Commons Community Council
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Notes of Meeting of April 2, 2024

Facilitator: Jinny Hayes

Minutes: Heide Brown

Present: Deborah Ferens, Bob Andrew, Brenda Fowler, Brent O'Malley, Bob Martin, Betty Kehler, Lynn Bowerman, Murray Bush, Carol Keane, Joyce Lee, Heather Menzies, Simon Nattrass, Bobbi Rose O'Brien, Kim Kasasian, David Lightly.

1. Land Acknowledgement: Deborah Ferens.
• Selected points from the Truth and Reconciliation Committee Report

2. Agenda: Reminders:
- 5 Minute team reports unless agreed upon; in Word or Pages, NOT PDFs, please
- Written reports preferred, in this case to Heide

3. Acknowledgement Discussion (~15 minutes)
• Heather had previously raised the importance of using the term "Land Acknowledgement", but Jinny noted that considerations surround more than First Nations' Stewardship of the land over eons before settlement. Centuries of wrongs to FN by settlers require ongoing acknowledgement and reconciliation, ie, beyond caring for the land.
• Heather noted that "land" is inclusive of concepts such as kinship with animals, flora, etc. Work must progress towards reconciliation, ie, repairs and in context of the historical commons and what comes next.
• David pointed to the notion of sovereignty, and also noted that FNs embrace the idea that the land also takes care of **them.**
• Joyce: **Truth** is reconciliation.
• So far there seems to be a sense that talking more about First Nations, along with the formal acknowledgement, is good, ie, expanding beyond their care of the land.

4. Team Reports

Farm Team (Heather Menzies)
• Betty Kehler has purchased **mason bees** for the orchard, and also enough **paper-pulp mulch mats** for use at the base of the apple trees and blueberry bushes; she will be reimbursed from Farm Team account.
• Despite an initial interest among North and South allotment gardeners to devote some portion of the **Little Field** to the shared growing of crops like potatoes, squash and muskmelon, this initiative seems to have lapsed for the moment; people seem to have enough on their plates with the allotment gardens they have, plus life.
• Betty Kehler is preparing to again offer the garden teaching/growing program that she launched last year in the **Kitchen Garden** for families interested in their children learning how to grow food well. It's called the Learners' Garden. She has an article about this coming out in the *Sounder*.
• Hosted a meeting March 30 to discuss how best to handle the workload of the **Commons Orchard.** It was attended by most members of the farm team plus five people from the South and North Gardener teams.
• Two farm team members (Bobbi Rose O'Brien & Simon Nattrass) are among four people with professional farming and orchard-management experience who are proposing to take primary

responsibility for caring for the orchard, harvesting and selling its fruit. (The others are Lynn Bowerman and Kayla Lofstrom.) The group has begun to frame as a proposal, stressing that this would not be a closed group, but also stating that they need to derive some living/income from this work.
• This idea was supported by everyone at the meeting, with attention then focussed on how to make this actionable within the framework of the Commons and its Bylaws, including #57 barring individuals from gaining personally from Commons activities.
• There was an excellent discussion of possible ways forward and a host of excellent suggestions.
ACTION: These four people will draft a mandate/project plan for a Commons Orchard Team to function as an affiliate of the Farm Team; Heather has agreed to help with this, and the Sharing the Commons Team might also become involved. The idea is to explore how a combined model of volunteers plus a core group of people receiving some income from their work is feasible; it will be sort of a pilot project. (Notes from the team's March 30 meeting are available on request.)

Orchard Team (Lynn Bowerman)
• Orchard pruned at the pruning workshop
• 4 participants are maintaining the orchard, amongst the community of the Commons; keeping records of work hours; working with allotment gardeners.
• Blueberries now pruned.
• Fertilized the fruit trees with Alpaca poop.
• Wanting to re-do drip lines, irrigation supplies – will need Commons financial help to purchase.
• Would like help mulching, putting up nets, and harvesting.
• Will keep lawn inside mowed/trimmed.
• Will try this for a year, taking notes of production and hours of labour. Working on how big of a share to them and how much to the Commons.
D: Brenda voiced a concern about the speed with which the new paradigm – Orchard Team – has evolved, but she finds the process exciting; wave of new thinking; will need more volunteers; suggests we move slowly.

Trails and Green Spaces (Heather Menzies)
• With support from work bee participants, cleared trees and brush from an area in the woods so that a clandestine (illegal) **camp site** will now be less clandestine.
• Started the seasonal trimming of the grass in and around the **labyrinth**, using the battery-operated weed wacker.
• Liaising with Hugh Skinner and others at **GaLTT** to meet and finalize details of the trails over which GaLTT is taking over the management, as per a Trail License worked out with the Trustees. At this on-site meeting, decisions on where to place GaLTT signage will also be made. It's hoped that a Trustee and a PST member will also attend this meeting to address details like trail-end transitions.
• Finalizing a first-ever **Commons trail map**, with professional support from Cameron Murray. Have chatted with PST members about posting some of these (to be laminated by Kim Kasasian) at trail entry points and at least one in the woods. Also proposing to have this published in the *Sounder* in time for a community Earth Day walk around the Commons.
Q: Check cost of colour map in Sounder. How will that be funded? It has to be big enough to read.

Kitchen Team (Brent O'Malley)
• Team is down to 3 members: Marti, David, Brent.
• Rental agreement rewritten.
• Working on inventory list, to be sent out with rental agreement; stuff goes missing; thinking to engrave pots, etc.
• Re-organizing the Kitchen and its adjoining rooms; eg, the Farm Team room is not used efficiently; moved some of large kitchen stuff off counters and into Farm room.

