

Make Yourself Heard

Ideally, local government allows community members to have meaningful hands-on participation—more so than any other levels of government. Here are some ways you can have influence on the decisions of the Denman Island Local Trust Committee (DILTC), the elected body responsible for land use planning.

(The DILTC is part of the Islands Trust, which brings together 13 local trust committees and one island municipality from across the Salish Sea area under an environmental protection mandate. Unlike a typical municipality, the DILTC focusses mainly on land use planning (zoning, bylaws, development permits, etc). Most other functions are handled by the Comox Valley Regional District.)

1. Speak to the DILTC at a regular business meeting.

There are two main ways to do this. The more formal approach is to speak as a delegation. This means your name and topic will be listed on the agenda, and block of time (up to ten minutes) will be set aside for you. To make this happen, contact the Islands Trust office at least 10 days before the meeting.

A less formal option is to speak at the Town Hall session offered near the beginning of every meeting. This is as easy as showing up and putting up your hand when the Chair asks, “Who wants to speak at Town Hall?” Town Hall speakers are usually asked to limit their time to two minutes, depending on how many speakers there are and how much is on the agenda.

If you have applied for rezoning or a development or other permit, things work a bit differently—usually, you’ll be invited to speak when your application comes up on the agenda.

2. Attend and participate in other types of meetings.

The DILTC holds community information meetings, open houses, forums, and public hearings on a variety of issues such as rezoning applications, bylaw amendments, and community issues such as housing, food security or shoreline protection. Formats range from small group discussions to question-and-answer sessions to formal meetings that work with a speaker’s list. All you need to do is show up, although it’s helpful to have done some research on the issue first.

Find out where and when meetings are held:

- Grapevine calendar
- Back page of the Flagstone
- Notices on bulletin boards around the island
- Islands Trust website calendar (islandstrust.bc.ca/Denman)

- Sign up for regular email notifications (click on *Subscriber Options* on the website home page)

Find agendas and meeting packages:

These are available on the website five working days before every meeting. The packages contain background information about the agenda items, and can help you make persuasive, informed arguments.

3. Send us correspondence.

Send email to northinfo@islandstrust.bc.ca. Make it clear in the subject line or in the salutation that you are writing the DILTC. You can also send a letter by post to Islands Trust, 700 North Road, Gabriola Island, V0R 1X3, or give us a written submission at a meeting. Please be aware that we cannot assure anyone of anonymity, and also that any potentially defamatory material will be redacted.

4. Join the Advisory Planning Commission.

The Advisory Planning Commission (APC) is made up of appointed volunteers who give advice to the DILTC when requested. This is a great way to delve into the issues. APC vacancies are advertising in local media.

5. Talk to a local trustee.

A discussion with individual trustees is a good way to explore a topic you’re interested in, ask questions, and test out your thoughts and facts before you consider making a more formal comment.

To find us, drop in during Trustee Office Hours (the second Saturday of each month, 10 a.m. to noon at the Old School), or contact us: Laura Busheikin, 250-218-3216 / lbusheiking@islandstrust.bc.ca; David Critchley, 250218-3214 / dcritchley@islandstrust.bc.ca.

You don’t need to know all the “right” lingo or be a certain type of person to speak to your local government. We want to hear from everyone. There are a few shared values we ask everyone to respect:

- Refrain from personal attacks, name calling, and insults
- Focus on the issue at hand
- Be mindful of time limitations

If you’re wanting to talk to the DILTC but feeling uncertain, I encourage you to give it a try. After all, democracy needs to mean more than just voting every few years.