

From: Colin Coe <[REDACTED]>

Sent: Sunday, February 7, 2021 9:34 PM

To: Laura Patrick <lpatrick@islandstrust.bc.ca>

Cc: Peter Luckham <pluckham@islandstrust.bc.ca>; Peter Grove <pgrove@islandstrust.bc.ca>; ssiinfo <ssiinfo@islandstrust.bc.ca>

Subject: Re: The Islands Trust, Affordable Housing and an Evolving Mandate - a slippery slope

Dear Trustee Patrick et al:

Thank you for your note and I have (re-read) your short essays in the SS Exchange. Rather than provide a lengthy response and in some cases rebuttal to your points I will try to provide a more succinct response in this email:

- I stand by my prior comments - any weakening of environmental protections through increased "flexibility" or "accommodation" as requested - if not demanded - by both "for profit" developers as well as "not for profit" affordable housing advocates is a betrayal of the Islands Trust Mandate and the wishes of the voters in numerous governance referendums.
- If a change to the Islands Trust mandate and any environmental protections is in fact not intended then there is no issue. However, if a change in the mandate is proposed which weakens or substantially modifies the existing environmental protections or adjusts the broader concept of a viable and sustainable carrying capacity of Salt Spring in order to accommodate an increase in the island population then a referendum should be held which is unambiguous and transparent, clearly outlining the intention of the Islands Trust to diminish the existing environmental standards in order to accommodate existing unmet housing demand, the demand of recent residents who chose to move to the island without access to long term housing and aspirational residents who wish to relocate to the island. Your communication and the associated Islands Trust website implies that providing an affordable housing buffer for urban residents in SW British Columbia who wish to escape both the cost and congestion of an urban environment by moving to Salt Spring is also to be an Islands Trust objective. These aspirational residents believe that they have an entitlement right not only to move to the island but that the cost of housing should match their financial capability. Since this represents a potential demand well in excess of the current total population of Salt Spring a clear definition of this strategy and the implications must be provided. The current residents have the right to understand exactly what is being proposed and the magnitude of this strategy.

There is a term that I understand is used in a military context called "mission creep" where incremental decisions eventually lead to a result that was neither intended or contemplated. The lack of clarity - let alone the appropriateness or advancing what may be a fundamental change in the direction and focus of the Islands Trust during a pandemic is cause for concern that we may be seeing "regulatory creep" which opens the door to the advancement of development and density that is unsustainable. I do hope that this is not the case.

Sincerely,

Colin Coe

On Sat, Feb 6, 2021 at 11:37 AM Laura Patrick <lpatrick@islandstrust.bc.ca> wrote:

Colin,

Addressing two or more trustees is communicating to a quorum of the Local Trust Committee (LTC). I would be happy to talk with you via phone. Please let me know when you have time.

The recently approved Housing Action Program is not about “the de-prioritization of the protection natural resources in order to advance human oriented social justice objectives” as you describe. This project addresses the full spectrum of housing on Salt Spring. The remaining blocks of land on this island are at risk of being carved up and developed while island institutions and businesses struggle to keep employees.

I believe that healthy, fully functioning ecosystems provide the basis for sustaining communities, economies, cultures and the quality of human life. Therefore ecological sustainability is fundamental to land and marine management.

The Housing Action Program acknowledges that the LTC decisions should be balanced and be acutely aware of social, environmental and economic elements and are rooted in sustainability and justice. Good solutions are integrated solutions that will also address other challenges and crises we face on Salt Spring (e.g., forest health and biodiversity, watersheds, changing climate, land use, community spirit, and resilient small business.)

I will direct you to my January 13, 2021 Salt Spring Exchange:

<https://saltspringexchange.com/2021/01/13/laura-patrick-trustee-report-getting-down-to-work-in-the-new-year/>

Laura Patrick

From: Colin Coe [mailto:]

Sent: Saturday, February 6, 2021 9:55 AM

To: Peter Luckham

Cc: Laura Patrick; Peter Grove

Subject: Re: The Islands Trust, Affordable Housing and an Evolving Mandate - a slippery slope

Dear Trustee Luckham:

Thank you for your reply. While I suppose in this case I am ok with this note being forwarded to staff and thereby becoming part of the public record, I had directed it to the Trustees only because I had not yet decided whether I wanted to enter into the public arena or not given the increasingly toxic nature of social media and discourse these days. Increasingly belligerent activist groups use patterns of abuse to advance their cause(s) in order to gain undue influence not only amongst those in government and associated agencies but also to discourage opposing opinions in the general public. This tactic is now becoming more common on Salt Spring and is being applied by individuals who have prior direct

experience working for and with activist organizations. This tactic has been successful in other types of campaigns to advance objectives that benefit a small minority of individuals by making it appear to be mainstream opinion due to the absence of other voices that in fact have been suppressed.

Regarding this topic, however, as I explained in a separate email to Trustee Patrick, the de-prioritization of the protection natural resources in order to advance human oriented social justice objectives is in itself becoming "systematic" well beyond our community and so needs to be addressed. And so I do not object to a wider distribution of my perspective. However, this may not always be the case; is it possible to restrict communication to Trustees only or require prior approval?

Sincerely,

Colin Coe

Salt Spring

On Fri., Feb. 5, 2021, 7:29 a.m. Peter Luckham, <pluckham@islandstrust.bc.ca> wrote:

Thank you Colin for taking the time to write to us on this important topic.

I am forwarding your email to staff to include in the public record.

