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GULF ISLANDS

Wednesday, Jan. 10, 2024

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Issue 2
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PHOTO BY JASON DONALDSON

ACTING OUT ALICE: Gulf Islands Secondary School theatre students, from left, Tayler DeBruin, Clara Wardlaw, Cass Corbett and Sage Hancock rehearse at the high school for their production of Alice in Wonderland running at ArtSpring on Jan. 10-12 at 7:30 p.m. The high school's dance program students take the stage at ArtSpring next Wednesday and Thursday, Jan. 17-18.

PROPERTY VALUES

'Typical' island home now \$850K

Residential valuations fall; data groups all Gulf Islands

BY ROBB MAGLEY
DRIFTWOOD STAFF

Gulf Islands property owners started the new year with new assessed property values — and they're lower, at least for most residential parcels.

But sussing out the trend from 2022 to 2023 will be more difficult for islanders this year, due to changes in the BC Assessment Authority's reporting. Those changes include electing to group together Salt Spring Island with what used to be considered a distinct outer island "neighbourhood" — a designation in last year's report that included Pender, Saturna, Mayne and Galiano islands.

While not broken down by neighbourhood, the "typical" residential property in the broader Gulf Islands was assessed at \$850,000 for this year, according to a fact sheet, down roughly three per cent from last year's \$874,000.

So-called single family residential properties were assessed at 3.4 per cent less, as measured from July 1 of each year, according to officials; strata property similarly lost 3.2 per cent in assessed value.

In contrast, commercial parcels saw valuation gains — averaging four per cent locally, according to BC Assessment's neighbourhood data, with "light industry" in the Gulf Islands rising 0.7 per cent in assessed value. The trend is similar in nearby areas; North Saanich saw more modest losses in value across residential properties — less than 1 per cent — but commercial and light industry parcels gained 5.1 and 11 per cent respectively. District of North Cowichan residential values fell three per cent for both single family and strata residential properties, while business and light industry values jumped 2.8 and 9.1 per cent.

The total value of all real estate on B.C.'s 2024 Assessment Roll is \$2.79 trillion, an increase of just 3 per cent from 2023.

The province has said a change in assessment value does not necessarily mean property taxes will go up or down by a corresponding amount; taxes are most affected if a specific property rises above (or falls below) the average value change in its geographical area. If tax rates rise enough, however, even a property with falling value could face a higher bill.

To see the assessed value of a property, visit the website bcassessment.ca and enter the address or parcel number. Property owners concerned about their assessments can find contact information there as well, if they feel their valuation or other information is incorrect.

ASSESSMENTS continued on 2

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HOUSING CRISIS

Drake Road project 'a disaster'

Adam Olsen holds out hope for completion of supportive housing project in 2024

BY ROBB MAGLEY
DRIFTWOOD STAFF

Next week will mark the start of a third year of construction delays for a Salt Spring Island supportive housing project — with the gap between housing needs and availability only widening in the interim, according to one elected official.

And there's not much to suggest things will immediately change, says Saaanich North and the Islands Green party MLA Adam Olsen, who expressed his frustration after one resident called the Drake Road project a "mess."

"It's a disaster, is what it is," said Olsen, who visited the island Friday, Jan. 5 as part of his regular participation at the ASK Salt Spring community forum. "And the amount of money that they've spent on it is remarkable, for no progress."

BC Housing first announced it would be building 28 units of supportive housing at 161 Drake Rd. in January of 2022, as the agency — and then-Attorney General and Minister Responsible for Housing David Eby — touted the fast tracking of the project, intended to support and house people experiencing or at risk of homelessness on Salt Spring Island.

In recognition of the situation's urgency, the province used its authority under the Interpretation Act — what is commonly known as "statutory immunity" — to bypass the local zoning process, predicted an opening date for the facil-



PHOTO COURTESY ASK 55

Local MLA Adam Olsen speaks at a previous ASK Salt Spring session at the Salt Spring Island Multi-Space.

ity in late summer of 2022, and announced construction would begin "within weeks."

