



Gambier Island Local Trust Committee

Minutes of Special Meeting

Date: July 30, 2026

Location: Electronic Meeting

Members Present: Laura Patrick, Chair
Kate-Louise Stamford, Trustee
Joe Bernardo, Trustee

Staff Present: Sonja Zupanec, Island Planner
Emily Bryant, Planning Team Assistant
Diane Corbett, Recorder

Others Present: There were approximately 17 members of the public in attendance.

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Patrick called the Community Information meeting to order at 10:04 am.

2. TERRITORIAL ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Chair Patrick acknowledged that, since time immemorial, the lands and waters of the Gambier-Keats Local Trust Area have been home to indigenous people who have served as stewards of the lands and waters and whose connection to these islands continues to this day.

Chair Patrick introduced staff and trustees in attendance. She noted that this meeting was the first of three Community Information Meetings on the proposed Shoreline Development Permit Area guidelines for Gambier Island.

3. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

By general consent the agenda was approved as presented.

4. TRUSTEE OPENING REMARKS

Trustee Stamford noted the interest and care the community members had been demonstrating to bring conversations about the land use and livability, shoreline health, and long-term stewardship on Gambier Island and that the proposed Development Permit Area (DPA) guidelines being discussed spoke to themes on protecting sensitive coastal ecosystems, planning for climate change impacts, managing development in hazardous areas, ensuring that shoreline activities respect natural processes and the character of Gambier Island, are rooted in Islands Trust's core purpose to preserve and protect the unique amenities and environment of the Islands Trust Area, and support provincial requirements to identify and manage environmentally sensitive and hazard-prone lands.

5. GAMBIER ISLAND DRAFT SHORELINE DEVELOPMENT PERMIT AREA PRESENTATION

The Planner provided information on the Draft Shoreline Development Permit Area and noted that no decisions on this subject would be being made at this meeting or imminently.

Points from the presentation included:

- In 2022, community engagement resulted in recommendations to the Local Trust Committee regarding moving forward with an Official Community Plan review and Land Use Bylaw review, shoreline protection was identified as a high priority and government-to-government engagement with Squamish Nation was undertaken. The Local Trust Committee directed staff to explore a shoreline development permit area as part of the larger Official Community Plan and Land Use Bylaw Targeted Review.
- An engagement summary will be presented to the elected officials in early 2027.
- Shorelines on Gambier are largely bedrock, mostly characterized by low rock, boulder or sea cliffs, and a few pockets of pebble, cobble, and shell areas. Shoreline mapping is available on the Islands Trust website for those interested in more detail.
- Historical industrial activity, including forestry operations, log booming, and marine transportation impacted the shoreline, nearshore environment, seabed conditions and ecological processes.
- Overhanging trees and native vegetation along the shoreline are critical in providing shade, nutrients and stability of marine habitats for eelgrass, forage fish and salmon, which support species up the food chain. Eelgrass and forage fish mapping is available on Islands Trust website.
- The Squamish Nation and Province of BC have entered into a new land use planning agreement recognizing cultural and ecological values across Howe Sound, including areas on Gambier Island with cultural significance and stewardship priorities. Sites 88 and 83 have been identified in this agreement. The Shoreline Development Permit Area (DPA) is an opportunity to collaborate with other levels of government and reflect these values in future shoreline planning decisions, guiding new development and land alterations.
- The Draft Shoreline DPA has been guided over the past year and a half by shoreline stewardship planning practices, input from the Gambier Island Advisory Planning Commission, and Squamish Nation engagement. The intention is to preserve shorelines and maintain the character of Gambier Island.
- The Draft DPA is available on the website, along with a newly launched public survey (survey open to August 31). The public is encouraged to read the ten-page document and offer feedback to Planning staff or Local Trustees.
- A 30-meter buffer upland and seaward from the natural boundary of the sea is proposed for certain development. This buffer is an area of interest, not a new setback, park designation, nor guaranteed public access, nor is it prohibiting development. Types of development that could require a development permit include construction of a new dwelling, major additions to an existing dwelling, subdivision of a lot, shoreline protection works, or significant land alterations or excavations with specific exemptions listed in the guidelines on page 3 of the draft DPA text.

- Information on such aspects as biophysical inventory, geotechnical, erosion/hazards/coastal flooding, or drainage might be requested in addition to an application for a development permit, with the intention to understand the impacts of the proposed development before a decision is made by the Local Trust Committee.
- The DPA will favour approaches that work with nature where possible, “softer” solutions that help to maintain habitat, natural processes, and shoreline resilience, over harder armoring engineering techniques.
- The draft guidelines support marine access, encouraging dock design and placement that protects sensitive shoreline habitats and maintains long-term health and ecology of Gambier.
- The intention of these protection measures is to achieve, where possible, natural shoreline processes, natural vegetation, erosion reduction, softer shoreline protection and adaptation to sea level rise, and restoration of disturbed areas.
- The application fee for Development Permit Areas as per the current Gambier Island Fees Bylaw is approximately \$1000.
- People are encouraged to review the draft DPA guidelines and provide the Local Trust Committee feedback on:
 - Does the draft DPA achieve the right balance of human use and ecological protection?
 - Are the exemptions appropriate?
 - Are the guidelines clear?
 - Are there any unintended consequences that should be flagged?
 - Are there important protection measures that have been missed that should be included?

6. QUESTION AND ANSWER PERIOD

Chair Patrick invited questions and comments.

