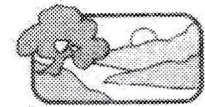


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Islands Trust

Making Change Happen: Choose Your own Adventure

"How do local land use rules get changed?" I get asked this quite a bit. For instance, last month at the Community School's climate change discussions, people asked how to create regulations that would require rainwater catchment for new construction, protect tree cover, or limit lot coverage.

The quick answer is, "It's a process." The current regulations come from thoughtful and thorough community discussion, professional analysis, and input from many sources. They are meant to reflect what is best for this island, and are not intended to be changed easily. But change does, and should happen, because the world changes.

Who decides? The body that creates new bylaws, or amends existing ones, is the three-person Denman Island Local Trust Committee (myself, David Critchley, and the newly-appointed chair, Sue-Ellen Fast from Bowen Island).

The process gets kicked off when we vote to put a topic on the Top Priorities List. This authorizes funding and staff resources. We usually have a maximum of three items on this list, because otherwise resources are spread too thin.

Step two is the creation of a Project Charter that sets out a budget, time-line, goals and boundaries for the project. It tells staff what to work on and the public what to expect, and keeps things on track.

Step three is usually a planner's report, analyzing such things as:

- Lessons from other communities
- Impacts on the environment, including sensitive ecosystems and climate change
- Impacts on neighbourhoods, traffic, and other community concerns
- Compatibility with the Denman Island Official Community Plan (the vision document for the island) and the Islands Trust Policy Statement (the vision document for the whole Trust Area)
- Potential conflicts with other legislation or with the interests of other agencies

The LTC will read the staff report and decide what happens next. Interested Denmanites can follow the process (the staff report is posted on line) and let trustees know what they think via phone calls, email, or speaking at meetings.

At this point I wish this article was an interactive flow chart, kind of like a choose-your-own-adventure book, because there are many options for next steps, for instance:

- Go no further
- Move ahead by drafting amending bylaws
- Ask for further analysis and information, perhaps from planning staff, environmental professionals, groundwater or geotechnical specialists, legal counsel, etc.

- Hold a community information meeting or seek public input in other ways
- Send the issue to the Advisory Planning Commission (APC), a group of volunteer community members appointed to provide feedback to the LTC

The above steps can happen concurrently (at least, some of them) or in any order. No matter what, moving ahead means asking staff to create a draft bylaw. A draft bylaw has no legal impact and is just a suggestion, until **the LTC turns it into an actual proposal by giving it first reading.** First reading says, "We think this is worth discussing in more depth."

At this point in the process, things can move in a somewhat circular way, with multiple rounds of public consultation, and/or input from professionals and stakeholders, consideration by the LTC with possible changes, and redrafting of bylaws to incorporate input.

All decisions must be made in an open meeting that has been sufficiently publicized, and community members must be given opportunity to give input. Also, numerous other agencies and stakeholders, including First Nations, are formally asked to comment.

If/when the LTC feels the time is right to move ahead, they'll **give the draft bylaw second reading and call for a public hearing**, which is a quasi-judicial process that is legally required for bylaw changes. This is the public's final opportunity to tell the LTC what they think should be done. After the public hearing the LTC again is faced with a decision: going no further, making changes (which, if they are substantial, would trigger another public hearing), or giving **third reading**, which signals approval in principal. After third reading the amendment is sent to the **Executive Committee** of the Islands Trust Council (the regional Trust-wide body) for its approval, and then it comes back to the LTC for **the final step: adoption.**

Actually, there is one more step: making sure islanders know about the changes, which we do via articles, brochures, mail-outs, website updates, and sometimes social media.

If there are bylaws you think should be changed, introduced, or removed, give the LTC convincing reasons to put this topic on their Top Priority List, and then stay in touch and participate in the process.

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