



Meeting Notes from Monday, September 5th, 2024 – 10:30am – 2:30pm

Attendees

Members:

1. Elizabeth May, MP (Saanich-Gulf Islands)
2. Adam Olsen, MLA (Saanich North and the Islands)
3. Paul Brent, CRD Director (Southern Gulf Islands)
4. Gary Holman, CRD Director (Salt Spring Island)
5. Timothy Peterson, Islands Trust Vice-Chair, Islands Trustee (Lasqueti Island)
6. David Maude, Islands Trustee (Mayne Island)
7. Mairead Boland Islands Trustee (Saturna Island)
8. Dag Falk, Islands Trustee (South Pender Island)

Staff:

9. Robert Barlow (Islands Trust)
10. Helena Murray-Hill (Office of Elizabeth May, MP)

Welcome

MLA Olsen began the meeting by acknowledging the responsibility we have to the waters and lands around the Salish Sea, the W̱SÁNEĆ People, and all of our relatives, including the Quw'utsun and Stz'uminus and to the south in the United States, in this deeply connected area.

Discussion

Discussion focused on the unique importance of the forum to address cross-jurisdictional issues in the Southern Gulf Islands and the future of the forum. There were also a few brief updates on legislation, local initiatives, and meetings with federal departments.

Some key points include:

Unique Position of the Southern Gulf Islands

- Of the roughly 35 000 residents of Saanich North and the Islands, 15 000 (one third) live within the Islands Trust Act, which is more than any other provincial constituency.
- The Southern Gulf Islands have a different governance structure than the municipalities and First Nations on the Saanich Peninsula. MLA Olsen meets with Mayors and Chiefs for no-agenda lunches, but the SGI Forum is his way to connecting with the elected representatives of the Gulf Islands. A different government style requires a slightly different approach.
- Islands Trust/CRD governments are technically arms of the provincial government and are very fragmented. Provincial Government treats the Gulf Islands like municipalities even though they are maintaining a system where they are not.
- Islands Trust and the CRD have to entirely different sets of requirements and services. Land use decisions and servicing components are often made by entirely separate bureaucratic entities.

Importance of the Southern Gulf Islands Forum

- Since there is no one centralized entity, often constituents will turn to the MLA to resolve CRD and Islands Trust-related issues.
- Cross-jurisdictional discussions are critical as issues often involve several levels of government.
- The forum helps the MLA and MP stay in-touch with Gulf Island residents, and Gulf Islanders often have different needs than residents of the Saanich Peninsula.

Discussion of the role of the next MLA in advocating for the Southern Gulf Islands

- Importance of building cross-partisan relationships with other MLAs and Cabinet Ministers.
 - o The MLA of Saanich North and the Islands cannot afford to ignore Gulf Islands constituents as they make up around 20% of the electorate, but rarely is there incentive for Ministers from constituencies without Islands Trusts.
- Candidates for Saanich North and the Islands, and the Party leaders are aware of the needs for cross-jurisdictional relationship building and the existence of the SGI Forum.

Discussion of the next Forum meeting

- Ideally, the next forum will be a half-day, in-person forum held post-provincial election to get to know the new MLA.

Action item – By September 22nd, MP May will invite all candidates for Saanich North and the Islands to the next SGI Forum meeting on November 12th, 2024.

Action item – Inform members of the Forum that the next meeting date has been moved from November 4th to the 12th.

Future of the Forum

- MP May's office will take over organizing and hosting and connect with Laura Parker from MLA Olsen's office for information.
- Discussion of organizing a thank you for Laura Parker for her work in organizing the forum – invite to the November 12th meeting?

Public-facing elements of the forum

- There was some intention in the early days to make the forum public facing.
- Currently, the forum involves the public by inviting stakeholder groups to some meetings.

Action item – For the November 12th meeting, discuss more possible ways to involve the public - for example a once-a-year public zoom link - and whether there is a need for this.

Action item - Discuss the possibility of doing a press release to inform the public of the handover of the forum from MLA Olsen's office to MP May's.

Update on the Joint Letter to Federal Ministers on Marine Matters

- MP May's office has been informed that all three recipient Ministers are working on a response, but there has been no answer yet.

Update on Bill C-33: Strengthening the Port System and Railway Safety in Canada Act

- If passed, the bill would see anchorages removed from the waters around the Gulf Islands.
- Bill is stalled before third reading. Hopefully, it will be revisited in the Fall 2024 Parliamentary session.

Update from MLA Olsen on Transport Canada meetings with Tsartlip First Nation

- A literature review on the impact of anchor dragging on the ocean floor is being conducted.

Update CRD meeting on Mooring Vessels

- Agreed by all levels of government present that First Nations should take the lead on fixing this problem. Relates to MLA Olsen's update regarding the Transport Canada meeting.
- Only federal representation at this meeting was MP May's Assistant, Ned Taylor. This is a huge issue with being unable to get representatives of federal ministries to the table.
- Another issue is federal ministries and departments ignoring federal legislation that has passed and received royal assent.

Action item - Could CRD give MP May's office a heads up when future meetings occur, so she can "twist some arms" to get federal representatives to attend?

Update on Tiny Homes on Wheels Project

- On September 4th, the planning committee put in a request for funding from Islands Trust.