Commons Coordinating Council (CCC)

Notes of Meeting of 05-Nov-2024

Send written reports to council@gabriolacommons.ca

Facilitator: Deb Ferens

Recorder: Greg Blee

Timer: Jinny Hayes

Present: Kristen Allan, Bobbi Rose O'Brien, Shelagh Huston, Kim Kasasian, Bob Andrew, Don Smardon, Gloria Filax, David Lightly, Brenda Joy, Heather Menzies, Rainbow Friberg.

1. Welcome & introductions

2. Land acknowledgement

David mentioned past land acknowledgements … talked about personal connections to First Nations people and community and his connection to this area within a few hundred km: "This is my home." But in school, the Queen was on wall along with a map of the British Empire. The imperialist capitalist context is part of us, and he sees himself as part of a history that stole the land. … Heard Doug White speak, he always circles back to love … "Love has been lacking, that is what we need to reconcile."

3. Agenda review

Deb taped a sheet on wall with the Commons three principles — Ecology, Agriculture, Community — and the current activities going on under each category.

We acknowledge the passing of Senator and First Nations elder, Murray Sinclair.

4. Reports

We went around the circle, comprising Team reports and some individual news.

Board of Trustees — Gloria (written)

- AGM – December 1, 2024, 2:00 p.m., Farmhouse. Need Trustee nominees; ad in tomorrow's *Sounder*.
- Poetry Gabriola request that they turn the Yurt over to the Commons Foundation.
- Grant writing policy. Approved by Finance Team and Trustees. Document to be circulated at Council.
- Companion document - fundraising - is in editing phase.
- George S working on a Legal Team.
- Discussion on access to public space (forest area). Tape up or down? Other mitigation measures?
- Gabriola Collaborative will take lead on community wide discussion on homeless and un-homed.
- Trustees require a proposal and plan for addition to Tool Shed.
- Insurance renewed and waiting for documents for Trustee liability and Property insurance.
- NEXT meeting: November 20, 2024, 10:00 am, Farmhouse.

Q: Collaborative?
A: Gabriola Health & Wellbeing Collaborative, an alliance of ~ 50 Gabriola organizations and individuals that focus on various aspects of health and wellness; the Commons is a member.

Q: Yurt discussion on agenda?
A: Yes, see below.

Finance Team — Gloria (written)

- Finance team is working on 2 documents: Grant writing and Fundraising. If you wish a copy of the Grant writing document, please email Gloria for a copy.
- Financial statements for August and September are available. Please email Gloria for a copy. Update Restricted Funds (team accounts) will be ready next week.
- We are working on documents and report for the AGM – December 1, 2024.
- Next Meeting: November 19, 2024, noon – 2:00 p.m. at the Farmhouse.

Property Stewardship Team — Kim, Bob (verbal)

- Getting ready for winter freeze but won't be fully ready. Issues with lighting, and the pump irrigation system.
- Found a campsite in the forest—first one in a while. Plan to remove it at Saturday workbee; occupant has been given warning.

Trail Walking — Bob (verbal)

• The trail walkers were diligent over the summer, 3-4 times a week. Results seem to indicate that the grounds were better respected and no camping happened. But now there are more people in woods, garbage has increased. We need to keep on top of it.

Peer Governance Working Group — Jinny (verbal)

• Nothing new to report. The "Intro to the Commons" document needs to come to Council but has been bounced from the agenda for a few meetings; hope to discuss it at December Council meeting.

Covenant Team — Jinny (verbal)

• Team is quiet, waiting the Islands Trust Local Committee to move forward on its decision re: becoming a Covenant Holder. Team will need to reconvene to attend to some of their requests.

• We also await the ALC decision to extend the deadline for registration on Title.

Bobbi — Fall Fair & Apple Fest (verbal)

• Bobbi just finished writing a 10-page report for the Agi Co-op.

• It was a successful collaboration with Agi Co-op (Commons provided volunteers, Co-op supplied infrastructure).

• About 1,000 people attended, all events went well. Raised about $3,000 net, including about $1,000 from the apple juicing.

