

Regular Meeting Addendum

Date: December 16, 2024
Time: 11:00 am
Location: Judith Fisher Centre
#1 China Cloud Bay Road
Lasqueti Island, BC

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13.	STAFF REPORTS	12:25 PM - 1:00 PM	
13.9	<i>Public Conduct During Business Meetings - Staff Report</i>		2 - 5



File No.: 3033-20-06

DATE OF MEETING: December 16, 2024
TO: Lasqueti Island Local Trust Committee
FROM: Stefan Cermak, Director
Planning Services
SUBJECT: Public Conduct During Business Meetings

RECOMMENDATION

1. **That the Lasqueti Island Local Trust Committee ensures a safe working and meeting space by enforcing proper public meeting decorum in the general following order:**
 - a. **Applying the Lasqueti Island Local Trust Committee Meeting Procedures Bylaw**
 - b. **Considering alternate forums**
 - c. **Requesting security**

REPORT SUMMARY

Trustees and staff have reported concerns about inappropriate conduct by specific individuals attending Lasqueti Island Local Trust Committee (LTC) business meetings. The ongoing impact from some meeting attendees' behaviour has negatively impacted trustee personal safety, mental health, and well-being. Efforts to manage decorum through proactive measures such as establishing meeting guidelines and applying tools available to the Chair have not been effective at eliminating the negative behaviour. The purpose of this report is for the LTC to consider options to help ensure a safe work environment.

BACKGROUND

Bullying and Harassment

WorkSafe BC defines bullying and harassment thus:

"Bullying and harassment in the workplace can take many forms, including verbal aggression, personal attacks, and other intimidating or humiliating behaviours. If workplace bullying and harassment is not addressed, it can lead to lost productivity, anxiety, and depression."

A worker is bullied and harassed when someone takes an action that he or she knew or reasonably ought to have known would cause that worker to be humiliated or intimidated. When an employer or supervisor takes reasonable action to manage and direct workers, it is not bullying and harassment (see OHS policy P2-21-2 for more information)."

Examples of behaviour or comments that might constitute bullying and harassment include verbal aggression or insults, calling someone derogatory names, harmful hazing or initiation practices, vandalizing personal belongings, and spreading malicious rumours.

This is a concern for trustees when it occurs because it impacts organizational morale and performance, impacts staff retention and the ability to recruit good staff, and can result in costly investigations and compensations.

Islands Trust workplaces include any location where staff (and Trustees) are working, including public meeting halls and their offices. Chairs of local trust committee are tasked with ensuring that the meeting location is a safe workplace, and trustees can help by being vigilant to potential bullying and harassment of staff at those meetings.

Public Decorum

The Lasqueti Island LTC chair has created a clear framework for public behaviour, set boundaries, and applied consistent enforcement of decorum rules in an attempt to maintain a respectful atmosphere during meetings that allows for productive and meaningful participation. These tools have not effectively deterred negative public participation.

There are several additional steps and measures that can be taken to regain control and restore order. These actions should be applied thoughtfully to avoid escalating tensions but still maintain the integrity of the meeting. Some ways to address persistent disruptions include:

1. Public Participation Suspension

- Lasqueti Island Local Trust Committee meeting procedure bylaw permits the Chair to enforce consequences for disruptive behaviour. Verbal warnings are first given for those who violate decorum. Enforcement may then include expelling or excluding a person for improper conduct. If the person does not abide by this ruling then the Chair may cease the meeting or take further actions as per below.

2. Alternate Forums

- The LTC may choose to change meetings to electronic only and permit virtual participation. This would require a resolution to announce the new meeting location and subsequent notification procedures. This would not address the desire for elected officials to meet in person and would effectively deny other community members from attending in person due to the negative actions of others.
- The LTC may choose to host meetings at an alternate location. The LTC currently has one alternate meeting location: the Bayside Oceanfront Resort in Parksville. A benefit to meeting in Parksville may also include access to RCMP if needed as a further elevation of actions if required.

