Commons Coordinating Council (CCC)
Written reports to: council@gabriolacommons.ca

Notes of Meeting of March 4, 2025

Facilitator: Gloria Filax
Recorder: Brent O'Malley
Timer: Bob Andrew
Present: Deb Ferens; Brenda Joy; Don Smardon; Heather Menzies; Kisa Carron; Janice Robinson; Bill McCallum; Kim Kasasian; Arlene Carlson; Kristin Allan; Diane Conrad; Greg Blee.

Next CCC meeting: April 1, 2025 at 7 pm.
Facilitator(s) for next meeting: David Lightly
Recorder for next meeting: Kristin Allan
FNN Acknowledgement: Deb Ferens
Timer: Jinny Hayes

AGENDA ITEMS

1. Welcome & First Nations Acknowledgement

2. Agenda Approval
Approved as is with no additions or changes

3. Following-up items from previous meetings
February 4, 2025 meeting was cancelled due to weather

4. Team Reports:

Bob Andrew for the Trustees reported:

- Notes from Trustees for the Jan 29 and Feb. 26 meetings rolled into one:
- Trustees agreed to PHC applying for a grant for a 12x20x10 greenhouse in the north gardens.
- New Legal Advisory Group (LAG) formed: Bobbi Rose, George Szanto, Deb Ferens and Robbi Huston.
- New Trustee appointed: Brent O'Malley
- Agreed, with the donor's representative present, to start the process of creating a new entrance in the North side of the house, entering the side of the NW, downstairs office space.

- Sketches presented for revamping the main entrance: to be built concurrently with the new downstairs entrance. Also looking at the bigger picture re: the front driveway, with a possible new parking space. This will go to Council for review.
- Report from LAG re: a police incident on the property. Suggestion of tightening up the process/protocols with the RCMP and PHC before any further such incidents.
- Transfer of the Yurt from Poetry Gabriola Society to the Commons almost complete. We noted that no insurance is possible on the structure.
- PHC/building rat issue: Working with PST and a pest eradicator.
- We need more Orchard Stewards to work with the present Steward; please contact Bobbi Rose.
- Talk of a 20th anniversary of the Commons celebration.
- The Commons has a "seat" on the Health and Wellbeing Collaborative. Laura Jean or Bob Andrew sit in on the meetings.
- We no longer have a Social worker on the island. Angela Pounds has been filling that role but has a new job. PHC is partly filling the role.
- There will be another nurse attached to the Health Clinic in the future.
- Some extreme heat and cold responses have been developed with the Fellowship Church being open for a few hours per day there is extreme weather.
- This Collaborative will be holding two half-day discussions open to the community to establish what needs doing re: health and wellbeing This needs help setting up. Kes from Sustainable Gabriola is the lead. The outcome will set strategic objectives for the Collaborative.

Brent O'Malley for the Community Kitchen Team Reported:

- We have finally found someone to provide regular monthly deep cleaning services to the Community Kitchen. So far, he is doing a great job and appears reliable. Thank you to Bobbi Rose for providing the reference.
- In early March it came to the CK's attention that a recipient of food from the Grub Huggers team reported finding a cockroach in his food back in early February. Apparently, his food had been left outside his home overnight and the cockroach was reportedly discovered the next day. This was not reported to PHC/Grub Huggers until several days later, by one of the daughters of the recipient. They assumed the roach had come from the CK. The Grub Huggers were going to follow up with the family but no further action was planned. This is not something that the kitchen will consider as a serious allegation.

Kim Kasasian for Property Stewardship Team Reported:

- There has been an ongoing rat infestation in the Farmhouse, especially downstairs in the PHC space where food for the food bank is kept. Orkin Pest Control has been

called and is setting traps.
- Concern was raised about collateral damage from using poison to combat the problem.

Brenda Joy for the Conflict Management Task Group reported in writing:

- Group members: Brenda Joy, Dave Lightly, Bob Andrew, Jen Turner.
- Met 28 Feb 2025 on Zoom.
- Work accomplished:
    - The team reviewed comments received from Council at the Jan 6 meeting as well as from individual members.
    - The draft has been out to teams for comments since Nov 4, 2024. No comments received.
    - Revised draft accordingly and a final version was generated.

