



Regional Planning Committee Minutes of a Regular Meeting

Date: July 18, 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
David Graham, Denman Island Local Trust Area
Laura Patrick, Salt Spring Island Local Trust Area (ex officio)
Aaron Campbell, North Pender Island Local Trust Area

Member Regrets: none.

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

Others Present: Two members of the public were in attendance.

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Boland called the meeting to order at 10:01 a.m. and acknowledged that participants of the meeting were attending all across the territories of the Coast Salish peoples.

2. AGENDA

2.1 Review of the Agenda

The following amendment to the agenda was presented for consideration:

- item 7.5 to be discussed first.

2.2 Approval of the Agenda

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

Chair Boland reported that there was an incorrect link on the webpage preventing members of the public from joining the meeting, and item 3, Public Comment Period, would be deferred until later in the meeting when the link could be fixed by administrative staff.

4. DELEGATIONS

None.

5. CORRESPONDENCE

None.

6. ADMINISTRATIVE COORDINATION

6.1 Draft Minutes of Previous Meeting

6.1.1 RPC Special Meeting Minutes of May 9, 2025

By general consent the Regional Planning Committee Minutes of May 9, 2025, were adopted as presented.

6.2 Resolutions Without Meeting (RWM)

None.

6.3 Follow-up Action List

Received for information.

Chair Boland indicated that the meeting link was fixed and item 3 Public Comment Period would commence.

3. PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

A member of the public commented on the Freshwater Sustainability Strategy on behalf of Friends of the Gulf Islands, suggesting that the review of the project needs to be affordable and produce understandable results in clear, plain language. The strategy should include information regarding where there is enough water for more development, where there is not, and what parts of the islands need to be protected to steward existing water supplies.

7. BUSINESS – WORK PROGRAM ITEMS

7.5 Crown Tenure Application Referrals - Briefing

Director Cermak introduced the briefing. Committee discussion included:

- there are about 20 Crown lease referrals per year
- a trustee expressed interest in applications for non-domestic water use, and understanding how many of these type are applied for
- the process of referrals for aquaculture is vague and would benefit from review
- Local Trust Committees have different levels of interaction with Crown lease referrals
- referral response time is 30 days

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- it is not useful to be copied for Local Trust Committee comment with meetings every 3 months
- other local governments have a screening step where staff determine if the referral is routine, and notify elected officials or refer for discussion
- many referrals are straightforward and either allowed by zoning or not, while infrastructure projects and aquaculture are more likely to see review
- one trustee suggested that trustees should be informed of each referral

Chair Boland indicated that Regional Planning Committee would resume discussion of the item later in the meeting.

7.1 Bylaw Compliance and Enforcement Policy Review – Draft Policy 5.1.1 and Manual – Request For Decision

Regional Planning Manager Kojima introduced the Request For Decision, noting that the Office of the Ombudsperson has returned comments on the draft policy and Best Practices Manual and that these comments have been incorporated into the documents returned to the Committee. Committee discussion included:

- the Ombudsperson’s office asked for the 90 day compliance deadline to be changed to “a reasonable timeframe” to incorporate flexibility
- a rough estimate of time given for compliance should still be provided in policy to give some common understanding
- anonymous complaints are treated separately than proactive investigations initiated without a complaint
- proactive investigations follow specific policy guidance regarding reasons to open a file, which includes health and safety or environmental concerns
- one trustee suggested that if a person is unwilling to put their name to a concern, then it does not meet the criteria of a formal complaint, and does not merit follow-up
- not accepting anonymous complaints encourages interaction with neighbours and assists in mitigating issues prior to bylaw enforcement involvement
- the bylaw compliance and enforcement process keeps complainant information confidential
- complainant information can only be released during legal disclosure
- Islands Trust does not need to make an allowance for anonymous complaints of any kind
- remove the Ombudsperson office’s insertion about investigations without a complaint from section 2.1.2 Anonymous Complaints
- balance is sought between a fair system and robust enforcement tools

RPC 2025-018

It was MOVED and SECONDED,

that Regional Planning Committee request staff remove the second clause of draft policy 2.1.2 in the Bylaw Compliance and Enforcement Draft Policy 5.5.1 and update the Best Practices Manual accordingly.

CARRIED

Trustee Elliott left the meeting at 10:53 a.m. and returned at 10:58 a.m.