3. Security – RCMP or Commissionaires

- If a participant becomes belligerent, physically disruptive, or refuses to leave the premises when asked, the Chair may need to call law enforcement to remove the individual. RCMP officers can help de-escalate the situation and ensure safety for everyone in the meeting. In extreme cases where individuals refuse to leave after being asked to do so, they could be charged with trespassing or disorderly conduct.
- The challenge is that Oceanside Detachment of RCMP officers would have to travel from Parksville to Lasqueti Island. Staff's experience is that RCMP officers are willing to ensure safety at meetings when concerns arise but will generally prioritize other emergencies. The Oceanside detachment's non-emergency telephone number is 250-248-6111.
- If an individual has repeatedly targeted an elected official with harassment or threats, law enforcement can pursue a restraining order against the individual to prevent further contact, either physically or electronically.

- The LTC may also consider requesting a commissionaire to attend and enforce security. Commissionaires have provided security for various Islands Trust events when needed. Commissionaire costs would be expensed to the LTC meeting budget currently spent at 27% (vs. the expected 50%).

Resources Available to Trustees

Trustees and staff have access to a variety of assistance services including counselling and healthy living services. Trustees may contact staff to get more information.

ANALYSIS

Meeting Procedure Bylaw

Meeting order and decorum procedures are regulated through Lasqueti Island Local Trust Committee's [Meeting Procedure Bylaw No. 100](#). Per the bylaw, the Chair is to preserve order at every LTC meeting and has the power to make such rulings as are necessary to do so, including the power to rule on all points of order and may deny any individual or delegation the right to address a meeting. The bylaw also notes that:

- A Local Trust Committee member may ask or answer questions of a member of the public who is addressing the Local Trust Committee. Debate with, or by, any member of the Local Trust Committee or staff is not permitted.
- The Chair or person presiding may expel and exclude a person from a meeting of the Local Trust Committee for improper conduct.

Meeting Procedures Policy

Islands Trust Council [Meeting Procedures Policy 2.1.9](#) states that all meetings of LTCs must be open to the public. This requirement does not supersede the Chair's authority to expel or exclude a person for improper conduct.

Issues and Opportunities

The Lasqueti Island LTC chair has created a clear framework for public behaviour, set boundaries, and applied consistent enforcement of decorum rules in an attempt to maintain a respectful atmosphere during meetings that allows for productive and meaningful participation. These tools have not effectively deterred negative public participation

There are several additional steps and measures that LTCs can take to regain control and restore order at public meetings. These actions should be applied thoughtfully to avoid escalating tensions but still maintain the integrity of the meeting. Staff recommend applying these additional steps in the general order presented here. However, staff recognize that the LTC may wish to pursue alternate venues before attempting to expel or exclude a person for improper conduct.

Rationale for Recommendation

Staff recommend that the LTC progress its way through the three steps identified above in order to maintain a safe working environment.

That the Lasqueti Island Local Trust Committee ensures a safe working and meeting space by enforcing proper public meeting decorum in the general following order:

- a. Applying the Lasqueti Island Local Trust Committee Meeting Procedures Bylaw**
- b. Considering alternate forums**
- c. Requesting security**

ALTERNATIVES

The LTC may consider the following alternatives to the staff recommendation:

1. Request further information

The LTC may request further information prior to making a decision. Staff advise that the implications of this alternative are a delay in addressing any immediate issues.

Recommended wording for the resolution is as follows:

That the Lasqueti Island Local Trust Committee request further information regarding:

- *[list items]*

2. Request staff to take specific action

The LTC may conclude to take specific action immediately. Such action could include changing meeting venues. The implications of these actions include avoiding further interactions with public members who choose not to adhere to rules of decorum; however, this comes at a cost to other public members and Trustees who would prefer to host in-person meetings on Lasqueti Island. If the LTC chooses to host its meeting at an alternative venue, a resolution-without-meeting would be required to confirm the time and location.

Recommended wording for the resolution is as follows:

That the Lasqueti Island Local Trust Committee request staff to:

[list action. Example: schedule the next regular business meeting at an alternative physical location].

3. Receive for information

The LTC may receive the report for information. No resolution is required.

NEXT STEPS

As requested by the LTC.

Submitted By:	Stefan Cermak, Director, Planning Services	December 12, 2024
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