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

Notes of Meeting of June 3, 2025

Facilitator: Bob Andrew
Recorder: Jinny Hayes
Present: Kristin Allan, Greg Blee, Patrick Colvin, Diane Conrad, Kim Kasasian, David Lightly, Heather Menzies, Brent O'Malley, Don Smardon, Maureen Wild.

NOTE: July Council Meeting cancelled due to it falling on Canada Day
Next CCC meeting: August 5 at 7 pm.
Facilitator(s) for next meeting: TBA
Recorder for next meeting: TBA
Acknowledgement: Kristin Allan

1. Welcome & First Nations Acknowledgement
Heather focussed on settlers' ignorance, ever since first contact, of First Nations' care and respect of the land, as integral to their civilization for time immemorial.

2. Agenda Approval
Two items added as seen below.

3. Announcement
Ocean Day is Sunday, June 8; see details in current *Sounder*.

4. Team Reports

Property Stewardship Team - Kim, written
- Workbee with circus people: we need a list of possible jobs; help with the hedge will not be enough for the many people available that day.
- We are trying to figure out how the solar heater at the kitchen works.
- Trench for new irrigation pipes will probably be dug next week.
- The garbage can has been stolen AGAIN! This was only the third time we put the new can out for collection.

DISCUSSION:
- Yurt Keepers will have some work for circus folks, eg, light landscaping, cleaning skylight. Also GIRO cleanup for the North and Dragon Gardens.
- Patrick Volunteered a solar water heater.

The Process Team (David, oral)
- Team is alive and well.
- Currently "test driving" the new Commons Agreement.

Board of Trustees (David, oral)
- Currently negotiating PHC lease; next meeting next Tuesday.
- Have requested PHC vans be moved to general parking lot, freeing up the handicapped parking in the Deliveries entrance.
- PHC has concerns about the plans for eth new Entrance to the Farmhouse
- Thank you note going to GaLTT for fantastic work on the Board Walk.
- Board to Board meeting scheduled for June 25th @ Haven; are planning to increase engagement with actual issues.

Share the Commons Team (Heather, oral)
- Cultivate Festival MoU with Gabriola Arts Council near signing.
- Saturday July 6 will be the joint workbee.

North Gardens (Maureen, written)
- The improvements to the fencing (NCG and Little Field) and new gates have successfully kept the deer out.
- Three diseased small plum trees were cut down in March. They are being repurposed: two to Tammy who makes the walking sticks and sells them at the market; one to Morgan (PHC garden worker) who will chip, the 3rd one and make smoked chips for smoking foods.
- Unfinished Greenhouse: being decluttered, cleaned up, used for starts. Metal pieces need to be transported to GIRO. PHC did not get the grant for a new greenhouse.
- Shed: repair of two walls is 'in the queue', hopefully to be completed in the summer. Kim & Cathy (artists) have agreed to paint flowers etc. on the new wall.
- Compost Bins: old and crumbling from the inside out, needing total replacement. Similar design with cedar was reviewed and approved by Maureen, Gill, and Tanner; all new materials will cost approx $650 from Arbutus; some wood pieces stored in the greenhouse could be used to minimize costs.
- Plots in the NCG are in good use. A few became cooperative plots, shared between gardeners; working well as this allowed space for growing more food which was needed.
- The Gabriola Community Seed Bank gave Maureen their leftover heirloom starts (to be given away): many tomatoes, cukes, okra, and hot pepper, which were shared with the Kitchen Garden, the Little Field, and gardeners in the NCG.

Community Kitchen Stewards (Brent, oral)
- No updates on electrical work.
- External corner of the CK building taken off by one of the PHC vans needs attention eg, roof. 100% PHC responsibility. A claim is pending with ICBC; may take weeks or months.

• ACTIONS: Brent to inquire at ICBC; David to follow up with PHC.

Yurt Keepers Team (Kristin, Written)

• We have a new Yurt Keeper: Patrick Colvin. He's very enthusiastic and Kristin is happy to not be the only Yurt Keeper anymore! We hope to add a few more team members in 2025.

• Transfer of yurt:
In process of having a plaque made for inside yurt (Poetry Gabriola Society has gifted the yurt to the Commons in 2025); have made some inquiries but have not confirmed anything yet.

• Grant Application:
Last week, the Yurt Keepers submitted a grant application to the *Gabriola Lions Club* for *$ 4,024.90.* This amount would cover the cost of the new wood stove (with necessary piping and accessories), as well as the materials needed to construct a secure woodshed near the yurt to store the firewood.

