Regional Planning Committee
Minutes of a Regular Meeting

Date: May 9, 2025
Location: Electronic Meeting

Members Present:
Mairead Boland, Saturna Island Local Trust Area, Chair
Sam Borthwick, Denman Island Local Trust Area, Vice Chair
Tobi Elliott, Gabriola Island Local Trust Area and Executive Committee Representative
Mikaila Lironi, Lasqueti Island Local Trust Area
David Graham, Denman Island Local Trust Area
Laura Patrick, Salt Spring Island Local Trust Area (ex officio)

Member Regrets:
Aaron Campbell, North Pender Island Local Trust Area

Staff Present:
Stefan Cermak, Director, Planning Services
Robert Kojima, Regional Planning Manager
Warren Dingman, Bylaw Compliance and Enforcement Manager
William Shulba, Senior Freshwater Specialist
Patricia Woodruff, Biologist
Rob Kroeker, Planning Services Administrative Assistant / Recorder

Others Present:
One member of the public

1. CALL TO ORDER

Vice Chair Borthwick called the meeting to order at 10:04 a.m. and acknowledged that participants of the meeting were attending all across the territories of the Coast Salish peoples.

2. ELECTION OF A REGIONAL PLANNING COMMITTEE CHAIR

Director Cermak indicated that he would conduct the election to establish a new Regional Planning Committee Chair. He described the election process, and initiated the election for the Regional Planning Committee Chair.

Director Cermak asked a first time for nominations. Trustee Graham nominated Trustee Boland and Trustee Borthwick seconded that nomination. Trustee Boland accepted the nomination.

Director Cermak asked a second time for nominations. There were no nominations proposed.

Director Cermak asked a third time for nominations. There were no nominations proposed. On not hearing any more nominations, Director Cermak declared Trustee Boland as Chair of Regional Planning Committee.

Upon discussion of chairing duties for the meeting, it was decided that Vice Chair Borthwick would continue with chairing duties until the completion of agenda item 8.3, and Chair Boland would then assume chairing duties from Vice Chair Borthwick for the rest of the meeting.

3. AGENDA

3.1 Review of the Agenda

Trustee Elliott brought forward a new item, AVICC Tiny Homes on Wheels Presentation Report, and requested that it be appended to item 8.4.3.

3.2 Approval of the Agenda

By general consent the Regional Planning Committee approved the agenda as amended.

4. PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

A member of the public spoke about their concerns regarding the Freshwater Sustainability Strategy, noting that they are concerned the data does not consider community reports on slow and dry wells that fail all or part of the year. They believe the project should focus on producing practical work products focussed on usability, and that a consultant reviewing the strategy should do so with cost and practicality in mind.

5. DELEGATIONS

None.

6. CORRESPONDENCE

6.1 2025-02-25 Stewart Brands, The Act and Mandate, and response from ITC Board Chair Gauvreau

Received for information.

6.2 2025-03-17 Alix Hodson Deggan, Gabriola Water Budget Study

It was noted that the writer is involved in the Water Budget Study Community Group on Gabriola, and that suitable land analysis work is being developed to direct density away from groundwater recharge areas. These concerns were noted as good focussing information for trustees as they support and direct staff work.

7. ADMINISTRATIVE COORDINATION

7.1 Draft Minutes of Previous Meeting

7.1.1 RPC Special Meeting Minutes of January 20, 2025

By general consent the Regional Planning Committee Minutes of January 20, 2025, were adopted as presented.

7.1.2 RPC Regular Meeting Minutes of February 7, 2025

By general consent the Regional Planning Committee Minutes of February 7, 2025, were adopted as presented.

7.2 Resolutions Without Meeting (RWM)

None.

7.3 Follow-up Action List

Vice Chair Borthwick initiated discussion of the Follow-up Action List. Committee discussion included:

- an item regarding developing Frequently Asked Questions for the Freshwater Sustainability Strategy has had a changing target date
- an FAQ document would be part of communications during implementation
- this item could be bundled with the delivery of the Freshwater Atlas
- the Islands Trust Communications Specialist could assist with developing this
- a dedicated website for Freshwater will treat this item more fully

Director Cermak noted that the item could be folded into the Freshwater Sustainability Strategy review process and reporting back to Regional Planning Committee.

