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7 Salt Spring Singers and Gordon Lightfoot tribute



11 New Reginald Hill trail a treat

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Issue 50
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PHOTO BY NANCY JOHNSON

SWEET TREATS: Mathai and mom Susanna Lyons show cookies they decorated at Francis Bread at Friday night's Holiday Block Party at The Jam Factory complex. Downtown Ganges businesses were also open for shopping and treats until 8 p.m. Dec. 8 for the Love Local Winter Wander event organized by the Salt Spring Island Chamber of Commerce as part of Christmas on Salt Spring activities. See the christmasonsaltspring.com website for information about other holiday season happenings on the island, or the Driftwood's online calendar at gulfislandsdriftwood.com.

PUBLIC LANDS

Displaced campers eye new spot

Chuan Society seeks agreement for Kanaka Road site

BY ROBB MAGLEY
DRIFTWOOD STAFF

Salt Spring's Local Community Commission (LCC) heard an 11th-hour proposal from a local non-profit society hoping to negotiate a winter space for people displaced after an encampment at Drake Road was dismantled.

After BC Housing evicted campers from its property on Nov. 7, according to Chuan Society's Kajin Goh, it was unclear where people who had sought their own accommodations there would end up.

"There's been a bit of a scattering and a scramble to figure out what to do next," said Goh, appearing before the LCC Thursday, Dec. 7, on behalf of Chuan. He was flanked by Jenny McClean and Skipp Toto, who he identified as fellow Chuan council members.

Goh told the commission Chuan Society has been working on Salt Spring for six years, advocating generally for "well-being in our community," although much of the work touches on the underhoused, mental health and addictions, he added. Chuan has been operating Gabriel's Kitchen, a program for food-insecure community members to prepare and share a Saturday night dinner — operating on donated ingredients, a grant from Island Health and the contribution of a kitchen space on McPhillips Avenue from the Gulf Islands Family Together Society, where they cook and serve once per week.

In the wake of the eviction at Drake Road, Goh said, he and Capital Regional District (CRD) director Gary Holman had discussed the need for a "society in good standing" to coordinate some agreement between the CRD and campers.

CHUAN continued on 2

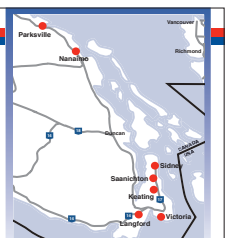
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FIRST RESPONDERS

Two Salt Spring RCMP officers receive honours

Charette-Thibault and Gill awarded for bravery and quick action

BY ROBB MAGLEY
DRIFTWOOD STAFF

Two Salt Spring RCMP officers received recognition during a gathering at the Legion that brought the island's first responders together Thursday, Nov. 30.

Const. Hardip Gill and Const. Felix Charette-Thibault were each presented with a certificate from visiting Superintendent Ray Carfantan, Acting Commanding Officer for the RCMP Vancouver Island District — both for

above-and-beyond actions taken before they transferred to the island.

According to an RCMP release, Charette-Thibault had responded to a medical emergency in Duncan, where he recognized the person had suffered an overdose, administered Naloxone and provided CPR until paramedics arrived. The victim was transported to hospital, where she passed away several days later. Although not the outcome hoped, it provided time for the victim's family to say good-bye, according to the release. Charette-Thibault was nominated for a St. John Life-Saving Award.

While working in the Lower Mainland, according to RCMP, Gill witnessed a shooting and chased an armed assailant on foot through a densely populated residential area.

Cornering the suspect in a residential backyard, Gill apprehended him, and the suspect was subsequently arrested. Deputy Commissioner Dwayne McDonald, Commanding Officer for British Columbia, said Gill's dedication and courage helped bring a successful conclusion to the incident, and that his actions and dedication to duty brought credit to himself in keeping with the highest traditions of the RCMP.

Salt Spring Detachment Commander Sgt. Clive Seabrook said he was pleased the officers were recognized.

"The actions of Const. Gill and Const. Charette-Thibault highlight the excellent work done every day by our officers across the country," said Seabrook. "I am very proud to work with all of the staff and RCMP officers here."



PHOTO COURTESY SSI RCMP

Salt Spring RCMP Const. Felix Charette-Thibault, left, receives St. John Lifesaving Award from Superintendent Ray Carfantan.

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Campers have familiarity with CRD site

CHUAN
continued from 1

Goh and Chuan's council brought a proposal to the LCC that centred around allowing the eight to 12 people from the Drake Road encampment to over-winter in RVs and tents at a CRD-owned property — specifically one on Kanaka Road, between the Gulf Islands Secondary School property and the Rainbow Recreation Centre's pool parking lot.

The need would be until late April, Goh said, and the Kanaka location was the group's preference. Despite the best efforts of LCC members and Chuan, no private landowners had stepped forward to offer property for them.

"We have some cognizance of that site," said Goh, "because we did have a warming space there."

Goh noted the "Warming Space Collective" encampments, which occupied the Centennial Park gazebo and part of Mouat Park successively during winter 2021-22, were "not specifically a Chuan project," although they were "connected" to it. Some people who sought their own accommodations there — and elsewhere across Salt Spring Island, as those encampments were forced to dismantle — had been living this fall at Drake Road.

"Winter is coming on pretty soon," said Goh.

"We've been pretty lucky that it hasn't gotten really cold, but you know, two years ago we hit minus 10 degrees on Christmas Day."

Among possible issues Goh and Chuan already identified on Kanaka was whether an off-leash area could be defined; he said many have service dogs that are important to their emotional health. In addition, availability of washrooms was a concern — with no water or power available at the site, Goh said there had been discussion of setting up a porta potty.

"It's also been commented that some of the service workers might be able to use that as well," offered Goh, "So we've doubled the use of that."

**"There are a lot of people
in the community who
just wish these kinds of
challenges just somehow
evaporated."**

BRIAN WEBSTER
LCC Commissioner

Cost for a porta potty runs \$1,500 for six months, with two pump-outs per month, according to LCC member Gayle Baker, and it was unclear whether potential campers would be expected to pay a fee to park on the property.

"It's not to say that there won't be costing here, but we always find creative ways to deal with that, and we've been pretty good at fundraising," said Goh. "There has been talk about maybe the CRD being able to financially support this in some way, and that would be most welcome."

Commissioners were sympathetic but expressed concerns about conflict — not only with pool patrons and community gardeners come spring, but more immediately with significant project work taking place this month. CRD staff will require near-constant access this winter to the storage area on the property — and the gravel road leading to and from it. That leaves the least-muddy spot on the property out of the running for camper space; Chuan council's other suggestion, offered Goh, was to perhaps also allow campers to use some parking spots at the pool.

"There are a lot of people in the community who just wish these kinds of challenges just somehow evaporated," said LCC member Brian Webster. "That doesn't happen; I appreciate you taking

the initiative, but I'm really concerned about our staff [being able] to manage the CRD properties we have, and this has kind of been sprung on them. I appreciate that something was talked about in October, but there was no proposal that's been on an agenda."

Parks manager Dan Ovington said that in previous years there was discussion of a group submitting a park use permit application for staff to review, but that had never materialized into a formal proposal.

"So we're into December," said Ovington. "Staff are in the middle of the recreation centre shutdown. In addition to the regular pool maintenance that we're doing, we have multiple replacements that are going on within the filtration room. And in addition to that, as you may have noticed, there's a very large construction project happening in the middle of Ganges. I just want to remind everybody of everything that's in motion that's extremely time-sensitive to our existing obligations."