But through a combination of missteps — what BC Housing officials called "environmental complexities" at the site and challenges with the first contractor — construction has yet to begin. The modular housing set to be erected on the property was reportedly "not suitable" and the agency has seemingly started from square one, with the latest plans calling for a different contractor fabricating new modular units.

"BC Housing was certain that they could overcome any challenge that they faced," said Olsen, pointing to substantial

community skepticism at the time — much of it repeated by local officials — surrounding potential pitfalls like site drainage, and availability of construction material and labour on a small island. "We all saw none of it was going to be delivered as easily as they thought."

In the fall of 2023, as the property languished, a "mutual community support" group of housing-insecure people set up camp in vehicles and tents at the property; a notice of eviction was delivered by BC Housing just before Halloween, and within a week the group had scattered to multiple sites across the island. Since then locally elected officials have been hoping to locate space for that group, with the Capital Regional District (CRD) board looking into legal ramifications of choosing to temporarily suspend enforcement on "no parking" regulations at several Salt Spring parks — at the Rainbow Recreation Centre lot, the parking area in front of Mouat Park, or on the CRD's Kanaka Road property.

"They're very hesitant to give a date [for Drake Road project completion], which I would be too," quipped Olsen. "My hope is that the project gets done this year."

Even if the Drake Road project was completed and fully in-service by now, Olsen said, those units would still not be enough to meet demand on Salt Spring, adding he was doubtful market forces would solve the problem via new legislation such as the recently passed provincial housing bills.

"It's still far less than the community actually needs," said Olsen. "Supportive and affordable housing needs to be an intentional act by the government, as it had been for decades in this country."

Appeal deadline set for Jan. 31

ASSESSMENTS

continued from 1

"Those who feel that their property assessment does not reflect market value as of July 1, 2023, or see incorrect information on their notice, should contact BC Assessment as indicated on their notice as soon as possible in January," said deputy assessor Matthew Butterfield.

"If a property owner is still concerned about their assessment after speaking to one of our appraisers, they may submit a Notice of Complaint (Appeal) by Jan. 31, for an independent review by a Property Assessment Review Panel."

The Property Assessment Review Panels operate independent of BC Assessment, are appointed annually by the provincial government, and typically meet between Feb. 1 and March 15 to hear formal complaints.

Few parcels seemingly immune

The higher-value parcels, at least in the Gulf Islands, were not immune from drops in assessed value.

A property encompassing a home and land on the entirety of Samuel Island — between Mayne and Saturna islands — was valued at over \$19.4 million, down from \$20.7 million last year. To the south, Forrest Island was assessed at \$14.6 million, down from \$15.2 million. Domville Island dropped to \$16.1 million from \$17.1 million; and James Island — the top-valued residential property in the Vancouver Island region — is valued at \$57.9 million, down from \$61.2 million.

James Island's value placed it third among all residential properties in B.C., behind two single family homes in Vancouver's Kitsilano and Point Grey neighbourhoods.

A home and acreage at the tip of Scott Point on Salt Spring Island, which last year had been valued at just under \$13.2 million — \$2.3 million more than the previous year's assessed value, or about a 20.7 per cent increase — fell off the province's top-500 valued residential properties list this year, coming in at \$11.7 million. Outside of the privately held islands, that property is still the highest-valued home in the Gulf Islands, resting at not quite \$1 million higher than its assessment two years ago.

DISASTER RESPONSE

Emergency support planning underway

Public survey launched and open through Feb. 9

BY ROBB MAGLEY
DRIFTWOOD STAFF

With the 2023 fire season safely in the rearview mirror, provincial emergency officials are asking for the public's help to re-tool its approach to supporting people and communities during a crisis.

The Emergency Support Services (ESS) program is due for an update, according to acting Minister of Emergency Management and Climate Readiness George Heyman, who said this week of about 24,300 households in B.C. who were put under evacuation orders this past summer, more than 7,000 of them accessed support from ESS.

