    - There have been at least 4 big encampment clean ups since the beginning of the year. The Trustees hired Gabriola Disposal to clean up one in June and one in Oct, costing >$800. It was noted that the garbage clean up expense was taken from the Operating Budget though this level of expense was not included in the 2023-2024 budget.
    - Follow-up plans include scheduling regular tri-weekly trail walkabouts to check on any further encampments and to clean up litter/garbage along trails.
    - A neighbourhood meeting is being arranged.
    - Gabriola Health & Well-being Collaborative has the opioid/homeless crisis on their radar and the social worker at the Medical Clinic will be holding a special community meeting to address the issue.

Finance (Deb)
The Sept 2023 Project Restricted Funds Spread Sheet was distributed.

Jinny reported on Peer Governance Group (Jinny)

- Part of this group's work was to develop a mandate for the new Council Stewardship team (circulated with the October Notes and again with the Council reminder e.mail). Those present agreed that to this mandate, so it will be sent to the webmistress for addition to the Commons website.
- Work on the Peer Governance document is continuing; thanks to all who submitted comments and suggestions.

Other Items (carried over from October Council)

There was general discussion about the bathroom that has been in operation since April 2023 and how to manage it. Unfortunately the facility has been abused and left in a state of chaos on occasion, leaving it to volunteers to clean up, by default, PST Team at present.

Bob reported that the water lines are uninsulated and therefore the bathroom should not be used in the wintertime.

A suggestion was made to form a small task force to come up with suggestions about best practices including care, cleaning and expenses. Deb and Jinny volunteered to begin the task but are seeking others.

Closing Comments

- Jinny thanks everyone for flexing to a trial new agenda format. Meeting participants felt that the new format, including 5-minute team reports, worked so far.
- Freshness and change is good.
- Maintaining a time clock of 5 minutes per team report worked, always with the option to extend should it be necessary and with consensus. The timer used was gentle.

Deb will facilitate the **Dec 5 Council Meeting: 7pm in the Farmhouse.**
A Notes-taker is needed; good to establish in advance so that person's e.address can be posted prior to the meeting to receive written reports.