



## SOUTHERN GULF ISLANDS FORUM

### NOTES from Monday September 11, 2023 – 10:30 – 2:30pm

- **10:30 – 11:00: Open meeting**
  - Welcome/acknowledgement - Adam
  - **Adam:** Wanting to ground the meeting in a good way:
    - Reflecting on records from Wayne Suttles and Diamond Jannes
    - Pre-contact descriptions of this area are of great wealth, an egalitarian society. Everyone could produce and harvest enough to meet their needs. The excesses were distributed through potlatches etc. Other hierarchical systems used elsewhere were not present on these territories, they were not needed.
  - Roundtable introduction of in-person and online participants
  - Overview of agenda - Adam
    - To discuss housing and issues related to the management of the waterways surrounding our communities.
      - These were agreed upon at the last regular meeting of August 14 and were two of a number of the priority topics that the group agreed to address from the last half day meeting in March in 2023
- **NOTES:**
  - **Attendees**
    - **in person – RSVPs:**
      - Timothy Peterson,
      - Ben Maberley,
      - Tobi Elliott,
      - David Maude,
      - Laura Patrick,
      - Elizabeth May,
        - Alexa Lewis,
      - Adam Olsen,
        - Laura Parker,
        - Jerram Gawley – Note-taker
        - Patricia Pearson
    - **Virtual – RSVPs:**
      - Lisa Gauvreau
      - Tim Peterson
      - Jeanine Dodds
      - Deb Morrison (N)
      - Dag Falck

- Mairead Boland
- Lee Middleton
- Paul Brent
- Gary Holman

○ **11:00 – 12:15: Discussion on Housing**

○ **NOTES:**

- **Adam:** Wanted to convene a discussion on housing, to inform his work as he goes back into session. Hopes for the discussion:
  - Move from having a problem to having a strategy
  - To better understand the impact of Short-term Vacation Rentals (SVRs) on local community/economy.
  - Discuss current reality on the islands specifically.
- **Paul:** We don't have the time or money to build the conventional housing that BC Housing tends to fund these days. We are far beyond the tipping point.
  - CRD has now effectively adopted a policy that allows trailers as residences, but the trailer must be readily movable (ex. connect via quick connect, no decks or stairs attached)
  - Rob Fenton (CRD) is now pursuing the opportunity of having trailer parks and modular homes parks.
  - Funding challenges for island communities:
    - The province recently said that they were going to give \$1 billion to municipalities and regional districts. CRD municipalities got \$88 million. The rest of the CRD got \$11 million. Dispersion was supposedly based on "rural priorities" meaning that between 53 – 73% will go to the downtown core. Rural areas only get a fraction of the funds.
    - Similarly, proposals from BC Housing always come with substantive conditions.
      - Ex. Proximity to transit or transportation hubs
    - Need to band together to reflect these challenges.
- **Elizabeth:** Positive about the potential relationship with Shawn Fraser, new Housing Minister. Opens the opportunity for people to connect and raise SGI specific issues.
- **Adam:** Where is Rob Fenton in pursuing the mobile home parks?
  - **Paul:**
    - Prices for mobile homes are quite good: \$40 – 50 000 dollars.
    - Looking at properties from 5 – 50 acres and considering setting up purpose-built areas.
    - Working to try and get something available near-term that is inexpensive and relatively limited in terms of effort.
    - Considering RVs and purpose-built modular homes.
    - Currently many people use trailers or RVs that are sustainable and have relatively limited impact, contrary to social stigma.
- **Tim:** Cortes Island new taxation policy. There is taxation on SVRs in the SGIs, and funding goes to tourism – is it worth re-directing these tax funds to housing?
  - **Paul:** There is an accommodation tax across SVR platforms and B&Bs, and this tax goes to [Destination BC](#). These funds are then parceled out to regions. In the SGI, it goes to the [Southern Gulf Islands Tourism Partnership](#) (SGITP).
    - SGITP focus: Visitors coming to the island and having more people come during the shoulder season (as indicated in 5-year plan).

