

Reprint **Island Tides**

Visit www.islandtides.com to read the current edition and more find more interesting articles on other BC, national & international topics in our extensive archive of newspapers and articles.

Reprint from Volume 20 Number 19

October 2, 2008

Face to face democracy breaks out on Galiano ~ Suzanne Fournier

Denied a town hall session at each of two September meetings of their Local Trust Committee, Galiano residents took democracy into their own hands at a impromptu September 19 meeting at the Island's south hall.

After close to 100 islanders were asked to leave the building so that Trustees Mike Sharp and Roy Smith could hear legal advice in-camera on patched-together bylaws 199 and 200, people voted with their feet—and stayed seated. It was politely pointed out that the kitchen adjoining the hall would be more suited to the small group of two trustees, Islands Trust planners and Galiano's new LTC chair Gary Steeves. The new 'kitchen cabinet' picked up laptops and moved to the kitchen, while the expectant throngs in the hall stayed put.

Astonishingly, on an island that has supposedly required hours of expensive 'facilitation', democracy broke out and a face-to-face discussion between Islanders ensued.

The LTC meeting had been called for 8:30am but Islanders had already showed up in droves at the appointed time, though it was widely-suspected the LTC would quickly repair to a private session. Outside the hall, affordable housing activists had erected a multi-room tent so that those entering the hall from the lower parking-lot had to negotiate their way through it, while right outside the hall stood a small pup tent, accompanied by signs asking if the temporary domiciles represented Galiano's best hope for affordable housing.

Although little has been done on the affordable housing front by the two trustees who inserted the issue as a plank in their last election platform, Galiano Islanders have worked diligently on a Galiano Land and Community Housing Trust, with a broad-based community board including Doug Latta, Diana Lilly, Gary Coward, Steve Goldberg, Gloria Olson, Hans-Krishna von Hagen, Roger Pettit and Tom Hennessey, most of whom were in attendance at the meeting.

When the LTC went 'in camera', longtime resident Tom Hennessey had swiftly repaired to the local bakery for a giant tray of cinnamon buns which circulated in the hall, Munching a bun, Hennessey, who had helped erect the tents outside, sat down in one of the chairs recently vacated by the LTC and asked who would like to discuss affordable housing; noting that with the Rural Residential Heritage Forest (RRFH) option

slated to be axed that very day, without a public hearing, the community stood to lose perhaps its best hope of getting land to house families, seniors, low-income and working families.

Despite a few initial loud protests, Hennessey took a vote and pressed on. A lively discussion ensued, with even the dissenters eventually drawn in. Pioneer Islander and forest-lot owner Lloyd Baines pointed out that the island needs several amenities as well as housing, including land to house a new cemetery.

Richard Dewinetz, a forest-lot owner and potential subdivision developer, puzzled aloud about the community's ambivalence over RRFH zoning (a zone the Islands Trust Executive pointed out in its August 28 letter might be deleted in the problematic bylaws 199 and 200). Dewinetz asserted that Forest land is too far from Galiano's 'town centre' to be suitable for housing or other community amenities and Forest-lot owner Isabel Stevens echoed those views by saying other property-owners should also be on the hook to donate land. Mike Hoebel noted that varying views could be properly accommodated as part of a long-delayed Official Community Plan review.

Stevens said there could be 'lots more give and take' if owners of F1 forest land were permitted one home first. To which Gary Moore replied that a residence could be gained right now under the existing community plan, through rezoning as part of an holistic planning process. Walter Forstbauer said he 'stayed away from RRFH' because 'it was too much development' on the island.

Dewinetz returned to a familiar theme that some off-island forest-lot owners 'have been trying to be part of this community for 17 years!' Some of these owners are generous and have 'solid ideas,' said Dewinetz, but have suffered in his view from unfriendliness and discrimination.

North Islander Helena Chambers had some succinct advice for those who just want to live on their land: 'Rezone!' South Islander Steve Goldberg, who has in the past chaired civil meetings in the fractious debate, stood up to say briefly that he appreciated Dewinetz and Baines 'for bringing up concerns about services' needed in the community. 'We have been at two ends of rooms for a long time,' said Goldberg of the two

© Island Tides Publishing Ltd. This article may be reproduced with this attribution, in its entirety, with notification to Island Tides Publishing Ltd.

'This article was published (Oct 2, 2008) in 'Island Tides'. 'Island Tides' is an independent, regional newspaper distributing 17,500 print copies in throughout the Gulf Islands and the Canadian Strait of Georgia from Tsawwassen to Campbell River, BC.'

Island Tides, Box 55, Pender Island, BC, Canada.
Email: islandtides@islandtides.com.

Phone: 250-629-3660. Fax: 250-629-3838.
Website: <http://www.islandtides.com>

Reprint from ISLAND TIDES, Oct 2, 2008, Page 2

perceived 'sides' of the Forest-land debate. He noted that Galiano residents should talk more about 'what's best for this island in terms of creating a healthy community.'

Baines, Stevens and Fred King then raised what they perceived as sore points in recent history, saying all their past rezoning efforts had failed, to which former trustee Louise Decario had a swift comeback that some forest-lot owners' refusal to countenance provision for future public road access through their land (through statutory rights-of-way) had made rational rezoning impossible. Decario noted that Jim Trueit's access to building on the upper portion of his forest lot would

have been blocked by Fred King's lot.

Strong opposition to public road access was voiced with some forest-lot owners apparently preferring friends with keys to gates to statutory rights-of-way. Clearly the road network plan, urged by the Islands Trust executive but spurned by forest-lot owners and current trustees Sharp and Smith, is a key part of what the Galiano community needs to decide as part of the OCP review.

The return of the LTC after its one-hour in-camera kitchen cabinet was almost anti-climactic. ✍

© Island Tides Publishing Ltd. This article may be reproduced with this attribution, in its entirety, with notification to Island Tides Publishing Ltd.

'This article was published (October 2, 2008) in 'Island Tides'. 'Island Tides' is an independent, regional newspaper distributing 17,500 print copies in throughout the Gulf Islands and the Canadian Strait of Georgia from Tsawwassen to Campbell River, BC.'

Island Tides, Box 55, Pender Island, BC, Canada. Phone: 250-629-3660. Fax: 250-629-3838.
Email: islandtides@islandtides.com. Website: <http://www.islandtides.com>
