

From: Jenny McClean [REDACTED]
Sent: Wednesday, December 16, 2020 11:31 AM
To: Laura Patrick; Peter Grove
Subject: Village Plan Task Force

Dear Trustees,

I have written yesterday that I would elaborate on why I disagree with the point of view of Francine Carlin expressed yesterday during the town hall as to why stakeholders such as the Chamber of Commerce and the Salt Spring Island Transportation Commission (S.S.I.T.C.) should be able to suggest certain task force members to prioritize for work on the 'Ganges Village Plan'. I also noted and did not wholly agree with Gary Holman's suggestion that the SSITC participate in the plan and work with the consultant they would like to hire to envision Ganges. To begin with, I assume that a plan is intended for the village to run successfully into the future. One thing, I learned is that things can change at any time for Ganges including the Ganges economy, the community, and the schools. For example, when my youngest child was attending Salt Spring Elementary (REDACTED), it was considered that there was an issue of overcrowding in the schools, and possibly more space required. Now we see that SIMS may become permanently closed because there are not enough students based on a reduction in # due to Covid changes.

So, if plans are laid out as a part of a trajectory that assumes that the future will be a continuation that is just a further increase of the same conditions as present, I am saying that it could be different from that. The actual future will belong to the children who are currently in the schools. The ideal planning would be to have a fresh vision to make the future for them, and for the estimated future use and needs of Ganges. This would be including sea level rise and many predicted and unpredicted factors.

The reasons why I believe that members of the public who are not particularly involved in any stakeholder groups and not a planner chosen by the SSITC are the best candidates for the village plan task force is because of the need for a fresh point of view outside of the groups who have already done a lot of the planning for town. At this time, I have a provincial document that shows the new mandate for public meetings for town meetings including Salt Spring, including the SSITC. This is the most recent update and was issued Dec. 2. Every effort should be made to have meetings open to the public including providing a zoom link. However, it has not been the case yet for the SSITC. Although we have been in Covid lockdowns since last March, I still have had to ask and wait and see if I can enter the meetings, with no certainty. The only way I can participate is if a commissioner is sick and away. There are no spots for the public otherwise and no zoom link. Even before Covid, it was difficult to speak at the SSITC meetings, as a delegation request had to be made 2 weeks on advance and could be refused if they were too busy on the agenda and so on. There has never been any town hall or free right to speak in the SSITC meetings as there is in the LTC meetings. There are issues with the access to the public for this particular stakeholder group. Aside from that, commissioners are all approved by the CRD director. So, there is already a selected group who are advisory to the CRD and who are instrumental in the town plan we currently have with control over the design of the new sidewalks, parking, shuttles, and other design aspects of town.

I am going to speak to why I believe that these stakeholder groups need to have people from outside of themselves for the village task force.

I have personally experienced a fixed mind set from the organizational advisory groups here on Salt Spring. These groups were created in response to a strong vision for Ganges going back to prior to 2007. That vision is already in progress. There is a new library, new swimming pool, and new sidewalks. In certain ways these additions are of benefit to parents with children and in other ways, they are not. Because I lived in Ganges as a mother (I am speaking of the time period over the last 10 years, recent times), I went everywhere with my youngest children, and I experienced the tone deaf quality of the vision put forward by the current stakeholders who for the most part are the same stakeholders who are in place now.

For example, in 2012, the North Ganges Transportation Plan Phase 1 was built. It came about from a vision set up through Island Pathways and the SSITC and the CRD. The SSITC was formed in 2008 as an advisory group on the bus, pathways and other active transportation. A good job was done of this by a local contractor, however, the SSITC was not really in touch with the needs for the public connected to this change. At the time, a bus shelter was to be built for Uptown for both sides of Lower Ganges Road. Before 2012, bus passengers could wait for the bus in chairs beside Country Grocer, as prior to 2012, the bus came right in to the parking lot by the deli area. From 2012 onward there was an urgent need for a bus shelter along Lower Ganges Road. At the time the SSITC wanted to put out a contest for a bus shelter design. In the end, they did get a very beautiful bus shelter, built on the south side of Lower Ganges Road. That took about 2 years, then about 2 years after that, B.C. Transit stepped in to build a shelter on the south side as there was no action taken on it. It took years of many waiting in the rain with nowhere to sit for these shelters to come about. The debates in the meetings were about the physical appearance of new shelters as art pieces. This was a priority to the point that no bus schedules were allowed to be taped up at the time, as there was not to be tape on the glass as it would mar the appearance. No shelter was able to be organized for the north side of the street, and the action was slowed by debates on the need for a physically attractive shelter that matched the other one, until finally B.C. Transit stepped in to build a basic bench because the commission took no action on it. During all of those years of waiting for a shelter, people with disabilities and people with small children stood out in the rain. I knew a person who lived at Braehaven who told me that he could no longer take the bus because he had no shelter or place to sit down. He passed away in the years waiting for the bench to be installed. I am interested in how these small changes in priorities can bring about a huge change in the ease of use for many.

