

Gabriola Island Land Stewards Society – Annual General Meeting

Wednesday April 3rd 2024 – Agi Hall

Present: Sibyl Frei, John Peirce, Steve Earle, Shaun Woods, Mary Lee Burns, K. Louise Vincent, Raven Leadem, Adam Paul, Louise Rebelle, Nancy Hetherington Peirce, Talyn Martin, Jenni Gehlbach, Emily Carrington, Bob Martin, Carol Hemrich, Barry Paterson, Katharine Paterson, Susan Yates, Burt Fidler, Michele Benjamin, Maggie Mooney

Guest speakers: Linda Dryden (Abbeyfield), Darcy Smith (Young Agrarians, via zoom)

Facilitators: Sibyl **Call to order:** 6:05pm

Territorial Acknowledgement

Sibyl spoke with gratitude for living on the traditional territory of the Snuneymuxw Nation, who have carefully stewarded the lands and waters here for millennia.

Minutes

Minutes of last AGM on March 26th 2023 were approved by consensus.

Guest Speakers

Shaun introduced each of the guest speakers and facilitated a Q&A after each speaker's presentation.

Linda Dryden spoke about Abbeyfield supportive senior's homes, which exist in BC, Alberta, Saskatchewan and Ontario. Some have been purpose built while most are adapted large homes. The one in Pt. Alberni is an adapted hospital. They range in size from 7 to 21 residents. Each has a full-time cook / manager and is operated by a local volunteer board. Two of the homes in BC are supported by BC Housing. More information can be found at abbeyfield.ca.

Darcy Smith spoke about the Young Agrarians. They have supported 2600 farmers in western Canada with apprenticeship programs, education, access to land and business mentorships. She spoke about how we are losing farms and farmers, adding that creativity is needed to reverse this trend. One program they offer is land sharing by matching landowners with new farmers. Groups like GILSS can help keep farm land in production. More information can be found at youngagrarians.org.

Financial statements

Sibyl reviewed the 2023 financial statements, a summary of which follows (the full statements can be found on the GILSS website).

	2023	2022
2023 REVENUE AND EXPENSES STATEMENT		
Revenue	26,309.84	312,471.83
Expenses	22,970.97	7,813.98
Net (Surplus/Loss)	\$3,338.87	\$304,657.85

BALANCE SHEET AT DECEMBER 31, 2023		
Assets	308,943.03	306,404.16
Liabilities	0.00	800.00
Equity	308,943.03	305,604.16
Total Liabilities and Equity	\$308,943.03	\$306,404.16

The financial statements were accepted by consensus.

Board activities report

Mary Lee and Sibyl presented the board activities report, summarized here:

Our early focus was on ensuring that our decision-making was structured for the benefit of the community, especially for people with low and modest incomes and Snuneymuxw First Nation members. We have put in place a balance of organizational and community representatives, we take a long-term view, and we use a thoughtful and productive consensus process for making decisions.

Other fundamentals involved working with CRA to obtain charitable status and “permission to accumulate property” – which means we can build up our financial reserves for land purchases. We developed a land purchase policy to evaluate any potential land acquisition. We also received a grant to learn about “social purpose financing,” and shared that learning opportunity with other Gabriola organizations.

With essential structures in place, we started focusing on the search for land that fulfills our mandate. We closely monitored the local real estate market. In 2023 and the beginning of 2024, we evaluated several properties for possible purchase, each offering both housing options and farming potential. When looking at any land possibility, we use our land purchase policy as our guide to due diligence.

Land purchase discussions must be done *in camera* – that is, not publicly – to avoid putting more pressure on the market and raising prices further, which would only make housing less affordable and more precarious for people with low to modest incomes. It would also risk loss of actively farmed land and increased food insecurity.

Moving forward, we are welcoming more community involvement. If you are interested in forming a housing or farming co-op to develop any of our future land acquisitions, get in touch and we may be able to find resources for you to put a plan together. We need help to build our capital fund through donations, pledges, or legacy gifts in your will. Let us know about a suitable property coming up for sale. Foreknowledge and access to money for significant down payments or outright purchases will allow us to act quickly when suitable properties come up.

Bylaw changes

John introduced a by-law change proposal that will allow organization-appointed directors to assume officer positions in GILSS.

WHEREAS GILSS's current bylaws treat directors elected at an AGM differently than directors appointed by member organizations invited to name a representative to the GILSS board; and

WHEREAS that difference has resulted in excluding directors appointed by member organizations from taking on roles as officers in the organization:

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the GILSS bylaws be changed to put all directors on an equal footing by making a series of changes within Part 1.1 Definitions and Part 4 - Directors and Part 5 Directors' Meetings, and Part 6.2, Appointment to officer positions, as detailed online and in handouts available at this meeting.

There was some discussion from members about potential conflicts of interest under this new policy, but it was noted that GILSS and most of our organizational member societies have strong conflict of interest policies in place.

The resolution and specific bylaw changes were approved by consensus. The revised bylaws can be found on the GILSS website.

New organizational member

The board had invited the Gabriola Chamber to become an organizational member and appoint a representative to the board, as described in our bylaws. There was some discussion about conflict of interest, but it was agreed that this can be handled by our conflict of interest policies and the authority of the board. The addition of the Gabriola Chamber as an organizational member was ratified by consensus. Adam Paul has been appointed by the Chamber as their representative.

Elect two directors at large

Steve let the members know that Shaun and Sibyl's terms are up, and that both of them were willing to serve for another two-year term. Steve called for other nominations three times and, hearing none, declared Shaun and Sibyl elected by acclamation.

Thanks

Sibyl thanked Carol Hemrich for her 3.5 years as the Gabriola Housing Society representative, David Reid for the time he was on the board in 2023 as the Agricultural Co-op representative, and all present for attending the meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:45pm