"We would have proposed sooner, I think," said Goh, "if we could have had a magic ball to see ahead into the future. But we were hoping things [at Drake Road] would work out. I know this is a late proposal, but it took a lot of internal discussion for us to feel that we could have the capacity to help with this project."

Holman asked whether Chuan would be willing to be the designated responsible party for a park permit.

"It would require things like liability insurance, provisions surrounding drug and alcohol use at the site, and ensuring a limited number of campers," said Holman. "Because once it's established, folks will tend to gravitate to it."

Goh said the details could be ironed out — because it needed to happen.

"I think what we need to do is run it by our council, and speak to the potential campers," said Goh. "We didn't imagine this was going to happen without conditions to protect the site, as well as respect what's happening there."

Goh said Chuan's council would be meeting soon, so plans were made to coordinate with one or two LCC members in the coming days to bring forward a formal proposal for use of CRD land — hopefully before temperatures drop further.

"I think with the human realities of the people involved, I'd just ask everybody to be as understanding as possible," said Webster. "The fact is there's a time pressure here. Let's all do the best we can."

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ELECTIONS

Local candidates penalized by Elections BC

Regulators assess penalties, prohibition

BY ROBB MAGLEY
DRIFTWOOD STAFF

Just in time for the new year, Elections BC appears to have concluded its assessment of Salt Spring Island's most recent election cycles — and there were a few missteps, according to regulators, with fines being levied and one candidate barred from running until after 2026.

According to an Elections BC announcement, Salt Spring Local Community Commission (LCC) candidate Nejmah Guermoudi did not file a disclosure statement or supplementary report within the required timeframe

— the late filing deadline was Sept. 25 — and is therefore disqualified from seeking office until after the 2026 General Local Elections. Guermoudi ran an unsuccessful campaign for a seat on the first LCC in April.

And while not disqualifying, monetary penalties were levied upon two candidates from earlier elections, according to enforcement notices sent by Elections BC director of investigations Adam Barnes and released last week. Elissa Poole, who ran in 2022 hoping to serve on Salt Spring's Local Trust Committee (LTC), has been ordered to pay a \$450 penalty for accepting a prohibited campaign contribution.

Barnes said upon being notified of one ineligible contribution by Elections BC's Electoral Finance Audit Assessment Team, Poole — who had not run for office previously —

immediately returned \$1,000 received from a corporate entity registered outside the province and filed amended paperwork, fully cooperating with investigators to come into compliance.

That speed and cooperation, according to Barnes, was a factor in levying a relatively small fine for the contravention; B.C.'s Local Elections Campaign Financing Act (LECFA) requires administrative penalties that can be as high as double the amount of the prohibited contribution.

Elections BC further announced it had assessed a monetary penalty to candidate Kylie Coates, who also ran in the 2022 election cycle but in hopes of becoming Salt Spring's Capital Regional District (CRD) electoral area director. Regulators said they became aware of a sign posted on Salt Spring during that

election's pre-campaign period that "had a picture of [a] local trustee candidate, and clearly opposed the candidate's election," according to Barnes' office — but the sign did not identify Coates as a candidate, nor as the sponsor of the advertisement.

The Driftwood is mentioned in Coates' enforcement notice; during an August 2022 interview, he said he had the \$600 sign — featuring a photo of Islands Trust trustee Laura Patrick, against whom he was not directly running — made and erected in Ganges. The sign alleged anti-business activities of the Trust, and Coates told the Driftwood he intended to raise awareness about things that were "going on behind closed doors" as he announced his candidacy for CRD director.

Coates was assessed a \$400 penalty for the LECFA contravention.

LAND USE

Trust to re-start Policy Statement process in 2024

Early messaging to focus on public feedback procedure over content

BY ROBB MAGLEY
DRIFTWOOD STAFF

It may seem hard for some to imagine, but just two years ago the public was worried the Islands Trust was moving too quickly on something — specifically, that it had been rushing the process toward updating its decades-old Policy Statement.

But likely in February of the coming year, according to staff, trustees will receive a new draft version of that contentious document, re-starting a lengthy review-and-feedback process that has some veteran trustees stinging from the last round.

As the Islands Trust prepares to mark its 50th birthday, the Policy Statement as we know it is turning 30, with its last meaningful update having taken place in 1994. An effort at revision in recent years went less than smoothly, bubbling over in summer 2021 as residents crowded meetings, reacting negatively to both wording and process during a "first reading" attempt that ultimately led to the plan being sent back.

Trust staff were tasked with returning with a new document, taking into account what had become significant feedback. Delays in the work since have been largely due to staff vacancies, according to Trust documents, but there is now a "completed" revised draft Policy Statement.

So far, it has only been shared with nine First Nations, according to the Trust Area Services report, many of which also received a "concordance table" explaining how (and whether) their early input had been integrated into the draft. It will be early 2024 before trustees serving on the Trust Programs and Executive committees will get their first look at the documents for review — and, noted Trust Area Services director Clare Frater, it will also be posted in public agendas.

"I hope it's drastically different from the last Policy Statement draft."

JAMIE HARRIS
Salt Spring Island trustee

Trustees were eager to advance the process, but that excitement was tempered by concerns about a repeat of 2021.

"When we receive this, because it's a public document, everyone receives this," said North Pender Island trustee Deb Morrison. "The last time that happened, there was no communication strategy in place, and the proverbial caca hit the fan."

Frater said the hope this time was to communicate clearly around the process even more than the content, to help

the public understand that the first draft is just that — the beginning of a long process where change is likely inevitable. Indeed, even once Trust Council gives its broad "in principle" approval, the draft Policy Statement will make the rounds through local Trust committees (and Bowen Island Municipality) for six months of consideration; those bodies will likely engage with the public on a local level during that time.

"The key messaging is that this will be council's draft to work with, until such time as it's comfortable with that draft, and then ask for public engagement on that draft you've agreed on," said Frater.

"We're preparing documents for your own messaging — such as frequently asked questions, and we hope to have some social media posts — to advise the public about how the process goes."

That messaging will also clearly outline how feedback will be received — writing to Trust Council, coming as delegations, sharing views with local trustees, etc. — and lay out a schedule. As for content, Frater said while a simpler-looking document, the concordance table alone was more than 50 pages long, demonstrating how staff integrated each of the 32 resolutions ITC passed amending the previous effort. Still, trustees seemed hopeful for a workable document.

"That last draft alienated local Indigenous [residents] to no end, and drastically threatened their traditional livelihoods," said Salt Spring Island trustee Jamie Harris. "I hope it's drastically different from the last Policy Statement draft."



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OPINION

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EDITORIAL

Mandate mischief

In any discussion involving the Islands Trust, no phrase is arguably quoted more than that body's object or "the mandate."

As originally envisioned, every decision or action taken by elected trustees should flow from the mandate, through the Policy Statement, then an island's official community plan and land use bylaws. If the mandate has any meaning at all, changing what it is collectively understood to be should be an important matter.

