



SOUTHERN GULF ISLANDS FORUM

March 13, 2023 10:30 am - 2:30 pm

In person and virtually via Zoom

Meeting Notes

Attendees

AOC Boardroom:

1. Adam Olsen, Islands Trust (Saanich North and the Islands)
2. Alexa Lewis (Office of MP Elizabeth May)
3. Deborah Morrison, Islands Trust (North Pender)
4. Laura Patrick, Islands Trust (Salt Spring)
5. Kristina Evans, Islands Trust (South Pender Island)
6. Dag Falck, Islands Trust (South Pender)
7. Laura Parker (Office of Adam Olsen MLA)
8. Jerram Gawley (Office of Adam Olsen MLA)
9. Judith Cullington (Facilitator)

Virtual Via Zoom:

10. Ben Maberly, Islands Trust (Galiano Island)
11. Tobi Elliott, Islands Trust (Gabriola Island)
12. Mairead Boland, Islands Trust (Saturna Island)
13. Jeanine Dodds, Islands Trust (Mayne Island)
14. Timothy Peterson, Islands Trust (Lasqueti Island)
15. Gillian Nicol (Islands Trust Host)
16. Carly Bilney (Notetaker)

Welcome

MLA Olsen welcomed the group and outlined the purpose of the Southern Gulf Islands (SGI) Forum. Judith Cullington reviewed the agenda and explained that the purpose of the present meeting is to determine the SGI Forum's priorities to address in 2023. Introductions were made.

What are the topics of shared concern in the SGI area?

Participants were asked to list the topics of shared concern in the SGI area. The following comments were made:

- ♦ Changing the flight path over the SGI
- ♦ A reduction of anchorages and volume of freighters
- ♦ Complexity and cost regarding land use planning and regulations with multiple levels of government
- ♦ Outhouses
- ♦ Siting and use permits in relation to building permits
- ♦ Rural island housing solutions and aging in place
- ♦ Health care provisions, funding models and the regulatory role of Island Health
- ♦ Classification of the SGI with regards to the Island Coastal Economic Trust (ICET)
- ♦ Challenges to home based businesses (“soup and bread”)
- ♦ Wholistic planning across four layers of government ("ecosystem level planning")
- ♦ Diverse housing for a diverse population (e.g., low cost accommodation, liveaboards)
- ♦ First Nations relations
- ♦ Communication with communities; communication to collectively express shared concerns
- ♦ A shared vision for the future to which cooperating organizations could agree
- ♦ Ferries
- ♦ Short-term vacation rentals (STVR) from a regional perspective (e.g., business licensing for the region)

What are the priority topics the SGI Forum should address in 2023?

Participants were asked to discuss where they would like to focus their collective energy as a collaborative group. The following comments were made:

- ♦ Housing and people, and how they are going to continue to live in the SGI
- ♦ Interagency advocacy, cooperation and communications as these are priorities that affect all other issues
- ♦ Addressing anchorages in the SGI would be timely as Bill C-33 is currently before the House of Commons
- ♦ Our highest priorities should be linked strongly to protecting the environment
- ♦ Coordinated communication from the SGI Forum to collectively express issues of the day with the federal and provincial governments
- ♦ Accessibility of funding from the Provincial Government

Participants were asked where they would like to focus. The following comments were made:

- ♦ Effective communication – being able to listen and to be heard; interagency communication (within the SGI Forum, among the four levels of government and First Nations), and in engaging with the public
- ♦ Create a strong vision statement to guide the direction of the group
- ♦ Better management of STVR from a regional perspective
- ♦ In the short-term, writing to the Minister of Jobs, Economic Development and Innovation about recapitalizing the ICET and advocating for implementation of a permanent fund
- ♦ Achieving rural classification for the islands (the SGI are unique within the Islands Trust as they are within an urban regional capital district and ministries such as Island Health needs to start viewing the SGI as rural)
- ♦ Making a concerted effort to explain to the Provincial Government what they are dealing with when they are addressing the SGI
- ♦ Choosing one priority issue and testing how it might be most effectively communicated
- ♦ Focus on housing – as it is an interagency issue that connects to business issues, water issues, STVR, etc. – and creative use of existing infrastructure
- ♦ Ongoing Transport Canada (e.g., anchorages, mooring buoys, boats, island shorelines, etc.)

What are the barriers to working cooperatively?

