Gabriola Commons Coordinating Council
Notes of Meeting March 3, 2026

Reports to: council@gabriolacommons.ca

Facilitator: Brent O'Malley
Timer: Kristin Allan
Note-taker: Jinny Hayes

Also Present:
Bob Andrew, Mary Lee Burns, Murray Bush, Diane Conrad, Mark Fenster, Mercedes Jayne, Carol Keene, Betty Kehler, Bob Martin, Christina Rajsic, Don Smardon, Plus 1 person.

1. Welcome & First Nations Acknowledgement
Brent acknowledged the racism and bigotry all around us, citing a particular comedian appearing at the Nanaimo Port Theatre who singles out anyone who is not white. We should all stand forward to help those whose voices are not being heard.

2. Agenda: Approved as posted.
Noted that regular agenda should include short team reports so that ample time can be available to accommodate a special PHC agenda item.

3. Team Reports

Yurt Keepers: Kristin Allan (oral report)

1. Lots of rentals; doing so well that their $1000 startup could be returned. There's been one wedding and another is booked.
2. Need a new member who is a morning person, to give orientations, check stove, etc.; 1-2 hrs/week. Mark volunteered.

Board of Trustees: Bob Andrew (written report)
Two big issues on Trustees' plate:
1) RDN request to have the house evaluated for public occupation and to apply for a building permit to change the use of the building. As well, the RDN has set a deadline for shutting down the downstairs kitchen (March 19) by removing the stove and attached vents and pipes.
2) We have had a meeting with PHC to consider their proposal of constructing a "community hub" building (for multiple community services) on leased Commons land. Our Trustee perspective response went to PHC (previously circulated; please contact trustees@gabriolacommons.ca if an additional copy is required). Further discussion

continued in the last half of the meeting; see below.
Other notes:
• We are finishing up a protocol agreement with PHC re: meetings through our Trustee Liaisons in order to further improve communications. Thanks to Rob, Mercedes, Jocelyn, and PHC for putting this together.
• Colleen Reid has been sending out a wonderful monthly Commons Communique; please take a look.
• The Covenant Team is steadily working on the Covenant. There is renewed energy there thanks to Rob & Brent.
Q: Implications of change from Single Family Dwelling to Multiple Uses?
A: Modifications may require a building code consultant, then a structural engineer, and then the RDN. Rough estimate of costs of these consultations = $10K.
Q: How did RDN get wind of the long-term current uses of the Farmhouse?
A: Permit application for changes to Farmhouse façade & entrance.
Note: PHC Reps reported that they can function without the downstairs stove; Commons will remove it.

Farm Team: Betty Kehler (verbal report)
• Doing a grafting workshop.
• Orchard fencing half done.
• Leanne is forming a sub-team for the blueberry field.

Council Stewards: Jinny Hayes (written report)
• Still no volunteers to join our little, easy-work team. Please consider becoming a member.
• Idea to rotate facilitation (using alpha rotation) and Note-taking through teams has encountered a few issues, eg, some teams are too small to field enough people to participate.
• Change time of Council to 6.30? Went out to teams with little input. Therefore: new time to start with April Meeting.
• Yurt Keepers asked last meeting if it needed "approval" for the woodshed: Jinny and Kristin to confer.
• Written reports are GREAT! But please be brief so Notes don't get too long. Can always flesh out verbally at the Council meeting.
Suggestion: Try to stick with the rotation idea above. Other ideas
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Property Stewardship: Bob Andrew (verbal report)
• Roof repairs for Community Kitchen (CK) estimate is $10K.
• Solar panels are now fully functioning.
• Ice slick on driveway has been ameliorated with improved drainage.
• 3 workbees have had good attendance.
• New hot water heater installed.

• CK needs to hook up the new generator; estimated cost $4000. Looking for a grant for roof.
• Trees for front are coming.
• New door in the CK has been installed.

North Gardens (written report by Maureen Wild, read by Jinny)
• Our Letter of Inquiry for a large greenhouse in the North Gardens was not accepted. We will focus on upgrades to the unfinished shed/greenhouse making it more usable.

Covenant Team – Jinny (verbal report)
This team is being reconstituted with 2 Trustee volunteers (Rob and Brent) and Jinny and George Szanto from previous team. We met on Feb 26; David Lightly and Mercedes Jayne also attended, though George was not available. Discussed progress to date with Local Trust C'tee lawyers' change requirements (for them to become Covenant Holder), issues with the proposed Stewardship Agreement & Plan and suitability of attaching a covenant to Title.
Next Meeting: Late March.