"Times like last summer are challenging, uncertain and emotional for people, communities and businesses," said Heyman. "We learned a

lot about how we can better support people in the future from experience — and conversations that are ongoing."

"Times like last summer are challenging, uncertain and emotional for people, communities and businesses."

GEORGE HEYMAN
Minister of Emergency Management
and Climate Readiness

While thousands evacuated en masse in 2023 due to wildfire, support from ESS can come for smaller events as well; on Salt Spring last August, for example, ESS coordinated with the Red Cross to move and temporarily shelter people displaced by an electrical fire at the Kings Lane supportive housing facility.

ESS is meant to provide quick, basic short-term support for people impacted by disasters; in an emergency that could include help with temporary lodging and food or more specialized services like emotional support and transportation.

Officials said the ministry is seeking feedback from evacuees, front-line workers, volunteers, families and businesses about how ESS could be improved; a public survey will be open until Friday, Feb. 9 at: engage.gov.bc.ca/govtogetherbc/engagement/emergency-support-services/.

Feedback collected from the survey, coupled with information gathered through extensive engagement, will support the province's work through the premier's expert task force on emergencies to make enhancements to ESS prior to the 2024 wildfire season, as well as long-term changes, the ministry said.

To learn about the ESS program's Evacuee Registration and Assistance tool, visit ess.gov.bc.ca/.



Salt Spring Island Fire Protection District 2024 Board of Trustees Regular Meeting Schedule

Regular Meetings are held at the Ganges Fire Hall Training Room, 105 Lower Ganges Road, Salt Spring Island

January 15	7:00 p.m.
February 26	7:00 p.m.
March 18	7:00 p.m.
April 15	7:00 p.m.
May 27	7:00 p.m.
June 17	7:00 p.m.
July 15	7:00 p.m.
August 19	7:00 p.m.
September 16	7:00 p.m.
October 21	7:00 p.m.
November 18	7:00 p.m.
December 16	7:00 p.m.

FORESTRY

Defoliating moths targeted for eradication

Spray program planned after effective trapping in 2023

BY ROBB MAGLEY
DRIFTWOOD STAFF

This past summer's efforts to slow an invasive insect infestation were successful, according to provincial officials, who hope a targeted spraying this summer will be enough to eradicate Salt Spring's spongy moth population.

Last seen in the 1990s, the invasive moths were detected again on the island in 2021; monitoring efforts the following year revealed a growing population of the insects (from six to 14), which — while caterpillars — are voracious defoliators of several native tree and shrub species, according to the Ministry of Energy and Natural Resources.

In response, 2023 saw the implementation of a high-density trapping program, one that set out more than 700 bright green tent-shaped traps across three different zones on Salt Spring Island — near St. Mary Lake and around the Vesuvius area.

That program appears to have helped limit the growth and spread of the insects — 14 moths were detected at the end of 2023's trapping — and one 48-hectare area is targeted for aerial spraying this spring to hopefully close the deal.

Across B.C., 13 different aerial spray events will be required by forestry officials in coming months, in several efforts to control spongy moths.

Salt Spring's treatment area is one of the smallest, according to the ministry, partly thanks to last year's traps keeping the population here from becoming more established.

The pheromone traps only lure male moths, although provincial research scientists estimate each unmated pair removed from the population can eliminate as many as 1,000 caterpillars the following year.

Unlike ground-based spraying, such as took place near Lee's Hill in 2007, aerial applications are used partly because they require a lower concentration of the bacteria-based insecticide preferred by the province's Spongy Moth Technical Advisory Committee — in this case expected to be Foray 48B, an Organic Materials Review Institute listed product certified in 2018 for use in organic production.