Participants were asked to discuss barriers to working together. The following comments were made:

- ♦ Old protocol agreements
- ♦ Challenges to working outside of one's jurisdiction
- ♦ Public misinterpretation of Islands Trust work
- ♦ Public mistrust of the Islands Trust
- ♦ The top-down approach of the Islands Trust
- ♦ The normal communication pathways for each island differs
- ♦ Too many rules (e.g., Trustees feel restricted from meeting outside of formal LTC meetings)
- ♦ The tight constraints around when Trustees and community members can speak (i.e., in a duly convened meeting with a constrained agenda, etc.) creates a level of mistrust and erodes the ability of Trustees to make progress
- ♦ Managerial structure of governance that does not foster open conversation among elected officials or with constituents
- ♦ Community demographics have changed, and meeting structure does not foster communication with everyone (e.g., young people)

How might some of these barriers be addressed?

Participants were asked how the SGI Forum can help with these barriers. The following comments were made:

- ♦ Commit to actions and hold each other accountable
- ♦ Improve communications to the public – e.g., a website for the SGI Forum might be used as a communication tool; however, this also has potential issues as creating another layer of administration
- ♦ Learn from the Howe Sound Community Forum that has a website that documents process and seeks transparency by sharing what happens at the meetings
- ♦ Use existing channels of communication within each organization to share the work of the SGI Forum
- ♦ Island-specific community conversations (facilitated sessions) on each island where the CRD Director, MLA and LTC members could meet with constituents and have open, honest conversations, and where constituents can see elected officials cooperating with each other
- ♦ Develop a social network map for each issue that shows the various agencies involved (e.g., Plectica visual mapping software)
- ♦ Foster events that get people excited and interested in learning about issues in which the Trust is involved
- ♦ Clarify the legislation relating to Trustees meeting with each other and with community members outside of LTC meetings, and provide that clarification to all incoming Trustees (a “Trustee Toolkit”) as a professional learning resource
- ♦ Design multi-agency listening events that allow for fulsome conversation (in a transparent manner without decision-making)
- ♦ Meetings should have to-do lists and action-lists with submission dates to manage progress
- ♦ Consistent meetings to update various groups help engage the community on Mayne Island (volunteer-led community connects breakfasts)
- ♦ Need to have the right people in the room – those who can bring professional knowledge to help problem solve and explain how work can be implemented (e.g., CRD leaders)
- ♦ Careful thought needs to be given to community meetings and how information can be collectively obtained by SGI Forum members who may then get the attention of the key leaders
- ♦ The SGI Forum can pull information together that individual LTCs gather and share it with the CRD, Islands Trust staff and appropriate ministries (e.g., Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure, BC Ferries)

Next Steps

The following next steps were identified:

1. Alexa will follow up on the flight path issue by seeking information regarding Nav Canada.
2. Deb will develop an initial plan for a potential SGI Forum website.
3. Laura Patrick will research old protocol agreements to discuss at the next meeting.
4. SGI Forum members will draft letters requesting that the Provincial Government recapitalize ICET funding and make it a permanent fund that can be accessed by all communities within the Trust area.
5. The SGI Forum will consider coordinating community discussions in the fall that focus on housing and the future of the islands (50-year anniversary creates a timely opportunity to reignite the conversation). This should include all levels of government



Addendum: Thoughts from CRD Director

CRD Director Gary Holman, who was unable to attend the meeting, shared his thoughts via email and highlighted the following issues as the top three that he felt could benefit from regional cooperation:

1. Development of a Gulf Islands Transportation Strategy - SSI and SGI Electoral Areas were omitted from the Provincial Southern Vancouver Island Transportation Strategy. In the short term, measures should include higher road maintenance standards, more proactive culvert replacements, more frequent line painting/shoulder sweeping, lower speed limits.

Longer term strategic objections would include completion of CRD regional trails (including Salish Sea Trail proposal), funding for transit, inter-island passenger service, and electrification of the BC Ferry fleet, and funding for fare stabilization. (Note recent announcement by Province).

I also believe that BC Ferries should implement a modest surcharge on non-resident vehicles (based on driver's license place of residence) to help fund transit, active transportation and other tourism-impacted infrastructure.

2. Ocean protection measures to better manage cargo vessel anchorages, liveaboards and derelicts, and marine stewardship. These issues can be pursued separately, but ultimately should be part of a National Marine Conservation Area co-managed by First Nations and enforced by First Nations marine guardians.
3. Establishment of a Primary Care Network (PCN) to better support community health centres, attract physicians, nurse practitioners and other health professionals, and improve mental health and addiction support services.