• Washroom Facility for Yurt:
Met with Phil Frisson, from GI John, in mid-May about the ideal location for a temporary porta-john near the yurt. It will be delivered on or around July 2nd and will be serviced every two weeks. There is a drop-off/setup fee of $50, and an equal fee when the unit is hauled away. The rental fee for this unit is $175/month. The funds will come from the seed money that was allocated to the Yurt Keepers by the Finance Team.
• Would like to propose moving forward with construction of a simple composting toilet facility behind the yurt this fall. Cost is roughly $1,500 for materials. I would like to suggest that some of the proceeds from our bhakti festival go toward the construction costs (if we are successful enough to have proceeds!). Funds should be available by August to begin construction late summer/early fall. If this funding isn't possible, the YKT will investigate other fundraising ideas.

• Spring Work Bee at the Yurt:
a. 8 volunteers came out for the work bee. About 22 collective volunteer hours is what it took to get the yurt cleaned up inside and out (and it needs a couple more hours of fine tuning inside).
b. Lawrence Feuchtwanger donated 2 jugs of algae remover to the Yurt Keepers Team, and we have one partial jug to be stored maybe in the woodworking shop (it's marked YURT).Bob borrowed some very useful scaffolding, and Patrick brought his pressure washer to clean up the wooden ramp leading to the entrance.
c. We even had a volunteer show up who had never been to Gabriola before, but said he LOVED to help at the Common in Halifax and was thrilled to see that there is something similar (but also very different) here on Gabriola.

• Rental of Yurt

a. The Poetry Yurt is all set up to be rentable on the Commons website, under the facilities page.
b. The rental agreement still needs to be written. It's the next item on the Yurt Keepers' to-do list.
c. Please spread the word that the yurt is ready to be enjoyed beginning in July!

Items to come:

- Yurt rental agreement
- Firewood donations? Where to store wood before constructing woodshed?
- Wood in orchard shed – ½ cord?
- Chairs for rental of yurt? Back jacks?
- Plaque – get a quote from Signs on Gabe

- Enclose underneath yurt by October 2025
  DISCUSSION:
  • Seasoned firewood should be obtained now @ $350/cord; there is ½ cord in the shed. Lions no longer donate and deliver wood; could call for donations. Storage for 2 cords would be a good idea.

Governance Ad Hoc Group (Jinny, oral)
• Final report not complete; will be trying out AI to assemble the document but seeking current photos. ACTION: Please send to Jinny: council@gabriolacommons.ca.

Farm Team (Heather, written)
• There is a core group taking care of the orchard in general and the blueberries/haskaps in particular. Plus, Tanner Ellingson has spent several Saturdays replacing defective parts in the irrigation system and getting this ready for the season.
• There is a smaller group (mostly David Arnell and Diane Conrad) growing food in the Little Field, especially geared to supplying ingredients for the work bee soup lunches.
• Betty K. has drawn a group of 4 to 6 to her "Learners' Garden" program in the Kitchen Garden.
• The Team is exploring how to market some of the produce, possibly through a revival of farm-gate sales.
• GI Seed Bank gave leftover seeds to Maureen who has dispersed them to others for planting.

Trails and Green Spaces Team (Heather, written)
• The trails are in good shape, though need some trimming; plus one of the people who sometimes comes to the Gathering Place on Fridays has taken it upon himself to do some trimming.
• Last Sunday, the team offered some support to a GaLTT work party doing maintenance on the boardwalk section of the connector trails they have a license to maintain for the Commons. (Hugh Skinner and Barry Moerkerken of GaLTT led the work, taking off the old shingles and replacing these with wire mesh.)
ACTION: Trustees to write a note of appreciation to GaLTT for this work.

Communications (Heather, written)
• Sent a photo and cutlines about the work party to the *Sounder.*
• Kristin Allan has the Commons FaceBook page and Instagram up and running well, and is pleased to see more and more traffic to these.
• Working with Colleen McCarthy (web designer) on some changes to the "Get involved" and teams pages on the website, applying some of the thinking that went into the review of teams, including the notion of identifying how many teams are linked. **Question**: Has the Governance Group finished its listing of what teams might be usefully dropped from the

website, and has Council consensus been reached on this (if consensus is necessary)?
ACTION**:** Jinny to take this to Deb Ferens, who facilitated that special discussion meeting.
Question 2: Are people happy with the Agreement Statement on the website and whether it is prominently enough displayed? (On home page and as footer on every other page.)
ACTION: Team reps to report to Heather.

