

April 22, 2020

2020-10-IT

Trust Council Reduces 2020/21 Budget

Lekwungen, METULIYE/Victoria, BC—In response to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on islanders and island communities, the Islands Trust Council held its first-ever electronic meeting to re-consider its 2020/21 budget.

"The COVID-19 pandemic has created personal and financial challenges for many islanders," shared Peter Luckham, Chair of the Islands Trust Council, "The world has changed dramatically since we first approved a 2020/21 budget in mid-March. Trustees wanted to help, so we held a special Trust Council meeting to discuss how we could reduce taxes. After debating options, Trust Council voted to approve a reduced budget that means an 8.1% decrease in the tax requisition to Bowen Island Municipality and an average 0% general property tax increase for property owners in local trust areas."

The budget is now \$8.2 million. It was amended by reducing meeting expenses, staff and trustee travel and training, and choosing to not hire a co-op student this year due to our current work at home measures.

Budget reductions have not changed Trust Council's commitment to climate action. During the pandemic, staff have been working from home. Staff continue to process development applications and referrals, manage the Islands Trust Conservancy's protected areas and develop Strategic Plan projects, including:

- Creation of a regional freshwater strategy.
- Review of foreshore policies and bylaws, and development of a model policy.
- Development of climate change, demographic, and environmental indicator data sets.
- Continuation of Coastal Douglas-fir protection work by select local trust committees.
- Development and implementation of a climate change-focused stewardship education program.
- Mapping the extent of eelgrass throughout the Trust Area.
- Continuation of the Policy Statement Amendment Project, which includes consideration of climate change-related policies.

In 2020/21, the Islands Trust budget will be funded by:

- Property tax revenue from local trust areas: \$6,783,140.
- Property tax revenues from Bowen Island Municipality: \$303,021.
- A draw from accumulated surplus funds: \$501,150.
- A Salt Spring Island Local Trust Area special property tax requisition of \$75,500 to fund continued coordination of watershed management in that Local Trust Area.

Details of the approved 2020/21 budget are available on the Islands Trust website.

At the same meeting, due to the current circumstances related to COVID-19, Trust Council voted to cancel its June 2020 in-person meeting on Hornby Island.

"We look forward to meeting on Hornby Island at a later date when things stabilize and we have the ability to plan with confidence," shared Peter Luckham. "During the interim, we are working to have electronic meetings open to the public."

The Islands Trust works to preserve and protect over 450 islands in the Salish Sea through land use planning, the Islands Trust Conservancy, and Trust Council programs and services. The Trust Area, located within Coast Salish territory, is the homeland of over 28,000 Coast Salish Peoples who have called this Area home since time immemorial. Covering 5,200 square kilometres between the British Columbia mainland and southern Vancouver Island, the Trust Area has 26,000 residents and 10,000 non-resident property owners. The region features many Indigenous archaeological and culturally significant sites, and some of the world's most endangered ecosystems.

Contact: Peter Luckham, Chair, Islands Trust Council 250.210.2553
Julia Mobbs, Director, Administrative Services, 250.405.5150