



SOUTHERN GULF ISLANDS FORUM

Friday October 29, 2021

3:30 pm by Zoom

In attendance:

- Adam Olsen, MLA SAN
- Gary Holman, CRD Director, Salt Spring Island
- Jane Wolverton, Trustee, Galiano Island
- Laura Patrick, Trustee, Salt Spring Island
- Paul Brent, Trustee, Saturna Island

Staff:

- Alexa Lewis, Office of MP Elizabeth May
- Jake Rees, office of MLA Adam Olsen
- Laura Parker, Office of MLA Adam Olsen
- William Kelly, Office of MLA Adam Olsen
- Clare Frater, Director Trust Area Services, Islands Trust

Guests:

- Geordie Gordon, Planner, Islands Trust Salt Spring Island Office

Minute Taker:

- Shannon Brayford

1. Call to Order and Acknowledgement

MLA Olsen called the meeting to order at 3:37 pm.

2. Check in – New Attendees

MLA Olsen invited new attendees and guests to introduce themselves.

3. Discussion

a. Proposed Changes to Islands Trust Act

MLA Olsen provided an overview of the proposed changes and requested feedback from the Trustees in attendance. The following points were raised:

- The proposed changes could reduce public participation
- Reduced public participation may be an unintended and negative consequence of the amendments.
- Local Trust Committee authority to waive public hearings could improve efficiency if used appropriately.

b. Rainwater Catchment for Multifamily Housing

MLA Olsen provided an overview of ongoing conversations within provincial and regional regulation regarding rainwater catchment for multifamily units. He outlined the complex inter-agency regulations and noted that a principal challenge has been to bring all parties together to develop a regulatory solution.

MLA Olsen reported that there is now an opportunity to facilitate collaboration. He provided an overview of his strategy for supporting this opportunity including creation of a report by his staff. MLA Olsen invited Clare Frater to discuss next steps after the meeting.

c. Tiny Homes

MLA Olsen provided an overview of the ongoing work to facilitate increased availability of tiny homes. He noted that there is interest in using the Southern Gulf Islands as a pilot location for removing barriers, but also noted that there are logistical constraints when regulators attempt to apply the current building code to very small builds.

A discussion was held regarding the general support and interest of Trustees in supporting a tiny home project. Salt Spring Island Trustee Laura Patrick noted that her Trust Area has already established some groundwork and may be well positioned as a pilot location.

A discussion was held regarding the risks and challenges of leaving tiny homes without specific regulations. The prevalence of residents occupying unregulated tiny homes was compared to other forms of non-legal residences such as basement suites. Concerns of occupant safety in unregulated housing was noted.

d. Liveaboards

MLA Olsen provided an overview of the ongoing work regarding establishing regulations for live aboard residences on boats. He highlighted the matter's relationship to the proposed Coastal Protection Act. He noted the difficulty in finding a regulatory body for liveaboards.

A discussion was held regarding the regulatory challenges, as well as safety and environmental risks that result from the lack of regulation.

e. Housing Crisis and Vacant Homes

A discussion was held regarding the impact of vacant homes on local housing stock, particularly in areas with vacation-based economies. Opportunities for support from Municipal Affairs and additional opportunities for collaboration with other areas facing similar challenges were also noted.

The group discussed potential options for increasing full-time residential housing stock, including:

- The purchase and repurpose of existing homes to multi-unit housing for workforce housing
- Improvements to water regulations to allow sustainable water usage that would support higher density without negative ecological impact.
- Local creative and community-minded financing initiatives to support the purchase of homes by individuals.
- Application of speculation and vacancy tax to the Southern Gulf Islands
- Inspiration from other areas, such as the San Juan Islands, to establish a Housing Authority that could collect funds and use them to improve access to housing
- Regulation of short-term vacation rentals and requirements for full time occupants on site.

The Speculation and Vacancy Tax was discussed in detail, including the following points:

- The history of the tax and the Gulf Islands' exemptions.
- Challenges with implementing the tax in the Gulf Islands and rationale for some to not support the initiative when it was proposed.
- Benefits of placing the tax, or a similar initiative, in the Gulf Islands.

4. Next Steps and Action Items

MLA Olsen reported that there was resistance to advancing objectives for the Southern Gulf Islands without direct requests from the representatives of the region. He noted that this forum could provide a platform to identify and advance such requests. MLA Olsen committed to continue to bring information from the respective ministers back to this forum.

MLA Olsen reported that some members have expressed concern with the meeting time. Prior to the next meeting, he will compile the suggestions received for a more suitable days/time to all members of the group and email everyone for their review.

- Next regular meeting (last Friday of each month):
 - Friday November 26th, 1:30 – 2:30pm
 - Two staff from Transport Canada will be attending to present on marine policies.
- Reminder there is no meeting in December

The meeting was closed at 4:43 pm