• Users forget food stored in the Kitchen, especially the freezer (eg, blackberries): what should be done?
• Capital improvements being put on the backburner.
• Insurance claim for water damage is in process; slowed down by illness.
• Mechanical engineer looked at the stoves; decision forthcoming re: spending money refurbishing, e

Process Team (David Lightly)
• Working on an agreement for all people coming onto the Commons; plan to have a draft for next Council; will be openly and widely available once agreed upon.

Bookings Team (Deborah Ferens)
• Report covers the period of Fall 2023 - Spring 2024
• Finances: Rental Incomes: Farmhouse $4276.50; Timberframe $1517.50; Community Kitchen $3990.00; Tent/Reservoir Stage $1505.
• Rental Incomes are revenue for maintenance & repairs in the Property Steward Team Budget.
• Goat Barn expenses $1816.75; no rental income.
• Outdoor Bookings: still looking for a booking agent for TimberFrame and Reservoir Stage & Green Spaces.
• Goat Barn Toilet: all discussion notes have been submitted to PST for their consideration on determining this bathroom's availability, accessibility, repairs, & maintenance.
• Farmhouse to be deep cleaned; talking to cleaning/window company.
Discussion (D): Should advertise for an Outdoor Booking volunteer in the *Sounder,* preferably with a computer and/or musician background.

Covenant Team (Deborah Ferens)
• Report covers the period of: up to Mar 2024
• June 2023 the Local Trust Committee (LTC) considered the request from the Covenant Team to consider becoming a signatory on the Gabriola Commons Covenant. At that time, the LTC forwarded the Covenant to their staff for review. Then at the March 21 LTC Meeting the following resolution was passed:
"that the Gabriola Island Local Trust Committee request that the Executive Committee approve up to $4,500 for the legal review of a covenant, to be charged to the Gabriola Island Local Trust Committee budget".

Peer Governance Team: Jinny Hayes
• Still working on the Field Guide
• Meet once a month.

Goat Barn Team
• Written report previously circulated to Team reps submitted by David Reid.
• As no-one from the team was present, item tabled for next Council Meeting.

Communications Team (Heather Menzies)
• There is no action taken to report on, only action plans in the works. These include additional revisions to the Commons website, to include some updates such as the Kitchen rental agreement, information about the Goat Barn project, collaboration with David Reid in writing a piece for the *Sounder* about the repurposing plans and activities, as well as items on the website and FaceBook page about Earth Day events.

Trustees Team (Bob Andrew)
• Lately been concentrating on the homeless, the partiers, the garbage; do now have a large, locked garbage container.
• Judith Plant to be appointed to Trustees at the next meeting.
• **Trail Walking Group** (Deb Ferens). Still checking on Tues, Thur. and Saturdays; finding fires, graffiti on trees, garbage; would welcome more volunteers.

Events Team (Bob Andrew)
• Max has resigned from the team and moved from Gabriola; therefore Spring Fair is in jeopardy. One person is considering taking it on; Bob will check with that person.
• Joyce Lee would like to coordinate an Asian Awareness dinner at the Commons in May; was encouraged to do so.

Property Stewardship Team (Kim Kasasian)
• Doing monthly water testing.
• A leak has been detected in the irrigation system.
• Zak Upton's (electrician) removal of baseboard heating in the Farmhouse Big Room and 2 bathrooms has made a big difference.
• Upstairs doors are still being left open. Could we get PHC to not use the front door (unlocked door gives access to upstairs, an obvious security risk)?
• Most time still spent on garbage removal (encampments) and vandalism, eg, butane use, drug paraphernalia, food near cisterns.
Q: Police advised that we take immediate action - why aren't we? **A.** (Bob for Trustees) Reports of partying has resulted in a "no tolerance" policy; Trustees will meet with others (PHC, Police) ASAP to figure out how to put this into effect.

5. Affiliate Reports

Tool Library (Carol and Murray)
• Members now approx. 50; 1200 loans annually.
• Want to build a freestanding storage shed (with no steps) for larger outdoor tool, eg, 8x6x8 ft. They would pay for it and get volunteers from their group to help construct.
Q. What tools are most commonly borrowed, then cull, and will need less space. **A.** Log-splitter, shredders; a chipper would be good. They are constantly culling!
D. • Are they aware that this will affect the Memorandum of Understanding?
• Reminded to draw up plans.

Earth Day (Bob Martin)
• April 13
• Has worked out rental, contracts, tickets (free, but folks can donate at the door).
• All in support of the Commons. Second concert also in support of the Commons. All money raised goes to the Commons, including donations at Earth Day films set up with Don Buskirk.
• Schedule of Earth Day events will be in the *Sounder*. Ads are set up for twice in April. Bob is paying for all the ads.
• Tickets are free but numbers limited to the venues' capacities.

PHC (Brenda Fowler)
• Participating in Earth Day Parade, with kids, etc.
• Changed PHC Guest Wifi password.
• Meeting monthly with Commons Liaison represenatives; starting to discuss next lease; want to change some structures, eg adding a reception area a greeter at the entrance, improving security, a

bathroom renovation, enclose back patio. Would like to apply for a grant from the United Way which is due in mid-April.
Q. Would these improvements serve us all collectively? **A.** Are responsibility of the landlord, ie, the Gabriola Commons Foundation. This item is on the Trustees' next agenda.
Q. Would this be a collaboration? Infrastructure is involved, and as such, any application would have to come from the Commons.
D. Commons requires strategic planning around changes to and uses of the Farmhouse and around the property, eg, the Community Kitchen. Agriculture needs to be a main focus.

6. Closure
Meeting ended a few minutes late.