

Trustee Notebook *By David Graham*



Islands Trust

I thought I would report on our last special meeting of the Denman Local Trust Committee (DLTC), which was held via Zoom on May 7th, 2024.

The purpose of this meeting was to review work done by Special Islands Trust Planner Narrisa Chadwick, who is the principal planner supporting our review of housing policies and regulations. This review was anticipated many years ago, and finally initiated by the previous DLTC and now continues with the current committee, under direction from Chair, David Maude, Trustee Sam Borthwick and myself.

The reason for the review, in my opinion, was to address the ongoing (in many cases decades old) situation of the use of illegal residences, which have been provided by land owners, who viewed the illegality to be a risk worth taking, in order to supply necessary housing, due to the lack of housing options.

The introductory paragraph to the section on housing, E.1 – HOUSING, in our Official Community Plan (OCP) Bylaw 185 contains this prophetic statement:

“Some islanders are concerned that growth and development of Denman Island could produce an accompanying sharp rise in land prices and could lead to a decrease in the diversity of the population in coming years. Comments submitted during the development of this Plan expressed a desire for a wide range of housing options to limit this possibility. As a result, this Plan introduces alternatives to the current land use pattern. Nonetheless, single family lots will continue to make up the majority of the land base on Denman Island.”

Little did we know just how much land and house prices would increase when this was written almost 30 years ago! Too bad the “desire for a wide range of housing options to limit this possibility” never happened. We now have an island population demographic that is missing some key categories, as evidenced by the constant cry for people by many of our core island businesses, services and agencies.

At our meeting, Planner Chadwick presented possible changes to our OCP and Land Use Bylaw (LUB) in a work plan that categorizes options into four work streams:

1) changes that do not require OCP amendments and may not require detailed analysis and community engagement,

2) options for OCP amendments that are minor in nature or may not require extensive analysis,

3) options that require detailed analysis of existing data including consideration of First Nations and further community engagement and

4) amendment options that involve increasing density on a wider scale (e.g. expansion of permissions for secondary suites and accessory dwelling units)

Separating proposed housing related options into these four streams, will help the DLTC focus time and direct community outreach, appropriate to each stream.

The other major piece of business conducted was the adoption of Bylaws 228 and 229. These bylaws affect lands in the Agriculture Land Reserve (ALR). Land owners now have the right to build Accessory Dwelling Units (ADU's) with restrictions on setbacks, a limit on the total dwelling square footage as well as requirements to provide potable water and waste management plan etc. These additional dwellings, if built, would effectively make the use of the Density Bank problematic, as there are only seven available densities in the Bank to date.

The community engagement work that was done during Stage One of the Denman Housing Review Project, last term and the recent work by the Denman Island Housing APC identified that there is clear support for removing the need for a Temporary Use Permit (TUP) for Accessory Dwelling Units for lands zoned in R2, A, F and RE. (All other the other requirements would still apply.)

Considering the removal of the TUP and the Density Bank are considered minor amendments, the DLTC directed Staff to have them considered separately from the major work of the Housing Review by initiating a minor project process. This separate process will be managed by our Denman Island Planner, Marlis McGarcar.

If there are topics identified by the K'omoks First Nation or the Denman community during a planned Community Information Session, that require more detailed analysis, the DLTC can choose to have them addressed as an additional minor project as well.

Our next regular meeting of the DLTC will be June 4th, 2024 at 10am in the Activity Centre Lounge. If you happen to log into the Islands Trust Website, you will notice a new look to the Islands Trust Application Portal and the updated Application Guides. A FAQ document will also be available for those using and registering for the Portal.