Commons Coordinating Council (CCC)

council@gabriolacommons.ca

Notes of Meeting May 06, 2025

Facilitator: David Lightly

Notes: Greg Blee

Timer: Bob Andrew

Present: Don Smardon, Diane Conrad, Kristin Allan, Brent O'Malley, Kim Kasasian, Patrick Colvin, Janice Robinson, Bill McCallum, Christina Rajsic (PHC's new ED)

AGENDA ITEMS

1. Welcome & Agenda

2. Acknowledgement - Kristin

The topic is emotional for Kristin, because she doesn't know what to do, where to start. She's organizing a one-day festival for July and want to connect with some FN Elders about it; would really like to know some First Nations people here and would like to see the Commons making efforts to include First Nations people.

3. Team Reports:

Trustees — Bob (written report)

- Lost 2 Trustees: Bobbi Rose and Shirley Whalen.
- Gained a Trustee: Mary Wilson, to share finance (treasurer) with Gloria Filax.
- Woods report: Diane Conrad, Janice Robinson, Danielle Bye (PHC) and Bob met in mid-April with Rick Mitchell (Folklife Village) to discuss the status of the "gathering sport" on Folklife Village's property and trail into the Commons.

  Rick is quite solid that Folklife cannot accept a designated gathering spot on the Village property, mainly for liability reasons. He has suggested that a gathering spot could happen on the Commons, perhaps just on the edge of the properties.

  A question came up as to whether it would be possible to keep the trail which goes through the Folklife Village property as a public passage. Diane suggested that perhaps GaLTT could be asked to see if they would take this on and agreed to write GaLTT about this idea.

  We agreed to keep in touch and that the gathering spot and trail would not be taken down yet.

- A Board to Board meeting with PHC/Commons is in the works.
- New Farmhouse entrances: Drawings not yet completed; submission to RDN for a building permit will likely take us 3–4 months before construction starts.
- Electrical upgrade to kitchen is proceeding.
- Rats are still an issue.
- Goat Barn: Engineer to inspect the building May 13 for potential for public use.
- Question for the Council: Revisit the idea of a Caretaker on site?
- Farm to Table on Sept. 13

Next meeting: Wednesday May 28th

DISCUSSION:

Kristin: AGM should happen in September.

The engineer will tell us what we need to do to bring the Goat Barn up-to-date for public gatherings.

Property Stewardship Team — Kim (written)

Goat Barn to CK Electrical feed - The trench from the Goat Barn to the Community Kitchen has been dug and we are waiting for EMC to lay the cable and complete the connection next week.

Main Irrigation Pipe — The main irrigation pipe from the orchard to just outside of North Garden will be buried within the next two weeks. We are asking the Farm Team to share the cost beyond that which is covered by our donor.

Cedar Hedge — We are considering removing the cedar hedge along North Road between the main parking lot and the east driveway. We would landscape and plant Maple trees about 12 feet in from the road. This will mean that the property is no longer closed off; it will give a view from the road of the soon-to-be improved entrance to the farmhouse, and it will remove that part of the hedge that receives full summer sun and is most vulnerable to climate change.

Summary of these proposed changes will be sent to teams for feedback. ACTION: Kim, Jinny.

Goat Barn Inspection — The engineers will be looking at the Goat Barn on the 13 May. Report to follow.

Upgrading Gabriola Commons roadside signs — We are thinking about upgrading the road signs which have deteriorated and darkened with time, so they no longer show up. Any ideas?

Concern about fires in the woods — 14 fires have been found by the woods patrollers so far this year [plus 3 more today]. PST is recommending to the Trustees that when finding cold

fires, disperse the materials. Any actual fires should be reported to both the GI Fire Dept and the RCMP. More 'No Fires' signs are being posted.

There are grants of up to $1,000 from RDN as seed money for climate action projects. Any ideas?

The circus will be here this summer [July 25th]. They are offering to do a day of work for the Commons. We need ideas for what 40 people might do — projects could be big or small. Ideas please.