8. BUSINESS – WORK PROGRAM ITEMS

8.1 Monitor Progress of Protection of Ecosystem Health in All Land Use Planning Decision - Presentation

Director Cermak introduced the presentation by Islands Trust Biologist Patricia Woodruff. He noted that her focus is species at risk and habitats, and the agreement with the Department of Environment and Climate Change that brings her to Islands Trust directs her work to enhance the integration of biological information into land use decisions in the Trust Area. Committee discussion included:

- there is hope that she will bring her expertise to bear on a GIS database tool produced on Salt Spring regarding preservation values by area
- the European Wall Lizard infestation and its impacts
- interaction with the Islands Trust Conservancy Species at Risk program
- how she can be reached by experts and members of public with information
- the Gabriola Official Community Plan review and Development Permit Areas

- indicators are of interest to a trustee, for instance the count of songbirds as an indicator of overgrazing
- disturbed area and contiguous forest reports are in need of closer review

8.2 Freshwater Sustainability Strategy Update - Verbal

Senior Freshwater Strategist Shulba presented the update on current work undertaken for the Freshwater Sustainability Strategy. He noted that the Freshwater Atlas has cleared technical impediments in data storage, integrating with the Islands Trust MapIT tool and provincial data. The Freshwater Footprint Project has produced a gridded water balance that provides more detail than well density mapping, and embeds a social framework. Committee discussion included:

- software licenses or platforms are required to support accessing the work
- watershed resiliency mapping and suitable land analysis work on Denman, Hornby, Gabriola, Mayne and North Pender islands
- the Freshwater Footprint is part of ongoing Official Community Plan processes
- the Gabriola Official Community Plan project has a water focus group following the work of consultants, with the hope that this turns into a community water stewards group
- it is valuable to involve community members in water stewardship and outreach efforts
- could Regional Planning Committee see the results of the Gabriola water survey when available? Senior Freshwater Specialist Shulba noted that the contract for Freshwater Footprint work on Gabriola closes in June, and an update can be provided to Regional Planning Committee in September following a Community Information Meeting for the Gabriola Local Trust Committee
- the Watershed Security Fund grant application was not successful
- a debrief will be sought from grant decision-makers following the Freshwater Sustainability Strategy review

Trustee Lironi joined the meeting at 11:01 a.m.

8.3 Bylaw Compliance and Enforcement Policy Review Draft Policy 5.5.1 and Best Practices Manual – Request for Decision

Regional Planning Manager Kojima introduced the Request for Decision. He noted that the report returned Trust Council Policy 5.5.1, and sought Regional Planning Committee’s direction in revising the Best Practices Manual. He noted that staff have made the changes suggested at the last several meetings, including augmenting the guiding principles, roles and responsibilities, and expanding key policy sections. Committee discussion included:

- review the policies against the Ombudsperson’s best practices checklist before submitting the documents to their office
- address notice periods for inspection more specifically with reference to section 12.1.2

- closing investigations and non-involvement of trustees in the bylaw enforcement process
- is this policy giving license to not investigating for community or political reasons, and how does this play out for staff?

Manager Kojima noted that files can be closed by resolution of the Local Trust Committee according to section 6.1.3 of Trust Council Policy 5.5.1. Processes could be detailed in Local Trust Committee Bylaw Enforcement Policies regarding how and when files are closed. Committee discussion continued:

- a trustee noted that there is value in closing files with staff input in certain cases
- trustees should not be involved in the investigation itself
- policy provides guidance but does not fetter the discretion of a local trust committee
- having multiple trustees provides insulation from a trustee taking undue action
- there is value in being able to recognize contraventions as minor in nature
- there has been debate about the use of the word “may” in the current policy for commencing files: language on opening files is more directive now, using “will” in section 3.6
- a trustee desires advancement of Trust Council Policy 5.5.1 to June Trust Council
- the policy should go when the Committee is fully confident that it is ready
- is the use of discretion in bylaw enforcement clearly outlined in this policy?
- if it is a combination of Trust Council Policy 5.5.1 and the Local Trust Committee Bylaw Enforcement Policies that establish the use of discretion, it should be stated clearly in 5.5.1, not found by reading several things in combination
- a longer window than the one week agenda period preceding the July Regional Planning Committee meeting is desired in order to review the final documents

