

Trustees' Report for South Pender Island

Approaching election day on November 15th, there is a ferment of activity around the islands. The Islands Trust homepage under "What's New" includes the names of 47 candidates for the 26 seats at Council. Please check the candidate profiles and websites for your island. Voter information is also available there. Please give me a call if you have any questions about voting (250-629-6636). I myself am not among the candidates, but I feel we will be well served by those running for office.

Here on South Pender, a democratic spirit is alive and well. This has been demonstrated most recently by public participation in the focus group work on the Land Use Bylaw review, in meeting attendance, letters and emails, in APC reviews. A dramatic example was at the January 4, 2014 special community meeting where 56 residents crowded the meeting room while 17 of those unable to attend sent letters. That's a total of 73 people actively participating, many with partners who shared their position but could not attend during a busy holiday season. For a population of 201, that's an impressive show of participatory governance in action!

Trustees' primary duty is to represent the interests and concerns of their constituents. To do that, they have to listen, sometimes to competing interests, to gather and digest the relevant information needed to make a sound decision, and to render a decision that is visibly fair. It's not always an easy task, especially when feelings in the community run high. Trustees can set the tone by listening and acknowledging, modelling civility and fairness, ensuring transparency by sharing relevant information with constituents and explaining why they arrived at their decision. These practices help support democracy and keep the peace in our small island communities.

There are other practices that Trustees can use to support democracy. Meetings open to the public ought to be welcoming and friendly. Many LTCs, including South Pender Island, schedule Town Halls at the beginning of the meeting to allow those who wish to speak an opportunity to do so before a decision is made. It can be a bit daunting for some members of the public to speak in a Town Hall. Speakers ought to be treated respectfully, especially by the Chair and Trustees. There should be zero tolerance for bullying in meetings. Written submissions from the public are public records and can be available to the community to review at their island's webpage at the Islands Trust website. The ability to access and review these letters, ideas and opinions is a vital way that community stays informed about the issues behind decisions we all will live with.

Deciding who will represent you is a choice that will have consequences. Candidate profiles and websites will provide some useful information about a candidate's background, education and experience. It can reveal what they consider to be important issues right now, and where they

stand. For those candidates with previous experience as Trustees, you can also factor in their track record. What you have seen in a prior term will likely resemble what you can expect in the upcoming 4 years. And it IS a 4-year term now.

In the past 3 years, in my experience, one of the key issues Trust-wide has been democracy itself, and whether it is being fostered in our policies and processes. In the delegations at Trust Council, the discussions and decisions around the Council table, we have heard that we must make it a focus. The Islands Trust will remain strong only insofar as our communities stand with us. My hope is that democracy will be a central one in the years ahead. As your acting Trustee for South Pender Island, I am asking you to take your place and stand with us. Please exercise your right to vote.

Our next South Pender LTC meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, November 4th at 10 AM at the South Pender Fire Hall. I hope you'll join us.

To contact your South Pender Island local Trustees:

Liz Montague <lmontague@islandstrust.bc.ca> or by phone at 250-629-6636

Mike Jones <mjones@islandstrust.bc.ca> or by phone at 1-250-886-9420

Submitted by Trustee Montague