

From: Islands2050
Sent: Wednesday, June 9, 2021 9:10 AM
To: Islands2050
Subject: FW: proposed revision of Policy Statement

From: Dan Bruiger [REDACTED]
Sent: March 18, 2021 10:13 AM
To: Grant Scott; Alex Allen; information
Subject: proposed revision of Policy Statement

Dear Islands Trustees, Trust Council, and Staff:

Please consider this comment on the Motion for Council to revise the Policy Statement, prepared on Feb 12 for the March 9 Council meeting [1]. The Motion seeks to override the general rights and concerns of local inhabitants in favour of environmental concerns as conceived from a particular point of view. While in many ways I agree with those environmental concerns, let us recall that there were pre-existing communities, holding private property, on many of the lands that became the Trust area under the Islands Trust Act. The “amenities” to be preserved and protected are in part for the benefit of residents of the Trust area [2]. The trustees are elected by those residents and accountable to them, and the Local Trust Committee does in fact have (some of) the powers of local government [3].

The proposed motion for council asks “How did we go from protecting the environment from potentially harmful human activities to protecting human activities that potentially harm the environment.” While I have sympathy for the issues behind this rhetorical question, I would like to point out that if the sole mandate of the IT were to protect only the environment, the democratic election of trustees would be unnecessary and irrelevant, even counterproductive. A provincially appointed watchdog agency would have done quite well for that purpose. The very fact of elected representation establishes the right of community input and local political will as a factor in decisions concerning the Trust area. The text of the same Motion admits that Local Trust Committees are responsible for “local community matters,” which now include the need for affordable housing and a balanced demographic [4]. It is therefore not true that “The inclusion of community needs in the definition promotes a mistaken understanding that the Trust is a ‘local government’...” From its inception, the Trust has assumed some of the responsibilities and powers otherwise provided by democratic local government.

I would also point out that to presently emphasize the “cultural heritage of Indigenous Peoples” is as much a consideration based on “political reasons due to public pressure” as the motion alleges was earlier the case for including “community needs” [5].

Certainly, a balance must always be found—between the goals of the Trust Council and of the Local Trust Committees, and between the needs of human beings and those of nature. I don’t believe a redefinition of that balance needs to exclude the goal of many island communities to implement affordable housing. It would be tragic if a rewording of IT policy were to impede or defeat affordable housing projects. Given that much of its “unique amenity” consists of private

waterfront properties, that would render the Trust area no more than an elite haven and not a true community. Affordable housing projects may involve increased density on a given property, but generally should not affect the overall population level of a given island, which on some islands has actually declined over the past two decades. Rather, the intention is to upgrade conditions for residents presently living in substandard housing.

The current IT Policy Statement document, ‘Section V, Policies for Sustainable Communities’, consists almost entirely of restrictions on human activities. The sole possible *directive* policy that might be interpreted to favour community needs over environmental concerns is 5.8.6, which includes addressing housing requirements [6].

Incidentally, nowhere in the entire Policy Statement could I find the expression “healthy communities and culture,” nor any explicit definition of “unique amenities” that includes the above expression. (The term “healthy communities” does occur in 5.8.5, referring to the Provincial Ministry of Health “Healthy Communities Program.”) However, ‘Section V: Goal’ does include this statement: “The health of a community is influenced by numerous factors such as economic security, education, social support systems, the cleanliness and safety of the environment, and the availability of such necessities as educational and social services, transportation, affordable food and housing. Public involvement in decisions that affect a community is also critical to the health of that community. Participation in the decision-making process influences whether an individual or group is able to realize aspirations, satisfy needs or cope with change.” Furthermore, 5.8.3 states: “Trust Council holds that island communities within the Trust Area are themselves best able to determine the most effective local government structure to support their local autonomy and specific community needs within the object of the Islands Trust.” ‘5.8.3’ is a clear statement of democratic intent, and ‘Goal’ clearly expresses concern for the well-being of residents along with environment.

If Trust Council still believes in democratic process and addressing local human needs, then it would be a serious error to remove such statements from Policy. The focus should not be to change the Policy Statement but to address specific practices that constitute an environmental threat.

Notes:

[1] “RECOMMENDATION: Be it resolved that Trust Council define the words “unique amenities” to be inclusive of the natural character of the environment and the cultural heritage of Indigenous Peoples within the Islands Trust Area, and that these aspects are prioritized.” [Motion for council, from Steve Wright, Feb 12, 2021]

[2] “**3** The object of the trust is to preserve and protect the trust area and its unique amenities and environment *for the benefit of the residents of the trust area* and of British Columbia generally, in cooperation with municipalities, regional districts, improvement districts, other persons and organizations and the government of British Columbia.” [Islands Trust Act, italics added]

[3] “**6** (2) The trust council has the same responsibility and authority in relation to elections for local trustees as a regional district has in relation to elections for electoral area directors...” “**29** (1) Each local trust committee has, in respect of its local trust area, *all the power and authority of a regional district board* under the following enactments...” [IT Act, italics added]

[4] “By using the original definition of “unique amenities” as put forward by the legislature, Council members and staff can focus on Council’s priorities for the Trust Area, such as climate change, Reconciliation, and coastal marine issues, *rather than local community matters which are the responsibility of LTCs.*” [proposed motion for council, italics added]

[5] “Be it resolved that Trust Council define the words “unique amenities” to be inclusive of the natural character of the environment *and the cultural heritage of Indigenous Peoples* within the Islands Trust Area, and that these aspects are prioritized.” [proposed motion for council, italics added]

[6] “5.8.6 Local trust committees and island municipalities shall, in their official community plans and regulatory bylaws, address their community’s current and projected housing requirements and the long-term needs for educational, institutional, community and health-related facilities and services, as well as the cultural and recreational facilities and services.” [current IT Policy Statement]

Thank you so much for your attention.

Sincerely,

Dan Bruiger

Former Secretary of Hornby Island Ratepayers Association

and past board member of Islands Secure Land Association