



**Salt Spring Island
Project Advisory Planning Commission
Minutes of a Regular Meeting**

Date of Meeting: Thursday, September 18, 2025

Location: United Church, Upper Hall Meeting Room
111 Hereford Avenue, Salt Spring Island

Members Present: Eric March, Chair
Tim Hiltz, Commissioner
Robert Steinbach, Commissioner
Riley Donovan, Commissioner
Maxine Leichter, Commissioner
John Cade, Commissioner

Regrets: Anne Gunn, Commissioner

Staff Present: Chris Hutton, Regional Planning Manager
Kalyaan Selvakumar, Planning Team Assistant
Carly Bilney, Recorder (electronic)

Others Present: Sandra Borton, McElhanney Consultant Engagement Lead

1. AGENDA

Chair March called the meeting to order at 1:12 p.m. He acknowledged that the meeting was being held on the territory of the Coast Salish First Nations.

1.1 Approval of Agenda

A request was made to add discussion about the role of the Advisory Planning Commission (“the Commission”) if it is not covered in the verbal update Item 3.1 Terms of Reference.

By general consent the agenda was adopted as amended.

2. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS

2.1 Draft Minutes of the August 07, 2025 Meeting – For Adoption

Concern was expressed about the point listed under Item 3.1.1 that says: “Discussion by commissioners continued related to ... addressing the technical issues of the current OCP is not

identified in the plan presented.” Comments were made that this does not make sense without background information to provide context. A suggestion was made to amend the point.

It was MOVED and SECONDED,

that the Advisory Planning Commission amend the Minutes of the August 07, 2025 meeting by removing: “that addressing the technical issues of the current OCP is not identified in the plan presented” and replacing it with “that addressing background issues to inform discussion of the current OCP is not identified in the plan.”

DEFEATED

Eric March, Robert Steinbach, John Cade and Tim Hiltz Opposed

Caution was expressed for potentially misinterpreting the original sentiment of what was said. A suggestion was made to remove the comment.

It was MOVED and SECONDED,

that the Advisory Planning Commission amends the Minutes of the August 07, 2025 meeting by removing: “that addressing the technical issues of the current OCP is not identified in the plan presented.”

CARRIED

By general consent the Advisory Planning Commission agreed to amend the Minutes of the August 07, 2025 meeting to correct the spelling of Robert Steinbach’s surname.

It was MOVED and SECONDED,

that the Advisory Planning Commission accept the minutes as amended.

CARRIED

3. BUSINESS ITEMS

3.1 Housekeeping:

- **Terms of Reference Review and Engagement - Verbal Update, Chris Hutton**

Planner Hutton provided a verbal update and made the following comments:

- This is a special Advisory Planning Commission created to bring together a group of people that would be deeply engaged in a particular project
- The project involves modernizing the Salt Spring Official Community Plan and Land Use Bylaw to provide a framework for residential growth over the next decade
- The goals of the project are outlined in the terms of reference
- The Local Trust Committee will make referrals to the Advisory Planning Commission to provide general guidance
- The Commission will assist the Local Trust Committee in the implementation and engagement of a communication strategy
- There has not been enough time to engage with key interest groups in the community and the Commission can help identify who should be involved
- One thing that was missed in launching the survey was notifying the Commission that it was going out

- About five weeks remain in the process and we are now participating in active engagement
- The Commission has an advisory role and is to make consensus-based recommendations to the Local Trust Committee that should be in the form of a resolution

RPM Hutton reviewed the Code of Conduct that applies to the Advisory Planning Commission as a committee within the mandated organization of the Islands Trust.

3.2 Update from Sept. 11 LTC meeting:

- **Items Presented**
- **Budget - Verbal Update, Chris Hutton**

Discussion ensued and concern was expressed about the engagement process, specifically about how the survey should not have been sent to community members before Commissioners had the opportunity to provide feedback on the questions. The following comments were made:

- Frustration was expressed at receiving notices about events the same week that the event takes place; notice should be given at least a week in advance if people are to participate
- Commissioners can help the consultants use the right terms on outreach materials (e.g. Salt Spring does not have a “recreation centre”)
- Commissioners should be used to ensure communications materials are meaningful to people
- Concern was expressed about whether what happens at Advisory Planning Commission meetings carries weight in the overall project discussion or if it is just for optics to demonstrate to the community that a Commission has been appointed
- The wording of survey questions and the context provided can influence responses
- The survey included bias that leads to certain outcomes because the options provided were limited
- Even with budget and timeline constraints, it is incumbent upon Commissioners to give the Local Trust Committee everything it needs to be useful with its time
- The survey was premature; it can be done again and done right
- It is essential that the process is done right