Committee discussion continued:

- bylaw enforcement file opening letters are abrupt
- the tone reads as accusatory
- an investigation may find there is an error and a contravention does not exist
- the implementation plan of the Bylaw Compliance and Enforcement Review project will involve review and redrafting of bylaw enforcement template letters
- a trustee requested that drafts of the template letters be returned for review by Regional Planning Committee
- this letter may be a resident's first experience with bylaw enforcement
- tone is important from a communications strategy perspective
- the Best Practices Manual and policy differ in their discussion of photographic evidence
- the manual will be reworded to reflect the gathering of information rather than prescriptive language about taking photos
- section 3.6 would benefit from another clause to state that it is at the discretion of the officers to collect evidence to substantiate a complaint
- section 3.6.4 discusses evidence gathered from a site inspection, but evidence provided by a property owner is not addressed
- staff will address this type of evidence provided outside of a site inspection context by editing section 3.6

RPC 2025-19

It was MOVED and SECONDED,

that Regional Planning Committee review and endorse draft Bylaw Compliance and Enforcement Policy 5.5.1 as amended.

CARRIED

RPC 2025-020

It was MOVED and SECONDED,

that Regional Planning Committee review and endorse draft Bylaw Compliance and Enforcement Best Practices Manual as amended.

CARRIED

RPC 2025-021

It was MOVED and SECONDED,

that Regional Planning Committee forward the Bylaw Compliance and Enforcement Policy 5.5.1 and the draft Bylaw Compliance and Enforcement Best Practices Manual to Trust Council for review and comment.

CARRIED

7.2 Islands Trust Freshwater Atlas Update - Briefing

Senior Freshwater Strategist Shulba presented the update for information, noting that an operational demo of the Freshwater Atlas is prepared and the drafting of a communications plan is to follow. He expressed gratitude for the work of Landen Matechuk of Cedar Shore Consulting on this project. Committee discussion included:

- are concerns about accessibility and ease of use for freshwater data addressed?
- the provincial water atlas is difficult to get relevant information from
- this tool will encourage learning and exploration of available data
- outreach will be at Regional Planning Committee's direction
- a trustee suggested a showcase session at Trust Council, open to the public
- a demonstration could include insight about how the Freshwater Atlas could provide relevant information for a subdivision request
- integration with planning is a subsequent initiative to rolling out the Atlas
- an appendix of data sources is desired
- the educational experiences will be grouped into topics such as climate, and include interactive mapping
- information will be available as public data with no need for an account
- next steps will be introduced at the Oct. 31 Regional Planning Committee meeting in a communications plan
- a special meeting could be requested via resolution without meeting if staff become ready to present the completed Atlas
- it would be helpful for Regional Planning Committee to see the completed interface and ask questions

The committee recessed for lunch at 12:07 p.m. The meeting resumed at 12:40 p.m.

7.3 Fiscal Year 2026/27 Business Cases – Request For Decision

Director Cermak introduced the Request For Decision, noting that all business cases presented are advancing priorities of the Trust Council Strategic Plan.

Committee discussion included:

- threats to eelgrass and kelp forests
- derelict vessels have affected eelgrass in locations such as Degnen Bay where zoning has permitted anchorage
- supporting reconciliation by protecting traditional Indigenous food sources
- there is an opportunity for engagement with First Nations with marine divisions that may have baseline mapping accomplished in their territories
- is this work more relevant to the expertise of Islands Trust Conservancy?
- one trustee expressed concern about sustaining and refreshing the eelgrass mapping dataset
- one trustee would like Islands Trust in a partnership or supporting role for this work
- the value of eelgrass mapping is recognized and its acquisition is supported, but there may be someone else better suited to hold this work
- this was an initiative begun by a previous Trust Council

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- why is Islands Trust the appropriate organization to do this work?
- one singular and trusted dataset is sought for planning decisions
- eelgrass moves, necessitating mapping over time
- capturing areas with the potential for eelgrass
- the project is expensive and requires strong confidence to forward
- this marine work is a natural point of collaboration with First Nations
- inquiring with First Nations working on the water regarding existing data or partnering is pursuing a reconciliation lens
- a contract cannot be pursued without following the procurement process of open tender
- collaborating with other interested stakeholders and sharing costs is desired
- a broader conversation about collecting data with interested parties is warranted, and may change the scope of work
- an expanded project will increase the forecasted budget required
- marine data requires planning for continued updating and maintenance

RPC 2025-022

It was MOVED and SECONDED,

that Regional Planning Committee request staff amend the eelgrass mapping business case to include an option to partner with First Nations' marine divisions and other relevant organizations in the Trust Area toward completing the work.