• Will share the written report with Commons teams, including several proposed tweaks for next year. Lots of room to improve on connection with Snunexmuxw, including possible collaboration with the Breaking Bannock project.
• The $3,000 is split evenly between Co-op and Commons; both expenses and revenue are shared.
• Several expressed thanks to Bobbi: "You rescued the whole event." Applause!

Trails & Green Spaces (TAGS) Team — Heather (written)

• Finalized details on Commons trail map and signs design, and had the signs made by Signfast in Nanaimo.
• About to finish last phase of project, which is to have the signposts dug into the ground and the signs installed on them. It's hoped this will happen in the first two weeks of November.

Discussion:

- Installing into woods on Friday, if no rain.
- Second stage is the brochure, now in place at the library and close-by businesses. Plan to put an article in the *Sounder*, as part of strategy to get people into the woods. Many people have no idea the trails are there!
- After the trail signs in place, another *Sounder* article to encourage walking groups, people on lunch breaks, to walk the woods.
- Must get all materials in to Gabriola Rec Soc by Dec-15 to get the funds reimbursed.
- Signs have a coating that protects from (some) graffiti.
- (Note further discussion under The Woods below.)

Farm Team — Heather (written)

• Finished report for the Agricultural Land Commission (ALC) on the Commons agricultural and related activities. Fact-checked this and edited it, plus inserted relevant photos. Report ready to send to ALC Land Use Planner responsible for the Commons, Ciaran McKay.
• Farm team members helped to set up and run the Fall Fair/Apple Fest.
• Collaborated with PST and North Gardeners, who took the lead in a major effort to replace the fencing around the food-growing areas on the Commons.
• The work spanned three work bees and drew together upwards of 15 people working under the direction of Tanner Ellingson with the Property Stewards. The North Gardeners' coordinator, Maureen Wild, spearheaded the project and coordinated communication among all the teams involved, including the South Gardeners, who provided extra work-bee help, and the Commons' soup makers who supplied extra soup and bread. PHC, which rents 36 garden plots within the area being re-fenced, provided additional financial support, and Arbutus generously helped with fencing materials. This work largely completed by the end of the month

Discussion:

- Article in *Sounder* about the activity this week.
- Since the Commons' organizational chart is flat, Heather can send on behalf of Trustees to ALC and copy Trustees. **ACTIONS:**
  1. Could also circulate by appending to Council Notes and posting on website.
  2. **Trustees** would like to see the report **before** it goes out so they can be fully aware of the

report. Also, **Covenant Team** has been main body interacting with ALC, so they should also see it.

Q: Is there a requirement for a regular report?

A: Our last report to ALC was done in 2008. It seems like they are grateful to receive anything!

Q: What triggered the writing of this report?

A: The prospect of getting decent grant money to do food promo stuff around the Community Kitchen.

Communications Team — Heather (written)

• Wrote an extensive blog piece for the Commons website chronicling the work that went into organizing the combined Fall Fair and Apple Fest, co-hosted by the Commons and the Agi Co-op, under the leadership of Bobbi Rose O'Brien, and describing some of the highlights of the day, complete with photos.

• Took photos and wrote short piece for the *Sounder* about the re-fencing project.

South Gardens Team — Brenda (written)

Covers 1 October to 5 November, 2024; last meeting 9 October (monthly).

- 2025 registration for primary plots is ongoing. Next registration dates are Nov 6, 5:30-7:30 pm; Nov 9, 2-4 pm. All at the Commons Farmhouse.
- Next SCG work bee is Saturday, Nov 6 10 am -12 pm to work on cutting back the bush along the perimeter fence inside and out, around the pond, and along the parking lot and composting toilet.
- Individual volunteers will be winterizing the composting toilet, cleaning the tool shed and removing the water meter/filter and draining the irrigation system.
- Kevin Chopin & Scott Lewis are removing and sorting through the big pile of organic debris on the berm. We are leaving the big dirt pile created from the parking lot construction as is for now.
- The SCG is coordinating a bulk delivery of hay bales for gardeners to use for mulch in the spring. The bales need to be weathered over the winter prior to use.

