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Galiano Forest Bylaw enforcement not suspended, says Trustee ~ Patrick Brown

A packed meeting of the Galiano Local Trust Committee on Wednesday, March 15 heard preliminary plans for a review of Forest Land Use Bylaws, but also learned that new prosecutions would continue to be initiated under the existing bylaws.

At present, three prosecutions have been started but are 'on hold' while the review is being carried out. The Islands Trust anticipates that should these cases come to court while the bylaws under which they were brought might possibly be changed, the courts would delay any verdict until the review was completed.

However, Trustee Roy Smith made it clear that should any new situations develop in which the Land Use Bylaws appear to have been broken, new prosecutions will be initiated. Some Galiano residents had anticipated that now that the Forest Land Use Bylaws were officially under review, they would no longer be enforced. Smith has clearly confirmed that enforcement would continue.

The Meeting

The LTC meeting started at 1pm. By mid-afternoon, nearly seventy people packed the North Galiano Hall. Early in the meeting, the LTC heard four speakers.

Helena Chambers expressed her concern that any new Forest Land bylaw that did not agree with the *Private Managed Forest Land Act* (PMFL) would be rejected by the provincial government. The choice, she said, would be to agree with the PMFL or decide to enforce it. She urged Trust Council to step up its negotiations with the government to have the Islands Trust area exempted from the PMFL.

She went on to accuse Trustee Roy Smith of 'bias' in his advocacy of #1 priority for the Forest Land Use Bylaw review. This was based on Smith's resolution seeking a review of Forest bylaws and specifying the changes that he thought should result. (His resolution was subsequently defeated.) Smith's reply was to deny bias, calling the claim 'an assault on the proper work of the Trust Committee.'

Carolyn Canfield sought 'open government'. She commented on the LTC's handling of the many letters it had received, and queried whether they would ever be answered. (Later in the meeting, Islands Trust Planner Brodie Porter

outlined the procedure which was to be used for the receipt of letters, and the LTC officially acknowledged the receipt of 23 letters, including at least one that had been previously rejected by the Trustees. The cut-off would now be ten days before the meeting).

Canfield went on to ask, 'What's the rush?' on Forest bylaws. 'Haste,' she said, 'hides issues, obscures choices, and hides consequences.' She questioned the current enforcement of Forest bylaws, and asked 'how long will this limbo last?'

Brian Mitchell emphasized the importance of defining problems before setting out to solve them, and the necessity of a full understanding of the objective of any public meeting. His plea was essentially for a properly designed process.

Bowie Keefer briefly described his plans for District Lot 10, and the reasons he had initiated a road access to the back of Mount Galiano through the existing works yard, off Georgeson Bay Road. He said there is no threat to Mount Galiano, that he was not planning residential development, but trail building. He will describe his plan at a public meeting at the South Hall at 10am on April 1. But, he said, his proposal is anything but an April Fool's day joke (see Readers' Letters, page 4).

Forest Land Use Bylaws

This was the third LTC meeting to consider a review of the Forest bylaws. Planner Brodie Porter said that he had been exploring the possibility of funding for the FLUB review, since funding for the complete Galiano OCP review would not be available from the Islands Trust budget until April 2008.

Porter indicated that the province was willing to fund the process in two phases, provided that it could be clearly defined. The first phase, to be carried out under the supervision of a contracted facilitator, would involve a variety of 'stakeholders' to design a public process. If this was successful, the second phase, the process itself, would be funded. Just how long the review would take was not predetermined, although presumably work on this part of the OCP would feed into the complete OCP review which, because of Islands Trust staff and funding limitations, could not start until 2008.

It was suggested that the Phase 1 group should involve representatives of various parts of the community. Initially, Islands Trust staff had suggested that the 'stakeholders' should

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include representatives of large and small Forest Land owners, community forest interests, conservation interests, non-forest landowners, prior trustees, and so on.

Trustee Smith suggested that the LTC could advertise for representatives of 'interest groups.' But at the 'town hall' session that followed the meeting, it soon became apparent that few of the individuals present were willing to be represented by anyone else, and there were many objections to the term 'stakeholders.' There was a similar resistance to the concept of 'interest groups.' Their legitimacy was questioned even before they had been identified. It was pointed out that the Phase 1 meetings were only to plan the public process; but even then, considerable distrust was evident.

Keo Okuda proposed a moratorium on Forest Land development while the review was in process.

Two other issues raised at the town hall session were:

- Galiano had not been represented at BCUC's hearings on the Vancouver Island Transmission Reinforcement Project, despite the fact that the existing power lines crossed Galiano and Parker Islands, and ran across Montague Harbour Park. Nick Francis advocated 'liberation' of fifty acres of Galiano.

- There appeared to be some delay in identifying potential covenant holders to guarantee land protection and preservation. Several speakers asked the Trust to take the initiative in these cases, rather than leaving it to the landowners. ☞

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