Commons Coordinating Council (CCC)

council@gabriolacommons.ca

Notes of Meeting of August 5, 2025

Facilitator: Bob Andrew

Notes: Brent O'Malley

Timer: Jinny Hayes

Present: Bob Andrew, Brent O'Malley; Diane Conrad; Virginia Hayes; Kristin Allen; Kim Kasasian; Janice Robinson; Bill McCallum; Patrick Colvin; Maureen Wild; Michael and Melissa (gardeners in both North and South Gardens); Dave Lightly.

AGENDA ITEMS

1. Welcome & Agenda:

- Welcome and intros
- Agenda accepted as posted, with one addition;
    - Letter from DinahD about the Boules Court

2. Acknowledgement – Kristin: wish and hope that we'll invite local FN more regularly to the Commons. K is in touch with someone who led an acknowledgement at her festival and hopes that some new learnings will manifest from that, especially about reconciliation.

3. Team Reports:

Trustees — Bob (written)

- Meeting twice a month now.
- Ongoing struggles on how to handle campers, smoking, alcohol, etc. issues on The Commons.
- Had a Board to Board meeting with PHC: progress made on understanding each other, our needs and goals. Set another Board to Board for Oct. 1 for further discussions.
- Lease with PHC not yet signed. Still in negotiation.
- AGM will be held at the end of September. Will be seeking trustees with legal and grant writing skills, and a treasurer.
- Renovation of the front of farmhouse entrances in process. Building permit about to be applied for.
- Process Team is very functional and working with at least one difficult conflict.
- 20th anniversary celebration being worked on. We may have David Bollier as a speaker.
- Finally getting Commons goals, etc. into a single Mission Statement.

Discussion:
In Vancouver, specific parks have been designated where alcohol can be consumed; de we need to designate same on Commons? Noted that this is a community consideration rather than only the Commons. Perhaps some kind of initiative by the Gabriola Collaborative Group; Could someone from that group do a talk about alcohol and drug use? Noted that the Commons is a member of the Collaborative.

Property Stewardship Team — Kim (written)

- New electrical will be done by September before the date scheduled for Farm-to-Table Feast.
- New irrigation pipes in place though there have been issues with the sun-exposed PVC degrading over the years.
- Goat barn engineered report – waiting to receive it.
- Rats – PHC will behave responsibly and this will be put into their new lease. Out of the last 13 weekends, garbage has been left out in the open for 10 of those.
- Hedge along North Road will be removed sometime in Sept (pending fire hazard status).
- The rest of the hedge needs trimming and will be done by Simon Natrass (as paid work) and volunteers.
- Circus was wonderful. Did all sorts of good work here, held a potluck with impromptu performances, fun workshops and the main circus performance. It was a wonderful two days full of good will and community.
- Kim would love to see an extension of the circus vibe as a regular feature of the Commons, A "Love the Commons Day" to be a celebration of care of the Commons, fun and community. There could be a morning workbee, an evening potluck and then performances. Maybe a fun workshop or two could be squeezed in to bring in families.

Discussion: Noted that the Farm-to-Table is NOT being held again this year.
Q: Could a break be made in north side hedge, opening to the Rollo Centre? **A.** Has been suggested with negative response from Rollo. **ACTION:** David with talk with the Board members about this again. Rollo is starting a water collection and drip irrigation would make that side of the hedge less vulnerable to drought. Noted that it does make the ends of the hedge a mess after partial removal.

Community Kitchen Stewards — Brent (written)

- We seem to be stalled out on the electrical upgrade
- The power outage at the beginning of July necessitated turning on the walk-in cooler for an extended period to assist PHC in all the free food it got from Nesters. We need to have a long-term strategy/position on this, as it will likely happen again.
- Meals on Wheels is consistently using the fridge with top freezer, and two dedicated freezers in the kitchen. It seems we should ask for a monthly surcharge to cover the increased hydro costs. **Q.** Any thoughts on how much? **A.** A guestimate is possible from watching hydro meter consumption, eg, walk-in freezer $20 for 3 days. **ACTION:** Community Kitchen Stewards to make a reasonable decision re surcharge.

- Team needs members.

Process Team — David (oral)

- Fairly significant conflict in South Gardens is being worked on.
- This has been a good test of the conflict resolution documents previously approved and it seems to have worked very well.

Covenant Team – Jinny (written report)

- Two years ago, the Covenant Team applied for a "Referral" to the ALC in order to pave the way for attaching a covenant to Title. Despite it not normally approving such additional protection of land in ALR, the ALC did approve this, requestion a few modifications to the Draft Covenant at the time. This is pertinent now as the Local Island Trust Committee is considering becoming our (required) Covenant Holder. The process with the LTC will be a long one, so last summer the ALC was asked to grant a 2-year extension for the period that the LTC is working with us. We received the ALC approval for the extension just in late July 2025.
- This is fortuitous as the LTC lawyers have requested changes to the ALC-approved version of the draft Covenant. As the Covenant Team is no longer functioning, two of its former members, Jinny and George Szanto are going through the LTC version and will work with the ALC and the LTC to resolve differences and move forward.
- To become our Covenant Holder, the LTC also wants the Stewardship Plan greatly expanded. **Q.** Anyone like to work with us on this?

Farm Team (written by Heather and reported by Diane)

- The Sounder article (mid-July) about the blueberry cultivation work at the Commons resulted in two positive responses, and offers of donations.
- The "Blueberry Team" is beginning to harvest the beautifully ripe blueberries, starting with an invitation to the people from various teams (like PST, Farm and TAGS) who show up for Saturday morning workbees to have a first picking, Aug.2nd.
- The team is exploring other ways to distribute and market the rest of the harvest. **Q:** what to charge? **A:** $5.00/ pint and with other famers at stands and AGI market.
- Betty Kehler is beginning to organize things and invite people to help in harvesting apples and juicing them.

