

ISLAND VOICES

LETTERS to the editor

Ganges fire hall project updated

Salt Spring's upcoming fire hall project is proceeding smoothly, staying on track both in terms of schedule and budget, as reported by CAO Rodney Dieleman and the Salt Spring Island Fire Protection District board of trustees.

The recently received Schedule-B cost estimates, a crucial construction milestone offering up to 90 per cent cost certainty, validate the meticulous planning and estimation efforts, resulting in a project likely to meet or even surpass the original budget. Board chair Rollie Cook expressed confidence that the approved \$9.7 million borrowing from ratepayers is adequate for project completion.

The owner's representative on the project, Hans Hazenboom, pointed out that "the project is now entering the active tendering and construction phase, including inviting local contractors to get involved."

Hans added that while installing solar panels was beyond the original budget, "provisions are being made to accommodate a future installation."

Building permits are in progress, and water hookup negotiations have been successful. Action on the site is expected this spring as tenders for various project aspects are anticipated to be awarded in the next four to six weeks.

Chief Jamie Holmes highlighted key enhancements in disaster resilience, stating that the new fire hall, in contrast to its predecessor, will adhere to significantly higher disaster-proof standards.

Additional features, such as water storage and reclamation, have been incorporated into the plans.

CAO Dieleman mentioned the inclusion of extra space for CRD Emergency Management Salt Spring Island operations in the new fire hall, reinforcing community resilience against natural disasters for generations to come.

For more information and updates on the project, visit our website page at saltspringfire.com/new-firehall or call 250-537-2531 and speak with CAO Rodney Dieleman.

**SALT SPRING ISLAND FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT
BOARD OF TRUSTEES**

Letters to the editor are welcome, but writers are requested to keep their submissions to 350 words or less. For details about deadlines, and word limits for the Viewpoint and other longer opinion pieces, contact the editor at the email address below, or phone 250-537-9933. All submissions may be edited for brevity, legality and taste. Writers are asked to provide a telephone number where they may be reached during the day, and to sign letters with their full name. Letters published do not necessarily reflect the views of Driftwood Publishing Ltd., its staff or advertisers. Send letters to: news@gulfislandsdriftwood.com

Rants + ROSES



Roses

We would like to thank paramedics Mike and Martin who ploughed through the snow on Jan. 17 to access my husband, who had fallen and was hurt. He has recovered well and our thanks go to them for their quick response.

H & T

The Salt Spring Island Public Library sends roses to all who helped create and launch the new ITOTELNEW HÁUTW / Tatul' utew't-hw Indigenous Learning Area, including Rose Spahan, Myrna Crossley Elliot, Chazz Elliott, James Jimmy, Maynard Johnny Jr, Angela Marston, Dr. John Elliot, Cosiniye Elliot, Rae Anne Claxton, Bill Jamison, Phil Vernon, Chris Marshall, Province of British Columbia through the Ministry of Municipal Affairs, The Salt Spring Island Foundation, The Philip and Muriel Berman Foundation, Salt Spring Books, Library donors, Library board, Christine Hunt, Anne Zeller, Library volunteers and staff, Caroline Dick, Maya Rosborough, Rob Bartram, Bobbi Ruckle, Alex Hasenfratz, Matt Tong, Calum O'Neill, Library Reconciliation Reading Circle members, CRD, Gulf Islands Driftwood, CBC Radio, Hungry Bubba's catering, and everyone else who contributed in any way. Huy ch q'u! HISWKE!

Rants

I would like to rant about the 80-km/hour speed limit sign posted on the Fulford-Ganges Road just north of Cusheon Lake Road by the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure. The signage as seen in the photo above is very confusing. It is only 33 metres in front of a 40-km/hr dangerous curve sign. Roses to the people of the island who have worked so hard to get the speed reduced in Ganges. We all need to slow down our traffic to protect our islanders and island environment. *Heather Neville*

QUOTE OF THE WEEK:

"I've seen when they're super hungry, they'll actually eat the bark off the tree. But typically they'll eat down to the mid-rib of a leaf."