Peter Luckham, Chair Trust Council
Trustee, Thetis Island
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Preserving island communities, culture and environment

On 2/4/2021 10:57 PM, Colin Coe wrote:

Trustees Luckham, Patrick and Grove:

I read with great concern today the editorial in the Salt Spring Exchange by Trustee Patrick. This confirmed my fear that the Islands Trust would become hostage to this special interest "affordable housing" group and be willing to compromise the environmental standards that have underpinned the governance of the Gulf Islands and subvert the justification for the very establishment of the Islands Trust. Over the years there have been numerous votes regarding proposals to change the governance of the Gulf Islands to a more direct model such as a municipality. These proposals have all failed, largely because residents were concerned about the risk of harm to the environment in a municipal model if "developers" gained control or had an undue influence on municipal planning and oversight. We did not want to see "our" Gulf Islands destroyed by those focused on profit - the majority voted in favour of

protecting the Gulf Islands by maintaining the existing governance structure despite its problems in order to maintain the original mandate - to "preserve and protect" the environmental resources of the Gulf Islands. The proponents of self governance, as you well recall, justified their position on the basis that it would allow more development flexibility. The voters soundly rejected this.

Now, according to Trustee Patrick this underlying principle has been transmogrified to allow environmental standards to be sublimated IF this serves the objectives of social justice. The environment is now a secondary concern. In Trustee Patrick's words:

I believe the Islands Trust 'preserve and protect' mandate should be interpreted not only to preserve and protect the environment but also to preserve and protect a diverse local population. (underlining is provided for emphasis)

There is often a disagreement between an "originalist" versus an evolutionary approach to governance. An originalist bias is clearly appropriate given the clear message delivered by the voters numerous times. The Islands Trust would not even exist if not for an established mandate and charter which emphasized and prioritized the protection of the natural environment. As we all know the Islands Trust was established in response to developments such as Magic Lake Estates on North Pender Island. The concern was not based on the motive behind the development - it was a reflection of the concern over the scale of the development, the density of the development and the impact on the natural environment. Now it would appear, according to the view expressed by Trustee Patrick, that such a development would be embraced if it served social objectives which she agreed with. Trustee Patrick's justification is simply moral relativism.

The justification for de-emphasizing environmental values is "to preserve and protect a diverse local population". I am not really sure what this means. Diversity can take many forms - racial diversity, socio economic diversity, age cohort diversity and so on. What is the "ideal" make up of diversity? Is it to reflect the diversity that existed when the Islands Trust was formed many decades ago - or is it another mix - and who defines what the objective is? The weighting on diversity will apparently be based on the values assigned by the Trustees I presume - informed by special interest groups who lobby for inclusion of their target group. But the demographic make-up of Salt Spring will be a function of many factors - typically the most important one being economic opportunities available on the Island. We have a very narrow economic base - construction and trades, tourism and services with the driver being housing construction and tourism. Other than for those that retire here with sufficient funds the determination of what is "affordable" housing is a function of how much they can earn. Unless one has a trade, a profession or some special skill virtually any cost to purchase for rent will be prohibitive. The cost of an average house on Salt Spring would be considered low cost housing in Vancouver, Victoria or Toronto or Montreal. Clearly affordability is relative to how much the average resident earns.

The challenge - and the slippery slope that arises due to this social engineering based expansion of the "preserve and protect mandate" is that it is impossible for the Islands Trust to prioritize one group over another through some sort of affordable housing mechanism. We may all agree that it is a good thing to encourage more artists to reside on the island. But simply by relaxing our environmental and other zoning standards to encourage more "affordable housing" you have neither the mandate or mechanisms available to select those existing or aspirational residents based on their "fit" with this expanded Islands Trust mandate. All you accomplish is an ongoing pattern of development through lower environmental standards and relaxed zoning.

Since I first visited Salt Spring over 50 years ago and in the 22 years since buying property here there has seen a significant expansion in the Island population. This is not adequately captured, however, due to our inadequate means of assessing population patterns. A simple census count does not reflect vacation properties, seasonal residents and short term visitors and tourists. There has been a significant amount of new construction of residential properties and multi-unit developments which has added hundreds and hundreds to the housing stock. But this is not enough to meet the demands of those who have either recently moved here or are aspirational residents. I strongly disagree with Trustee's Patrick's unwelcome expansion of the Islands Trust mandate - we are being asked (or rather it is being demanded) by recent and aspirational residents to degrade our environmental standards and relax our zoning standards so that they can afford to move here. ⁽¹⁾ Existing residents have voted time and time again to prioritize the environment. Now we are told by Trustee Patrick that we must lower our environmental standards to make room for new residents.

The changes proposed by Trustee Patrick are not a positive evolution of the mandate; they are a betrayal of the mandate that created the Islands Trust and they are a betrayal of the wishes of the voters. This is a subversion of the democratic process. Any fundamental changes should first be carefully evaluated to determine that they are legally valid or whether they are so fundamental a change so as to contravene the Islands Trust Act - and then voted on - after the implications are clearly outlined to the public. The current process has been anything but transparent regarding the broader implications of this ill advised re-imagining of the Islands Trust mandate.

Yours sincerely,

Colin Coe

Note 1 - there are longer term residents who are experiencing housing issues - and factors such as Airbnb's have reduced the housing stock to some extent however, the constraints on available housing are mostly the result of the influx of recent and aspiring residents who move to the island before purchasing a property here. Furthermore, based on a quick review of housing costs in: Greater Vancouver, Greater Victoria, Langford, Sooke, Sidney, Saanich, Duncan, Chemainus, Nanoose Bay it is clear that housing costs on Salt Spring are not higher - if anything they are already lower than housing costs in equivalent communities. Developing additional housing that is lower than the general regional cost of housing will consistently see demand outstrip supply and the Islands Trust mandate to preserve and protect (the environment) endlessly sacrificed in order to meet Trustee Patrick's revised Island Trust mandate. It will become a vicious circle of rationalized environmental degradation.