

Trustee Notebook *By Laura Busheikin*



Report from Denman's COVID Response Network

DIRCON stands for Denman Island Response to Covid Network and is just that—a network, representing organizations and businesses on the forefront of community response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

This group has been meeting regularly via Zoom for about six weeks to share information, support each other, identify needs and gaps in the community, and brainstorm solutions. In my role as Local Islands Trust Trustee, I co-chair the network along with Hornby and Denman Community Health Care Society Chair Bill Engleson.

We don't have capacity to report out regularly, but this week our meeting coincided with the Flagstone deadline, so here are some key points (not a full summary):

Daniel Arbour, our Regional Director with the Comox Valley Regional District, reported that

- The Comox Valley's Emergency Operations Centre (EOC), which is the central hub for COVID response in our region, will continue working during Stage 2 of pandemic response;
- Hornby Island is working on an outbreak plan that outlines measures that would be taken if there was a COVID outbreak on the island, and that a similar plan is in the works for Denman. The plan will provide clarity around who does what, how information is shared (and not shared, to protect privacy), and options for accommodation and medical care;
- The CVRD has been interviewing non-profit organizations to find out their concerns and needs.

Dr. Ron Wilson explained that

- If there was a case on Denman, the Medical Health Officer's staff would handle the situation;
- It is at the discretion of the North Island Medical Health Officer to decide whether or not to declare an outbreak;
- Patient confidentiality is essential; information about cases should not and will not be shared.

Denman Fire Chief Don Luckett reported that

- the Denman Fire Department is gearing up to resume regular training and operations, using safety and mitigation measures based on the five pillars (self-assessment, distancing, clean hands, no touching your face, and advanced

cleaning of premises), setting occupancy limits for the Fire Hall, and keeping windows and doors open;

Tony Gregson and Graham Hayman of DenmanWORKS reported on a program called the "Island Comeback Portal," an on-line fundraising and sales platform for non-profit organizations and businesses on the Gulf Islands. DenmanWORKS is setting up the Denman Island segment of this program as a way to support the local economy.

Emily Guinane of Denman Island Community Education Society reported that:

- A public laundry facility on Denman is in the works;
- The food bank and weekly food hamper program are functioning well and highly appreciated;
- DICES is looking at options for sports facilities for the winter, as there is no guarantee that the typical venues will be open.

Bill Engleson of the Hornby and Denman Community Health Care Society said their services are working well, and they are working out protocols around personal protective equipment for health care workers.

Emily Anderson, representing the agricultural sector, said that farmers were challenged by the many unknowns and uncertainties facing them, and by the demands of continually adapting.

Islands Trustee Laura Busheikin reported that Islands Trust is gradually resuming its regular work via electronic Zoom meetings. These have options for the public to participate via Internet or phone. This is new for everyone.

As a group, we discussed the importance of public gathering spaces on Denman and the possible impacts of not having these spaces available over the long term. We need our public spaces for fitness and sport, programs for children and youth, the vast range of activities included in the word "culture," and more. Director Arbour agreed to advocate on behalf of our community for the re-opening of the Community Hall and the Activity Centre as soon as possible, when deemed safe by the Provincial health officer.

We also talked about the potential for local businesses to expand into on-line sales to adapt to these times, and Director Arbour shared information about a funding program to support this.

That's just a sampling of the types of information-sharing and brainstorming that happens at a DIRCON meeting. If you have any questions or want to bring something to our attention, contact me at lbushiekin@islandstrust.bc.ca or 250-218-3216.