Director Cermak noted that the Ombudsperson’s office is awaiting these documents, anticipating a reasonable turnaround time due to their attention to this project. The Policy and Manual could be forwarded to the Ombudsperson shortly following the meeting, unless Regional Planning Committee wishes to spend more time working on the Manual. Committee discussion continued:

- strike the word “solely” from the definition of vexatious complainant
- a situation where a complaint is almost entirely vexatious in nature, but has some merit, was proposed to illustrate the problem with the above language
- a trustee expressed their confidence in staff to complete the work harmonizing the Best Practices Manual with work on Trust Council Policy 5.5.1
- the Guiding Principles section of the Best Practices Manual could be reorganized as a list

- make lists where there are large paragraphs
- discretion and how it is exercised in all roles should be treated in its own section
- eliminate the word violation in the discussion of starting an investigation without a complaint
- remove information on implementing a Bylaw Enforcement Notification bylaw, as it is not useful as part of cataloguing the enforcement process
- the section regarding Bylaw Violation Notice scenarios (p.70) should be improved by making it more readable and user-friendly

RPC 2025-010
It was MOVED and SECONDED,
that Regional Planning Committee endorse draft Bylaw Compliance and Enforcement Policy 5.5.1 as amended.

CARRIED

RPC 2025-011
It was MOVED and SECONDED,
that Regional Planning Committee request staff revise the draft Bylaw Compliance and Enforcement Best Practices Manual to harmonize it with draft Bylaw Compliance and Enforcement Policy 5.5.1, with amendments as discussed at the Regional Planning Committee May 9, 2025 meeting.

CARRIED

- a trustee expressed support for sending the Manual to the Ombudsperson after staff review and without returning the document to Regional Planning Committee
- changes can still be made after Ombudsperson's office returns the documents and before forwarding them to Trust Council

RPC 2025-012
It was MOVED and SECONDED,
that Regional Planning Committee requests staff to make amendments, as agreed at the RPC May 9, 2025 meeting, to Trust Council Policy 5.5.1 and the Best Practices Manual, and to send the documents to the Ombudsperson for review.

CARRIED

The committee recessed for lunch at 12:27 p.m. The meeting resumed at 1:01 p.m.

Chair Boland assumed chairing responsibilities for the meeting upon Regional Planning Committee's return from the lunch break.

Director Cermak suggested that item 11.1 Work Program Updates receive adequate time for discussion. Chair Boland decided to move item 10.1 Crown Tenure Application Referrals to be the final item discussed.

8.4.1 Housing Strategic Action Plan and Housing Toolkit – Request For Decision

Regional Planning Manager Kojima introduced the Request for Decision, stating that the purpose of the item is to provide Regional Planning Committee with updates on the Housing Toolkit and Housing Strategic Action Plan, which are intended to be regularly reviewed and updated. Committee discussion included:

- these documents must be maintained and kept current to reflect learning from other jurisdictions
- underlying zoning on the islands can be changed and corrected to meet community housing needs
- expanding forms of housing such as community land trusts
- clustering of smaller or low-impact forms of housing
- a trustee requested a workshop for linking Policy Statement work to Official Community Plan development
- the workshop could examine policy tools such as clustering and planning work like Mayne Island's Flexible Housing zoning to gauge the impact on housing availability and affordability in communities
- determining how to use the suitable land analysis tool after its development feels backwards, and it is unclear how it will be used operationally
- there is a lack of methodology ensuring that the data for the tool stays updated
- data inaccuracies undermine the confidence of constituents and call into question decisions that are supported by the tool
- results would improve if the suitable land analysis tool is built transparently with community engagement on issues of concern from the start
- density transfers and land acquisition for preservation on Saturna Island
- clustering has positive impact on sharing resources and leaving natural areas unchanged
- data on densities could form the basis of a useful tool itself
- census data lacks detail regarding housing options: could Islands Trust survey to gather better data on housing forms in the islands?
- tools in the Housing Toolkit are being explored with the Denman Island community as part of their Housing Review
- a trustee spoke about balancing the sustainability and resilience of communities at the intersection of providing adequate housing, and maintaining land unmodified by habitation
- the framing of the suitable land analysis tool should be about exploring data for the islands and becoming more familiar with communities
- it should help answer questions such as where to cluster dwellings or place amenities
- better real-world data can address fears such as that if secondary suites are permitted, every lot will build one
- workforce housing, cooperatives, and other housing forms are not fully explored in the Housing Toolkit
- a trustee requested an addition to Housing Toolkit Tool 3 to capture non-market or quasi-market options for clustering small dwellings