7. Special Topics

a. Hedge (Kim, oral)
- Proposal to take out front section of hedge has been supported by those providing feedback.
- Maples being considered are like those near Spirit Market which are 13 years old. Red Norway maples cost about $70-100; colour catches the eye.

DISCUSSION:
- Could bushes be planted to protect children from Road? Maybe not necessary as that whole strip of North Road is not similarly planted.
- Could make the ditch deeper.
- Will wait a bit after hedge is removed before new plantings, but same digger that removes the current hedge could also dig hole for new plantings.
- While we're at this, could there be a hole cut in east section for communication with Rollo? In past, Rollo has not agreed.
- Removals will require GI Volunteer Fire Dept approval.

b. Books Donations to Commons Library (Greg Blee, oral)
- Greg announced that he has gifted several books on environmental topics to the Commons Library.

c. 20th Anniversary Celebration (Jinny, oral)
- Official anniversary is June 8 this year.
- Shelagh Huston has agreed to do a special talk on the history and establishment of the Commons as part of the GI Museum's Speaker Series (at Golf Club). As such presentations are not well attended in summer month, this will be held in October or November.
- In conjunction, we will hold events (eg, cake, guided tours) on the Commons. Could set up a series of small "15-minute workbee" jobs; scavenger hunt; use the reservoir stage.

5. Woods Group (Heather, oral report) followed by Discussion
NOTE: This item started in the Team Reports round, and was tabled, and concluded at end of the meeting due to need for additional time.

- Six months in, the group continues to meet weekly at the Gathering Place. The relationship building is paying off in mutually respectful rapport, and in the willingness of the people

who hang out there to self-police in taking care of the site and picking up garbage/litter elsewhere. (E.g. today: trail walkers noted "a mess" at the Gathering Place when they walked the trails this morning. When some of us were there just after noon, the garbage was bagged up.)

• Danielle Bye, mental health outreach worker with PHC, has joined the task group; she has her own supply of small garbage bags at PHC to distribute as people need these.

• This Friday, Deb Ferens' trails patrol group will be meeting with the task group to explore possible collaboration.

• Two members of the task group (Heather and Diane) plus Bob Andrew (Trustees) met and walked today with Vanessa Craig, our RDN director, to talk about possible ways that the RDN might support a viable and even improved Gathering Place. Sarah Kopjar, GALTT Board President attended. We talked about the possibility Diane is exploring with GaLTT about their getting a trail license to and through the spot.

- Vanessa wondered if there was a way for the Commons to "carve out responsibility" for the Gathering Place. This led to speculation about negotiating an easement with Folklife Village over that bit of its property, perhaps even buying that bit of land from Folk Life Village. Vanessa suggested that some monies might be available through the Community Works Fund, but only if this could be given to a not-for-profit like the Commons.

- Bob mentioned that he's been talking with Christina, new PHC ED, who is interested in collaborating more around the Gathering Place; Perhaps this will come up at the Commons/PHC Board-to-Board meeting at the end of June.

DISCUSSION:

• **Q:** As Gathering Place is not on Commons, why are we so invested? Could be a community conversation/issue.

• Also need another conversation with the RCMP.

• Site was designated by the Fire Dept, Commons, PHC and Folklife Village after the woods fire last summer.

• **Q:** Gabriola Collaborative has donated $500 towards this project: Where is it?

• Rick Mitchell (FL Village) is community minded, so may be being pushed by "higher-ups". His position has softened somewhat.

• Could relocate the meeting area/circle to 100 ft behind the skateboard park, but RDN doesn't want it there either.

• Users are by in large Gabriola residents, except a few more in summer.

• Needs community-wide discussion. Who could help, work, include? There was a community discussion at the Rollo a few months ago. Question is HOW to get involvement at the community level. The Collaborative is involved but has many other things on its plate, eg addictions strategies, etc.

• **Q:** What if we do nothing? **A:** The Gathering Place would continue to grow.

• Always need to consider users: What's in it for me? IE, Need to have something to offer them.

• Need a system and long-term options.

- What are the provincial resources? Pressure governments for bigger solutions.
- Small suggestions for winter: Scaffolding, tent.

6. A. For Action items, see "ACTION" sections above.

B. For Teams' discussion:

Please send Heather any feedback on website treatment of Agreement Statement (see Communication Team Report above).

7. Closing and appreciations