



Islands Trust Responding to COVID-19

I will start with the same disclaimer I wrote last month: because the situation is ever-changing, this information may well be out of date or at least seem terribly old by the time you read it. I apologize for this.

Islands Trust Asks Visitors to Stay Home, for Now

On March 22, The Islands Trust issued a public statement with a plea for people to please refrain from all travel to the islands, except where absolutely essential, for now. This is in line with recommendations from Provincial Health Officer Dr. Bonnie Henry.

You can read the whole statement at <http://www.islandstrust.bc.ca/> (click on *Visitors Stay Home* under *What's New*). The Trust is in close contact with Provincial authorities and is closely monitoring the situation. As I mention above, by the time you read this, the situation may be different.

Islands Trust Decreases our 2020-2021 Budget

On April 20, the Islands Trust held its first ever electronic meeting of Trust Council, the 26-member group made up of all the trustees from across the whole Trust Area. At that meeting we made a decision to amend our 2020-2021 budget by lowering expenses so that property taxes will not be increased from the previous year. The original budget included a 2% increase in property taxes.

We did this in recognition of the economic challenges people are facing due to the COVID-19 pandemic. It doesn't add up to much of a difference on a property-by-property basis, but at least it was something we can do.

We considered deeper cuts to our budget, funded on a draw from surplus, but the consensus was that we want to maintain a healthy surplus for now. The future remains uncertain and many of us expect financial challenges to be ongoing, and unpredictable, in the next year or two.

The Trust doesn't have the power to defer taxes; this can only be done by the Provincial Government.

The province has given businesses a break on school taxes and is allowing commercial properties to defer paying property taxes until October 1, without incurring any payment.

Electronic Meetings

The Trust is on a learning curve around electronic meetings. We have been holding some meetings electronically for a few years, but had never held a Trust Council meeting that way. In order to do so, we needed special permission from Minister of Public Safety and Solicitor General Mike Farnsworth. This permission, granted

via Order 83 to all municipalities and regional districts, and the Islands Trust, does not give us carte blanche but rather is focused only on time-challenged budget decisions and other urgent matters.

Conversations continue about how to make electronic meetings work for a wider range of business for Trust Council.

We have now cancelled the Trust Council meeting scheduled for June on Hornby Island. It will be replaced with some sort of electronic meeting. That should be interesting!

Decisions via Resolution-Without-Meeting

Locally, we've been doing some decision-making through a resolution-without-meeting (RWM) process. As the name suggests, this is a way to make decisions outside of a meeting. This is an unusual measure, created for the Trust in recognition of the geographical challenges of holding meetings on our islands.

RWMs can only be used for simple decisions that will not involve discussion by the Local Trust Committee and do not warrant community input. For instance, we adopted minutes from a past meeting. We're feeling our way with this, cautiously.

Stay Informed

If you want to keep closer tabs on what the Denman Island Local Trust Committee is up to, please sign up for email notifications on the Islands Trust website, www.islandstrust.com. Click on "subscriber options" in the middle of the page.

To contact a planner (inquiries about applications, bylaws, current projects, etc) contact the Gabriola office at 250-247-2063 or northinfo@islandstrust.bc.ca.

To contact a Denman trustee

- Laura Busheikin: 250-218-3216/lbusheikin@islandstrust.bc.ca
- David Critchley: 250-218-3214/dcritchley@islandstrust.bc.ca
- And/or the chair of the Denman Local Trust Committee, Sue-Ellen Fast: 778-867-8390/sfast@islandstrust.bc.ca

To write an email to the entire Local Trust Committee, which is the best way to ensure your correspondence is considered as part of the public record, send it to northinfo@islandstrust.bc.ca and state in the subject line and/or near the top of your email that it is for the Denman Island Local Trust Committee.