Questions and comments included the following:

- Part of the OCP process has gone to First Reading, what is meant by “First Reading”.
 - First Reading means the bylaw is no longer a draft but is called a proposed bylaw, meaning it has begun the legislative review process and formally acknowledging to the community and referral agencies that the Local Trust Committee is comfortable with the draft as presented. When a draft bylaw is given First Reading, it becomes a proposed bylaw and will be referred out to agencies, First Nations, the Advisory Planning Commission, and be open for public comment until a public hearing is held.
- What is the difference between the proposed Development Permit Area and parts of the island that have 30-metre parks or 30-metre setbacks.
 - The Development Permit Area, if adopted, would be applied to the entirety of the Gambier shoreline. In areas where there is a provincial or regional park, these guidelines are superseded by provincial park boundaries. Setbacks do not regulate land alteration, like tree or vegetation removal, and are specific to buildings and structures. The DPA is an additional tool to inform land alterations such as clearing vegetation.
- What is the difference between dock shade and the shading that comes from trees.

- Part of the vegetation retention priority is that vegetation at certain tide levels will be in the water, and that creates an extra level of habitat opportunity. When branches and vegetation drop into the water column, that is a critical function of an ecosystem. It provides necessary although temporary shelter and shading.
- For docks, the intention is to create safe access for humans and boats while not overbuilding, balancing the need for creating light penetration to the seafloor. The diversity of organic materials introduced into the water column is prioritized.
- Light penetration and organic elements should be retained for habitat protection for the smaller species that need the shoreline to provide shelter, food sources, and other ecological purposes.
- A trustee added that the value of the retention on the shoreline is not just for providing cover for eelgrass but maintaining shade for tidal area creatures like mollusks.
- How is the natural boundary of the sea arrived at when there is sea level rise on the move and storm surges are changing the boundaries?
 - British Columbia Land Surveyors are qualified to determine what the natural boundary of the sea is. Islands Trust uses specific mapping and has established the boundary for all coastlines across the islands for mapping purposes.
 - A development permit area is shown on a map in an Official Community Plan; that becomes the geo-reference for measurements 30 meters upland or seaward.
 - In cases where there have been landslides or slips, such as at Thormanby Island, there are portions of the island that have had to be redrawn since a sustained new level was achieved and meets the threshold for the BC Surveyors to redraw those lines. Fluctuations due to storm events do not qualify as a new highwater mark.
- Since the Keats Island Shoreline Development Permit Area was adopted, have there been any learnings from that?
 - Islands Trust has received no Keats Island Shoreline DPA applications to date.
 - There are Shoreline Development Permit Areas throughout Islands Trust Area. It is a common tool with regional districts and municipal governments.
- Speaker noted that that they had encouraged Islands Trust to undertake a more comprehensive survey of island residents regarding the draft bylaws. They expressed the view that the summer is not an ideal time for public engagement, and suggested to do this engagement in the fall. They also noted efforts to better understand the concerns of residents living off-grid on water-access properties. Speaker expressed concerns about increasing restrictions and what they perceived as government overreach by Islands Trust and the Sunshine Coast Regional District. They raised concerns about dock size restriction and noted that residents living off-grid on water-access properties may require additional infrastructure to access the shoreline. . The speaker also questioned whether applying the same maximum dock size to both a one-acre residential property and a 150-acre property is reasonable or equitable.
 - A Trustee commented that they had encountered similar anxiety of shoreline property owners regarding a Development Permit Area on Keats Island, this is the beginning of the consultation process and Trustees and staff are here to respond to these concerns. The Local Trust Committee would like the public to identify specific issues.

- Staff remarked that if a DPA is adopted, it becomes effective on the day of adoption for new construction and new land alterations.
- At Brigade Bay on the east side of Gambier, there are 65 lots off-grid and there is a community dock. There are a lot of examples of shoreline erosion and there is need to address impacts of climate change. It is necessary to find a balance to how people can enjoy access to off-grid properties while still helping the ecosystem recover and be more resistant.
- Inquiry regarding whether there would be a response to a letter sent from Council of BC Yacht Clubs offering assistance and making recommendations, such as specific widths of docks and ramps. Speaker noted this is an example of stakeholders sharing sentiments and recommendations for something that is more widely accepted and appropriate for how residents and stakeholders are using their properties.
 - Staff advised that all correspondence received to date would be compiled and posted to the website. After the elections, an engagement summary will be compiled for review by the Local Trust Committee. At this stage, the Local Trust Committee is asking for that information to be submitted to them in writing or at a public meeting where it can be recorded in the minutes. All this will be compiled for early 2027 and no changes will be made to the draft text between now and then.
 - Staff had not been given instruction to work with any stakeholder groups. Information that comes to staff or the Local Trust Committee by email and writing would be part of the package of information that is to be considered by the future Local Trust Committee and acted upon when and if this project proceeds.
 - A Trustee remarked that this is a draft for comment, and that it would be necessary to go through a public process in a public meeting in order to consider any changes. The speaker was asked to provide specific changes they would like to see and a rationale behind it. That would then be considered at a future process.
- Speaker wished to clarify that riparian area regulations and shoreline protection were legislated in the 1990s for fisheries and forestry. Even back decades there has been a 30-meter setback, which is backed up by peer-reviewed scientific research. The challenge being faced now is how to apply it to private property, which is different than when dealing with Crown land. Regarding docks, shade is just one element. Turbulence created by boats is detrimental, toxins that can leach are detrimental. Development very close to the shoreline is inherently detrimental. Urban development on the islands is inherently destructive; we can't stop it, so we need to modify it.

Observing no further participants wishing to speak, Chair Patrick announced that it is still early in the process, there will be two more public meetings held in the same format and the survey is open until August 31. Correspondence can be submitted to northinfo@islandstrust.bc.ca until at least the first meeting of the new Local Trust Committee in 2027.

7. ADJOURNMENT

By general consent the meeting was adjourned at 11:24 am.

Laura Patrick, Chair

Certified Correct:

Diane Corbett, Recorder