

Islands Trust and COVID-19

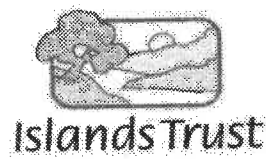
I'm writing this update on March 18, which means it may be woefully out of date by the time you read it. But I am hearing that people want to learn more about how the Islands Trust is responding to the COVID-19 situation, so here's some information that is valid at the time of writing:

- The Islands Trust as an organization is still conducting business
- Approximately 75% of staff are working from home
- The Trust's three offices (Gabriola, Victoria, Salt Spring) are closed to the public
- All Local Trust Committee meetings and Islands Trust community events are cancelled until April 15, at least
- Staff are not having in-person meetings with islanders but are available via phone and email. We ask for everyone's patience in understanding that there may be delays in response due to the challenging times
- Staff are working on projects and applications to the extent that this is possible
- Trustees and staff are aware that some applications by their nature are high-priority and time-sensitive, for instance when associated with grants, and are looking at how to identify these and enable progress
- The Trust is a land use planning authority and has no jurisdiction over, nor responsibility for, health and public safety, emergency planning, or programs associated with a public health crisis. We are able to act as an information liaison and have provided a list of sources of information on our website (<http://www.islandstrust.bc.ca/> Click on the March 13 news item)

What about electronic meetings?

The Denman Island Local Trust Committee (DELTC) has policies in place to allow electronic meetings and in theory could go ahead and hold one. However, electronic meetings pose some thus far unsolved challenges.

According to legislation, all local government meetings where decisions could be made *must* be held in public. This is a requirement for transparent and fair governance. The public must be able to witness the discussion and hear all the information their elected officials hear. The only exception is *in camera* meetings, which deal with sensitive



matters. *In camera* meetings can only be held for reasons listed in the relevant legislation.

So an electronic meeting needs to have a physical location that is accessible to the public, and a member of Islands Trust staff must be present to maintain this space. So even for an electronic meeting, we'd face challenges around ensuring social distancing. Another barrier is finding a meeting location, as public spaces are mostly closed right now.

The Islands Trust doesn't have the legislative authorization nor the technology to include the public electronically. There's no way to ensure that everyone in our communities has the savvy, the equipment, and the Internet capacity to participate.

Accessibility and transparency are key foundations of democratic process, and local governments haven't (yet) figured out how to carry out electronic meetings that meet acceptable standards.

The DELTC can make minor decisions that are primarily technical or process-oriented in nature by email via something called a resolution-without-meeting. Substantive decisions, such as how to respond to a rezoning application or proceed with a bylaw amendment, can *not* be made this way.

Like just about everything these days, the situation calls for patience and willingness to go with the flow, (and pause when there is no flow) as needed. The Trust is continually monitoring the global and local situation and working on ways to best respond. Thanks for your patience.

Budget update

I want to thank all the Denman Islanders who took the time to engage in the islands Trust budget survey. This was the first time that public input into the Trust's budget reached the threshold to be considered statistically relevant. Here are a couple of key results:

- 33.06% of respondents support tax increases to add new programs or services, or improve existing ones
- Of eight climate change-focused activities, respondents chose these top four priorities:
 1. developing a regional freshwater strategy
 2. developing climate change, demographic, and environmental indicator data
 3. reviewing foreshore policies/bylaws
 4. Coastal Douglas-fir forest ecosystem protection

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ISLANDS TRUST NOTEBOOK FROM PAGE 4

On March 13, Trust Council passed a budget that focusses heavily on climate action and includes all four of the priorities mentioned above. The budget also includes continued funding for a senior staff position dedicated to First Nations relationships and reconciliation. The budget represents a 2% general property tax increase. You can read more about it on the Islands Trust website (see above).



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ARTS DENMAN ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING POSTPONED

submitted by Christine Stewart for Arts Denman

The Arts Denman Annual General Meeting normally held in April, is postponed in the interest of keeping everyone safe and well.

Meanwhile, here is something we would like you to think about:

Grantors and funding agencies like to see some sort of succession planning on the part of the groups they fund. New blood is good for non-profit organizations and even the most dedicated volunteers get a little tired in the long run. We'd love to welcome one or two new members with good administration skills and a wish to facilitate the success of arts organizations on Denman: someone willing to assume a vice president-like role, with a view to taking over the direction of the board some time in the future.

We are lucky to have the high calibre of arts events we do: the Readers and Writers Festival, the Summer Gallery, Concerts Denman, the Creative Threads Conspiracy, the Baroque Festival, and the Open Stage. This is due to the high calibre of artists and creative people we have, and also to the dedicated volunteers who staff the committees behind each of these events.

As for Arts Denman, we stay behind the scenes looking after business: banking (ticket sales via e-transfers!) financial statements, insurance, building maintenance, and the many other things that come up for an arts-related secretariat on an island. In this way, our member committees are free to fly and create.

If you are new to the island, interested in the arts and want to make a contribution to the community - or just get away from chores at home - why not think about joining us? And you don't have to be newish! Island veterans are welcome too.

Visit our webpage at artsdenman.org
email Michael Rapati at kjwithmr@interbaun.com

And watch the front page of the Grapevine for the date of our AGM.

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The Tsk Tsk Revue is postponing the Salish Sea Tour. Even though we Lasquetians live on an island, we are people of the planet and now is the time to stay close to home, to take care of ourselves and thereby everyone else. When it is safe and right to get physically close to each other again, to celebrate rather than fear the exchange of fluids, we will reschedule shows and get to freely play together. In the meantime folks, wash your hands and keep your hearts open!