

Gabriola Island Land Stewards Society – Annual General Meeting

Monday March 30th 2026 – Agi Hall

Members present: Sibyl Frei, John Peirce, Steve Earle, Mary Lee Burns, Simon Nattrass, David Lightly, Hayley Read, Bruce Batchelor, Carol Hemrich, Carroll Hodge, Fay Weller, Graham Bradley, John Peirce, Julian Young, Kim Feltham, Maggie Mooney, Michelle Benjamin, Nancy Hetherington Peirce, Peter Danenhowe, Shaun Woods, Tobi Elliott

Special guest: Laura Busheiken, Denman Island Co-Housing Co-operative

Community guests: Ardyth Cooper, Betty Kehler

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

Land acknowledgement

Sibyl opened the meeting with an acknowledgement that we are guests on the unceded traditional and present territory of the Snuneymuxw First Nation.

Guest Speaker

Shaun Woods introduced our guest speaker, Laura Busheiken, Denman Island Co-Housing Co-operative.

Laura spoke about the history of the CoHo Cooperative, which is situated on 88 acres of land on Denman Island and has been in existence for 18 years. The co-op includes 15 homes, a workshop, a common house, a garden and an orchard. She opened her presentation with a quote from one of the co-op members who expressed their satisfaction in “tangibly participating in building a better world”.

The co-op has consensus governance without hierarchy. Residents are not owners and not renters. When a home is sold it must be listed at a price well below market value. They have two work bees and two meetings each month. They often have shared meals, particularly around holidays. They have movie and dance nights, and cookathons when there is a lot of garden produce to be preserved. The residences all have rainwater catchment. The well is used only for farming. They use composting toilets and have greywater re-use systems.

Some of Co-op’s the values are:

- DIY – members want/need to learn skills
- look for low-tech solutions
- acceptance of inconvenience
- look for a different relationship with the land (not as a commodity)
- the garden produce is available to everyone (“pick what you need”)
- it is not a commune – there is a wide range of political views
- the core group has good connections in the community

They worked with the Union Bay Credit Union (now part of VanCity) to purchase the land. They are currently seeking new members to build another 4 homes. Each will have to pay \$80,000 to join and then finance the construction without a mortgage. Prospective new members are interviewed and given

a 6-month trial period. The current zoning is unique to the property “multi-dwelling affordable”. The zoning definition has recently been revised to allow for dwellings larger than 1500 sq. ft. to make room for secondary suites. Some of the land is in the ALR.

Minutes

Minutes of the last AGM on April 7th 2025 were approved by consensus.

Financial statements

Sibyl reviewed the 2025 financial statements, which are provided in the following tables. The full statements can be found on the GILSS website at <https://gabrielaislandlss.ca/about/>.

REVENUE	2025	2024
Donations – individuals	6,380.00	1,485.00
Donations – non-receipted		100.00
Grants		250.00
Memberships	935.00	715.00
Interest	9,671.32	13,759.12
Total revenue	16,986.32	16,309.12

EXPENSES	2025	2024
Advertising and promotion	781.52	410.20
Consultant fees – Thrive		250.00
Courier, postage & PO Box	392.70	196.35
Donation fees (Note 5)	61.37	46.00
Fundraising expenses	629.00	629.00
Incorporation and registration fees	40.00	90.00
Indigenous relationship-building	469.13	
Insurance - Directors and Officers	1,000.00	1,000.00
Interest & bank charges	28.50	16.50
Interest - Thrive Impact Fund	967.15	314.20
Land purchase expenses	677.25	1,260.00
Meeting expenses	549.19	355.33
Memberships in other organizations	100.00	100.00
Miscellaneous		100.50
Office expenses	226.80	
Professional fees	1,023.75	
Website hosting & maintenance	888.11	708.11
Zoom fees	240.69	240.69
Total expenses	8,075.16	5,716.88

NET INCOME	2025	2024
	8,911.16	10,592.24

ASSETS	2025	2024
Cash	329,201.88	319,336.27
Accounts receivable	95.50	204.00
Total current assets	329,297.38	319,540.27

LIABILITIES	2025	2024
Accounts payable	845.95	
Total liabilities	845.95	

EQUITY	2025	2024
Retained earnings – previous year	319,540.27	308,948.03
Current earnings	8,911.16	10,592.24
Total equity	328,451.43	319,540.27

LIABILITIES + EQUITY	2025	2024
	329,297.38	319,540.27

The financial statements were accepted by consensus.

Board activities report

Mary Lee and Sibyl presented the board activities report.

The current board of GILSS includes David Lightly, Hayley Reid, John Peirce, Mary Lee Burns, Michelle Benjamin, Sibyl Frei, Simon Nattrass, Steve Earle. With regret, Adam Paul is out of the country for work at the moment.

As a Community Land Trust, our main focus is finding, viewing and analyzing the suitability of potential properties that fulfill our mandate - farming and food security, housing or community economic development, particularly for people for whom access to housing and land is insecure or unattainable. To that end, GILSS has been busy preparing for when the right opportunity comes along. Here are the highlights from the past year.

The search for property:

- One important learning this past year has been that, considering how expensive property is, it would be ideal if we could find a property that would allow us to fulfill at least two of our purposes.
- Having a better understanding of the type of property we are looking for – particularly those with both housing and farming potential, we investigated fewer properties than in 2024. Of the eleven properties where we conducted site visits and/or gathered extensive information, we made formal

offers or serious inquiries on five, just lost out on one property last week, and we are continuing to explore two of the others.