That's why learning that elected Islands Trust Council members had discussed the mandate and come to a conclusion about what it means that is arguably much different from what it's been for several decades in a meeting closed to the public on Sept. 26 has become an issue of concern. It's understandable

THE ISSUE: Islands Trust Council mandate discussion

WE SAY: Lack of transparency disturbing

Minutes from that meeting, approved at last week's quarterly Trust Council meeting, declared that a news release would be forthcoming on the subject. But council or the Executive Committee clearly don't want to talk about the discussion or process. No such news release has yet appeared, the topic was not on the Dec. 6 to 8 meeting agenda and it only came into view when members of the public made that the case during the town hall segment. In response to those individuals, Trust Council chair Peter Luckham said he didn't think any specific action needed to be taken. Trust Governance Committee chair Judith Gedy of Bowen Island did say she intended to draft something for her committee and the Executive Committee, but hasn't yet had the time to do it.

So has the interpretation of the hallowed mandate of the Islands Trust actually changed through a closed-door discussion and decision of Trust Council? If anyone knows for sure, they aren't saying — yet.

Perhaps as the Islands Trust heads into its 50th year it is time to revisit the mandate and/or come to a new consensus on what it means. But if so it should be done through a fulsome discussion with the thoughts and views of our elected representatives made clear in a public forum.

PARKER



Housing plans criticized

BY MLA ADAM OLSEN

During this fall legislative session the BC NDP government introduced dramatic changes

VIEWPOINT

with housing poverty on Indian Reserves for over a century with devastating outcomes.

to housing policy in British Columbia. At one point we had four active bills (35, 44, 46, 47) all related to the housing affordability crisis.

My response to Bill 44: Housing Statutes (Residential Development) Amendment Act, 2023, was a 12,000-word, 1.5-hour speech, a culmination of my 15-year journey in local and provincial governance.

The speech broadly reflects my concerns and critiques with the current trajectory of housing policy in British Columbia and I dig into the complexities of the housing affordability crisis. However, I also call for collective action that goes well beyond housing, urging genuine dialogue and comprehensive solutions. The following offers a summary of my comments.

For millennia, we worked together to deliver basic human needs — food and shelter — creating societal bonds and fostering creativity and innovation. Today, the real estate market impedes universal housing security, pitting wealth creation against basic human rights and general well-being.

The current housing market is designed to generate wealth for those that own property, but it widens the gap with those who don't own property. Consequently, the system we created is generating wealth for some while impoverishing others financially and socially. Housing insecurity forces non-property owners into increasingly tenuous situations. They often must take on multiple jobs, reduce community engagement and limit educational pursuits. Public security weakens as desperation grows, contributing to addiction and fraying social safety nets.

We have clear examples of what happens when housing systems generate poverty. Canada deliberately experimented

The housing affordability crisis in Canada has elicited a uniform response from politicians across the political spectrum — build more supply. Even the BC NDP government is in reckless pursuit of supply. Through Bill 44, they unilaterally eliminated single-family zoning, allowing the development of triplexes and fourplexes. This change will likely only create unimaginable real estate wealth for the property "haves," while deepening the socio-economic gap with the "have-nots." At the same time, they have heightened the infrastructural demands, burdened some local government administration's ability to process applications, depleted local revenue to pay for infrastructure and undermined public engagement.

The BC NDP's solutions to the housing affordability crisis are driven by a mistaken philosophy that the real estate market will magically start valuing human well-being instead of individual wealth creation. It ignores the reality that building more supply for the past century has not created more housing affordability. They entirely sidestep the reality that housing affordability requires substantive investments in non-market solutions including non-profit housing, cooperatives, co-housing and other models of housing that foster community development.

I have a hopeful vision for a connected world that prioritizes human well-being over profit, a world that considers housing and food fundamental human rights.

This is a snapshot of the criticisms I have for the systems we have created and maintained and the ideas I have proposed that the provincial government has ignored. I hope you will take the time to watch the speech at adamolsen.ca.

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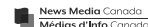
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THIS WEEK'S POLL QUESTION:

Is the BC NDP on the right track with its housing strategy? ☐ Yes ☐ No

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ISLAND VOICES

LETTERS to the editor

Use school fields

I have used the Portlock Park facilities constantly for the 16-plus years of my Salt Spring residency. I totally agree with Richard Hayden's rationale for maintaining the oval track as shared in last week's Driftwood.

Portlock Park is the single location on Salt Spring where people with mobility issues, parents with small children and walkers can exercise without fear of motorists. I have witnessed children being taught how to ride a bicycle in safety. These uses complement runners of all ages using the track. A pathway around the complex is not a suitable substitute for a 400-metre oval track.

I also agree with the soccer players, pickleball players, little league and older baseball players and other recreational users that Portlock Park is not really large enough to meet

every recreational need.

Yet there seems to be a simple answer. Work in cooperation with School District 64 to facilitate increased public use of the open school district recreational fields. This is done in many communities. I trust that the Salt Spring Local Community Commission and School District 64 will work collaboratively to improve our recreational opportunities.

CURT FIRESTONE,
SALT SPRING

Heated

I'm thinking of writing a pamphlet, "Heated Vestibules of SSI," for people who get cold.

P. BOSNELL,
(PREVIOUSLY HOMELESS),
GANGES

QUOTE OF THE WEEK:

"When we receive this, because it's a public document, everyone receives this. The last time that happened, there was no communication strategy in place, and the proverbial caca hit the fan."

DEB MORRISON, NORTH PENDER TRUSTEE, ON THE TRUST POLICY STATEMENT PROCESS

Salty Dog Retreat operator outlines permit application issues

The following is approximately half of the delegation Salty Dog Retreat operator Jaime Halan-Harris intends to present to the Dec. 14 Salt Spring Local Trust Committee meeting in requesting she be allowed to re-apply for a temporary use permit for a dog kennel that is also providing some housing.

The Salt Spring Local Trust Committee (LTC) considered my temporary use permit (TUP) application at the Nov. 16 meeting and voted in agreement with the staff report recommendations, which denied my application and closed the file.

Let me accept some responsibility for missing the meeting. However, my lack of readiness, an incomplete application and poor communication with Trust office staff all contributed to a regrettable outcome.

In light of the results and circumstances of my first application, I ask the LTC to waive the one-year waiting period so I may re-apply with the benefit of experience I gained from the process and speak to the merits of my temporary plan for the 130 Blackburn Rd. property.

Considering all the effort I invested in meeting the requirements of various agencies, I trust you will find it reasonable to waive the one-year waiting period so I may speak to the merits of my application. In addition, urgency is required in order to maintain the kennel. This delegation describes the services Salty Dog delivers to the community, explains how the Salty Dog Retreat business protects the watershed, addresses concerns raised by the planners and suggests reasonable next steps.

Community Services

Salty Dog Retreat offers significant services to emergency workers who encounter dogs that require

immediate care. For the past six years I have supported the community by caring for lost dogs and rescues at no cost. This means that I accept dogs brought to me by the RCMP, CRD, IWAIV, hospital and ambulance services, SPCA and people in the community. Sometimes, this means I take care of 10 or more of these dogs at a time. For CRD in particular, my kennel operation is an official pound facility. I perform this community service to CRD at no charge.

With respect to the community water supply system, the levelling of land in the sandy area of the property to allow for a cluster of temporary structures also manifests as a community amenity. The amenity is that levelling the land enhances groundwater infiltration. Covering kennel areas with temporary roof structures directs precipitation away from nutrient-enriched wood chips so precipitation infiltrates without contacting kennel operations.

Watershed Protection

A qualified engineer (Bradley Fossen of Aurora Professional Group) assessed the risk of impact to shallow groundwater and wrote that as designed and operated, the kennel posed no greater risk than would be "created by a primary dwelling with a properly designed and installed onsite sewerage system and likely less risk than that from a light agricultural operation."