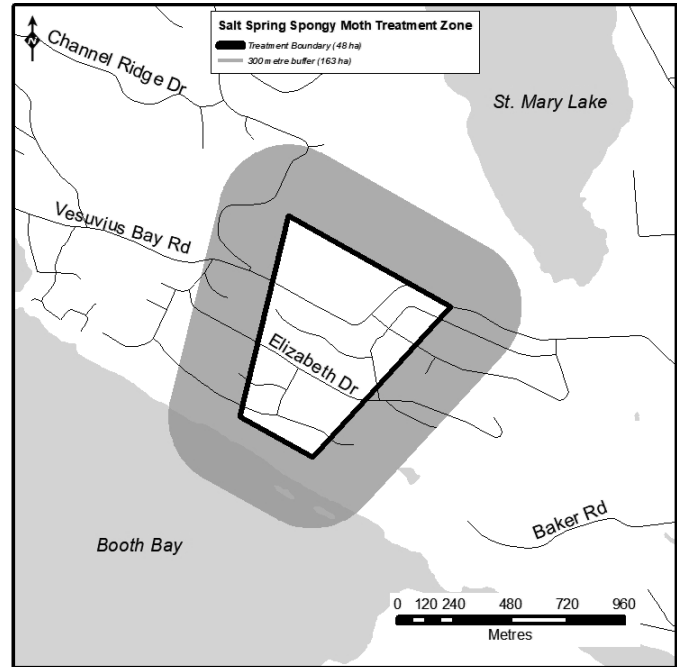
The spongy moth is the common name for *Lymantria dispar*, renamed from "gypsy moth" by the Entomological Societies of both Canada and the United States in 2022. The name references the insect's "spongy" egg masses, often found in the branches of the same deciduous trees the hatched insects will devour — and which have been known to cause rashes when handled.

Recently, the egg masses have been found more often in human-made shelters — including under vehicle wheel wells, which has helped them spread from Ontario into B.C.

Across Canada and the U.S., particularly in the northeast, spongy moths deforest roughly one million acres of forest in an average year, according to the ministry.

Virtual open house sessions will be held in February, officials said, to provide program information and answer questions.

For more information visit www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/industry/forestry/managing-our-forest-resources/forest-health/invasive-forest-pests/spongy-moth.



A map shows the 48-hectare spongy moth treatment zone on Salt Spring Island, centred on Elizabeth Drive and outlined in black, targeted for aerial spraying in the spring. The grey shading indicates the 300-metre buffer around the target area, calculated to account for variable conditions like wind and temperature. Officials said they would hold a virtual information session about the spraying in February.

GOVERNMENT OF B.C. MAP



Islands Trust

Salt Spring Island Local Trust Committee NOTICE OF FIRST READING Draft Bylaw No. 537

NOTICE is hereby given pursuant to s.467 of the Local Government Act, that the Salt Spring Island Local Trust Committee will consider first reading of draft Bylaw No. 537, cited as "Salt Spring Island Land Use Bylaw, 1999, Amendment No. 2, 2023" at its Special Meeting scheduled at 1:30 p.m., Monday, January 22, 2024, via Zoom, Electronic meeting.

What is Draft Bylaw No. 537 about?

Draft Bylaw No. 537 will, if adopted, amend the current Salt Spring Island Land Use Bylaw No. 355 to allow Accessory Dwelling Units, such as secondary suites, cottages, or garden suites, to be established on select properties island-wide.

The Local Trust Committee is not holding a Public Hearing for this Bylaw under the authority granted in Section 464(2) of the Local Government Act that states that a local government may decide not to hold a Public Hearing on a draft Bylaw if an Official Community Plan (OCP) is in effect for the subject area, and the draft bylaw is consistent with the OCP. Draft Bylaw No. 537 is consistent with the OCP for Salt Spring Island.

How Do I Get More Information?

A copy of the proposed bylaw may be viewed at the Islands Trust Office, 1-500 Lower Ganges Road, Salt Spring Island, BC, commencing Thursday, January 11, 2024 and ending Monday, January 22, 2024 during regular business hours (8:30 am – 4:30 pm) or on the Islands Trust website (www.islandstrust.bc.ca/ss-ltc-bylaw-no-537).