Yurt Keepers Team — Kristin (written)

1. Transfer of yurt:

    a. Have a plaque made for inside yurt — PGS has gifted the yurt to the Commons in 2025. Still seeking someone on Gabriola who makes these. *(Council group suggested that we ask GAC or woodworkers guild.)*

2. Insurance coverage: Brent has inquired with the insurance company, and they have no issue with a new wood stove being installed in the yurt.

3. Heating options:

    a. Fire department has no issue with a wood stove, other than needing a WETT certification and the stove pipe needs adjusting to comply with fire code.

    b. *Yurt Fire Extinguisher must be mounted at 5 feet high. Tanner will do this.*

    c. The YKT proposes installing a new wood stove that can be WETT certified and include the cost of that in a grant application to the Lions Club this month.

4. Washroom Facility for Yurt:

    a. Would like to propose moving forward with construction of a simple composting toilet facility behind the yurt. 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. Funds should be available by August to begin construction late summer/early fall.

    b. A temporary rental of port-a-potty from GI John ($175/month), starting in July will be necessary, until a more permanent washroom is created. The Finance Team has allocated $1,000 to the Yurt Keepers Team. That money can help fund the port-a-potty rental so that the yurt can begin to be rented ASAP and begin generating income.

5. Sounder Article:

    a. Submitted a short article to the *Sounder* with photos, requesting that it be printed in the next week or two. It's announcing the yurt transfer, the need for more YKT members, and the spring work bee to scrub the exterior of the yurt (and clean up inside) on **Saturday, May 24th 10am-12pm.**

6. Fundraising for 2025:

   a. Grant application: Plan to write a grant application to the Lions to support the a new wood stove, as well as a wall plaque (and possibly new lighting).

   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.

7. Rental of Yurt

   a. The Poetry Yurt is all set up to be rentable on the Commons website.

   b. The rental agreement still needs to be written, and I've been in communication with Deb Ferens, Mary Wilson and Gloria Filax about the details of who can rent the yurt and in what capacity. As of this week, I have clarity on how to write the rental agreement and will be doing that soon.

   c. Without any heat, it's only feasible to rent the yurt in July and August, so far, and we'd like to see the new heating system installed by August/September so there's no pause in yurt rentals.

DISCUSSION:

- Kristin: The Yurt Rental is now set up on Commons website under "Facilities"; it's confusing about who can rent it. Clarified that anyone can rent the yurt for a community event, with a rental fee counted as a donation to the Commons.
- What is asked of Yurt Keeper members? A: More brain-power, planning effort … help maintaining the yurt (e.g. spring work bee) … bookings communications … checking & cleaning yurt between bookings … wood stove maintenance … wood stove orientation for first-time renters.
- Re firewood storage: The quote Tanner & Kristin got was for a composting toilet *attached to a woodshed*.
- **Lions' grant** deadline is the <u>end of May</u>, so a go-ahead would be required soon.

  David: Teams generally make their own decisions, but, the Finance Team should know about any grant applications.

  We have consensus from attendees that an application to the Lions be made.

Community Kitchen Stewards — Brent

Electrical upgrade chugging along. Dug a trench from Goat Barn to Kitchen, it's 90% there, now waiting on electrician. Kim does constant updates about things, general maintenance.

Meals on Wheels started yesterday — Kitchen was busy the whole day, cooking all day Monday for a hot meal, plus food frozen for Tuesday and Wednesday, cooking again on Thursday. Grub Huggers (PHC) does cooking, and the Auxiliary does the driving. About 160 meals cooked, we expect the number to rise.

Gave a kitchen orientation to several people working on Monday.

Process Team — David

Met last Thursday of the month. Trying to have a focussed meeting on the hedge issue.

Newcomers - Patrick

Patrick is monitoring emails for new team members; very few coming in.

4. Affiliate Reports

People for a Healthy Community — Christine

Christina — Odour has been a problem in the office — something has died in the walls? I'm just hitting the ground, after a week. Plan on attending CCC frequently.