Trust Recommendations

The Nov. 16 staff report imputes exclusions not found in the island's official community plan (OCP), misrepresents important facts about Salty Dog and quotes the OCP out of context.

Furthermore, the TUP application

IN RESPONSE

form compels staff to ensure applications are complete before opening a file. This is important because the staff report includes significant criticism that the application does not include "information on the impact to the watershed, well information, septic information, or a Building Location Certificate prepared by a qualified surveyor." Obviously, LTC staff accepted my incomplete application.

Here are examples of items that skewed the report against issuance. I begin with what the staff report says is the "primary reason for non-support." "Recommendation 1. a. The SSI OCP Bylaw No. 434 does not list the Watershed and Islet Residential designation as eligible for TUP issuance."

While it is true that the OCP does not list the watershed land designation, the staff report imputes that only listed land designations are eligible for a TUP. The main problem with imputing eligibility from a list is that plain reading of Part G, the TUP section of the OCP, shows there is no restriction to additional land designations. The terms "can be issued" and "may issue" allow trustees to exercise discretion.

In my TUP application, the salient issue is risk to a sensitive watershed that is also within a community water supply system. Since the engineer's letter affirms that the risk of adverse impacts to the watershed are less than or equal to a single-family dwelling, the substantive concern about impact to watershed issue should be considered properly dealt with.

Clearly, it is reasonable to believe that if the OCP meant for the list of

land designations to be exhaustive and exclusive, the language would say so.

Misrepresents Basic Facts

The staff report misrepresents basic facts. The staff report does not describe the subject property zoning accurately. The report states "the 10.06-acre property is zoned Rural Watershed 1 (RW1)." MAPIT indicates 130 Blackburn Rd. is split zoned R1 and RW1. About 17 per cent of the property is zoned R1. Kennels are permitted in R1 zoning.

Regarding the well, the staff report states: "The operation has been drawing from a non-registered and unlicensed well on site." In fact, the provincial, online well registry indicates the well, Tag Number 43497, 1979 (3 GPM), was registered in 2003.

The staff report makes an unsubstantiated claim that development included unauthorized soil removal. In fact, development of the property did not require or cause any soil removal.

OCP Quoted Out of Context

In general, the staff report implies an embargo on development in RW1 zoning areas when single-family dwelling, home-based business and agriculture are permitted. The best example of this bias relates to the primary reason for denial, that the list does not include the RW1 designation. The planner comments state "this can likely be attributed to the OCP policy around no further development in these designations." This narrow comment downplays that zoning allows for dwelling, home-based business and agriculture.

Furthermore, notwithstanding the staff report claim that my TUP application "meets none of the TUP

objectives," Objective G.1.2.2 provides for use of land "to provide essential community services not provided by local government." Meeting one of the objectives is sufficient.

In addition, the staff report states "the applicant has moved the kennel business from a suitably zoned property without obtaining required land use permissions to a rural watershed zoned property ... while other adequately zoned properties exist." This statement offends fairness three ways. First, a family law judge ordered the suitably zoned property sold. Second, my realtor offered only one property as zoned R1 and the split zoning was not reported. Third, the staff report fails to acknowledge the G.1.3.6 TUP Permit Guideline that states, in part, "Consideration could also be given to the temporary relocation of an existing business in emergency or hardship situations."

Next Steps

In the event the LTC agrees to waive the one-year waiting period to reapply for TUP, please expect the engineer to expand on his work. In particular, he will generate draft recommendations for the design and implementation of a shallow groundwater-monitoring program in combination with scheduled operational compliance inspections.

Let me close by speaking briefly to the emergency housing aspects of the kennel operation. In general, the OCP welcomes island-based businesses that support challenged, unemployed and homeless people with counselling, employment and safe, emergency housing. Within the OCP these attributes are promoted, encouraged and needed.

Rants + ROSES



Roses

A pantry of rosehips for Stan, Ann, Alex, Gina, Ross, Vivian and Alan for supplying the extra skills, knowledge and tools required to prepare gallons of silky smooth shrimp bisque for the Fulford Christmas Craft Fair. Your insights, dipping nets, freezer capacity, stockpot and Vitamix made this seafood standard "pop" for many fair-goers! *John R.*

A big bunch of colourful roses to Richard Hayden for his interesting and informative article in the Dec. 6 In Depth column. Although I don't use the track and am able, for now, to walk our many trails, etc., as a senior, I can see the many benefits of the track for so many different people and abilities.

~ All Dressed Up ~



PHOTOS BY NANCY JOHNSON

Peeks into three of several windows forming entries for this year's Driftwood Decorating Contest reveal the extent of effort and creativity employed by decorators of, from left, Ganges Fire Hall, Jill Louise Campbell Art Gallery and Salt Spring Gallery. Also entered are the Salt Spring RCMP, Mouat's Home Hardware, Love My Kitchen, Visitor Information Centre, Salt Spring Inn and Windsor Plywood. Winners are determined by online voting at christmasaltspring.com for three categories: Best All Round, Most Creative and Best Use of Lights. Voting deadline is Dec. 15.

TIDE TABLES

at Fulford Harbour

DECEMBER 2023 PST (UTC-8h)

When using Daylight Saving Time, one hour must be added to the predicted time in the table

DAY	TIME	METRES	FEET	DAY	TIME	METRES	FEET
13	0709	3.6	11.8	17	0117	0.3	1.0
WE	1130	3.2	10.5	SU	0946	3.7	12.1
ME	1440	3.3	10.8	SU	1608	2.7	8.9
	2301	0.0	0.0	DI	1803	2.8	9.2
14	0750	3.6	11.8	18	0204	0.6	2.0
TH	1228	3.2	10.5	MO	1020	3.6	11.8
JE	1520	3.3	10.8	MO	1712	2.4	7.9
	2344	0.0	0.0	LU	1939	2.5	8.2
15	0831	3.7	12.1	19	0252	1.0	3.3
FR	1335	3.2	10.5	MA	1052	3.6	11.8
VE	1606	3.2	10.5	MA	1801	2.0	6.6
				TU	2205	2.2	7.2
16	0030	0.1	0.3	20	0343	1.5	4.9
SA	0910	3.7	12.1	WE	1120	3.6	11.8
SA	1452	3.0	9.8	WE	1843	1.5	4.9
SA	1658	3.0	9.8	ME			

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ISLANDS TRUST

Closed meeting on mandate irks

Governance Committee chair promises clarity

BY ROBB MAGLEY
DRIFTWOOD STAFF

The dust has seemingly not fully settled on the Islands Trust Council's (ITC) recent interpretation of its mandate, with both the consensus reached and the closed-door process used to get there coming under fire at ITC's meeting Wednesday, Dec. 6.

In a two-hour-long closed-to-the-public discussion held on North Pender Island back in September, trustees had what ITC chair and Thetis Island trustee Peter Luckham called a "lengthy discussion" about the interpretation of Section 3 of the Islands Trust Act — commonly referred to as the "object" or "mandate" of that body.

Upon returning to public session, Luckham said then only that ITC had "come to a conclusion" of how it wished to interpret Section 3 going forward, and that public release of that information and the interpretation ITC agreed upon would be forthcoming. Rather than a public release, the Driftwood — and the wider public — had its first look at an unofficial "consensus document," dated the day of the closed meeting, when a link to it was embedded in a file published as part of the Trust's Executive Committee's Oct. 11 meeting agenda packet.

