



Regional Planning Committee Minutes of a Regular Meeting

Date: February 6, 2026
Location: Electronic Meeting

Members Present: Mairead Boland, Saturna Island Local Trustee, Chair
Sam Borthwick, Denman Island Local Trustee, Vice Chair
Tobi Elliott, Gabriola Island Local Trustee, Executive Committee Representative
David Graham, Denman Island Local Trustee
Aaron Campbell, North Pender Island Local Trustee
Laura Patrick, Salt Spring Island Local Trustee (ex officio)

Member Regrets: None.

Staff Present: Stefan Cermak, Director, Planning Services
Warren Dingman, Bylaw Enforcement Manager
Patricia Woodruff, Biologist
Erica Wheeler, Species At Risk Program Coordinator
William Shulba, Senior Freshwater Specialist
Sheree Rialp, A/Planning Services Administrative Assistant / Recorder

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

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Boland called the meeting to order at 10:02 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

No new or late item was presented for consideration.

2.2 Approval of Agenda

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

3. PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

No member of the public offered comment.

4. DELEGATIONS

4.1 Maxine Leichter, Friends of the Gulf Islands Society

Maxine Leichter spoke to the Bylaw Enforcement Review project and the following points were noted:

- the new bylaw enforcement policy is improved
- timely response to environmental concerns and cumulative effects are under-considered
- change the policy so that local trust committees are not involved in bringing cases forward, or discontinuing bylaw enforcement cases

Committee discussion included:

- islands are rural in nature, without resident bylaw enforcement officers
- local trust committees are exercising governance-level decisions about whether enforcement actions continue to serve the public interest
- the structure of local trust committees with an external chair from another island supports decision-making integrity
- local trustees are best suited to action Ombudsperson feedback about exercising fairness via exceptions to standard processes

5. CORRESPONDENCE

5.1 2025-10-17 Nancy Wigen

Received for information.

6. ADMINISTRATIVE COORDINATION

6.1 Draft Minutes of Previous Meetings

For review and approval.

6.1.1 Regional Planning Committee Draft Minutes of July 18, 2025 Regular Meeting

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

6.1.2 Regional Planning Committee Draft Minutes of September 8, 2025 Special Meeting

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

6.1.3 Regional Planning Committee Draft Minutes of January 13, 2026 Special Meeting

ADOPTED

It was noted that on p.3, a point discussing the need to hire a third person or third party for local trust committee projects should be altered. Chair Boland suggested that the bullet point be removed in full for clarity.

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

6.2 Resolutions Without Meeting

6.2.1 RPC RWM 2025-01 Convene RPC Special Meeting on Sept. 8, 2025

For information

6.2.2 RPC RWM 2025-02 Cancel RPC Regular Meeting on Oct. 31, 2025

For information

6.2.3 RPC RWM 2025-03 Adopt Fiscal Year 2026/27 Regular Meeting Dates

For information

6.2.4 RPC RWM 2025-04 Convene RPC Special Meeting on Jan. 13, 2026

For information

6.3 Follow-up Action List

Committee discussion included:

- target date for Freshwater Sustainability Strategy Frequently Asked Questions document and Implementation Plan is updated to July 1, 2026
- it is helpful if the previous date is retained when a new date is added
- cleanup of Follow-up Action List is desired for the July 18 regular meeting

Trustee Elliott joined the meeting at 10:29 a.m.

7. BUSINESS – WORK PROGRAM ITEMS

7.1 Integrating Biological Information into Land Use Decisions

Biologist Patricia Woodruff presented her work on species at risk in the Trust Area and integrating biological data with planning decision-making. Species at Risk Coordinator Erica Wheeler presented her work on species at risk and conservation action in the Trust area.

Committee discussion included:

- how does Islands Trust compare to other municipalities in protecting species at risk?

ADOPTED

- some leading municipalities have moved from no net loss to seeking positive gain of species habitat during development
- there is interest in indicators for species at risk: how many exist and are they common across islands?
- indicators monitored over time can tell an encouraging story
- beyond protected areas, fenced private property could be indicative when reviewing species at risk
- what other information is needed for an updated State of the Islands report with indicators?
- the Land Information Screening Tool being discussed later in the meeting collates available data to support decision-making of elected officials

7.2 Freshwater Strategy – Update

Senior Freshwater Specialist William Shulba presented the update, noting the accomplishments of the strategy and its effects on planning outcomes, such as development permit areas and the Gabriola Official Community Plan project.

Committee discussion included:

- a trustee did not receive the updated agenda containing the update report
- discussion of the report should occur again at Regional Planning Committee's next regular meeting on May 1, 2026
- work is required on transparency and communicating progress updates so that trustees understand what strategy components are being produced and when
- information sharing challenges exist between Trust-wide strategic projects and the local trust committee level
- groundwater recharge mapping resources in the Freshwater Atlas identify information such as areas of significance for groundwater recharge
- this work can be viewed on a regional scale or used on for parcel-based assessment
- development of a process flow-through tool for decision makers
- structural data work has largely occurred, and project implementation on islands will accelerate
- a Freshwater Help Desk that supports staff, applicants, and consultants will help facilitate coordination and resource access, and track inquiries

Regional Planning Committee recessed at 11:55 a.m. and resumed at 12:26 p.m.