There's still an exploratory gap in the bathroom wall that could be fixed, pending a decision being made. Bob says Randy has volunteered to fix it.

Health & Well-Being Collaborative — Bob (written)

Bob is the Commons liaison with the Collaborative, which includes over 50 representatives — from services (RCMP/Firehall/CofC, etc.) to nonprofits, to try to bring unity in pursuing Gabiola's needs. Collaborative is in the middle of its Strategic Planning exercise, next date **May 18, 1-4PM** [at the Community Hall].

Recently the Commons was offered financial assistance to help us deal with our Woods issue.

Bob also circulated the "Gabriola Health & Wellbeing Report 2024" put out by the Collaborative (also available online).

Gabriola Island Land Stewards Society (GILSS) - David

David is Commons rep with GILSS, which is looking at buying 2 lots (5 acres each) just beyond South Gardens (contiguous with Commons), mostly covered by wetlands (riparian zone). GILSS would like it to be protected beyond riparian protections. One idea is to make it part of the Commons, under a mandate of environmental protection.

GILSS's focus is low-cost housing and agriculture. A small piece of this land would be suitable for agriculture. Could we partner with GILSS, maybe trade land? Open to ideas.

DISCUSSION:

- Have any inquiries been made with Ducks Unlimited? No, will look into it.
- Who owns it now? Owned by C— B—, who is currently living on it. Zoned Rural Residential, but much of it is in the riparian zone. It's not in ALR.

7. Items for further discussion (arising from Team Reports)

Hedge — Kim

The idea is to remove the cedar hedge section in front of house, along the road between 2 driveways. Some of the cedars are dead, and the hedge receives blasting sun in the summer, requiring considerable water that we don't have to spare in the summer. Also, we are renovating the front of the front of house in more inviting fashion, and it would be more visible from the road. Between trees and road would be an apron of grass.

The hedge would be replaced with five small-leaf maples, which grow fast, don't require much water, and look great in summer and fall.

The driveway currently has parking for 2 vehicles. We would sacrifice one (possibly dead) tree to create 4 parking spots and move the busses to the west parking lot.

Financially, the hedge costs $3000 every 2 years for trimming. The new scheme would require less maintenance, for net savings of about $600 a year. The big upfront cost would be removing the hedge.

The idea has been sent out to all Teams; only one replied, and nobody objected. Everybody I've talked to so far likes the idea … somewhat surprising!

DISCUSSION:

- Bob: The last hedge discussion took 10 years! We need a bit more of a comprehensive plan, with a drawing, financial and public relations plans, and go to Council for a full discussion. Don't touch the ornamental trees (cherries, rhodo)! The work would likely happen in Fall, as the fire shutdown coming soon would stop all machine work.
- There are about 22 cedars in total. They wouldn't be cut, just pulled out by machine, roots and all. (There are 2 trees next to the parking lot, a big one now in flower, and a smaller that is struggling. They wouldn't be affected.)
- Christine: Good to move the vans over to the west parking lot. A possibly parallel PHC ambition is to expand the bottom floor, e.g. by closing in the rear porch area to give more office area and more light.
- We could ask local businesses for assistance, free work. The hardware store might help, and a local design business could help with the concept drawings.
- What good is a hedge anyway? It's a British colonial construct!
- It's a big project — maybe we could maybe use the circus (40 people) work day to help. Would need to be well planned. Timing important, as the circus comes in late July.
- Bill: There will be lots of limbs and woody debris generated. The Housing Society knows of a property that has taken ~20 truckloads of woody debris from the Paisley site and might be open to taking the hedge debris. Will get contact info to Commons.
- David: re design for PHC and Commons — The hedge idea is a big opening of possibility. A couple of years ago, Trustees had a big discussion around the PHC–

Commons relationship. Concluded with almost consensus that PHC should have its own independent space, maybe in the property corner by the Rollo. This could be an opportunity to revisit that discussion, rather than the ongoing nitpicking dance between PHC and Commons. Let's find a way to talk about a vision for the whole front of the property.

