

Sustainable Gabriola

Meeting notes – Sunday, April 26, 2026



Attendees: Fay W (facilitator), Dyan DF (notes), Bob A, Janice C, Nancy HP, John P, Greg B, Joan J, Alix HD, Charlotte C, Tom C, Bob M, Arlene C

1. **Welcome**
2. **Reconciliation** – Janice
3. **Phoenix Way/Cable Bay** – Issue: Harmac (Nanaimo Forest Products NFP) wants to amend zoning for 245 acres of land to heavy duty industrial. NFP says they are doing good things for the environment. The property is currently heavily forested and used locally for recreation. Gabriola does not have a recognized voice: Gabriola is not governed by the City of Nanaimo so has no formal standing but could potentially be significantly impacted depending on the decision. Impacting Cedar as well. Snuneymuxw First Nation not consulted until late in the day. Another public hearing this coming Thursday.

SG members attending the public hearings noted that 80% spoke against at 1st meeting and 100% against at 2nd meeting. RDN noted that land is beside Rural Residential. It appears that the Council is onboard for passing the zoning; it has already gone through 1st and 2nd reading. Big concern is lack of restrictions on what industries could be located there. Nanaimo City Councillor Paul Manley has asked for an impact report which hasn't been received.

Doctor Ricker spoke about risk for serious health impacts should the property be used for an incinerator. SG discussion proposed pushing to downgrade the zoning to allow some potential impact while preserving the environmental and health values.

A question arose as to the RDN position? (The land parcel is in the RDN, but the City of Nanaimo is handling the zoning.)

Action: Call in or attend the last meeting this Thursday. Request that at a minimum any air polluting activity not be allowed. Send content to Greg for distribution prior to the Thursday meeting. Hearing starts at 7:00, but need to get there at 5:00 to get on the speakers list when the doors open. 80 commercial Drive. Also, email Dr. Tribesty Nguyen MHO (see islandhealth.ca/about-us/medical-health-officers).

4. **Events & Courses** –
 - a. Energy conservation “sealing your house” workshop held yesterday.
 - b. Fix It Fair – tons of stuff fixed, earlier today.
 - c. Steve E workshop on well monitoring, Sun-17-May – info: [Blue Heron website](#)
 - d. Introduction to Solar Energy – Wed-06-May, Bob M is leading – info: [Blue Heron website](#)

- e. Gabriola Transportation Society – Celebration of Active Transportation. Music, games, food. Sun-31-May 31, 12–3 at Commons. Info:
GabriolaTransportation.ca/gts-fun-day/
5. **Freshwater Footprint** – Alix recommending changes to the OCP — note report attached as appendix . Consideration of how suggestions in consultants (DW) report. Joan: Importance of education regarding water. Had 22 people turn up to Wellsmart workshop March 27th and Household Water on Gabriola information link. Approach should include Snuneymuxw teachings, and climate change, water use and consumption information.
Action: Create a Groundwater Group – Alix. Link with Streamkeepers (Jethro and Melanie). Working with *Vancouver Island Watch*. Build on Climate 12-12-12 model. Reach out to Chamber and PHC to redo the Gabriola 101 model.
6. **GILSS Report** – Fay (as the new SG rep on the GILSS board) reported GILSS is very active in looking to acquire land for community good. Discussion followed re: acquisition of Coates land. Erin has talked to Vanessa. Could we have a community conversation via Gabriola Talks about acquiring the Coates land?
Action: Encourage a discussion between GILSS, RDN, Gabriola Talks and other potential partners re: hosting a community conversation.
7. **Governance** – Dyan expressed a need to engage in a broad community conversation about ‘governance.’ It was noted that *Gabriola Matters* (Susan S, Annie O and Greg B) are looking at this issue from the perspective of ‘What matters, what matters to you, and who decides?’ Perhaps folding into a *Gabriola Talks* series.
Discussion noted lack of respect for Trustees – lack of civility, the importance of grounding the work in the rights of SFN. Greg noted that MLA Sheila Malcolmson has indicated that she is not hearing from constituents about climate issues.
Actions: Janice suggested having table at the Market (cost could be covered by Island Futures) on the theme of ‘Ask me anything about Gabriola.’ Bob reflected that this is a paradigm shift from individual responsibility to ‘How can we solve our problems together?’ Thoughts: Start with issues that are not too contentious and work up – or start with the most contentious issue e.g., the 200-meter buffer issue. Consider Wosk Centre for Dialogue model for Citizens’ Assembly. Have *Gabriola Talks* and *Gabriola Matters* get together to map out a way forward, including Elder Geraldine Manson. Offer to meet on the Reserve to have this meeting.
8. **Global climate news: *A Few Signs of Hope*** — Deb’s notes viewable at
SustainableGabriola.ca/2026/04/27/global-climate-news-april/
9. **Fall Elections** – Susan not running; Tobi considering; Vanessa running. Part of problem is the “colonial” nature of the meetings (rigid structure and rules as to who gets to speak, what they can speak about). Get someone to run for School Trustee.
10. **Next meeting** – Sunday May 31, 3-4:30pm, Commons farmhouse

