

The Galiano Local Trust Committee and Islands Trust Planner,

I moved to live full time on Galiano in 1995. The furor over the sale and use for forest lots a was in full rage. Public meetings were fraught with anger and frustration. There was an OCP review in these years, where islanders worked hard to make some guidelines for what could happen on the lands zoned F1, approximately half the island, over 7,000 acres. While there has been some movement forward regarding rezoning of F1 land, there has been mostly stall. There appears to be resistance by some people to anything other than traditional subdivision – for example, Panorama and Beau Vista off Vineyard Way. Even those took many years to get through the bureaucratic morass called ‘rezoning’.

I have been a member of Crystal Mountain Society since 2010. The Crystal Mountain Society’s rezoning application has been in front of the Trust for 14 or 17 years, depending on when you start counting. Other letters submitted today refer to the innovative and creative solutions shaped by Crystal Mountain in round table conversations with north end residents which included preservation of land, protection of ecosystems, transfer of title, studies on water, capacity etc. These agreements seem to have been forgotten, despite being made in good faith. Instead, those in opposition to Crystal Mountain vilify us, as an evil, unwanted, untrustworthy neighbour, accused of allowing ‘foreigners’ to come to the island to stay on the 15 acres of forest retreat preserved for reflection and contemplation – at its essence, to pursue the study of the nature of mind. It is a good, strongly written, site-specific rezoning: innovative, creative and gentle on the forest lands everyone wants to protect. This rezoning will set a precedent for thoughtful, site-specific rezoning applications to come, ensuring that the sensitive ecosystems of Galiano will be protected in perpetuity.

I’d like to comment on the townhall meetings, 9 held each year. Each meeting is an opportunity to talk to the agenda items. Since I started attending LTC meetings in 1995, there are some who have taken it on to criticize, attack, deride, bully, and harass anyone supporting any topic that doesn’t meet with their approval. After working with two off island consultants hired by the Islands Trust in 2007, I too became a target of this vitriol. Finally, after efforts to bring people together to talk met with complete obstruction, I took my leave of island politics. I stopped coming to the LTC meetings because of the tone set by a certain few community members. Quite frankly I am fed up with being treated as a pariah, an outsider not wanted here. I know what it is like to be shunned, ignored. What distresses me is the uncivil behaviour present in these townhall meetings. Snide tone, derogatory comments, mis-truths, and personal attacks all amount to a toxic environment at the LTC meetings. Criticism of the LTC trustees, the Chair, the Island Trust planners, professional experts in hydrology, forest ecology and so on, people frequently and publicly accused of not doing their jobs.

I implore the LTC, Chair Rogers in particular, to put a stop to this behaviour. If this was my workplace, I would be talking with the Human Resources people to file a harassment complaint. This poisonous, disheartening behaviour is the antithesis of a respectful workplace let alone a respectful community. I reiterate what I mentioned earlier: This rezoning will set a precedent for thoughtful, site-specific rezoning applications to come, ensuring sensitive ecosystems of Galiano will be protected in perpetuity.
Sincerely,