RPC 2025-013
It was MOVED and SECONDED,
that Regional Planning Committee request staff make minor updates to the Housing Options Toolkit identified in the Request For Decision of May 9, 2025 and as discussed.

CARRIED

- there is an option of having a housing presentation at Trust Council, but time is often constrained
- presentation suggestions would be tailored to the context of the housing project contemplated
- the focus is on bringing Housing Toolkit options back to the forefront when local trust committees and communities are initiating housing projects or Official Community Plan reviews

RPC 2025-014
It was MOVED and SECONDED,
that Regional Planning Committee request staff to schedule a future presentation for Local Trust Committees initiating major projects or housing projects for presentation at regular or special Local Trust Committee meetings.

CARRIED

- affordable housing strategies have not been included in the Trust Council Strategic Plan
- item 26 on advocacy to the Province regarding advocacy for tiny homes on wheels could be removed from the Housing Strategic Action Plan
- focus on key items is required to get actions resourced and completed
- no strategic direction is given in the Plan to match a focus on community resiliency

Director Cermak noted that the Trust Council Strategic Plan includes developing a growth management planning framework, to be discussed in agenda item 11.1. He suggested that Regional Planning Committee could resolve to recommend adding an amendment to the Trust Council Strategic Plan to add another key initiative if the Committee so desires. Committee discussion continued:

- balancing growth management and building community resiliency
- average age on the islands is well above the provincial average
- the missing of key demographic elements to maintain the resiliency of communities is a major issue
- concrete action is needed to use the supportive policies of the Housing Toolkit to increase the diversity of housing stock

Director Cermak advised that a proposed motion to recommend changes to Trust Council's Strategic Plan may be better served as a notice of motion for July's

Regional Planning Committee meeting, where staff and trustees can review and respond more accurately with regard to appropriate progression through the Trust's committee structure. Committee discussion continued:

- returning this item to Regional Planning Committee in July will mean that it does not get to Trust Council before September
- Regional Planning Committee could request Executive Committee to give feedback on Trust Council Strategic Plan action 2.3.2 regarding "design[ing] a plan for advocating to enhance access to funding for housing in the Trust Area"
- an alternative action suggested is that Official Community Plans under review include supportive policies for diverse types and forms of housing, and policy options that increase the diversity of housing options
- the Strategic Plan is still missing actions addressing community resiliency
- the third recommended motion regarding revising the Housing Strategic Action Plan according to the Request for Decision should be deferred

8.4.2 Tiny Homes on Wheels Enablement Project – Final Report

The report was received for information.

8.4.3 Tiny Homes on Wheels Enablement Project – AVICC Presentation

Trustee Elliott introduced the item, indicating there has been early interest in the project. She noted the benefits of holding the Tiny Homes on Wheels Enablement Project workshop which connected local government representatives and tiny home builders. Committee discussion included:

- the Canadian Board for Harmonized Construction Codes has an interest in supporting innovative construction methodologies
- legal pathways for existing and self-built tiny homes
- next steps for project include planning for presenting at the Union of BC Municipalities convention and asking local governments if they want to participate in furthering the tiny homes initiative
- a survey for residents would be useful to determine levels of non-secure housing in the islands
- non-enforcement on illegal dwellings is not a long-term solution
- illegal dwellings need to be brought into a formal process for compliance, or ensure they meet health and safety requirements
- the Tiny Homes Working Group can bring back clearer direction for the July Regional Planning Committee meeting

8.4.4 Housing Needs Reports – Request for Decision

Director Cermak introduced the Request for Decision, indicating that Housing Needs Reports for all local trust committees are attached in alignment with provincial legislation. Committee discussion included:

- the methodology is provincially mandated

- Salt Spring Island Local Trust Committee experienced problems with the data suggesting unrealistic results: it is stated that only 16 rental units are needed over 20 years to meet healthy housing levels
- the data does not match community intentions on the islands
- ask to work with the Province to modify the applied methodology
- it is a poor use of taxpayer dollars
- can the findings of the report be formally rejected as having no value?
- a trustee does not want to forward this report to local trust committees
- those who say there are not community members in core housing need could point to this report
- vulnerable community members are difficult to reach for public feedback
- a trustee expressed strong support for a statement to clarify the Committee's position on the limited value of these reports
- a statement could be forwarded to Executive Committee to endorse
- the response from the Minister is that the tools needed to do the job have been given
- the desired response is not just to advise local trust committees to take results with a grain of salt, but informing the Province of the tool's lack of utility
- a letter to the Ministry of Housing and Municipal Affairs with supporting examples from the reports is warranted
- electoral areas in the Regional District of Nanaimo also had concerns with results
- communicating the insufficiency of the tools may be more effective than expressing dissatisfaction

RPC 2025-015
It was MOVED and SECONDED,
that Regional Planning Committee request staff to forward the housing needs reports to Executive Committee, but also wish to convey our lack of confidence in the data, its usefulness, and belief that it could cause harm.

CARRIED

9. BUSINESS - OTHER

9.1 2024/25 Annual Report: Approval of Regional Planning Committee Section – Request For Decision

Director Cermak introduced the Request For Decision. Committee discussion included:

- move the funding request section below the achievements section

RPC 2025-016
It was MOVED and SECONDED,
that Regional Planning Committee approves the attached text for inclusion in the 2024/25 Annual Report for approval by Trust Council and submission to the Minister of Housing and Municipal Affairs.

CARRIED

10. BUSINESS – NEW

10.1 Crown Tenure Application Referrals - Briefing

Discussion of the briefing was deferred to a future meeting due to time constraints.

11. WORK PROGRAM

11.1 Work Plan Updates – Request for Decision

Director Cermak introduced the Request for Decision, detailing his changes to the active projects list to match the Trust Council Strategic Plan and providing guidance on Regional Planning Committee's top priorities with regard to the Strategic Plan. Committee discussion included:

- funding questions around the Freshwater Sustainability Strategy need to be addressed
- the independent review should precede an implementation plan for the Freshwater Sustainability Strategy
- Trust Programs Committee's understanding is that work to be initiated in fiscal year 2026-27 according to the Strategic Plan not receive business cases yet
- a trustee believes that planning for these future initiatives can start now
- a decision on these items is challenged due to lack of time and clarity
- Director Cermak noted that the recommended resolution regarding the business cases was the item that needed addressing most urgently
- business cases such as those for kelp forests and eelgrass have been prepared in the past

RPC 2025-017
It was MOVED and SECONDED,
that Regional Planning Committee request staff to draft business cases to address the following Trust Council key initiatives:
a. Map eelgrass and kelp forests.
b. Develop a growth management planning framework that includes data on growth trends and projections, geological and hydrological capacities, infrastructure, and development rates.
c. Conduct an independent review of the Freshwater Sustainability Strategy by a qualified external party and that the scope include, but not be limited to:
- Assessing the effectiveness and outcomes of the strategy to date,
- Identifying areas of strength and opportunities for improvement,
- Evaluating alignment with Trust Council strategic objectives and other key initiatives.

CARRIED

- two trustees expressed their desire to work with Senior Freshwater Specialist Shulba and Director Cermak regarding development of the Freshwater Sustainability Strategy business case
- work through funding sources to ensure sustainability for the project
- a project charter is to be developed following the review

Trustee Elliott and Trustee Lironi left the meeting at 3:44 p.m.

12. NEXT MEETING

The next scheduled meeting of the Regional Planning Committee is July 18, 2025.

13. CLOSED MEETING

The Committee did not close the meeting.

14. RISE AND REPORT

As the Committee did not close the meeting, there was no need for the Committee to discuss this option.

15. ADJOURNMENT

By general consent the meeting adjourned at 3:48 p.m.

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Mairead Boland, Chair

Certified Correct:

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Rob Kroeker, Planning Services Administrative Assistant / Recorder