

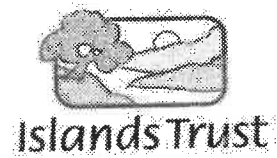
# Trustee Notebook *By Sam Borthwick*

Hello Denman! It's been a busy month for your local Trustees, with the infamous March Trust Council meeting, where Trust Council ideally adopts the budget for the coming year, and all the attendant reading and preparation. This Trust Council meeting's agenda was a whopping 500+ pages once all the addendums and final additions were in, and receiving it only two weeks out meant that, at least for me, there were a lot of long evenings trying to parse the sheer quantity of information.

First of all, I want to congratulate the Financial Planning Committee (FPC) and Director Julia Mobbs of Administrative Services, for their incredible work in stepping into take ownership of the budget on a very tight timeline, an artifact of the unfortunate conflict between the electoral and financial cycles. Chair Bernardo has an exceptionally keen eye for systemic issues and he is joined by a chorus of incisive minds on the committee, including our very own Trustee Graham. The clear and emphatic language with which Chair Bernardo delivered the FPC's report, which emphasized that while this year's budget was a relatively successful stop-gap measure, there is a real need for a clear corporate plan to guide the financial planning process for the Trust, and to maximise the efficacy of the money being raised and spent. This call for a corporate plan is a central theme in the Governance Review from last term's Trust Council, and something that I and many of my fellow current Trustees are looking forward to helping bring to fruition this term.

In the end we passed the proposed budget of \$9.7 million, which assumes that Islands Trust will maintain existing service levels, support a new Governance Committee, a new Accessibility Committee, and undertake a reduced docket of select projects including the Denman Island Housing Review Project, although the manner in which that will be executed is yet to be defined, work which I know that I personally am very much looking forward to participating in, alongside the special APC (which will hopefully by the time this goes to print have had its first round of advertising for applicants posted in the Grapevine), the budget also includes funding for three new staff positions.

We had a full evening of delegations this time round, including Denman's own indomitable Riane Da Silva, whose presentation on the UN's Declaration of the Human Right to Housing gave my fellow Trustees a lot to think over, and in response to which, David Graham introduced a motion that should start the wheels moving



at the Trust level to make sure we're responding to and incorporating that mandate. We also had presentations from Deborah Ferens about amplifying stewardship of and education about our rich biodiverse island ecosystems, Daniel Dunnison on the extent Coastal Douglas Fir (CDF) zone and potential inaccuracies in Islands Trust literature, Shauna Doll from Raincoast about their valuable environmental advocacy, Maxine Leichter regarding the importance of consistent and publicly available bylaw enforcement procedure, Eric Booth about inefficiency in application processing at the Trust, and finally Michael Sketch presented in great depth about the risks of delegated decision-making on development permit areas.

Among the high profile discussions had at this Council was a motion to rescind a request made of the Province by the previous Trust Council in 2020 and which was, as yet, unanswered, to extend the same powers over tree cutting on private property as possessed by municipalities. This was a very contentious issue on many islands, and Trustee Harris of Salt Spring Island was the motion's chief proponent. After a great deal of heated discussion, the motion to rescind the request was passed, not for any lack of care about the rights of trees among Trustees, but more, I believe in hopes of finding a better set of tools with which to protect them, while still allowing for individuals to retain control of their properties.

This was our second in-person Council meeting, and I cannot emphasise enough how valuable, as someone new to this particular arena, I find being able to meet in person. Sharing physical space with staff and Trustees alike seems to go a long way toward deepening conversations, and being able to hash out our perspectives, as well as share entirely unrelated experiences, during coffee breaks and over meals seems to greatly strengthen the calibre of conversation around the table when we are in session. I am very much looking forward to getting to our next meeting on Gabriola in June.

There is so much more that I could go into, but alas, I have hit my word allowance (and then some), so as always, I encourage anyone with questions about what's happening with the Trust to reach out to me, or to David Graham, and I look forward to hopefully seeing some of you at the next Local Trust Council meeting on April 4<sup>th</sup>, if not sooner, out and about!