Enquiries or Written Comments may be directed to Chris Hutton, Regional Planning Manager by email ssiinfo@islandstrust.bc.ca, or phone at 250-537-9144. For toll-free access, request a transfer to the above telephone number via Service BC: in Vancouver at 604-660-2421 and elsewhere in BC at 1-800-663-7867. Written submissions must be received at the Islands Trust Salt Spring Office via email to ssiinfo@islandstrust.bc.ca or 1-500 Lower Ganges Road, Salt Spring Island BC V8K 2N8, no later than **4:00 p.m. Friday, January 19, 2024.**

Rob Pingle, Deputy Secretary

HOUSING

CRD launches housing vote

\$85 million could be matched by BC and feds

BY ROBB MAGLEY
DRIFTWOOD STAFF

An initiative to authorize additional borrowing in the name of "affordable, inclusive, and adequate" housing across the Capital Regional District (CRD) will proceed in February — providing 90 per cent of the electorate "votes" by sitting on their hands.

Officials announced last week the CRD has begun a regional Alternative Approval Process (AAP), or "counter petition," seeking voter approval for the Land Assembly, Housing and Land Banking service to increase its borrowing to as much as \$85 million to support "future housing partnership opportunities" aimed at increasing the supply of housing.

Debts would not be incurred immediately, but rather borrowing would begin upon the identification of specific projects, which would then face approval through the CRD's normal annual budget process. Proposed Bylaw 4552 also specifically limits the debt servicing cost to a 30-year recovery period, according to officials, and projects would be considered throughout the service area — including Salt Spring Island and the Southern Gulf Islands.

With 331,905 electors eligible to vote within the CRD, the AAP allows the district's board to adopt a new borrowing bylaw if less than 10 per cent — or 33,191 people — submit a signed Elector Response Form indicating their opposition.

And with a threshold of roughly three times the voting population on Salt Spring and the Gulf Islands put together, it's unlikely the electoral areas will have a significant effect on the AAP process, according to Salt

Spring Electoral Area CRD director Gary Holman.

But if the borrowing is approved, Holman said, he sees a big upside; a portion of those dollars will be allocated to electoral areas, a previously unavailable "specific pot" of funding to apply for. Holman told Salt Spring's Local Trust Committee in November that the CRD had already met with the housing minister to request BC Housing match the \$85 million on a "two-to-one basis," and was also approaching the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC).

"CRD will be the first agency to put funding on the table," said Holman, "but I'm optimistic this will encourage matching funding."

If successful, he added, the district would be creating a large fund of a type Salt Spring has historically benefitted from — not unlike the Regional Housing First program that brought matched provincial and CMHC funds to the 54-unit Croftonbrook Islanders Working Against Violence project.

"Matching funding could also be secured on a project-by-project basis," said Holman, adding that one non-profit on Salt Spring has already approached all three levels of government regarding an affordable housing project.

If the counter-petition fails and the bylaw proceeds, early estimates by CRD staff indicate an average-value property on Salt Spring would incur a little over \$2 per month in borrowing cost, Holman said, should the service reach capacity. Costs will however grow gradually, as projects are approved and funded, likely over several years.

Deadline for submitting signed elector response forms is noon on Monday, Feb. 5. More information about the AAPs, including copies of the elector response form, can be found at www.crd.bc.ca/landbanking-aap.

OPINION

2022 CCNA Awards
Gold - Best Editorial Page | Gold - Outstanding Community Service | Silver - Best Front Page
Silver - Best Local Editorial (Gail Sjuberg) | Silver - Best Local Cartoon (Dennis Parker)

2022 BCYCN Awards
Silver - Best All Round (for circulation Category C)
Silver - Community Service Award



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EDITORIAL

Planning ahead

Islanders can be forgiven for being distracted and having one eye on the weather forecast this week.