- The final draft was sent back to Council Stewardship team for uploading to the Commons website. A link to the document should also be added to the section describing the Process Team's mandate.
- The document is a living document and can be expected to be revised over time as required or as feedback from users is received.
- The CM Task Group is now dispersed as its work has been completed. Any required updates to the document and to the Commons Agreement should be communicated to the Process Team.
- Questions can be sent through the Process Team at process@gabriolacommons.ca

Kristin Allan for the Yurt Keepers Team Reported:

1. Transfer agreement:
    a. What stage is the yurt transfer paperwork at, Gloria?
    b. Plaque inside yurt; Poetry Gabriola Society has gifted the yurt to the Commons in 2025.
2. Insurance coverage:
    a. Gloria reported that the insurance company will not insure the yurt.
    b. Yoga instructors and any other instructed physical movement classes are not covered for liability and will need their own insurance or signed waivers from all participants (this will be noted on the yurt rental agreement).
3. Heating options:
    a. On Saturday, March 1st, the old wood stove was hauled to a new home.
    b. Replacement wood stove for secondary heat source is not really feasible.
    c. Met with Thealia Black, local electrician, and Bob Andrew in Jan. about possibilities for alternative heating. Thealia's thoughts:
        - electrical capacity should be more than sufficient for our needs
        - installation of heat pump (at least a year wait) or electric convection heaters (her top recommendation) is possible. TWO convection heaters would cost roughly $500. Thealia will install them for us at no cost.

- *highly* recommends improving the insulation on the interior of the yurt

4. Frank, of *Jim Chimney*, donated his time to disconnect the old stove pipe and put a temporary cap on the hole in the wall. He suggests propane heat. I received quotes for two different stoves from *Pioneer* and it was about $6K for each of them.
5. Washroom Facility for Yurt:
    a. The RDN suggested a list of pros to oversee installation. Contacted Bob Bye of *Gabriola Septic Services* in mid-Feb, who's qualified to oversee this project. He's interested in discussing it with me. Awaiting a conversation with him. Contacted Mack Shaw and his business partner, Mike. who are willing to discuss.
    b. Next step is reaching out to VIHA for a clear list of requirements.
    c. Considering a temporary rental of port-a-potty GI John Rental ($175/month).
6. Fire Inspection Compliance:
    a. need occupancy limit sign near door
    b. wall-mounted fire extinguisher is missing an inspection tag
    c. chimney was too close to side of yurt; will likely be removed soon.
7. Timing for *Sounder* article re: announcing the official transfer of the yurt to the Commons from PGS, seeking Yurt Keepers Team members, needs new heating source, fundraising for washroom, other upgrades, spring cleaning workbee, etc.
8. Fundraising for 2025: Grant application possibilities: Gabriola Lions, RDN, Coastal Community Credit Union, Gabriola Recreation Society
    a. Kirstin was down to the wire for applying to the Gabriola Rec Society for their spring grant to fund the first phase of a washroom facility, but decided to hold off until issues such as insurance & heating could be settled.
    b. Kirstin's family (with lots of help!) will be hosting a full-day event in July, with some proceeds going back to the Yurt Keepers Team.
9. Rentals of Yurt
    a. Need new email address for yurt bookings (Colleen/Jinny)
    b. Need to settle on rates for hourly and daily rentals
    c. Need a rental agreement (can this be fully digital, or is paper needed?)
    d. Interim washroom access – Goat Barn or GI John Rental

Gloria Filax for Finance Reported:

1. March 31, 2025 is the fiscal year end for the Gabriola Commons Foundation. Please have all expense claims and/or donations prior to March 31. As well if you have an outstanding cheque please cash before March 31.
2. Budget time for the new fiscal year has arrived. Please prepare your team budget and submit to finance@gabriolacommons.ca. If you have any concerns or questions or please contact Gloria.
3. 2024 tax receipts have been mailed. Many thanks to Don, Suzi, Mary, and Deb for their

efficiency to making this happen.

4. Anything to do with money flows through the Finance Team. For projects and grant applications please contact Gloria at finance@gabriolacommons.ca to send out the policy document to work with Finance Team.

Heather Menzies for the Farm Team Reported:

- The final phase of the re-fencing project is coming to completion: a new gate for the Little Field.
- In collaboration with the North Gardeners, organized a work-bee and meeting with Doug and Michelle Smith with the Gabriola Seed Bank (affiliated with the Agi Co-op) on Saturday, March 1st.
- There was some good relationship building over the course of a workbee (with Betty leading a pruning exercise) and a presentation by Michelle on what the seed bank has to offer (including 2 catalogues that they are sharing with us as e. documents).
- Also explored the possibility of collaborating by providing some space for growing seed stock etc. This resulted in two agreements in principle:
    - between the seed bank and David Arnell, with the Farm Team, about using some space in the Little Field for growing seed stock.
    - between the seed bank and Bob Martin, also with the Farm Team, about possibly growing medicinal herbs in some space in the Kitchen Garden.
- At least two others who attended the event are interested in being part of making this happen.

