

From: Islands2050
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To: Islands2050
Subject: FW: For Inclusion in TC July 8 Correspondence Package

From: Frants Attorp [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, June 22, 2021 3:58 PM
To: Lori Foster <lfoster@islandstrust.bc.ca>
Subject: For Inclusion in TC July 8 Correspondence Package

Power Struggle Over Trust Policy Statement

By Frants Attorp

The spirit of Machiavelli lives on. For proof, look no further than the review of the Islands Trust's Policy Statement, the umbrella document that is supposed to preserve and protect the Gulf Islands into the future.

The saga of the review started in the fall of 2019 with an extensive—and expensive—public consultation process called Islands 2050. That exercise, which involved 24 events and generated input from about 1500 people, confirmed that the vast majority of respondents valued nature and were concerned, above all, with protection of the natural environment.

Given these results, one would think Trust Council would immediately make environmental protection its top priority, but not so! The March 2021 meeting saw the defeat of two separate motions to do just this, with help from Salt Spring trustees.

Those who voted down the motions have given various reasons. Salt Spring's Laura Patrick repeats her sustainable development mantra even as environmental indicators flash red across the Trust Area, while Dan Rogers, the influential trustee from Gambier Island, pushes the faux argument that prioritizing the environment would preclude all development.

Despite this tragic turn, the draft Policy Statement now lists the following as a guiding principle: “Trust Council commits to place priority on preserving and protecting the integrity of the environment and Indigenous cultural heritage in all decision-making.” Huh? Wasn’t the environmental part just defeated?

A second guiding principle says “the primary responsibility of Trust Council is to provide leadership for the preservation and protection of the unique amenities and environment of the Trust Area.” This contradicts the above guiding principle since Trust Council decided in 1994 that “unique amenities” includes community needs. How can the Trust prioritize both the natural environment and the forces that damage it?

Nothing makes sense, but there’s an even greater conundrum: the Policy Statement on its own is toothless without the Policy Statement Implementation, a totally separate document that instructs Local Trust Committees how to comply with the Policy Statement.

Unfortunately, that document contains various escape clauses allowing Local Trust Committees to circumvent the Policy Statement, including when there are problems “balancing two or more components of the Policy Statement that cannot be achieved simultaneously.” Could there be a more blatant admission that social, economic and environmental goals are conflicting?

But there’s more. Even though the implementation document is supposed to reflect the contents of the Policy Statement, it does not currently identify anything as a priority. Policy Statement Implementation is considered an in-house document and, as such, is not open to public discussion during the Policy Statement review. So much for transparency and public process!

If you are wondering what’s going on, be aware there is a massive power struggle taking place within the Islands Trust and it’s causing great confusion. Some have likened it to an identity crisis.

In the end, protection of these islands will likely depend on who we elect as trustees, but having a clear Policy Statement along with implementation directives that reflect the will of the people surely can’t hurt. Send your comments to Trust Council at execadmin@islandstrust.bc.ca

Frants Attorp



Salt Spring Island