Committee discussion continued:

- the Suitable Land Analysis has become the Land Information Screening Tool
- local ground truthing of mapping in this tool reveals gaps on Denman Island
- work involving multiple jurisdictions requires coordination in knowledge and action
- a communications plan and Frequently Asked Questions document for the Freshwater Strategy have not materialized

ADOPTED

- watersheds were designated in Official Community Plans predating this project
- proof of water and flaws in vulnerability maps for the southern Gulf Islands

Chair Boland indicated that item 7.2 would be revisited later in the meeting due to a trustee with a resolution for consideration briefly losing connection to the meeting.

7.3 Housing Action Plan – Update

Director Cermak delivered the update and discussed the Land Information Screening Tool and methodology, which is uploaded to the Islands Trust website and available to the public. He provided a demonstration of the tool's application.

Committee discussion included:

- sea level rise and available data sets for coastal risk mapping
- will trustees be able to ask detailed questions of this tool?
- deeper feedback has been sought at the local trust committee level while using the tool for Official Community Plan work
- if Regional Planning Committee wants to work on the methodology of this tool, the committee could make it a top priority on their project list via resolution
- a trustee is concerned about the tool being used with some unanswered questions about it still outstanding
- a use case demonstration is desired, such as for a subdivision application
- the tool is a new way to visualize considerations that planners already apply in the course of their work
- it was applied during development of Mayne Island's housing review project
- damage to the public trust occurred when suitable land analysis mapping was released on Gabriola
- slides from a presentation on the mapping were released without methodology or an explanation of its layers
- there are questions about the methodology of weightings in the mapping layers
- should local trust committees play a role in the discretionary weightings of this tool?
- this is an internal tool for staff use, but there are political ramifications to the maps it generates
- the intention is not to question staff expertise, but so that trustees can better understand and defend the work in public
- residents may zoom in on a red layer on their lot and react much differently than a planner looking at abstract or regional information
- there should be a narrative story for each map that is produced
- build confidence in the system by bringing the community along in development of the tool and its mapping layers and weightings
- it is Regional Planning Committee's job to help improve planning processes for local trust committees

ADOPTED

RPC 2026-001

It was MOVED and SECONDED,

that the Regional Planning Committee request staff to provide options and recommendations to improve communication on the methodology and rationale used to create models in the Land Information Screening Tool (LIST), and that these can accompany any public release of maps or models that support LTC projects.

CARRIED

Chair Boland indicated that the Committee would return to item 7.2.

7.2 Freshwater Strategy – Update

Committee discussion continued:

- a trustee seeks a process flow to answer how the elements of the Freshwater Sustainability Strategy interact with local trust committee decision-making
- this could help incoming trustees learn about existing freshwater information
- explain how the components that have been developed help support land use planning activities
- a template would be more suited to implementation plan work

RPC 2026-002

It was MOVED and SECONDED,

that the Regional Planning Committee request staff to provide a summary of the components of the Freshwater Sustainability Strategy and their links to land use planning.

CARRIED

7.4 Bylaw Compliance and Enforcement Policy Review – Request for Decision

Director Cermak introduced the Request for Decision, explaining changes applied to the draft Trust Council Policy 5.5.1 and introducing an implementation plan. Manager Dingman highlighted that the policy provides bylaw compliance and enforcement officers more discretion for closing files and mediating solutions between parties. Committee discussion included:

- “restoring public confidence” is suggested as a project name
- the tone of bylaw enforcement notice letters is a concern
- encouraging voluntary compliance is important to balance with letters being technically correct in outlining contraventions
- letters should be reviewed by the communications specialist as well as the bylaw enforcement team
- enforcement should be civil in communications, but enforcement action must be meaningful to uphold bylaws
- implementation plan reporting will occur every six months with metrics

ADOPTED

RPC 2026-003

It was MOVED and SECONDED,

that Regional Planning Committee endorse and refer to Trust Council:

- a. The revisions to draft Bylaw Compliance and Enforcement Policy 5.5.1 as shown in the draft attached to the Request for Decision dated January 29, 2026;
- b. The draft Bylaw Compliance and Enforcement Best Practices Manual, and
- c. The Bylaw Compliance & Enforcement Policy Review and Portal Implementation Plan.

CARRIED

Committee discussion continued:

- restoring public trust is a goal for this work
- Regional Planning Committee should respond in writing to the delegation from Friends of the Gulf Islands which raised the issue of the separation of bylaw enforcement and elected officials
- elected officials direct enforcement priorities
- the benefit of trustee discretion is in the application of local knowledge and relief for issues that are not enforcement priorities
- abuse of this power is taken seriously and governed by the oath that trustees take

RPC 2026-004

It was MOVED and SECONDED,

that Regional Planning Committee request staff to assist the Chair in drafting a response to the letter from Friends of the Gulf Islands regarding the Bylaw Enforcement Policy update.

CARRIED

8. BUSINESS – OTHER

None.

9. BUSINESS – NEW

None.

10. WORK PROGRAM

Committee discussion included:

- put in dates associated with item sub-deliverables

Director Cermak indicated that Regional Planning Committee could indicate its desired level of involvement with the Freshwater Sustainability Strategy review process. Chair

ADOPTED

Boland indicated that the current Request for Proposal should continue and it would be helpful for the Committee to receive updates on the process.

11. NEXT MEETING

The next Regional Planning Committee regular meeting is May 1, 2026 at 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

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 was adjourned at 2:58 p.m.

Mairead Boland, Chair

Certified Correct:

Rob Kroeker, Planning Services Administrative Assistant