Heather Menzies for the Woods Task Group Reported in writing:

• Task group was formed out of the Dec.12/24 meeting to address the problems and concerns behind the woods remaining closed and "find solutions" (in the words of Deb's meeting notes) so the woods can be re-opened.
• Main strategy has been to engage with the people most associated with those problems/concerns – and to do so with empathy and even love.
• We've held 8 meetings since coming together in Dec. to draft a mandate: 2 in farmhouse; the other 6 at the Gathering Place at spot behind Folk Life Village at the edge of the Commons woods. We meet there every Friday at 3.
• At first, folks just "hung out", listened a lot, began to form relationships – with about 8 people who are regulars there. They're all clients of PHC with offices at the Commons. Also learned that at least half are struggling with mental illness. Learned too that there's a strong sense of community among them and mutual support.
• Gradually introduced the task group's agenda, such as getting buy-in for shifting responsibility for garbage pickup, and also re: fires in the woods.
• Two Fridays ago, we did a check-in on whether we are achieving the task group's priority objectives, and the consensus was 'yes.'

1. Yes, we have changed the relationship from them/us to something that feels like us sharing responsibility around the Commons woods. We've established a lovely rapport with this community. It feels good to be working with them, in a way we hope will be ongoing.
2. The garbage and empties have been successfully cleared up by the group for the past 5 weeks. There's at least one person who takes empties; the rest go into RDN garbage bins.

• Each week, Heather sends an email to Deb, trail walking patrol coordinator, updating her on the task group's work, and recommending that trail patrollers simply note where there's stuff along the trails, but NOT pick anything up. This has allowed us to demonstrate our success here.

• Re: fires: approach has been to have conversations: first, why are they being set? To get warm. One who admitted to lighting a fire had been sleeping rough a lot through the recent cold and wet weather. Meanwhile, we've had lots of conversations about trees as living beings and the need to respect and protect them. This has resulted in 3-4 people wanting to become Commons Forest Stewards on an ongoing basis.
• Task group hasn't authority to re-open the woods. But it's well positioned to recommend when it's time, when "solutions" have been found. And that's what we're doing: Recommending that the woods be re-opened on the first day of Spring (March 20), or at least by the end of the month.
• The biggest "solution" is the "us working together" relationship the task group has nurtured. And this will continue. Because we consider the woods re-opening to be merely the end of Phase I of our work.
• Took this recommendation to the Trustees last Wed., and they all support it: partly as a token of trust in the process and rapport we've established, and partly in the expectation that we will continue this work. I have received confirmation from most of the Task Group members that they are happy to continue….

• Ongoing concerns: Bob gathered the following:

Need for ongoing care of the woods to keep pressure off teams like PST
Need to be vigilant around fires.
Keeping the forest clean.
Vandalism and theft; linked to the people hanging out in the woods.
Adhering to rules, protocols. (In fact, we've had some preliminary conversations about this.)
Ready to develop a 'code of conduct.'

Most of these have seen basic agreement statement.
ACTION: At Trustee meeting, it was suggested that the conflict-management group document be introduced to the group; plan to do this.
• The commitment the task group has nurtured will serve us well in ongoing efforts to address these concerns. Besides the shift in responsibility, we now also have more eyes on the ground, and access to the additional knowledge and insight that these would-be Forest stewards & Gabriola Outreach have to offer. This will help us stay on top of the ongoing concerns people have.
ACTION:
The consensus of the meeting was in support of the woods being reopened, by March 20th, the first day of Spring.

Deborah Ferens for the Covenant Team Reported:

- The Covenant still sits with the Gabriola Local Trust Committee (GLTC)
- The GLTC has completed a legal review with a number of technical revisions (no suggested changes to the intent or purpose).
- The GLTC is not prepared to go any further with the Covenant Application until the legal suggestions have been incorporated. Then the newly revised Covenant can be presented again to the GLTC.
- Covenant Team members are planning to go over the Covenant with the intention of making the revisions and submitting the Covenant again to the GLTC.
- The Covenant Team is also waiting for a reply from the Agricultural Land Commission for an extension of time to attend to the GLTC request.

5. Miscellaneous

- Kristin booked the Commons for a full day event in July and inquired about process for booking various venues at the Commons at once for a single event.

- Brenda suggested a Gabriola Museum collaboration for a fund raiser built around a movie festival.

- Brent circulated information on possible swag options for the Commons but received no direct feedback on pros or cons.

6. Follow up discussion on the woods reopening:

- Heather is confident that any concerns about reopening the woods will be addressed by the people who are in the woods most frequently. They are committed to ensuring the environment is safe for everyone.
- A counter concern was voiced expressing that that confidence is not shared by all.
- One opinion was that vandalism in the woods is perpetrated by bored youth and not those who frequent the area who are vulnerable and unhoused.
- That was countered by a comment that the unhoused have been caught in the act.
- One person appreciated Heather's work in creating a core group of dedicated people who will take responsibility for the woods, as the summer can see an influx of new people and progress made now may be set back.