Confidentiality:

- We recognize that keeping the names of properties we are considering confidential is a tough one, especially for our members, and for encouraging more Gabriolans to support our focus on long-term community benefits.
- We keep this information confidential to avoid heating up the market, focusing more interest in a particular property, and potentially having a property scooped up out from under us.
- The need for confidentiality means we do not have a lot to share during the year, despite the fact that we meet at least monthly, research and consider a fair amount of information about each property that has the potential of fulfilling our mandate, add zoom board meetings as needed to quickly consider a property and put together an offer, etc.
- Adding to the timing challenge is that we need the full board to be able to weigh in on whether to try and purchase a particular property, and the need to develop a clear and unique strategy for how we will finance it as part of formulating an offer.

Members – our first partners:

- So why become a member if you don't know what properties we are considering, putting offers on, etc?
 - First of all, it is very difficult to obtain any grants or larger donations without a physical project or program, which we won't have until we own a property. This is a very significant barrier for us.
 - Secondly, all work except land purchase expenses, professional fees and web maintenance is done by board volunteers; your memberships and donations allow us to pay those fees and all other expenses that keep the virtual doors open.
- Fundamentally, membership fees and donations make it possible for GILSS to survive as an organization, and to work toward acquiring that first property and the next and the next, gradually making a real and long term difference in access to land that is out of reach for too many.

Other partners:

- We are developing an important collaborative partnership with Salmon Returns, a place-based financial intermediary that works across the US and Canada to support Indigenous and community-led initiatives in the bioregion from Alaska to California – the watersheds where migratory salmon live. They help communities access the capital they need by: aligning funders, investors and communities; structuring investment funds and instruments suitable to local contexts; and helping build communities' financial capacity while enabling capital partners to learn what works on the ground. We are very excited about what we can learn and do together.
- The Scale Collaborative and Thrive Impact Fund have now amalgamated as Thriving Non-Profits. They are an ongoing partner and supporter with whom we are able to explore funding possibilities and receive advice about projects we are considering. From them, we also receive complimentary access to their online platform that includes online courses and tools, monthly learning events, a non-profit leaders discussion forum, and a full resource library.

- We are members of the Canadian Network of Community Land Trusts, joining webinars such as the monthly agriculture/rural discussion group, accessing resources, and sharing and learning about best practices from other community land trusts.
- Erin Udal from the Gabriola Chamber of Commerce shares information about upcoming grants and learning opportunities with us and other organizations on Gabriola. Thanks Erin!
- Two important potential partners that we are slowly trying to develop relationships with are the Snuneymuxw First Nation and their Petroglyph Development Corporation. Because the Nation has so many other priorities and frankly is inundated with requests for letters of support from Gabriola organizations, we need to be patient with the process. We can certainly build on the excellent work the museum has done, and more recently the Arts Council, in building those relationships. Until we acquire land that might be of interest in terms of a partnership or some kind of sharing relationship, it will take time. In our bylaws, we have included 2 seats on the GILSS board for SFN-appointed board members, for when it becomes a priority for them. To prepare to be good partners, the board holds regular conversations about the history of Indigenous Peoples in this area and in Canada, raising our own awareness and understanding, and considering how we might contribute to reconciliation, especially in building good relations with SFN.

Fundraising:

- We had obtained a commitment of an anonymous \$200,000 donation when the board signs an agreement for purchase and sale. Unfortunately, due to the uneven impositions of tariffs and ever-changing actions from South of the border since early 2025 and the resultant volatility and uncertainty in the financial markets, this donor had to withdraw their financial commitment. As a result, GILSS still has only \$300,000 in cash to contribute to the purchase of a property, making it more difficult to put together the financing required to make a purchase. Fundraising must be a continued focus of GILSS as we move forward. Our flyer in the Sounder late fall generated interest and donations from people here who had not as yet been involved.
- We thought that being able to provide tax receipts as partial payment for a property, with the rest paid in cash, would be to our advantage. However, we have learned that a tax receipt is really only of benefit to reduce the capital gains impact of selling a property. If a property is someone's principal residence or for personal reasons getting more money is more important than anything else, sellers are not interested in tax receipts as part of a purchase price.
- Not as frequently as is ideal, we browse Imagine Canada's Grant Connect service, which allows us to access an extensive database of grants and fundraising opportunities. However, it would be great to have a volunteer willing to take on regular review of current grants, foundation options, etc on this database.
- A positive development is that we have had conversations with owners of two different properties about making a bequest to GILSS in their wills. One owner, with a property who does not want to be publicly named, has now written GILSS and another Gabriola organization into their will. This action is such a beautiful way to leave a gift and legacy to the Gabriola community. We so very much appreciate it, recognizing what an impact it will have on our ability to acquire and steward property for people who cannot afford secure access to a home, a place to grow food, etc. long into the future.

Election of directors

Sustainable Gabriola community board member John Peirce has stepped down. John was thanked for many years of service to GILSS, including his role as a board member and treasurer, and his valued input right from the very start of the organization. Fay Weller has been appointed to the board by Sustainable Gabriola.

Three at-large director positions were filled by acclamation, including Sibyl Frei (to a one-year term) and new board members Elana Evans and Julian Young (to two year terms).

We thanked the two new board members for their willingness to contribute to the goals of the GILSS Community Land Trust. And we thanked the membership, people who made donations large or small, and community members for their interest in GILSS.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:50 pm.