During those years I did travel around with my children for the purpose of taking photos of bus shelters in B.C. that were easily built with community helpers and I presented on this for the commission. However, I did experience a deaf ear. The same with the family travel pass. As it is known that each child on Salt Spring who is age 4 and up must pay full fare and that a parent and children pay the full fare for each direction, so going into town for a mom with 2 kids is \$6.75 and going home is another \$6.75. I am sure that people do not believe that bus riders should be subsidized as there are already subsidies in the transit system. However, if a person takes into account the amount spent on plans and other transportation connected issues, it is easy to see that there would be money to help families with a family travel pass. B.C. Transit was open to it, but it was killed by the local Salt Spring Island Transportation Commission. Now, I

would not know what to say, as we are lucky to have transit since ridership is down so low. So, I am thankful, but I am also interested in having people heard from who are parents with children who use town without cars. If we are trying to build a town without cars, it would be good to learn from those who are already in that category and how they manage and what they would like to see improved. The commissioners and other stakeholders see the vision of electric cars and bikes but do not have any clue as to how people manage who are in the low income work force or who are low income families. I do not accept it as a given that the SSITC speaks for these people. Also, use of town is more important than a planner working on yet another aspect of the physical landscape. How can use be improved for the library and for the swimming pool and other family amenities?

Planning has to be for actual reality of actual people.

For example, there is currently a lot of work going into the movement toward electric cars, That is great to cut carbons, but where will all those cars be parked ? Who can afford them? Can we hear from people who are not able to afford electric cars and cannot bike into town? What kind of town can we have with more areas for people? How can we have that? Is it really appropriate to be promoting electric cars as the answer when that is just another car that takes up a spot in town? What would it look like if we had a park and ride? Or nice, weather proof bus shelters?

I would love to see new planning bring in a fresh view that includes people who we never hear from.

On another subject also related to the ease of use of Ganges that I felt was very important is as follows; I felt that it was (and is) very important to have the public library open at 9 AM instead of 10 AM as parents who bring school aged children into school in Ganges often also have a preschool aged child with them and it would be convenient for that family to be able to bring their young child to the public library at 9 AM after they drop their school aged child off at school. This is instead of waiting of over an hour for the fixed opening time of the public library at 10 AM.

Instead of having this put down as a possibility, I was told that this was impossible. Gary Holman knows of this subject, as he is a person who I have asked twice about this in person at meetings, directly speaking to him. I also spoke to a member of the library board. I was told that the reason why the library can only open from 10 AM onward is because it is staffed by volunteers and those volunteers should not be expected to come in any earlier than 9 AM to set up for the 10 AM opening time, because they are volunteers. I take this as a real reason, as it is already difficult and honourable to be a volunteer. However, now we have added 2 more paid staff, I would hope to see a change. I have brought this up a lot and Gary Holman knows this and I have always met with a byzantine maze of reasons as to why change is impossible. These are just examples of the dyed in the wool attitudes that are here on Salt Spring Island. Personally, I would love to see the priority put on general members of the public to participate in the task force. If that is impossible, because no one wants to come forward, I can see the reasoning to ask the stakeholders. But in my opinion, I completely disagree with that being a first choice. I would love to see the actual public given first choice to participate. Ganges Village is not just a physical structure, but also a place we use everyday for our basic needs. I would love to hear from fresh people who are not often heard from, if possible. Maybe they don't want to be heard from, but I would not want to see the first step being to go to the same

stakeholders who have already set a strong vision on Ganges based on how they see it meeting their needs. My experience has been that it has been very difficult to open people's eyes to the need for change. I would love to see change. I would love to see new people and not those chosen by stakeholders. I did listen to the address by Gary Holman at the Dec. 15 LTC meeting when he stated that the SSITC would like to participate in the village plan and to hire a consultant to envision Ganges. And also the comments by Francine Carlin of the Chamber of Commerce on their opinion to favour stakeholders. Instead, I would love to see others able to have a chance.

Sincerely,
Jenny McClean