Yurt Keepers Team Kristin (written report)

- The Yurt Keepers is still a team of only 2 people. We'd love to see another couple of people join us to collaborate on thinking, visioning and executing ideas for the yurt. Spread the word, please.
- Donation plaque: A lovely wooden plaque is in the works with Jared Hooper. Mock-up is awaiting approval by Poetry Gabriola Society. It should be hung up in the yurt before the end of August. Cost will be around $100.
- Grant Application and Fundraising: In May, the Yurt Keepers submitted a grant application to the Gabriola Lions Club to help fund the purchase of a wood stove and construction of a

woodshed. The grant application was denied. They encouraged us to reapply after we have raised part of the funds through other means.

- The Yurt Keepers have been brainstorming fundraising ideas, and we have some great ones brewing for September and October (and beyond) to raise funds for a wood stove, and eventually a woodshed.
- Washroom Facility for Yurt: Phil, from GI John delivered a porta-potty to the yurt in early July. There was a set-up fee of $50 and the rental fee for this unit is $175/month. The key to the washroom is inside the yurt and is available to all renters of the yurt.
- Wood Stove: A call has been made to Frank with Jim Chimney about his willingness to keep us in mind if he comes across a nice used wood stove that may be a suitable size for the yurt. A new one will cost us about $2,500 from Pioneer in Nanaimo.
- Rental of Yurt:
    - a. We have a rental agreement written that gets emailed to all rental inquiries. We will have a laminated copy inside of the yurt so renters can reference it.
    - b. We have had several rentals already in the first month of the reopening of the yurt, despite the lack of advertising. We hope to have many more to help us pay for the porta-potty ($175/month) and help collect funds toward the woodstove acquisition and installation. Please spread the word.
- Tax receipts are available for donations, eg, in-kind receipts also possible.
  Q: Capacity? **A:** 30, 12 for yoga.
  Q: Is it sealed underneath? **A:** No

North Garden (Maureen – written)

- Shed will repaired soon by Tanner.
- Compost bin – a new structure will be built; donations of wood requested, cedar preferred.
- Spigots – breaking at top of standpipes. On both occasions it was caught soon enough to repair but these are accidents waiting to happen
- Greenhouse needs finishing; would be helpful to have a parallel table inside to help increase work space
- Fundraising project: a tribute to Joanna Macy at the Phoenix on Sunday Nov 16, donate to either the Commons or the children's garden.
- **NOTE:** Gate to little field is frequently being left open rendering crops subject to deer foraging. Would a plasticized sign ion the gate help?

Trails and Greenspaces (written by Heather and reported by Diane)

- The team devoted a workbee to trimming the trails and pulling tansy ragwort in the woods and surrounding areas.
- The team is down to three active members, and would welcome more.
- The team will be watching the grassed areas closely when the Fall rains come, to ensure they recover. Having had three major events on these grounds in July, this might have exceeded their carrying capacity. If so, we will report this and remind everyone of our ecological responsibility to care for the land.

Communication Team (written by Heather and reported by Diane)

- Heather will be meeting with Shelagh Huston in August to talk about articles for the Sounder commemorating the 20th Anniversary Celebration of the Commons
- Heather sent a photo from the workbee to the Sounder's annual 24-hour photo essay on Gabriola on the Sat., July 26.

Woods Task Group (written by Heather and reported by Diane)

- With a go-ahead from the Trustees, the task group is sending an email to Rick Mitchell, property manager at Folklife Village, to ask if the Pattison Group would be interested in exploring the possibility of donating (or selling) to the Commons the bit of land where the Gathering Place is located. Heather met with a planner with Islands Trust to get a guesstimate on the amount of land involved. It's roughly 3000 square feet, or .069 of an acre.
- If there is interest from them in exploring this, the task group will prepare a full proposal to present to the Trustees and Council, including the costs and benefits and the (many) actions involved.
- There has been a $1000 private donation.
- Picker-upper for trash & butts recently broken. $5 donation for replacement. **ACTION:** Jinny will contact Ambulance Equipment Loans to see if they have an extra; if not, she will order a replacement online.
- Could stand to have a pick with a nail for butts.

4. Affiliate Reports

Gabriola Island Land Stewardship Society (GILSS) (David as Commons representative to its Board

- Purpose of "providing access to land for affordable housing, sustainable food production and small-scale community economic development."
- Exciting developments pending.

4. Proposal re: Boules Court from DinahD (summarized by Kim)

- The boules court is a tripping hazard and needs to go, eg dancers, circus performers, etc.
- DinahD volunteers to take on the disassembly task and wants to start in Sept.

  Discussion: past users of the court have been informally polled and though reluctant, would be ok with its removal. Some general support for removal at this meeting.
- Kim would like to see the entire area flattened and hydroseeded; est. $2000
- Suggested that Commons Council is not the Commons body to make a final decision. Perhaps as a safety issue, it falls to the Trustees.
- Bob reminded attendees that the Commons process is to notify all team members, gather feedback, and get back to, in this case, DInahD. **ACTION:** PST will take responsibility for drafting something to all teams; Jinny to send out to all team reps ASAP. Feedback to Trustees who will inform PST.

5. Items for further discussion (arising from Team Reports): None

Additional thoughts:

- Revisit idea of paying people to work at the Commons [Ed Note: there is an existing policy].
- Pros and cons of someone living on the property [Ed Note: non-occupancy required by current Islands Trust bylaw].
- Bill: There are organizations that provide grant writers in Nanaimo and he would be willing to look into that for us.
- Gloria is asking the AGI Co-op about organizing a Fall Fair.

6. Closing

Next CCC meeting: Tuesday September 2 at 7pm