Appendix — Alix's report on Freshwater Footprint

The GW Solutions Report provides much useful information that can inform the writing of our new OCP. The Report also identifies many gaps in regulations, monitoring and enforcement. In many cases, the Trust does not have the authority to fill these gaps. Therefore, I suggest that the OCP include provision for the LTC to advocate for other agencies to do so. The following items should be included in the OCP as recommended in the FF:

1) Development Permit Areas (DPAs) should be established to protect areas with high groundwater recharge as identified. This DPA should limit clearing of trees and vegetation, limit the amount of land covered by structures, and limit industrial and other uses with potential to pollute the groundwater. The DPA should include meaningful enforcement measures for non-compliance as allowed by Provincial law. This includes when owners clear land before applying for the DPA permit.

2) There should be an OCP Objective to protect and restore groundwater quantity and quality on Gabriola. Under that Objective, the following policies should be included:

a) The Local Trust Committee shall not increase the density or number of residences per lot in areas identified as having very extreme, extreme or high aquifer stress as shown in the report.

This recommendation is made in the report under 6.7 on page 126 quoted below:

“- Areas with a very high freshwater footprint are likely not appropriate for development beyond current density or require policies to guide land use changes and rezoning specific to the hazards in these areas, such as saltwater intrusion.

- Additional development on the island could focus in areas with very low, to moderate footprint.”

b) The Local Trust Committee will consider limiting lot size through subdivision to be no smaller than 5 acres in areas with high groundwater recharge potential and areas with aquifer stress.

c) The Local Trust Committee shall investigate how to obtain enforcement of regulations barring continued pumping of wells with Saltwater intrusion.

Alternate sources of water may be rainwater collection and purchasing water from off island.

It is not legal to continue pumping from a well with Saltwater intrusion. But this practice is widespread on Gabriola endangering the health of residents and their visitors. Continued use of such wells spreads the contamination to more and more wells in the area.

d) The LTC will identify the location of wells with high levels of total coliform and fecal coliform and take steps to reduce and eliminate this contamination.

The GW Solutions Report identifies contamination of many wells with high levels of total coliform and fecal coliform. A map of these areas should be created and a study be done to determine the source of this contamination. If it is from septic systems, then the OCP should require that no further increase in density or number of residences per lot should be allowed in these areas. If it is from agricultural practices, then ways to address this should be investigated such as provincial rules, education, etc.

e) The Local Trust Committee will not consider applications for zone changes or variances from commercial or other non-domestic water users unless their wells have been registered with the province and have met all provincial requirements.

f) The Local Trust Committee will investigate what land use bylaw provisions can be established in order to protect and restore Gabriola groundwater quality and quantity. These could include rules to show adequate water for obtaining a building permit and for subdivision.

g) The Local Trust Committee will advocate with the Province and Regional District of Nanaimo to achieve the recommendations of the GW Solutions Report that include:

- Conducting significantly more monitoring and testing of groundwater quality including testing for natural minerals, contaminants from septic systems (nitrates, pharmaceuticals and pathogens).
- Monitoring the quantity of water that is being delivered to the island as an indicator of water scarcity.
- Conducting more groundwater monitoring near areas with high well density and higher water demand for non-domestic use and from surface water msources.
- Undertaking steps to achieve enforcement of Provincial requirements for registration of non-domestic wells.

What Climate-12 can do (suggestions)

1. Organize a groundwater protection group that focuses on *Freshwater Sustainability* strategies that attend to groundwater sources and the processes influencing groundwater quality and quantity.
2. Discuss all the GWSolution's recommendations and make a plan to integrate these into the group's objectives.
3. Ensure as a group that the GWSolution's recommendations are included in the revised OCP policies.

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