"There has been some debate in the past about the meaning of unique amenities," read that report. "Trust Council's view is that unique amenities are broad-ranging and may include issues such as, but not limited to, housing, livelihoods, infrastructure and tourism."

As trustees met at the Coast Victoria Hotel last week, they were questioned during the public comment period on, as one person put it, the "how and the what" of that conclusion — specifically calling out the process for a resulting inability to hold individual elected trustees accountable.

"We strongly object to a trustee discussion, and decision, on a subject so integral to the entire operation of the Trust being

made in a meeting closed to the public," said Galiano Island's Jennifer Margison, speaking for the Friends of the Gulf Islands Society. "The public has been denied the opportunity to hear the views — and to know the voting record — of their elected representatives on an interpretation that fundamentally impacts how the purpose of the Trust is carried out."

Correspondence submitted by Margison and signed by society members on Salt Spring, Gabriola and North and South Pender islands also expressed concern that the Trust was — to the detriment of its mission, they said — under increasing public pressure to "provide more housing and community services, despite these responsibilities belonging to regional districts."

"We strongly object to a trustee discussion, and decision, on a subject so integral to the entire operation of the Trust being made in a meeting closed to the public."

JENNIFER MARGISON
Friends of the Gulf Islands Society

Blame for that, according to the letter, was partly due to what they characterized as the Trust's mixed messaging on its jurisdiction — most recently exacerbated through the now-public mandate consensus document listing subjects like infrastructure and housing.

"By including these new subjects as 'amenities' and equating them with the environment, how is the Trust now relevant as a 'special purpose government?'" said Margison. "How is the Trust still a trust?"

A second letter from society members further questioned why trustees did not simply issue a "rise and report" after the Sept. 26 closed session, then plan an open meeting to discuss and arrive at a new

interpretation of the mandate. It also asked whether First Nations were consulted in the interpretation, and whether the text itself was presented to trustees that day in September as a draft created by staff, or by trustees.

The letter also strongly suggested that the document released regarding the closed meeting seemed to use words such as "consensus" or "determination" — rather than "decision" — in ways that further obscure the already opaque process.

"Is the 'consensus' a decision by trustees through a vote and, if so, was it unanimous or not?" read the letter. "If there was no vote, how was it agreed to?"

Answers were not immediately forthcoming. At the end of ITC's three-day meeting, as the disposition of delegates was set to be considered, chair Peter Luckham said he felt there wasn't specific action needed on what they'd heard. Trustee Tobi Elliot did ask fellow trustees whether, given the public comments, they should consider addressing the matter, perhaps issuing a new report or taking other action.

Bowen Island municipal trustee Judith Gedye, who chairs the Trust's Governance Committee, said there was something "in the works," but did not specify a date. That committee had prioritized the mandate interpretation since members were appointed in December 2022, to address what the released report called a "deep division amongst both trustees and constituents" on its meaning and implementation.

"At the last Governance Committee, one of the pieces of 'homework' that I agreed to pick up was to try to re-draft something to bring to the Governance Committee," said Gedye, "that would then go to Executive Committee. And I haven't had the time to do that."

Section 3 of the Islands Trust Act — the "mandate" — instructs the Islands Trust to "preserve and protect the Trust Area and its unique amenities and environment for the benefit of the residents of the Trust Area and of British Columbia generally, in cooperation with municipalities, regional districts, improvement districts, First Nations, other persons and organizations and the government of British Columbia."

Ask the Expert

Q: How can I instill good financial habits in my children?

Expert: Siobhan McKenzie,
Assistant Branch Manager—Ganges



A: Start early The best way to raise money-smart kids is to instill financial education as early as possible and incorporating lessons into everyday activities. Bring your child grocery shopping and tell them why you chose one product over another. Pay with physical cash sometimes too, so kids can see that it's finite.

Make it fun Kids love games. So, a fantastic way to make financial literacy stick is to play an activity that involves money. Set up an imaginary grocery store and give your child a budget to purchase items for your "dinner." This will teach them how to effectively manage cash.

Set savings goals Once kids start to earn a bit of cash, teach them about saving for something special, like a toy or tickets to a hockey game. By introducing long-term savings habits, they'll better understand the value of having a nest egg later in life.

Teaching your children how to responsibly handle money is a great way to prepare them for a more secure financial future.

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ARTS + ENTERTAINMENT

ARTS EDUCATION

SS Arts program inspires creativity

Fernwood students develop festive performance with Sue Newman

SUBMITTED BY SS ARTS

Salt Spring Arts' Artist in the Class (AiC) program has been connecting local schools with local artists for over 20 years.

AiC was created to increase opportunities for youth to engage in rich, hands-on arts creative experiences with professional artists. Workshops are delivered at no cost to schools, making it accessible for teachers to bring in artists and implement creative learning.

Artist in the Class offers a wide range of arts instruction, from clay, printmaking and painting to music, theatre arts and more. The workshops promote imagination and introduce kids to activities that otherwise may not be accessible to teachers.

This season, two classes at Fernwood Elementary School worked with local musical theatre professional Sue Newman, who conducted a workshop titled Winter Wonderland. Students collaborated with their classmates to develop a festive performance to showcase to their families and peers ahead of the holiday break.

"I've always loved working with children," said Newman. "To be honest, it feels like playing. Sharing performing arts skills and allowing the flow of imagination has always filled my world with a way of interacting with others when words are hard to find."



PHOTO COURTESY SALT SPRING ARTS

Fernwood Elementary School children perform in their Winter Wonderland show.

Through AiC, teachers have a direct connection to professional artists, exposing students to many art forms.

"Having an experienced artist come into our classroom to share their talents has inspired our students in many ways. They are learning how to work like a team and explore a wide variety of artistic outlets," said Fernwood Elementary kindergarten teacher Malindi Curtis. "Sue Newman's calm and creative teaching style has been a joy to watch and a gift for students. When it is an 'Artist in the Class' day, the children are

all very excited to go and practise their singing and a wide variety of dance movements. It has been a wonderful experience having Sue coordinate our Winter Wonderland performance this year."

The Artist in the Class program bridges the gap between Salt Spring Island artists and schools, promoting creativity and innovation in local kids. Salt Spring Arts thanks AiC sponsors, the Wilding Foundation and Country Grocer Pharmacy. Visit saltspringarts.com or contact Salt Spring Arts for more information.

CONCERT PREVIEW

Singers celebrate winter season

Beautiful songs, humour and a Gordon Lightfoot tribute

BY GAIL SJUBERG
DRIFTWOOD STAFF

Salt Spring Singers have an extra special treat to deliver to audiences this weekend when they present their last concert of 2023 at All Saints by-the-Sea.

Running Saturday, Dec. 16 at 7:30 p.m. and Sunday, Dec. 17 at 2 p.m., the first half of Songs for a Winter's Night puts the musical focus on celebrating the winter season, rather than Christmas specifically.

"There are a lot of wonderful composers that have provided choral music along that theme," said Singers director Don Conley. "So we have songs about the wonder of winter, songs about winter lullabies, and different medieval songs that talk about winter, going back to Thomas Tallis, an English composer, using some of his music and some madrigals as well."

The concert's second half is a tribute to the legendary Gordon Lightfoot, who died earlier this year.