- Some funding goes to housing, specifically [Housing Now](#). This program is new, and the amounts are small, but discussions are planned with the tourism partnership to raise these limits.
- There is no more need for advertising tourism. We need housing (ie. Workforce housing) so that visitors have services when they come.
- **Tobie:**
  - Cortes model changed the legislation to allow **ALL** funding to be used for housing.
  - Housing coordinator was completely funded through the Municipal and Regional District Tax (MRDT)
  - The Regional District of Nanaimo (RDN) also negotiated a different agreement with Parksville/Qualicum that made a 2% tax available to tourism and housing.
  - **The catch** is that you need to show support from hotels and other units that offer housing.
  - **Challenge** on Gabriola: How do you create a mechanism such that the business MRDT tax is collected from operating a SVR and ensure that you are not penalizing commercial spaces? Also, how do you avoid implicit legalization of illegal SVRs by implementing a tax like this?
- **Laura:** We don't just need a rural approach on the SGIs. We need a rural ISLAND approach.
  - There is also a lot of misinformation/misunderstanding about the housing challenges. There is an impression that we are trying to create more growth – NOT TRUE. This is about housing options for the diverse communities that the Islands represent.
  - There is great wealth on the island, but it is being used to buy up the properties that were once affordable for people. Islands are losing young families.
  - SVRs – are far too lucrative.
  - **Tobie:**
    - Some people who are new owners are also trying to make ends meet by creating SVRs. Cannot penalize these people. They are distinct from those trying to take advantage of this situation.
- **Gary:** Update
  - SGITP needs to have a greater focus on housing.
  - SGITP 5-year plan to be reviewed next spring.
  - There is a view in the LCC that strings should be attached to funding provided to SGITP that requires some funding be directed to housing.
  - CRD is renewing its regional housing program. The board has authorized a municipal review process to borrow \$8.5 million. May also be developing a regional rural housing strategy (More in the fall).
  - BC Housing just announced that the [Community Housing Fund](#) is now open with deadlines in November.
  - SSI Housing Council
    - New leadership is a little more active. They keep talking about the Whistler model which may be a bit misleading; however, they are keen to improve housing.
  - Chamber of Commerce – believe that the allocation of funding between the two electoral areas needs some review as well.
  - Provincial Housing Minister has been hinting at a policy to help local governments manage SVRs. Potentially allowing local governments to license SVRs.
  - Delays continue with regard to supportive housing on Drake Rd.
- **Adam:**

- The largest growth in the SGIs, happened in houses that were already developed, happened during COVID-19. People moved to the islands full-time.
- The islands now have a much larger full-time population than previously. This has broad repercussions (Ex. Paramedic system).
- **David:** Update
  - Lots of political will, but people are frustrated with the barriers.
    - Ex. National building code doesn't permit tiny homes.
    - Ex. CRD Bylaw officers enforcing rules that don't reflect what people need to house themselves.
      - An Individual had a livable trailer, but because he had an outhouse, VIHA and bylaw enforcement were all over this individual. Eventually, they admitted that it was not a problem.
    - Ex. Islands Trust requires proof of a well for subdivision, even if there is NO intent to use the well.
    - Ex. What is the issue with catching rainwater? Experts say you are taking from the ecosystem. Not true.
      - People from off the island made these claims because they are used to stormwater that delivers rainwater right to the ocean.
  - Government is preventing people from moving forward with creative solutions. We need to focus policy with an **enabling mindset**.
    - Houses as we know it are something that has only occurred in the last hundred years.
- **Dag:**
  - Everyone seems to laugh at the phrase "I am from the government, and I am here to help"
    - People are trying to get around the barriers governments put in place. We need to identify the barriers that the government is putting in place, and then find ways to get out of the way.
    - If someone put a patent together for a flush toilet today, it would not be accepted, it is an atrocious way to deal with waste.
- **Tobie:**
  - We have a fractured system that impedes people trying to get where we need to get.
  - Key action identified for their trust: **build partnerships and remove barriers**.
  - We know what the problems are and that the barriers exist.
  - Potential need for a **Rural Islands Round Table**
    - **Ben:** People are disillusioned with the bureaucracy.
    - **Laura:** SSI mapped the organizations that contributed to housing on SSI – so many.
- **David:**
  - CRD has supposedly focused on housing over the last decades, but over that time **they have removed more housing** than they have generated.
    - housing housing housing!
- **Mairead:**
  - Generally speaking, we are doing too much. We have layered and layered more complexity.
  - On Saturna residents can now use rainwater catchments as proof of water.
  - There is a complex web of good ideas across jurisdictions, just need to collaborate on them.
    - There is limited sharing between the LTCs. Could learn by sharing across islands the good practices that have worked. In a straightforward, clear manner.

