

Denman Island Wish-list, 2016

It's January, time to think about goals and wishes for the coming year. For the Denman Island Local Trust Committee (DILTC), that means contemplating what land use initiatives the Island most wants and needs. As I wrote in October, at any one time we have the capacity to work on (typically) three projects, while also carrying out the ongoing work of a local land use government, such as processing applications. Right now we have our hands full, but I anticipate that **sooner or later this year we'll be ready to take on one or two new projects. But which ones?**

The DILTC keeps a list of project ideas based on community concerns, legislative changes, and emerging environmental issues. We consult this list as we make decisions about where to target our resources (although we are free to respond to new issues as they arise). Here's a summary of a few key topics (full disclosure: this is my subjective choice of topics; other Trustees may have their own favourites, and you may have yours). The whole list is below.

Farm Plan Implementation/supporting food security:

The Denman Island Farm Plan is a 107-page document setting out a vision for farming on the Island (to find it on the Islands Trust website, islandstrust.bc.ca, click on Denman Island, then on Resources, then on Farm Plan). It was created by a team of community volunteers, working with a number of consultants, and is based on a great deal of research and community discussion. The LTC endorsed it in November, 2012, and uses it as a guide, but some of the Farm Plan recommendations for the LTC call for a focused initiative, such as "undertake a review of farm worker housing and agritourism accommodation" and "establish an Agricultural enterprise zone to encourage agricultural-related businesses and services."

The LTC could undertake a process to formally consider these and other recommendations for regulatory change. This would include public involvement as well as all the legislative work necessary for bylaw changes. We can also look for ways to promote the Farm Plan's recommendations for others, since the plan is full of good suggestions for farmers, community groups, and other levels of government.

Alternative Dispute Resolution as a component of bylaw enforcement:

This is definitely an "outside the box" idea for the Trust area, which means that if we take it on we will be using words like "explore," and "pilot project." The question here is if we can incorporate some kind of restorative/community justice approach as a tool to augment standard bylaw enforcement.

Local Trustees and enforcement staff have done some preliminary research which suggests that this may be feasible, but no one knows what it might look like and if it would be successful. So if we took this on, the first step would be simply to look into it more deeply.

Regulations to promote greenhouse gas emissions reduction:

The DILTC can promote greenhouse gas emissions reductions through regulations, public education, and advocacy. We could consider how we landscape, provide transportation infrastructure, and build our homes. Actions could be as simple as changing height restrictions to allow renewable energy equipment, as complex as allowing density transfers to encourage clustered development, and as controversial as setting a maximum square footage for homes.

Downtown village neighbourhood planning:

What's Denman's vision for its "downtown" centre? Do we want to change zoning to allow different uses? What's missing? What could be improved? What would make this area more fun and functional, even, dare I say, more "Denmany"? Is the limited septic capability a problem and if so what could we do about it?

The creation of a neighbourhood plan could involve the whole community, and other agencies such as the Regional District and Ministry of Transportation in considering these, and other, questions.

Other items on the Projects List are a protected area network; regulations governing wind towers and ocean loop geothermal systems; regulation limited the gross floor area of a dwelling; and DCLTA Rural Affordable Housing Project Final Report, as well as a couple of administrative tasks.

Feel free to let me and my colleague David Critchley know which of these you think are most important and timely, and if there are others we should consider as we guide the Local Trust Committee through the new year. Contact info: lbusheikin@islandstrust.bc.ca / 250-218-3216; dcritchley@islandstrust.bc.ca / 250-335-3244.

Info on Housing Options Now Available

About a year ago Denman's housing regulations changed to allow secondary suites and cottages, in order to give Islanders the power to create more housing on the Island, thus meeting community needs for rental and affordable housing and aging in place.

The Denman Island Local Trust Committee has now published a brief, readable guide to these regulations, intended to help anyone contemplating making use of these opportunities.

The guide is available at Abraxas Books, in the notice-board case at the Old School, and on the Denman Island section of the Islands Trust website (www.islandstrust.bc.ca).