4. Affiliate Reports

Tool Library - Carol Keene and Murray Bush (verbal report)
• Library had > 1500 loans last year.
• The addition to the shed, approved by the Commons about 6 months ago, will be built soon. It's a kit, and about half the size of the existing shed.

People for a Healthy Community (written response to Commons Trustee statement previously circulated)
• PHC Food Program is open Thursday evenings now, 4-7 pm. Lighting needs improvement in that area.
• Continued discussion of the proposed new Community Hub Building:
  - Commons Trustees decision to not pursue development on Commons land should not hinder the momentum of this meaningful initiative. Trustee Colleen Reid, who was unable to attend this meeting, sent a strong personal endorsement of the value of the PHC's work on Gabriola, but agreed that the Hub placement on the Commons is unsuitable and that the Commons Trustees decision was not an easy one.
  - The Commons and PHC started together, as illustrated in Shelagh Huston's 20th Anniversary talk about the Commons at the Golf Club in November 2025. Following this, Mary Lee and Christina spoke with Shelagh who subsequently suggested that a

new site for the outgrown rented first floor of the Farmhouse might be situated on the Commons on leased land.

- Because they support the health and wellbeing of the whole community, the Community Hub is an idea PHC that has been working on for awhile. It's still at concept phase. Duncan and Campbell River have something similar.
- ARE outgrowing the Farmhouse and associated spaces.
- Commons project management was not intended by the PHC Proposal.
- **Response:** Clarified that Commons Trustees are also not responding to project management workload but the overall capacity requirements in a fully volunteer not-for-profit system of work teams.
- **Q:** How can Trustees make the decision about this without consultation?
- **A:** This IS a Commons-wide issue and has now gone out to teams.
- Gabriola Commons Foundation (GCF, technically the Landowner) would be leasing the land to PHC.
- **Q:** Would this not be a problem for the Agricultural Land Reserve, who approved the zoning that established the Commons, and Land Title?
- **A:** Onus is on the Commons to do that background work.
- Confusion & anger that Shelagh Huston would make the suggestion, when the purposes of the Commons embrace whole-community benefits. We need to work to help the Commons thrive.
- The Trustees are saying that support for this project ON THE COMMONS would stretch their capacity to concentrate on the financial and legal responsibilities that should be their focus.
- No group has specific use of an area of the Commons; exclusive use is against what the Commons is all about. As a LEASE of land, the proposed Community Hub building would be exclusive use. For example, the Goat Barn project would be managed by a Commons team for multiple groups' uses.
- Hub is for the whole community, all Gabriolans. PHC has 170 volunteers. Hub idea has been taken to other Gabriola organizations.
- Land itself is a concern as one of the 3 central established values of the Commons (environment, agriculture, community benefit) is land protection. If PHC were to be granted use of some land, what happens if others want the same? So it's "not about PHC" only.
- One consideration is that a lease of greater than 3 years requires rezoning, and the Commons would have to file this paperwork which could be long and onerous.

- There are differences between PHC and the Commons; the latter is not a service agency. If we look at the mission statements of the two agencies, we are "different animals".
- Proposal needs to go to the Community for discussion and input. Christina and Mary Lee plan to go to the community in April and they wonder what they can say about the Commons' position. **A:** Commons representatives should be present at such sessions. Session will be facilitated.
- Reminder that full Commons consultation has only just started; our Trustees are one team among many whose input is still required.
- Noted that Gabriolans purchased the Commons as a community commons. Maybe the proposal has moved forward a bit too quickly?
- **Q:** Could we strike a task force to work with PHC about the issue?
- **A:** 5 attendees volunteered: Mark, Leanne, Bob M, Carol, David L. Diane to convene the group [Ed Note: E.addresses sent to Diane by Jinny}. Liaison group can also work on it and also the Board-to-Board meetings.
- Could *Gabriola Sounder* be used as a discussion forum?
- **Q:** Will the need for more space cause PHC to go "belly up"? [No] Have other locations been considered?
- **A:** Mary Lee: Yes, several locations have been looked into; and in going to the community, PHC will ask for other land possibilities.
- Basically, the issue comes down to capacity; the community hub building and PHC expansions would exceed the Commons abilities to accommodate it.

5. Other Business: None

6. Closing at 8.55 pm

Next Meeting: NOTE NEW TIME: 6.30 PM April 7, 2026 Farmhouse