Our region has so far had an easy go of it this winter, weather-wise, but it seems that trend is about to change.

Predictions for the coming days have ranged from a single dump of 10 centimetres of snow to -12° temperatures to a few days of flurries. We know some form of winter weather is headed our way but the specifics are not certain, which heightens anxiety more than when the forecasters issue confident statements.

Since memories can be short, it's worth reiterating that people whose vehicles are not equipped with tires suited for winter driving should not venture out in the snow; or find themselves out and skidding their way home after the snow starts to fall. Even with adequate tires and/or a four-wheel-drive vehicle, the fewer trips made the better. There is still time to get provisions for the coming days to avoid having a reason to go out in the snow.

THE ISSUE: Emergency planning

WE SAY: Take government survey

While no one expects the coming winter weather challenge to be catastrophic in any way, it's timely that the provincial government has launched a survey to help improve its Emergency Support Services (ESS) system. With more than 24,000 people evacuated in 2023 due to wildfires, the ESS program was severely put to the test last summer, resulting in demands that it be examined. A BC Ombudsperson's study and report issued last October found that current programs "are outdated, under-resourced, inaccessible for vulnerable evacuees and poorly communicated." It called on government "to take urgent action to better support people who are increasingly being displaced from their homes for long periods by extreme weather events."

The online survey (at engage.gov.bc.ca/govtogetherbc/engagement/emergency-support-services/) is short and simple. Respondents do not need to have had an evacuation experience to provide useful input. Questions are predominantly aimed at determining what kind of services people would need and how they would prefer to receive them, acknowledging technological options that offer more flexibility.

We may be more preoccupied with winter's wrath at the moment, but it's an ideal time to take a few moments to help with planning for harsher events that may be coming down the road.



PARKER

Play cancellation saddens

The following was sent to the Victoria Belfry Theatre's artistic director Michael Shama-ta and executive director Isaac Thomas regarding the cancellation of *The Runner* play, and filed with the Driftwood.

VIEWPOINT

BY HANNAH BROWN

I knew that you would make this decision and I am very sad that a bullying and violent part of our community can have this kind of power. The content of this play did not take a position on what is happening in the Middle East. It presents what happens between people when they are responding to their higher self . . . the part of them that asks them to behave ethically and morally.

The people who have defaced your building with anti-Israel stickers and paint and who are threatening, yelling and protesting in a violent way are not accessing the moral and higher part of their spiritual being. They are committing a crime and not participating in democratic dialogue. They are simply intimidating us. What topic will be next?

I have no answers, at this point in time, only a specific answer for you, which I have outlined below. I feel that there will be more and more hijacking of our democratic institutions and rituals by an unlearned minority that believes that might is right and gets away with it.

Throughout history, "art" has always been a place in which we dialogue and consider a variety of opinions and perspectives. Therefore, since we are deviating from this, we need to state clearly why we are not presenting a play that actually makes no statement about the Israel/Gaza conflict but is Jewish in content only by its affiliation with Zaka, a non-governmental rescue and recovery organization in Israel, staffed by volunteers. It responds to any emergency in Israel for

Bedouins, Christians, Jews or Muslims, and Israel's population of 9 million people has over 2 million who are not Jewish. We need to clearly state that

it is anti-Semitism that has caused this reaction, not the present conflict in the Middle East. We need to say that it is anti-Semitic people who will harm you all and those of us who will attend. Anything other than that is untrue and means we are not speaking clear to this situation . . . at our peril.

My strong request is that you do not put on anything else in *The Runner's* place. Let it be a time of mourning for the defacement of our values . . . a period of mourning for the arts, whose job it is to challenge us to think beyond our borders. This would then be a non-violent response to this violent protest . . . a much-loved theatre, our Belfry, that is closed because it was unsafe to present a play that had been chosen.