CARRIED

Chair Boland initiated discussion on the business case regarding an independent review of the Freshwater Sustainability Strategy. Committee discussion included:

- it is a good time for an outside review to facilitate an implementation plan
- the business case can be forwarded to Financial Planning Committee as is
- the staff hours allocation in the business case addresses inconsistent staff support for the Freshwater Strategy
- partnership with other agencies is missing in this project
- the review should consider agencies with overlapping responsibilities to assess if some of the work belongs with them
- elected officials need to see and understand clearly why this project is with Islands Trust

RPC 2025-023

It was MOVED and SECONDED,

that Regional Planning Committee forward to Financial Planning Committee for inclusion in the Fiscal Year 2026/27 the budget business case for:

- Independent Review of Freshwater Sustainability Strategy

CARRIED

Chair Boland initiated discussion on the Growth Management Framework business case. Committee discussion included:

- the decision to move forward or not with this business case is a political decision
- carrying capacity is a common discussion with constituents
- the data required to support carrying capacity would be very complex
- a growth management framework could be phased as a multi-year strategy to account for procurement, outreach and engagement
- the State of the Islands report on key indicators was valuable and could be revisited
- one trustee would put effort into key indicator reporting before a growth management strategy
- disturbance data, contiguous forests, freshwater reports, maps of kelp and eelgrass, and buildout analysis work are valued indicators
- Trust Programs Committee is considering a business case revisiting the State of the Islands report
- the Islands Trust biologist is working on ecosystem indicators and ecological carrying capacity
- suitable land analysis and build-out analysis tools are being used for Local Trust Committee major projects
- a build-out analysis applied across the Trust area has utility
- such an analysis would inform ongoing discussions about growth management and carrying capacity
- there is value in developing this framework but to be successful it needs to be broken down into stages
- a phased approach supports careful consideration of an expensive item
- thought is required about how to demonstrate an engaged approach working with communities and First Nations
- a meeting with Trust Programs Committee could coordinate work on State of the Islands indicators with this emergent growth management framework

Trustee Patrick left the meeting at 2:27 p.m.

RPC 2025-024

It was MOVED and SECONDED,

that Regional Planning Committee request that the business case for the Development of a Growth Management Planning Framework be revised as a multi-year strategy, and that staff assess how the biologist's work on ecosystem indicators, and build out maps and suitable land analysis tools be incorporated in that framework, before the next stages are envisioned.

CARRIED

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

Director Cermak introduced the Request for Decision, noting that this recommendation will bring the Housing Strategic Action Plan into Trust Council's Strategic Plan. Committee discussion included:

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- discussion workshops about clustering small homes and incentivizing housing supportive of the Islands Trust mandate are being held on Gabriola
- there is opportunity for a demonstration of housing policies and configurations of housing that utilize different zoning options
- onboarding for trustees should include some technical items such as the Housing Options Toolkit and Freshwater Atlas
- prioritizing and funding Part 2 of the Housing Options Toolkit on developing resources for providers of affordable housing
- a trustee suggested that Regional Planning Committee are the experts in housing work, and their role is to make recommendations to Trust Council
- update the Strategic Plan is important to further this work
- deferred actions will be resourced after space on the work program opens up
- one current top priority, the Bylaw Compliance and Enforcement Review Project, is nearing completion

RPC 2025-025

It was MOVED and SECONDED,

that Regional Planning Committee request staff to revise the Housing Strategic Action Plan as recommended in the Request For Decision of July 18, 2025 and to forward the revised Plan to Trust Council for endorsement.

CARRIED

RPC 2025-026

It was MOVED and SECONDED,

that Regional Planning Committee request the following amendment to the Trust Council Strategic Action Plan:

- Replace Key Initiative 2.3.2 with: Implement the Housing Strategic Action Plan

CARRIED

Regional Planning Committee then returned to item 7.5 of the agenda.

7.5 Crown Tenure Application Referrals - Briefing

RPC 2025-027

It was MOVED and SECONDED,

That Regional Planning Committee request staff to report back on Trust Council policies, held by the Director of Planning Services, to address Trust Council's key initiative to review, and where appropriate, amend, combine or rescind policies, and to prioritize the crown referrals procedure.

CARRIED

8. BUSINESS - OTHER

None.

9. BUSINESS – NEW

None.

10. WORK PROGRAM

The work program was approved **by general consent**.

11. NEXT MEETING

The next regular meeting of the Regional Planning Committee is October 31, 2025.

12. CLOSED MEETING

The Committee did not close the meeting.

13. RISE AND REPORT

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

14. ADJOURNMENT

By general consent the meeting adjourned at 2:45 p.m.

Mairead Boland, Chair

Certified Correct:

Rob Kroeker, Planning Services Administrative Assistant / Recorder

Minutes are not official until adopted at a subsequent meeting.