- **Adam:** Can send communications to our office, and we can share more broadly with the Island Trustees. **ACTION**
- **Adam:** It is interesting that conversation on the islands in the San Juans is almost identical to the conversation that SGIs are having (noting that there are also some very different contextual factors and regulatory procedures).
  - **Two Questions:**
    - **Prior to SVRs what did accommodation look like on the islands, was it small Inns, B&Bs?**
      - Yes, but also:
        - For workers there would be boarding set-ups or billeting
        - Or small little resorts – half a dozen little cabins.
        - These are allowed in the OCP (Gabriola) if the owner lives on the property. For SVRs, when the owner doesn't live on the property, they need a temporary use permit. Different conditions are set by the LTCs for each of these use permits. The policy in most LTCs is to go after proactively, to find illegal SVRs.
        - **Tobie:** Do SVRs impact housing? Tricky depending on how you ask the question. Many people are turning housing into SVRs because they cannot afford their own mortgages.
      - **Ben:** Historically, 60% of homes on the island would have been dormant over the winter. The only difference now is that the people can now generate revenue with those buildings when they are not there.
        - **Tobie:** This is leading to speculative investment though.
      - **Laura:** An important impact on SSI, is that a house or cottage that was providing a full-time rental can be purchased by a new owner who kicks out the tenant and makes it a SVR.
        - **Tobie:** Potential solution. **Licensing agreement.**
          - Ex. A person sells their house to someone transitioning to the islands. The person wants to be there in the summer but not year-round. Allow them to do a SVR for a period if they commit to a long-term rental when they are on the island full-time in the future.
      - **Adam:** what I am hearing is that people are turning to SVRs as a long-term solution.
        - **David:** Part of the issue is with the RTB. If you have a bad tenant, you can't get rid of them. People are wary of accepting tenants as it is so hard to navigate bad tenants.
        - SVRs are a relatively minor issue compared to many houses that are sitting empty year-round out of the fear of getting a bad tenant.
      - **Adam:** Would a professional property management company help in mediating this process.
        - **Broad support for this.**
      - **Mairead:** We need to be clear about the profile of people who want to rent out a house.
        - Very few people are buying property to rent on a long-term basis. There is little incentive. We need to better understand the people that might want to create a full-time rental opportunity for islanders.
    - **Adam:** **What are the thoughts on re-purposing existing 'mansions' that are already set-up (established with services etc.), and converting them to multi-family dwellings?**
      - **Tobie:** Potential for co-ownership – now trendy.