Since Singers concerts typically involve some humour, the audience will enjoy a piece called Various Themes on Fa-La-La, which weaves famous orchestral pieces into the Deck the Halls tune.

Another piece, It's the Most Wonderful Time of the Year by Andy Williams, will be familiar, and a few lovely pieces by renowned choral composers will gain new fans. Those include Morten Lauridsen's Sure on This Shining Night, a luscious piece set to a James Agee poem, and The Rose, a composition by Ola Gjeilo, whose works are among the most popular in new



PHOTO BY DAVID BORROWMAN

Salt Spring Singers director Don Conley at the choir's 50th anniversary concert in May 2023.

choral music.

For something completely different, two tango dancers will grace the stage when the group performs Greg Gilpin's Holiday Tango piece.

The Lightfoot tribute has the choir singing Lightfoot's Pussywillows, Cat-Tails, and Song for a Winter's Night. Well-known local singer-songwriter Peter Prince will lead the presentation of four other popular Lightfoot songs — Canadian Railroad Trilogy, Early Morning Rain, Steel Rail Blues and If You Could Read My Mind — with the audience invited to sing the choruses and some verses. Deb Smith will play bass and Singers accompanist Ben Neufeld will be on keyboards for that section.

Tickets for the shows are sold in advance through ArtSpring and at the door, if space permits.

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ACCOMPANIST: BEN NEUFELD

SPECIAL GUEST: PETER PRINCE

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HOLIDAY ENTERTAINMENT

Afternoon of carols on Dec. 20

No snow predicted for Carols for Christmastide date this year

SUBMITTED BY MUSIC MAKERS OF THE ANGLICAN PARISH

Carols for Christmastide, the annual community carol sing held at All Saints by-the-Sea, is back after both a COVID hiatus and a disappointing cancellation in 2022 due to snow.

Hosted by Music Makers of the Anglican Parish, this year's concert

is slated for Wednesday, Dec. 20 at 2 p.m.

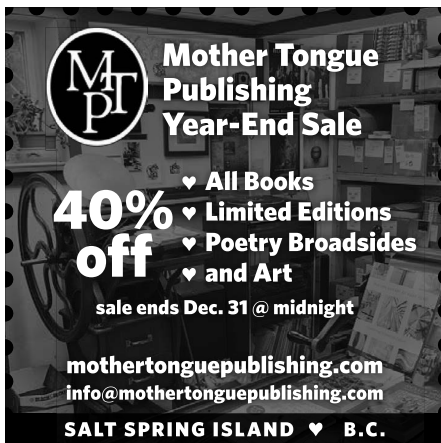
The popularity of this hour-long afternoon event may be due to both the start time, which allows for daylight driving, and the ambiance of candlelit intimacy, with the traditional sounds of the pipe organ in this acoustically excellent venue.

It also offers islanders the opportunity to take a break from the Christmas rush and enjoy time together over delicious Christmas fare, including traditional Christmas cake, mincemeat pies, mulled apple juice and more.

Accompanied by All Saints by-the-

Sea choir director David Storm at the piano and organ, the All Saints' choir will be leading the familiar carols, with soloists performing seasonal gems that bring Christmas straight to the heart. Those include the enchanting voice of soprano soloist Jean McClure, and the duo of alto Anke Smeele and soprano Connie Holmes, who will be performing favourites from their seasonal repertoire.

Admission to Carols for Christmastide is by cash donation. Refreshments are a suggested \$4, with all proceeds going to the Salt Spring Island Food Bank.



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what's on this week

Wed. Dec. 13

LIVE ENTERTAINMENT

Christmas With Scrooge. Pay What You Can Night at Fulford Hall. 7 p.m. Advance tickets only at Salt Spring Books.

GISS Music Winter Showcase: All Together We Are Love. ArtSpring. 7:30 p.m.

ACTIVITIES

Bridge. Every Wednesday at the Salt Spring Library program room. 12:45 to 4:15 p.m.

Music Bingo. Moby's Pub. 7:30 to 10:30 p.m.

Thur. Dec. 14

LIVE ENTERTAINMENT

Christmas With Scrooge. Fulford Hall. 7 p.m. Advance tickets only at SS Books.

GISS Music Winter Showcase: All Together We Are Love. ArtSpring. 7:30 p.m.

Open Mic. At the Legion. 7:30 p.m.

Craig's Karaoke. At Moby's Pub. 7:30 to 11 p.m.

ACTIVITIES

Salt Spring Local Trust Committee Meeting. At the School District 64 Learning Hub. 9:30 a.m. Or attend virtually through the Islands Trust website.

Mother Goose. Free group experience for babies, young children (0-4 years) and their parents/caregivers. Presented in partnership with Family Place at the Salt Spring Public Library. 10 to 11 a.m.

Fri. Dec. 15

LIVE ENTERTAINMENT

Christmas With Scrooge. Fulford Hall. 7 p.m. Advance tickets only at SS Books.

Karaoke. At the Legion. 7:30 p.m.

Friday Nights With DJ Boomtown. Moby's Pub. 9 p.m. to 12:30 a.m.

ACTIVITIES

Moms Stop the Harm Meeting. Third floor of The Core. 12 noon. Info: momsstoptheharm.com.

Fri. Dec. 15

ACTIVITIES

Neighbourhood Story Time. Stories for young ones read by community members or library staff in the library's children's area every Friday from 11 to 11:30 a.m.

ASK Salt Spring. North Salt Spring Waterworks District board chair Brian Pyper and CAO Mark Boysen are this week's guests at SIMS. 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Youth Games & Chess Club. For ages 9 to 13. Children's area at the library. 1 to 4 p.m.

Sat. Dec. 16

LIVE ENTERTAINMENT

Songs for a Winter's Night. Salt Spring Singers concert featuring songs of winter, plus a Gordon Lightfoot tribute and sing-along. All Saints by-the-Sea. 7:30 p.m.

Christmas With Scrooge. Fulford Hall. 2 p.m. and 7 p.m. Advance tickets only at SS Books.

Brandon Isaak. Live at the Legion. 7:30 p.m.

ACTIVITIES

Salt Spring Island Christmas Market. Local vendors and artisans. Presented by PARC at SIMS. 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Farm Stand Light Up and Tour. Self-guided tour of island farm stands. Meet the maker at some stands from 12 to 3 p.m. today. See map at gulfislandsdriftwood.com.

Shamanic Dreamweaving: 13 Looms. Shamanic dreamwork and loom beading workshop at Salt Spring library program room. 10:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. Register via email to mamawicreations@gmail.com.

Sun. Dec. 17

LIVE ENTERTAINMENT

Songs for a Winter's Night. Salt Spring Singers concert featuring songs of winter, plus a Gordon Lightfoot tribute and sing-along. All Saints by-the-Sea. 2 p.m.

Christmas With Scrooge. Fulford Hall. 2 p.m. matinee. Advance tickets only at SS Books.

Blues Jam. Legion. 3 to 6 p.m.

Sun. Dec. 17

ACTIVITIES

Salt Spring Island Christmas Market. Local vendors and artisans. Presented by PARC at SIMS. 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Farm Stand Light Up and Tour. See map at gulfislandsdriftwood.com.

Mon. Dec. 18

LIVE ENTERTAINMENT

Merry Monday. Christmas carol singing led by Valdy in the SS Mercantile parking lot in Fulford. 6 p.m.

ACTIVITIES

Saltspring Cyclists Group Ride. Meet at OutSpokin Bike Shop every Monday at 9:30 a.m. All types of bikes and levels of experience welcome. Free event.

