

Make Yourself Heard

Voting every four years technically ensures democracy, but you end up with a pretty thin broth. For a richer soup, we need a communal kitchen approach -- lots of participants adding their particular ingredients to make a nourishing and flavourful decision-making soup.

With that in mind, here are options for participation in the work of the Denman Island Local Trust Committee (DILTC), the elected body responsible for land use planning under the auspices of the Islands Trust. If you've got something on your mind, have information to share, or simply want to contribute to democratic process, these are steps you can take:

1. Speak to the DILTC at a regular business meeting. There are two main ways to do this. The more formal approach is to speak as a delegation. This means your name and topic will be listed on the agenda, and a block of time (usually 10 minutes, unless there are a number of delegations) will be designated for you. To make this happen, contact the Islands Trust office at least 10 days before the meeting.

A less formal and more spontaneous option is to speak at one of the two Town Hall sessions offered at every meeting (one at the beginning, one at the end). This is as easy as putting your hand up when the Chair asks, "Who wants to speak at the Town Hall?"

2. Attend and participate in other types of meetings. The DILTC holds community information meetings, open houses, forums and public hearings on rezoning applications, bylaw amendments and community issues such as housing, food security, or shoreline protection. Formats range from small group discussion, question-and-answer sessions, and formal planarians with a speakers' list. All you need to do is show up.

To do this, **you need to know where and when meetings are held and what's on the agenda.** Meetings are listed on the Grapevine Calendar and on the back page of the Flagstone, and notices are posted on bulletin boards around the Island. Also, they are listed on the website calendar (islandstrust.bc.ca – look on the Denman page). As well, you can sign up for regular email notifications (click on Subscriber Options on the home page).

Agendas and meeting packages (these contain background information about the agenda items, and will help you immensely in making persuasive, informed arguments) are available on the Denman page of the website about a week before each meeting.

3. Send us correspondence. Send your email to delc@islandstrust.bc.ca to reach the whole Trust committee and support staff. You can also send a letter the old fashioned way to 700 North Road, Gabriola Island V0R 1X3, and you can give us a written submission in person at a meeting. Note that we can't assure anyone of anonymity, and also that any potentially slanderous or defamatory material will be redacted.

4. Join an Advisory Planning Commission. Advisory Planning Commissions (APCs) are made up of appointed volunteers who give advice to the DILTC when requested. This is a great way to delve into the issues. APCs meet independently of the DILTC and often have an Islands Trust staff member present as a resource. Denman has a general APC and an APC focussed specifically on marine issues. APC vacancies are announced in local media.

5. Speak to a local trustee individually. Discussions with individual trustees don't carry a lot of political weight since the information shared isn't heard by everyone, but this is a good way to explore a topic you're interested in, ask questions, and get your thoughts and facts in order before you consider making a more public or formal comment.

To find us, drop in at Trustee Office Hours the second Saturday of each month, 10 a.m. to noon at the Old School, or contact us at Laura Busheikin, 250-218-3216, lbusheikin@islandstrust.bc.ca; David Critchley, 250-335-3244, dcritchley@islandstrust.bc.ca.

I'll end with some advice on **how to make your voice persuasive**: address the whole DILTC rather than just speaking or writing to individual trustees; use reason and evidence to support your message; avoid hyperbole and exaggeration; and learn about the issues before formulating your position.

The soup of democratic process awaits the spice of your input! I hope this article has been both informative and encouraging. After all, the best parties are often in the kitchen.