



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

Date of Meeting: Tuesday, December 16, 2025

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

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

Regrets: Tim Hiltz, Commissioner

Staff Present: Chris Hutton, Regional Planning Manager
Carly Bilney, Recorder (electronic)

Others Present: Laura Patrick, Local Trustee (electronic)
Kevin Brooks, McElhanney Consultant Engagement Lead (electronic)

1. AGENDA

Chair March called the meeting to order at 9:21 a.m. He acknowledged that the meeting was being held on the territory of the Coast Salish First Nations.

1.1 Approval of Agenda

The following comments were made:

- A commissioner requested that an update be given on a motion made at the previous Project Advisory Planning Commission (PAPC) meeting, and the Planner indicated that an update would be provided later in the meeting.
- A commissioner commented that the PAPC Terms of Reference do not include evaluating a possible review of the Official Community Plan and emphasized a need to focus on the task that has been referred; another commissioner suggested a need to clarify that the task of the PAPC is to comment on consultation strategies.
- A commissioner commented that the role of the PAPC is to ensure diverse opinions are reflected.
- The consultant indicated that the presentation today will provide context on the project's progress, and that the material provided to Commissioners includes an update on the process to inform the next stages of engagement.

A suggestion was made to change Item 3.2 General Discussion to General Discussion about Public Consultation.

By general consent the agenda was adopted as amended.

2. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS

2.1 Draft Minutes of the September 18, 2025 Meeting – For Adoption

It was MOVED and SECONDED,
that the Advisory Planning Commission accept the minutes as presented.

CARRIED

3. BUSINESS ITEMS

3.1 Review presentation, Kevin Brooks – McElhanney

Kevin Brooks introduced himself and provided a high level presentation to the PAPC to explain where the process is and to describe the next steps of engagement. He commented on the need for the consultants and the PAPC to work together as a team. The following comments were made:

- A commissioner noted that many community members view Development Permit Areas as regulations, and the consultant explained that they are guidelines that allow discretion in decision making (compared to zoning bylaws that establish clear rules); the commissioner suggested this be given consideration in communications with the public.
- The consultant commented that a longer workshop with the PAPC is proposed for January to determine how best to provide recommendations to the Local Trust Committee in a timely fashion; he also commented on the goal to have a draft vision and guiding principles by the end of January, as well as additional engagement materials.

3.2 General Discussion about Public Consultation

The following comments were made:

- In response to a question from a commissioner about why Bill 44 was included in the documents, the consultant noted that the Official Community Plan must consider the province's housing needs projections, but does not need to zone accordingly. (There is no consideration being given to mandating multi-unit housing developments on single family lots on Salt Spring.)
- The consultant commented on a need to clearly communicate to the public about the authority of the Official Community Plan and how it can help staff and Trustees administer decisions; he also described a need for input from the PAPC about how to frame questions to community members.
- A commissioner commented on the need to include material regarding the relationship between climate change resiliency and ecosystem integrity in communication strategies.
- The consultant noted there are various tools available in the communication strategy to achieve dialogue, and discussions with the PAPC in the new year will focus on trying to create effective engagements.

- The consultant noted the intent is to diversify members of the public to achieve inclusive engagement; he added that the engagement plan will identify interested parties that ought to be targeted, and the PAPC will have an opportunity to share feedback.
- A commissioner commented on the lack of up-to-date mapping of ecosystems and the consultant responded that updated mapping is a key strategy that can be targeted to allow for better ecosystem protection.
- A commissioner commented that it would help community discussions to define affordable and attainable housing.

Discussion ensued about the pros and cons of conducting engagement through a town hall process. The consultant suggested town halls are an excellent tool for communication, but not for policy development and noted the combination of engagement tools to be used is yet to be determined. Discussion continued and the following comments were made:

- The consultant commented that the additional funding that has been approved will be used for more engagement with the community.
- The consultant noted there is opportunity to be more effective in strategizing how to deliberately get information out in a timely fashion and on a more regular basis; he emphasized a need for people to understand what the information they are giving is going to be used for.
- A commissioner commented that the PAPC can be most useful to the consultants if the consultants provide more information about the process (how they intend to communicate, not just what they will communicate).
- The consultant commented that the intention is to bring the engagement plan to the PAPC to provide input on who should be engaged; he added that the plan would identify which tools should be used.
- A suggestion was made to begin setting up meeting dates immediately, and the consultant indicated that staff is working to schedule meetings until the end of April.

A commissioner proposed a motion to request a town hall and discussion continued about the merits of various communication tools. A commissioner noted there has been much feedback from community members about the lack of town hall opportunities. The consultant commented that in this context, the town hall is a communication tool that will not provide a diverse, cross-section of the community or help to develop the project.

It was moved and seconded that the Project Advisory Planning Commission recommends that the Local Trust Committee generate a town hall as part of an early stage of the engagement process. Discussion on the motion was held and the following comments were made:

- A commissioner expressed a preference for the consultants to propose communication tools in the engagement plan that the PAPC could then discuss rather than prescribe a particular format.
- A commissioner expressed a need for discussion and dialogue and suggested useful input cannot be accomplished from town halls.
- A commissioner commented on the fear of public speaking that inhibits some community members from participating in town halls.

- A commissioner suggested town halls are meant to inform members of the audience who hear the various opinions of the speakers as well as responses from experts.

The consultant described a hybrid town hall and workshop approach that allows for dialogue and education.

It was MOVED and SECONDED,
that the Project Advisory Planning Commission recommends that the Local Trust Committee generate a town hall as part of an early stage of the engagement process.

DEFEATED

Discussion continued and a new motion was moved and seconded that the Project Advisory Planning Commission recommends that the Local Trust Committee hold a town hall early in the engagement process in a non-traditional, innovative table format designed by the consultants for review by the Project Advisory Planning Commission.

Discussion on the motion ensued and a commissioner expressed a preference for the consultants to design the engagement tool. The consultant explained that the engagement being discussed would include various tables each with a pre-designated facilitator to ensure discussions are adequately captured and shared with everyone at the workshop. He noted that this engagement tool will be integrated into the plan for the PAPC to review at the next meeting, and that a list of engagement tools can also be provided if necessary.

It was MOVED and SECONDED,
that the Project Advisory Planning Commission recommends that the Local Trust Committee hold a town hall early in the engagement process in a non-traditional, innovative table format designed by the consultants for review by the Project Advisory Planning Commission.

CARRIED

4. OTHER BUSINESS – None

5. ADJOURNMENT

By general consent the meeting adjourned at 11:02 a.m.

Eric March, Chair

CERTIFIED CORRECT:

Carly Bilney, Recorder