Next meeting: November 13, 2024 at 5:30 pm at the Commons Farmhouse.

Q: What's with the big, covered pile of hay bales near Timberframe?

A: It's gone now. The South Gardeners are doing a bulk order of hay to encourage mulching.

Conflict Management Work Group — Brenda (written)

Covers 27 October to 5 November, 2024.

- Group members: Brenda Joy, Dave Lightly, Bob Andrew, Jen Turner.
- This group is a subgroup of the Process Team.
- No meeting this month.
- On 4 November 2024 the Council Stewardship Team sent out our draft document *Dealing with Disagreements and Conflict: The Gabriola Commons' Guide to Conflict Management and Respectful Relations* to all the teams for review and feedback.

- Please send comments, feedback and any questions about the draft document to the Conflict Management Task Group at process@gabriolacommons.ca
- Once we have reviewed the comments/feedback received, we plan to request discussion time on the agenda at Council, prior to finalizing the document and sending it out again to the teams for approval. Likely either Dec or Jan Council.
- The Gabriola Agreement: now that the document has teams' approval, we are requesting funds to cover printing the agreement as a for posting inside facilities and outside at various locations. It also needs to be uploaded to the Commons Website.

Next meeting: To be determined.

Several expressed kudos to Brenda for dealing with a longtime gap in Commons protocols. Congrats to all involved. Bob: "It's the best conflict management paper I've ever read!"

Q: Process Team doesn't seem to have a budget for printing copies to post around.

ACTION: Talk with Finance Team. Communications Team may also have funds so also talk with Heather..

Community Kitchen Stewards — David (verbal)

- Quoted cost to upgrade kitchen electrical system is $15–16k. We have received RDN grant for $5,000. Deb suggested trying the Lions, which gave us another $5,000, so we just need another ~$7k.
- There's a bunch of other things we need to bring the kitchen up to scratch, a "wish list". We didn't have time in the last round of big grant applications, but we are now ready to go for next round.

5. Affiliate Reports

Poetry Yurt - *Kristen & Greg* (verbal)

• Background: Yurt is owned by Poetry Gabriola Society; installed at Commons in 2014. There's an annual MOU. Always been a good relationship with Poetry Gabriola. PGS now wants to turn over ownership to the Commons. Valued at $28K.

• Kristen will be talking to Bob about joining the Commons Board and is also interested in taking over bookings, guidelines, insurance, maintenance of the Yurt. Looking for something to do, and husband Tanner has carpentry and other skills to maintain and improve it.

• Many friends have feelings for Yurt, which used to be vibrant and active (e.g. women's circle, kirtan group). It's a shame to see it unused. There's a lot of fear, isolation, grief on the island after recent years, and a gathering place like the Yurt, with its specific and unique vibe, is important.

• Sure that there's a small team of people willing to step forward as Yurt keepers. Rainbow says he's on board!

• Washrooms are a tough problem, however (e.g. composting toilet at South Gardens?).

Q: Maintenance?

A: Mainly a scrub of the exterior every spring. Plus handling the wood.

Q: Wood stove?

A: Existing stove works fine but is too old to be certified. There's an electric oil convection header, but uncertain whether it would provide enough heat. Mold has not been a problem over the years.

- Wood storage also a problem, as it can't be stored under the Yurt anymore. Needs a small, enclosed side structure.
- There's probably a wood stove somewhere on Gabriola that someone will happily donate, it's just a matter of finding it.
- Possible to install a heat pump?
- Commons spent money running hydro to the Yurt, but so far it has used very little electricity.

Q: Insurance?

A: Commons insurance would cover the Yurt, but the non-certified stove would have to go in first.

Q: Why is PGS turning it over?

A: Renting and maintaining the Yurt is overwhelming us, and we'd prefer to spend our time and energy planning literary events.

• We need more sacred gathering places. The labyrinth fits this as well.

• The process needs to involve Sharing the Commons Team. Heather/Gloria are happy to be part of the conversation.