Maybe in the current concept drawings, that space could be left as is, for possible future development. But the whole issue would need a comprehensive plan, and a much larger discussion with PHC.

- Process Team discussed the hedge, assumed there would be a more in-depth discussion.
- Next step: Drawing and action plan to go to Council and Teams.

Idea: come to a decision now (at this Council meeting), put that out to the Teams, and see what comes back?

Decision: CCC consensus to remove the hedge as discussed. Teams to send in comments by next CCC meeting. Action plan (with site drawing) will come to next CCC meeting.

Trails — Janice

Folklife (Rick) wants to make the gathering spot unusable (adding debris, a No Trespassing sign), for liability reasons. But they will consider leaving the trail passing through (which is rough but still being used). They won't do anything till we can talk with GaLTT, explore the possibility that they might take it over. Or could Commons partner with GaLTT to maintain that trail?

As many as 8–10 people were coming [weekly] to help pick up garbage. Now that the gathering place is disrupted, they have dispersed — mostly onto other Folklife property.

More unhoused people are arriving as the weather improves, sleeping out. It is thought that there is not much interaction with the new arrivals.

DISCUSSION (roughly sorted by topic):

The trail:

- Spoke with GaLTT, they haven't done a trail licence with a company before, just individual property owners.
- Pointed out that GaLTT has held a couple of trail licences with companies, e.g. MainRoad through Paisley property, also with a company in Silva Bay.

Unhoused people:

- We have some obligation to these folks, they are community members as well. Three or 4 were born on Gabe, many have family here on island.
- In the short term, we don't want to let the built relationships slide. Need a short-term solution; the regular Friday pizza sessions are a good thing.

- Some of the local members are very supportive, fire-aware, are picking up garbage, putting bottles and cans in a pile for those who need the refund cash.
- The "no alcohol/drugs" signs won't deter some. Creating a space for them where we can keep an eye on them is important.
- It's an idealistic idea to make them "stewards of the forest," but that doesn't work with the mentally ill and addicted. Now they're feeling they've been pushed out more.

Gathering place:

- A gathering place is important, for mutual support, mutual policing.
- If Commons created a new gathering spot, the Folklife concern might be alleviated. Could we set up a separate gathering place, clear some land, offer it to them?
- But us creating a gathering circle [on the Commons] would adopt the same problem as the Folklife has now.
- How to engage them actively to create their own gathering place? We could assist, rather than leading it. Considerations: not too deep in the woods, not too exposed.

Overall:

- This is a Gabriola community problem. Work cooperatively with those willing, but let's not make laws/rules we can't enforce. H&WB Collaborative, in combo with Commons, is the way to go. There won't be an influx of people. Now the weather is warm, they aren't building fires.
- This is not a Commons problem, it's a community problem. We're not going to cure it here; it needs to get the community involved. Our role is to find a way to get community involvement. The big fire last year was a turning point. It's a bigger problem that just us finding a gathering spot.
- Our problems are small, in comparison with other places. This group is interested in talking and interacting with the community.
- We want families, kids to use the Commons, and some of the homeless challenges are making families feel unwelcome. The homeless group is also sucking a lot of energy from Commons volunteers. A NIMBY attitude, simply pushing them out, is not the answer. Maybe a gazebo shelter with a built-in fire pit would be. Do we need professional help on this? What do other communities do?

ACTIONS:

- Commons to look into maintaining the trail, in concert with GaLTT.
- Keep a liaison going with the unhoused.
- Communicate with the Collaborative. Bob & Christine will keep them updated.

8. Closing

Appreciations

David: to Kim … Welcome to Christine.

Kim: to Leanne, who has taken on blueberry field solo, and is constantly recruiting people.

Next CCC meeting:

June 3rd (first Tuesday) at 7 pm, Farmhouse

Facilitator, etc: Council Stewards will check list and make requests.