- None of these boats will sail, they are houses that float
- Lack of pump out facilities, lack of regulation
- **Alexa Lewis:**
  - Spoke with SSI RCMP:
    - Concerns around burning for warmth, putting waste in the water, deaths onboard
    - Trend of people renting out a liveaboard, with potential for exploitation.
- **David:** Is there the potential of a Gulf Islands Harbour Authority?
  - **Adam:** Central Saanich applied for a water lot, but the province asked them to carry ALL responsibility and liability. Central Saanich refused and the province walked away. Went to municipalities in the CRD and wanted to band together to take on responsibility as a coalition so that all municipalities would get water lots.
- **Elizabeth:** Lots of overlapping federal jurisdiction at the Federal level: Parks Canada, Environment Canada, DFO, Transport Canada
  - [Navigable Water Protection Act](#) used to require that there was a process to license a mooring buoy. The Harper government amended the act to exclude minor works. Potentially something to rectify?
    - **Ben:** Coast guard removes all buoys in navigable waters. But all property owners can put mooring buoys in front of their properties. There is a lot of water with buoys that are not in navigable waters.
  - **Elizabeth:** Bill C-33 is also being reviewed, which regulates rail, port, and vessel safety – maybe a place to discuss buoys and anchorages?
  - **Elizabeth:** Cabinet shuffle this spring resulted in a change in the Minister for Fisheries. Predict that the new Minister will be a disaster.
- **David:** Would a Port Authority be game changing?
  - **Ben:** Yes, because would get funding from moorages.
  - **Adam:** Potential to incorporate a marine stewardship program, building on the stewardship programs that already exist in the WSÁNEĆ nations and Hul'q'umi'num'.
  - **Ben:** Port Authority should be led by First Nations and funding should move through them.
  - **Tobie:** There are some First Nations groups up island that are advocating for a potential fixed number of anchorages for freighters.
  - **Adam:** Fixed anchorages are more reasonable. Unpopular for constituents, but the reality is that the government is not going to go against economic development.
    - **Adam:** Potential for a levy taken on all marine items that goes toward marine cleanup.
  - **Dag:** If we ask to become a First Nation port authority – do we have the authority or capacity to do this?
    - **Many voices:** This would NOT be done by IT. Would be led by First Nations.
  - **Adam:** There are two types of people out living on their boats. Those without homes and those that would have been pirates – salty Mariner people.
  - **Elizabeth:** Strategic Planning – can my office draft specific letters that all other representatives can sign onto (the ones that they are interested in supporting) or does the advocacy need to be broader? **ACTION**
  - **Adam:** Potential to get some funding from the Washington boats that come up into Canadian waters for whale watching/fishing.
    - Lots of potential to tick boxes with a First Nations Port Authority.
  - **Ben:** A port authority is essentially the one viable solution.

- **Gary:** Many rules and regulations are in place at all levels of government. Looking for regulations that might allow for a fixed number of moorages to accrue some financial benefit for services provided.
  - Assume that the First Nations would be supportive of a First Nation Port Authority, but has anything like that emerged from them?
  - **Adam:** First Nations are out there doing almost all of this stuff, but just don't have the permission to enforce.
  - **Adam:** Intends to bring this forward with the WLC and determine whether they would want to bring the idea forward to their technical group.
  - **Adam:** What GH is proposing is essentially what C. Saanich wanted to do.
- Potential to reach out to the [Central Coast Indigenous Resource Alliance Group](#), which supports and advocates for the indigenization of relevant Federal and Provincial regulations, and align efforts around Waterways.
- **Elizabeth:** Is it too soon to also write to First Nations Minister at the Federal level to propose a First Nation Port Authority on the coast when discussing Bill C-33.
  - **Adam:** to discuss with the WLC and get back to Elizabeth. **ACTION**

○ **2:15 – 2:30: Next Meetings and Actions Items**

- **Next regular meetings, thru to end of year** (*usually* second Monday of each month):
  - October 16, 8:30 – 9:30 - (changed to the 3rd Monday, as 10/09 is Thanksgiving)
  - CANCELLED: November 13, 8:30 – 9:30
    - **holiday in lieu of Nov 11 on a Saturday – therefore cancel**
  - December 11, 8:30 – 9:30
- **ACTION ITEMS:**
  - **Elizabeth's Office:**
    - Draft letters that can be shared and signed by other elected representatives:
      - Marine Item Levy
      - A First Nations Port Authority (Pending Adam's conversation with the WSÁNEĆ Leadership Council)
  - **Adam's Office:** Meet with the Southern Gulf Island Tourism Partnership
    - Topics:
      - Regional equity
      - Affordable housing
  - **Rural Island Communities Approach:**
    - Adam's Office to draft a letter to identify the need for a rural island communities' approach that touches on housing strategy, transportation, governance (MUNI)
  - **Communication between Islands Trust Members:**
    - Islands Trust Members to share positive policy developments on their islands with Adam's constituency office, which will then be distributed to all trust members to improve communications.
  - **Abandoned Vessel Remediation Fund:**
    - Specifics of the program are still being discussed. Potential to influence the structuring of this program.

○ **2:30: Close meeting**

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