ACTION: Kristen, Poetry Gabriola, Sharing the Commons will meet to explore possibilities for a more full-fledged proposal. Would be good if this comes back to Dec. or Jan. Council mtg with a plan.

6. Other Items & Announcements

Shelagh Huston — (verbal)

• Shelagh's *Living into the Earth Emergency* course will be meeting weekly over nine weeks, from 23 Jan to 21 Mar here at Commons. Two parallel courses, either Thursday eves or Friday noons, meals included, max 20 people for each course. Registrations begin on Thursday, check website TalkEarthEmergency.com for info. Michelle Benjamin is doing publicity (Facebook, etc.). Pamphlets handed out.

Rainbow — (verbal)

• Thoughts on the Commons:

• His first time at a CCC meeting, just getting feet wet. Seem to need more people for work bees, more people engaged in Commons; what's the barrier? Feels like there's more we can do to get people here.

• Fully in support of Goat Barn being used as a creative space, and a presenting venue for creative endeavours. Appreciate David Reed's efforts in this direction.

7. The Woods

The fire incident this summer caused great alarm, and good coordination among all interested parties. With the woods closed for fire risk, camping stopped and garbage lessened. Commons teams set up a gathering area just *outside* the Commons, which helped.

Now the fire department has ended the fire closure and removed its yellow tape. (Some Commons-installed tape remains.) With the tape down, impression is the woods are open again. Neighbours, school, RCMP are concerned.

Big question now is: *Do we keep the woods closed over the winter?*

Pertinent facts:

- Commons zoning and bylaws do not allow overnight camping.
- When the woods were closed, it worked very well. Police, Fire Chief had good presence.
- There is a trail walking group, 4 times a week.
- Four big cleanups have cost us $1500 (for just two).
- RDN gave us a dumpster for free, but only till the end of this year. Then all businesses must transition to a 3-bin system and our bin will be removed.
- It's reported that new unhoused people are moving to Gabriola.
- Health Collaborative is taking the lead on a community discussion on homelessness, but it won't happen soon.
- Capacity issue: time we spend cleaning up the woods isn't spent on property maintenance.

Observations, views, questions, notes:

- The Commons was originally all woods, then was turned into a farm, involving major ecological disruption. Provocative questions: What good are the woods anyway? Maybe we should turn it into more agriculture?
- What does the yellow tape say to the community? When it went up, the tape was clearly for fire risk. Now that doesn't apply, and the rationale would be to keep (certain) people out. This conflicts with the Commons being accessible to everyone.
    - Do we have the moral authority to turn people away? Read the Conflict Management document. Does the Gabriola Agreement have a place in this?
- Compliance with the closure was high in summer but would probably be lower in winter (with its lower risk of fire). How would a closure be enforced? Will yellow tape really keep people out?
    - The tactic of continuing the walking patrols, and getting many more people walking the trails, should help.
- This problem goes back for years. Used to be handled by TAGS, then PST. The big cleanup bill was from *accumulated* debris and garbage. The fire sent a strong message to everyone. There used to be a sign saying (former tagline) "The Commons: a place for everyone"; this conflicts with closing the woods. Who are we to keep people out? There's a potential here to get people on board with respectful relations to the land.
- It's undesirable to see the woods closed like this, too reactive.
- Idea: Keep the woods closed till spring, then hold a big gala opening.
- Don't send an article to the *Sounder* saying that "the woods are open."
    - There's a distinction between the woods being closed, and not publicly encouraging people to come in.
- We have mostly a good exchange with homeless individuals, when it happens in the collective area. In the forest, the interactions are very negative.
    - Can we have a meeting with the people who are misusing the Commons?

More discussion clearly required, but for now:

ACTION ITEMS:

- Trail walking patrols will continue. We will enforce litter and camping bans, continue building relationships.
- Heather will postpone the *Sounder* article on the new trail signs (reluctantly — *Sounder* readers are not the ones causing the problems).
- Process Team will convene a special open meeting. Dave will poll the TPT members and when a date is set, Jinny will email team reps to invite all commoners to this meeting.

Meeting end at 9:13 pm.