SSI Fire Protection District Trustees Meeting. Ganges Fire Hall. 7 p.m., or online.

Tue. Dec. 19

LIVE ENTERTAINMENT

Christmas With Scrooge. Fulford Hall. 2 p.m. and 7 p.m. Advance tickets only at SS Books.

Country Band With Open Mic. Legion. 6 to 9 p.m.

ACTIVITIES

Trivia Tuesday. Moby's Pub. 7:30 to 9:30 p.m.

Wed. Dec. 20

LIVE ENTERTAINMENT

Carols for Christmastide. Community carol sing with All Saints choir at All Saints by-the-Sea. 2 p.m. Followed by seasonal treats.

Christmas With Scrooge. Fulford Hall. 7 p.m. Advance tickets only at SS Books.

ACTIVITIES

Christmas Feast For Teens. Free games, music and dinner at The Core. 4 to 7 p.m.

Music Bingo. See last Wednesday's listing.

Bridge. See last Wednesday's listing.

CINEMA

• **The Holdovers** runs Friday, Dec. 15 to Tuesday, Dec. 19 at 7 p.m. each night plus a 3 p.m. matinee on Sunday. See thefritz.ca for more movie info.

• **Plus National Theatre Live: Waitress: The Musical** — one day only on Thursday, Dec. 14 at 3 p.m. and 7 p.m.

EXHIBITIONS

• **Gallery 8** presents the 15th Annual Christmas Exhibition of Small Works daily through Dec. 31.

• **Artcraft Winter** runs daily through Dec. 23, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., and Dec. 24 from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

• **Salt Spring Gallery** artists present their Small Works show Tuesdays through Saturdays until Dec. 21.

• **Deck the Walls: Nature Prints** at the Library. New works by the SSI Printmakers are on display until Dec. 30.

• **Katie Watt: A Retrospective** is the ArtSpring lobby-area show until Dec. 22.

• **Dulcy Wilson** is showing her flower-themed paintings at Harvest Moon through December.

• **Festival of Trees** runs at the Harbour House Hotel daily from Dec. 1 to Jan. 2. Bring a donation for the food bank to place under your favourite tree.

Merry Monday

Annual carol singing event led by Valdy in the Salt Spring Mercantile parking lot.
Monday, Dec. 18, 6 p.m.

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ISLAND LIFE

CHARITY

Birthing Families Foundation awarded \$14,500

Latest 100+ Women Who Care event

SUBMITTED BY 100+ WOMEN WHO CARE SSI

After three compelling five-minute presentations, including from Beaver Point Hall and ArtSpring, doula and volunteer Madison Greggains' presentation on behalf of the Birthing Families Foundation (BFF) was declared the winner during 100+ Women Who Care's meeting on Nov. 14.

The organization was awarded the collected total of \$14,500 to go towards direct family funding as well as supporting the goal of living wages for on- and off-island referral coordinators and the doulas themselves.

Founded in 2017 and achieving charity status in 2020, BFF is a reproductive justice-based charity based on Salt Spring that provides essential support for vulnerable people and rural families throughout the Gulf Islands and Vancouver Island before, during and after giving birth.

The care offered by BFF is in the form of skilled doula services, integrative community support and food security.

"Birthing and raising a newborn is a valuable contribution to society, and we believe all women and birthing people should receive ample support, not solely the privileged few," said BFF executive director Sadie Hodswood. "Our programs help families who face barriers in the health care system, resulting in increased rates of maternal mortality, infant mortality, postnatal depression and other negative birth outcomes due to systemic racism, lack of resources or structures within the institutional



PHOTO COURTESY 100+ WOMEN WHO CARE SSI

A ceremonial cheque for \$14,500 is held by Madison Greggains of the Birthing Families Foundation (the tallest person with the cheque) and others at the most recent meeting of the 100+ Women Who Care group on Salt Spring.

health care system. We are looking to fill in the gaps."

Birthing in a rural setting such as Salt Spring is noted to come with barriers and challenges, but a maternal health care crisis has been experienced over the last three years because of a lack of government funding for midwives on island and obstetrical staff at the hospital, putting strain on the community.

Fifty per cent of birthing families transfer care off-island for various reasons, with all high-risk pregnancies being asked to transfer off-island at 37 weeks. This can be stressful, disruptive and potentially expensive for spouses and families facing travel, accommodations, pet care and missed work.

"Another consequence is the increase in unassisted deliveries

occurring at home in our community, some due to the feeling of being forced into the choice," explained Greggains. "This comes with a lot of risk, so being connected to our doula care can help with recommendations on resources, doulas can go off-island to support the client, and we help with continuous care after labour."

A doula is a trained, non-medical professional who provides patient advocacy, as well as physical, emotional and informational support for people through their pre-natal, birth and postpartum periods. It is considered a private for-pay service, and as such, through close collaboration with community partners such as the local midwives, Islanders Working Against Violence (IWAV) and the Salt Spring Doula Collective, BFF covers the cost on behalf of families who cannot afford it.

A community food program was also established as local doulas who worked with postpartum clients witnessed families needing the food bank and sometimes subsisting on cereal for weeks at a time. Increasing food security and providing balanced, ready-to-serve meals to families is being made pos-

sible with support from Harvest Kitchen and Woodshed Provisions.

Recent research has demonstrated that when families, especially those who are vulnerable, are supported through the entire perinatal period and beyond, they experience improved birth outcomes and enhanced early childhood development, including reduced rates of child removal.

"For 100+ Women Who Care to invest in us means knowing we are supported by a larger net of community women who believe in valuing health care equity, young families and our outreach care workers," said Hodswood. "That feels heartwarming and inspiring."

The 100 Women Who Care initiative was launched in 2006 as a simple, efficient, and effective collective fundraising model for charities. One hundred (or more) women each contribute \$100 and vote for one of three nominated charities three times a year. There are now over 400 chapters active across North America.

Celebrating its fifth anniversary, the Salt Spring branch has raised over \$250,000 for 14 causes, including elder-care services, pathways, early childhood education, the SPCA, IWAV, Island Community Services, and Salt Spring Search and Rescue.

Nominations deadline for the next 100+ Women Who Care vote is Jan. 27, 2024.

Book your FREE Hearing Test today!

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COMMUNITY

Stocking program in need

Seniors supported by volunteer effort

BY DRIFTWOOD STAFF

A successful program that delivered more than 200 stockings and gifts to Salt Spring's seniors is on for a second year, according to organizers — but fewer donations this year are making it harder to hit their goal.

"It's a tough year for many," said Stocking Stuffers for Seniors coordinator Brad Hefferon, who along with Sylvia Andress and many helpful volunteers are bringing back the program. "We are looking to fill even more for seniors in our community this year."

For 2023, the program has ordered holiday gift bags to streamline the process, Hefferon said. The group is requesting either a \$25 donation to sponsor a stocking (e-transfer to stockingstuffersforseniors@gmail.com), or items, such as gift cards, puzzles, slippers and jams. Goodies can be dropped off at special gift boxes, on the covered deck at 226 Tripp Rd. or on the covered porch at 2454 Fulford-Ganges Rd.; volunteers will be sorting and packaging things prior to delivery the week of Dec. 18.

For questions, call or text Hefferon at 604-363-5639 or Andress at 250-537-7012.