Staff expressed a desire to gather input on how to engage with the community, and commented that the timeline and budget for the project does not allow for an in-depth review of survey questions. It was noted that the Official Community Plan designates Ganges, Fulford and Channel Ridge as village centres. Discussion continued and the following comments were made:

- The Commission was struck in April and there was ample time to vet the survey before it launched, and to do so in a manner that respected the budget
- Perhaps the inclusion in the Official Community Plan of Channel Ridge as a village centre is something that should be looked at
- Perhaps Fulford is not a good place for development given water issues
- If additional funding and time is needed to redo a proper survey, it would be worth looking into

Staff commented that the project is not a re-write of the Official Community Plan (not blue-sky engagement), and changes need to develop policy around what is practical and achievable. Discussion continued and the following comments were made:

- We need to work collectively to address common concerns on Salt Spring
- The Integrated Housing Strategy – that involves the Capital Regional District, Salt Spring Island Foundation, and the Islands Trust – has been underway for some time to identify housing opportunities. Staff advised that the CRD’s Affordable Housing Strategy engaged with Salt Spring Staff and the project has been discussed with Trustees.

Discussion continued about how to move forward. A suggestion was made to request a new survey that fixes technical issues that arose with the existing survey and uses questions that have been vetted by Commissioners. Comments were made that the additional expense and time needed to produce another survey are necessary to elicit meaningful community response.

It was moved and seconded, that the Advisory Planning Commission recommends that the Local Trust Committee direct staff and consultants to produce a new survey that is subject to vetting by Commission members before it is distributed. Discussion on the motion was held and the following comments were made:

- Hesitation was expressed for including the phrase “before it is distributed” in the motion
- If it is not feasible to redo the survey, the overall engagement is discredited
- A potential consequence of compromising the current survey could be a significant expansion of the budget or cancellation of the project
- The request to the Local Trust Committee for additional funds could be turned down
- The survey is already compromised and that is why a new survey is necessary
- It is the job of the Advisory Planning Commission to provide meaningful input and Trustees do not have to follow the Commission’s recommendations

It was MOVED and SECONDED,

that the Advisory Planning Commission recommends that the Local Trust Committee direct staff and consultants to produce a new survey that is subject to vetting by Advisory Planning Commission members before it is distributed.

CARRIED

John Cade, Riley Donovan and Maxine Leichter in favour

Eric March and Robert Steinbach opposed

Tim Hiltz abstained

Discussion continued about how the development of the bylaw as part of the project includes various opportunities for public engagement. Comments were made that there is opportunity to get the process right.

3.3 Phase 2 Initiation - Community Visioning

- **Input on Next Phase Values Workshop, McElhanney**

Sandra Borton, McElhanney Consultant Engagement Lead, outlined the community visioning portion of the meeting and described the process of engagement between the consultants and the Advisory Planning Commission.

A break was held between 2:44-2:50 p.m.

Ms. Borton introduced herself and commented that she is there to support Commissioners in reaching consensus-based recommendations to the Local Trust Committee. She invited Commissioners to introduce themselves and share what they love most about Salt Spring (responses included: the small-town character, farm stands, nature, the sense of community, the ability to access services and live in nature, and hearing about why people come to Salt Spring, etc.) and what they hope to get out of the Commission:

- More of a sense of engagement with the Official Community Plan from working folks
- More emphasis on making sure people on the island that earn a wage can find a comfortable way to live on the island
- To see the community's concerns conveyed without a vision being imposed on them
- A sense that we are able to build on some of the foundational values that exist on Salt Spring around community
- To find ways to work together to develop communities that address the broad cross section of people who live on the island (seniors, working folks, etc.)
- To use creativity to find solutions to housing challenges
- To address housing needs to maintain the community
- To see jobs and futures for the children at Gulf Islands Secondary School

The consultant commented on the common ground shared by Commissioners. She then asked Commissioners to score their personal levels of familiarity and knowledge of provincial regulations related to official community plans, the Trust Policy Statement, the Salt Spring Island Official Community Plan, and the process in which they are currently engaged.

In response to a question from Ms. Borton about which tools would serve them best, Commissioners expressed preference for concise information on printed paper.

Next, Commissioners were asked to join pairs and predict the values they anticipated community members would voice on specific topics. After the exercise, the consultant noted that the common value that arose in each group is a desire for a secure future.

A Commissioner commented that over the past 50 years the values of Salt Spring islanders have shifted dramatically.

4. OTHER BUSINESS - None

5. ADJOURNMENT

By general consent the meeting adjourned at 3:58 p.m.

Eric March, Chair

CERTIFIED CORRECT:

Carly Bilney, Recorder