



Gabriola Island Local Trust Committee

Minutes of Special Meeting

Date: April 28, 2023

Location: Electronic Meeting

Members Present: Peter Luckham, Chair
Tobi Elliott, Trustee
Susan Yates, Trustee

Staff Present: Renée Jamurat, RPP MCIP, Regional Planning Manager
Chloë Straw, Recorder

1. CALL TO ORDER

The Chair called the meeting to order at 9:05 am. He acknowledged that the meeting was being held in territory of the Coast Salish First Nations.

2. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

The following additions to the agenda were presented for consideration:

- Public correspondence from Deborah Ferens and from Alix Hodson Deggan
- A memo that Trustee Elliott sent to Staff and Trustees prior to the meeting.

Staff confirmed that these items will be added to the merged agenda package as late items.

By general consent the agenda was approved as amended.

3. BUSINESS ITEMS

3.1 Scope of Work for an Indigenous Engagement Coordinator Position for the Official Community Plan Review Project - for discussion

Staff presented the history of requesting staff include this position as part of the Official Community Plan (OCP) Review Project. Staff see the value in having the position and will need time to determine whether it could be filled by a staff or contracted position, and to determine what the procurement process would need to look like. The position will be outlined as part of the OCP Review Project Charter, and the first step will be to write to the Nation requesting input on whether and how they would like to be involved. If there is no interest from the Nation, the Indigenous Engagement Coordinator position would be moot.

- Trustees supported the process outlined by staff.
- A Trustee added that they would also want to ask whether there was financial support available from the Nation to support their involvement in this work. They added that it is important that the Nation be given an opportunity to provide input

into the design of the project charter, to ensure that early and meaningful engagement occurs. They mentioned that in order to support this process getting underway, and based on the direction of the Director of Trust Area Services, they have been collecting names of Snuneymuxw members who could be appropriate for the position based on their existing relationships with the Nation and ability to set up meetings in a respectful way. The Nation is very busy and the procurement process could take three to four months.

- The Island Planner confirmed that this will be woven into the project charter and consideration of the scope and budget of the project will have to be given. She also mentioned that she has relevant experience to support this work.

GB-2023-021**It was MOVED and SECONDED**

that the Gabriola Local Trust Committee Chair writes to Snuneymuxw First Nation Acting Chief Erralyn Joseph on behalf of the Gabriola Local Trust Committee expressing interest in learning how the Nation might wish to be involved with an Official Community Plan review project on Gabriola and how we might respect the Nation's engagement priorities at this time.

CARRIED.

- The Chair asked for an update from staff on the hiring of a Senior Indigenous Relations Advisor.
- Staff reported that interviews are being held and that, in the meantime, there are resources available through the Islands Trust to review letters to First Nations and make sure language is appropriate and respectful.
- The Chair mentioned there may be some funding from Islands Trust that could be used throughout this project for First Nations engagement.

3.2 Opportunity to Qualify for the Federal Housing Accelerator Fund - for discussion

Staff provided an update on the funding opportunity available through the Canada Mortgage & Housing Corporation (CMHC). The Housing Accelerator Fund is uniquely set up and focused on encouraging local governments to develop housing action plans which are focused primarily on increasing the possibility for additional units to be built within the local jurisdiction. They clarified that funding is available to support the actual building of the units, as well as for supports like infrastructure and research to understand groundwater availability which would help to understand where possible units could be put.

They explained that the Cowichan Regional District is working on an Accessory Dwelling Unit Incentive Program, which aligns with their Housing Plan for the Southern Gulf Islands. This could be an area of focus for Gabriola because this project is being developed now and will likely be expedited due to the CMHC funding announcement.

They presented a model of what a housing project process would typically look like, as well as what an expedited process could look like in order to meet the funding application deadline in June 2023. Staff requested input from the LTC on the proposed process.

- A Trustee asked whether other islands in the south are applying for the Housing Accelerator Fund.
- Staff responded they are not.
- A Trustee expressed concern that the LTC would have to commit to a housing supply growth target that increases the annual rate of growth to at least 10%. It's never, in the history of the Islands Trust, been done to commit to increasing density in a certain timeline and in a certain way. The overall concern is that this is completely funding-driven and not community driven, as well as that it might mean that other important areas like the Development Permit Area mapping get dropped.
- Staff clarified the growth rate requirement for the CMHC fund: communities would have to have a minimum of 1.1% increase. For example, Mayne Island has had an increase of 6% from 2016-2021, which breaks down to an increase of 1.25% annually. They are meeting the minimum requirement by increasing at the same rate of growth that they have had, which has been approximately fifteen new units annually. Funding recipients get more points when their growth rate exceeds the natural growth rate, but this is not a requirement.
- The Island Planner clarified that the Trustee's concern is whether the community would support the number of units that need to be committed to and asked whether the Planner was able to predict the number of units that would be needed for Gabriola.
- The Planner responded that they had not had a chance to do review these numbers for Gabriola yet.
- The Chair confirmed that 'acceleration' refers to accelerating the building that is already planned for in certain areas, as opposed to increasing density.
- The Planner responded that we're talking about *density and intensity*. It's about creating additional potential for more growth. Extending secondary suites regulation to other areas in order to create the ability for more options for housing doesn't necessarily mean that that housing is going to be built. It's about increasing units that are going to be affordable and how to support the actual building of the options that currently exist or are created through the program.
- A Trustee commented that there has been years of talk about how local governments struggle because the federal and provincial government have not partnered like this before. For me, it's about island-specific solutions to housing. It's about what is our "missing middle." It's not about wholesale growth of what we already have (single detached family homes). For the past two terms, we've had a Housing Options Major Project funded through the Gabriola LTC. We created a housing options report with twenty-six recommendations and only one was turned into an action item by the last LTC. It could have resulted in OCP and Land Use Bylaw (LUB) amendments. Also, what are the environmental impacts if we don't control how growth is happening? She asked whether this LTC believes there is enough research and reporting that has been done