DAVE HOLDEN, CANADIAN FOOD INSPECTION AGENCY BIOLIST, ON SPONGY MOTH BEHAVIOUR

Islands Trust 'runs rogue' with object and policy statement moves

BY DAVID J. RAPPORT AND
LUISA MAFFI

One often hears that being an Islands Trust trustee is a thankless job — one of the classic "damned if you do [uphold the Trust's "preserve and protect" mandate], damned if you don't" sort. Confronted with that uneasy dilemma, the current Salt Spring Local Trust Committee (LTC) and a majority within Trust Council (TC) at large seem to have chosen to overcome the impasse by simply ignoring, and indeed undermining, the Trust's mandate. To put it succinctly, in our view the Trust is now running rogue.

We do not say that lightly. It is hard to imagine that fellow islanders would vie for the opportunity to serve as trustees and then deliberately turn their backs on the Trust's core mission. But how else might one interpret recent events in what we can only describe as the Trust's "Theatre of the Absurd"?

First, the TC has taken it upon itself to redefine the "object" of the Trust, turning it into a vehicle to

preserve and protect such "unique amenities" as housing, livelihoods, infrastructure, and tourism — seemingly without a hint of recognition that none of the above really qualify as being "amenities," let alone being "unique."

Second, it appears to us that the TC is seeking to reformulate the all-important Trust Policy Statement (TPS) in ways that align with their twisted concept of "amenities." That will prove to be difficult. The concept of "unique amenities," as defined and approved by the TC in 1986, clearly refers to the benefits of our natural environment, its rural character, and its cultural history for our island communities and people in British Columbia and beyond.

Third, the TC is so keen to promote its new "vision" for the TPS (apparently one of unrestrained economic growth and development — precisely the circumstances that the Trust Act was established to curb in our beautiful and fragile islands) — that it seems unwilling to wait for the required

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input from First Nations before going ahead and formulating its public relations strategy, complete with "talking points," "speaking notes" and "frequently asked questions" (as detailed in the Jan. 31 Driftwood's "Draft Policy Plan Delayed" story).

Fourth, our LTC recently attempted an "end-run" around public opposition to their proposal to open the floodgates on more ADUs by requesting Salt Spring's inclusion under the provisions of provincial Bill 44 — which was designed for municipalities, outlawing public hearings on housing matters provided that relevant decisions don't conflict with official community plans. That effort was thwarted by the Ministry of Housing, eliciting a sharp rebuke from Minister Ravi Kahlon, who reminded the LTC of our "existing infrastructure capacity issues" (particularly around water and waste

disposal), the interests of local First Nations and the LTC's obligations under the Trust's "preserve and protect" mandate.

Rather than focusing on "talking points," our LTC and the TC might be better advised to reflect on the limits of their authority. Much as some of them may fancy otherwise, they were not elected as politicians — that is, as authorities entrusted with "all-purpose" governance over the islands. Quite to the contrary, islands trustees — much like trustees for the fire board, school district or North Salt Spring Waterworks District — are elected for special purpose governance: to carry out a specific and limited, if crucial, mandate. Issues beyond their given remit are not within their purview.

Ironically, this is happening just as our provincial government is owning up to its failure to ensure the health of ecosystems across the province. If the Minister for Land, Water, and Resource Stewardship has done so, it is more than high time for the Trust to follow suit.

Under all accounts, our island ecosystems are in dire straits. Yet, the LTC and the TC appear to be oblivious to this fact, blissfully pursuing an agenda that conflicts with their own mandate, at an increasing cost for our island ecosystems and, as a result, for the health and well-being of island residents.

The draft of the Province's flagship Biodiversity and Ecosystem Health Framework program (November 2023) should be mandatory reading for all Islands Trust trustees, as well as for island residents. It sets a new course on the stewardship of the environment, addressing head-on the life-essential need to restore health to our life-support systems. The draft document is available on the B.C. government's website.

David J. Rapport is an economist and ecologist who pioneered the field of ecosystem health. Luisa Maffi is a linguist and anthropologist who pioneered the field of biocultural diversity. They live on Salt Spring Island.