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page 8

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S/V Kaleidoscope 35ft fiberglass multicolor hull/white upperdeck, no mast beached in Ganges Harbour Saltspring Island B.C. File#: POL 1026-2023

S/V Mystic Star 45ft Black Ferro Cement with yellow stripe moored in Ganges Harbour Saltspring Island B.C. File# W2023-502737

26' S/V sunken near breakwater entrance Port Browning Harbour. File# W2023-502882

22' white fiberglass S/V "Dragonfly" moored in Port Browning Harbour. File# JH-PH-201

In accordance with section 39 of the Wrecked, Abandoned or Hazardous Vessels Act (WAHVA), the Minister of Transport may dispose of a vessel, wreck or their contents, if considered to be dilapidated, abandoned or likely to deteriorate rapidly.

This notice serves as official notice of the Minister's intention to dispose of these vessels after 30 days from which this notice was given. Should you have any questions, you may contact, Transport Canada's Navigation Protection Program at NPPAC-PPNPAC@tc.gc.ca or 604-775-8867 and reference the noted file#

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OUTDOOR RECREATION

Trail showcases newest conservation area

'New' Reginald Hill access tops at spectacular Salt Spring overlook

BY ROBB MAGLEY
DRIFTWOOD STAFF

Trailhead signage at the new Reginald Hill Conservation Area off Bridgeman Road is, put charitably, understated.

Finding the right spot involves a process of elimination; neighbours on both sides of the 400-acre property, now owned by the Nature Conservancy of Canada (NCC), have thoughtfully added their own signs over the years — "no trespassing, no access" one offers; another confidently asserts "no trail exists."

Regardless, and in the most Salt Spring manner imaginable, I randomly bumped into the granddaughter of one of the parcel's early owners, who helpfully shepherded me to a precise point right by Bridgeman's intersection with Clarinda Road — and pointed to a little sign set into the trees, beckoning walkers to enter.

And it is for walkers only, to the likely disappointment of equestrians and cyclists. No pets, either, in deference to the myriad tiny, fragile species that make their homes here — and very nearly nowhere else, according to the NCC. The threatened sharp-tailed snake beds down here, they say, although I've resigned myself to the reality I'm not likely to see one in late fall. The common nighthawk, far too uncommon now due to habitat loss, is reportedly thriving on both sides of Reginald Hill. But it's a crepuscular bird, and I'm not.

It'll have to be about the forest. Truly, just about every trail on Salt Spring Island is near-magical, at least on a sunny day; and yet somehow Reginald Hill Conservation Area manages to feel exceptional, even on the grey and rainy. The start immediately drops you in a lush, dense wood, one that's obviously seen its share of logging work, if not recently. The trail through the first section follows an unmistakable former forestry road, carved with tires and a bulldozer blade, reportedly built mostly during the resource boom of the Second World War.

A fact sheet from the NCC puts more than 40 per cent of the trees in the conservation area at "mature" — 81 years old, or older. The most senior survivors, either in a tough place to reach or just a little too misshapen to bother with, are giants. Land among the younger trees, particularly on the "new" eastern side, has been substantially reclaimed by nature; in the rainy season, it's one of those Salt Spring forests that's teeming with oversaturated green things — healthy ferns sprout from thick moss, some full-grown and improbably perched on tree branches 30 feet in the air.

Much of the eastern path, today covered in orange leaves, is a recovering web of social trails; conservationists have set rustic sections of split-rail fence across routes best abandoned, with a polite sign suggesting walkers choose the single common way. It's a recurring theme, and I'm here to respect it — despite tempting glimpses around every corner of some rocky clearing, mossy meadow, or softly dripping water into wetland pond.

The dense land cover habitat holds homes for critters, of course, but it filters overland water too. And despite the robust recovery after forest work in the '40s and '50s, it was a slow process. No reason for hikers to be careless, considering the overarching conservation goal that made the trail possible, or at least "legal." There's an investment here.

The trail splits around three kilometres up a gentle-ish slope, with a short steeper spur to the left that tops out at a Garry-oak-dotted overlook, hemmed in by more split-rail fencing; signs warn of the dangers of treading the other side, but



PHOTO BY ROBB MAGLEY

Split-rail fencing helps visitors stay on the trail and off sensitive ecosystems at an overlook in the Reginald Hill Conservation Area.

conservationists have left us the best view, down toward the mouth of Fulford Harbour.

A return to the main trail starts its transformation — single-track pathway now, it's the end of the old forestry roadway. The route begins heading slightly down and into the mixed Coastal Douglas-fir and Garry oak forests, past visible wetlands and unseen (but heard) dripping creeks, then again clearing away just long enough for another spectacular overlook.

All-in, about \$9 million was spent in acquiring the new land, a mix of public and private funds that covered protective conservation covenants and, eventually, a comprehensive property management plan. None too soon, I think, as I approach the side that borders the nearly linear CRD Reginald Hill Park Reserve — the "old" Reginald Hill Trail. A short cliff and steep traverse guards the boundary between park and conservation area, and a sign explains the difference: bikes, animals, fires and camping should be elsewhere. That didn't deter at least one mountain bike, I discovered; it left a recent track of torn moss down a steep section of rock, not remotely on the trail.

But despite border pressures, that interconnection between undeveloped places was a big part of the value proposition for the conservation purchase. Each section that links to another expands the habitat potential, and broadens the watershed. To the south, Reginald Hill Conservation Area borders Tsawout Reserve lands. Just a bit to the east, while not directly connected, Beaver Point Park's westernmost boundary marks the beginning of a huge run of protected land through Ruckle and all the way to the sea.

It's a peaceful walk, in a special island forest. A little more than seven kilometres covers a hike from the Bridgeman Road trailhead to the border with CRD-managed land, and back again. I marked 218 metres of ascent, but that included the side spur near the top.

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Tuesday, December 26
and will reopen
9am - 4pm on
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December 27.

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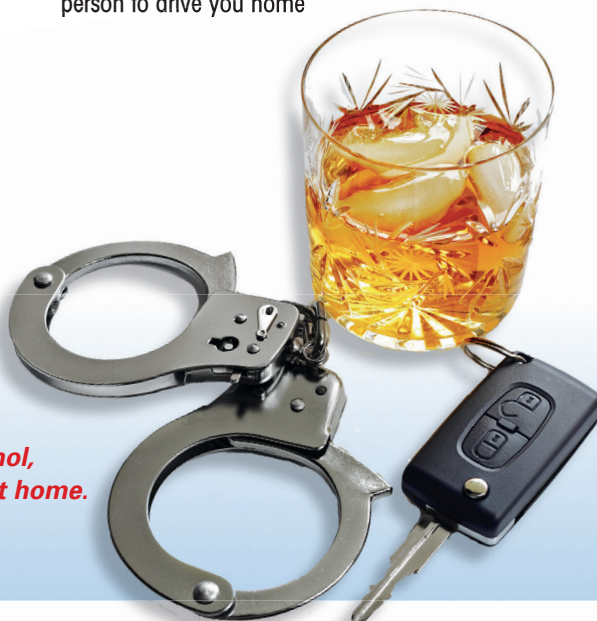
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PLAN AHEAD! No one wants to be part of another statistic or have someone's death on their conscience for the rest of their life. In 2023, there are no excuses for driving under the influence. You have plenty of choices to avoid putting your own safety and that of others at risk.

Here are a few options to consider for a safe holiday season and new year:

- Use public transportation
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