through phase one and 2 to move forward with pursuing this opportunity. They also asked the Planner to comment on the potential for future opportunities if the LTC decides not to pursue this one.

- The Planner responded that they could share their impressions only because neither they, nor the CMHC staff who are working on this program, have an answer at this point. There is another program that came out recently looking at Compact Communities. Housing is a key focus right now and the best thing that a local government can do is be ready to be able to take advantage of whatever may come. And being ready means knowing where you will put the money and having an action plan. In the case of the Freshwater Sustainability Strategy, the Islands Trust was able to tap into funding for the development of that. Now that we have that strategy, we know what our priorities are and we know where we can use funding if it becomes available. Being ready means you're also focusing your own decision-making.
- The Island Planner reflected on the considerations in front of the LTC currently. They could decide to proceed along the same path of the OCP review project and include housing and groundwater as part of that scope. They could also choose to complete some of these housing pieces as part of a new major project. They could decide that the major project for the next year is to create a housing action plan.
- A Trustee asked whether the development a Growth Management Strategy could be an option as a short-term project under the OCP.
- The Planner responded that the OCP Review will identify those pieces and that writing the Growth Management Strategy would be an additional report.
- The Island Planner suggested that the planners go back and scope out the idea of a Growth Management Strategy because it has a slightly different focus and intent than an OCP review. It takes the goals of the OCP one step further. She confirmed that they would be two major projects.
- A Trustee mentioned that she is always wary of something that a funder directs; however, if this funding can actually be used to start the OCP review process in a way that we would do it as a community ourselves with our own concerns for the environment, she could support that. The concern is that it is a lot of work for staff and that it would take away from other staff time that must be done for the regular work program and for the other pieces that need to be done for the OCP review. There is no doubt that a major part of the OCP review is a focus on housing.
- A Planner mentioned that staff are meeting with CMHC on Tuesday to adequately understand what the needs assessment has to look like and to gain further clarity on the program.
- The Island Planner added that this project will move very quickly if it gets funded, which will mean minimal time to check in with the community. These are factors for consideration for the LTC.
- A Trustee asked whether it is possible to defer a decision until the May 11th business meeting to allow time to get more information and for Trustees to have discussions out in community, and to learn from the Housing Advisory Planning Commission on how they would see being involved.

- The Island Planner clarified that May 15th is the absolute deadline for a decision to allow for the identification of staff resources that would be required to carry out the project.
- A Trustee reiterated that they don't want to be diverted from other important environmental priorities and asked what is needed as far as groundwater research and assessment.
- Staff reported that the work should be complete and that they will access the report prepared by the Freshwater Specialist who is currently on a leave from work.
- The Chair commented that there is a need to balance the development of any kind of housing with respect for the natural environment, and that the housing action plan seems necessary as we work through the Development Permit Areas. He asked how to facilitate the housing action plan so that we are shovel-ready to take advantage of funding opportunities?
- A Trustee asked, 'How do we actually get the units constructed since administering the funding for this is out of scope for the Islands Trust?' They noted that Mayne Island has developed a relationship with Habitat for Humanity.
- A Planner responded that CMHC is working to figure that out. They are creating a model, and if the Regional District of Nanaimo (RDN) thinks it is a good model, they could follow it. If the regional district says they can't do it, Islands Trust would have to talk to the Province. These steps are all apart of the project, and they would require staff resources.
- The Chair confirmed that Trustee Elliott had a conversation with the RDN Director and confirmed her support for the project while also noting that the RDN Chair has rebooted a project exploring housing options. Trustee Elliott will request more information on this from the Area B Director.
- Staff observed that clarity is needed on project management to ensure staff know what they are working on. Staff resources to support an OCP Review and A Housing Action Plan would have to be phased because they are two major projects.

Planner Chadwick left the meeting at 10:58am.

- A Trustee commented that exploring the possibility of sequencing the OCP review with finishing the Housing Options and Review Project might be appropriate. And how we do housing is environmental protection.

GB-2023-022

It was MOVED and SECONDED

THAT the Gabriola Island Local Trust Committee request staff to review and offer a high-level perspective on the merits of the Housing Options and Impacts Review recommendations and staff reporting, and prepare a briefing, including any further information on the expedited process for the Trustee's consideration for the next LTC meeting on May 11th, and report back on Canada Mortgage & Housing Corporation's requirements for an updated housing needs assessment.

CARRIED

4. ADJOURNMENT

By general consent the meeting was adjourned at 11:17 am.

Peter Luckham, Chair

Certified Correct:

Chloë Straw, Recorder