Please do not cover your words by saying "further tensions in our community" and "for sharing values that added to our understanding." There is only one thing to understand: the threat of violence from a very aggressive anti-Semitic minority has brought the closure of this widely acclaimed Canadian play that presents a theme that each of us should consider carefully. In the words of the playwright, Christopher Morris, who is not Jewish, "How do you stay true to yourself and live in a moral way, when circumstances tell you it'd be easier not to?" and "Life is precious and short, so how do you live a good life while you have it?"

I would be glad to write a letter to our community asking them to donate their ticket price for *The Runner* to the Belfry. As well, I think there are donors who would support this with additional funding. I would be happy to phone them.

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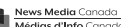
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THIS WEEK'S POLL QUESTION:

Do you support paying higher taxes to help build public housing?

Yes No

LAST WEEK'S QUESTION:

Should the province give NSSWD access to lower interest rates?



Cast your ballot online at www.gulfislandsdriftwood.com before Monday 2 p.m. or clip this box and drop it at our office before Monday at 2 p.m.

ISLAND VOICES

LETTERS to the editor

Alternate housing route suggested

I would like to suggest the concept of a public/private partnership applied to housing, both in general and specifically here on Salt Spring Island.

A local business figure has obtained a property on Jackson Avenue that would be appropriate for this concept, which could devote 33 per cent of its space to worker and/or low-income housing.

The concept is thus: A three-storey building with the ground floor dedicated to retail, the second floor devoted to rent controlled worker/low-income housing, and the top floor devoted to high-end, luxury condominiums for sale to those who can afford such.

BC Housing would contribute some financial assistance/incentive, and local government would zone the property appropriately.

The Salt Spring community, local government and province would reap the benefits of an expanded affordable housing base with a relatively small capital investment.

The business owner would reap the benefits of retail space rental and condominium sales with expedited zoning and decreased initial investment (and enhanced profitability).

This model could be applied to not only Salt Spring Island but in theory to numerous sites throughout Canada.

PETER MEYER,
SALT SPRING

More good local energy news

Regarding the Dec. 27 *Electric Switch* editorial, yes, it's all happening, if a little slower than one would like sometimes.

But this good news extends to the solar generation we've seen develop on island to complement the electric transportation. At 134.5kW, IWAV's new Croftonbrook building has the largest single project in the Gulf Islands and that too will be powering local kilometres when the electrician wires up the chargers already on site!

KJELL LIEM,
SALT SPRING COMMUNITY ENERGY SOCIETY

Help prioritize safety issues through new group

As we enter the new year we are setting up a consultative group called *Cycle, Walk, Ride, Drive – Salt Spring*.

This is a groundbreaking initiative seeking community input to prioritize Salt Spring pedestrian, transit, cycling and vehicular safety concerns across the island.

Emphasizing the importance of shared priorities, this initiative will aim to identify and prioritize hazards that need addressing. We are establishing a series of public meetings and other feedback opportunities. Then, by speaking with a single voice, we hope that Salt Spring residents are more likely to get our road safety concerns addressed in a timely fashion.

We want your involvement. You can help us identify road safety priorities by coming to a series of meetings, the first of which will be Friday, Jan. 12 at 1:30 p.m. in

the SIMS (former middle school) building.

If you cannot attend, then please watch out for other meetings on the second Friday of the month. Alternatively, please send your top road safety concerns and how they might be improved to our email address: cyclewalkride@gmail.com.

When concerns have been identified and prioritized, the list will be presented to the Local Community Commission this spring for their advocacy with the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure, and Emcon, our roads maintenance contractor. By speaking as one we might achieve more success.

We hope to see you on Friday or hope to receive a response by email. We want you to be part of the solution.

The *Cycle, Walk, Ride, Drive Consultative Group* thanks you for your help in making Salt Spring roads and pathways safer for all.

AUBREY SMITH,
PETER MEYER,
GAYLE BAKER,
GARY LEHMAN,
SALT SPRING

QUOTE OF THE WEEK:

"Supportive and affordable housing needs to be an intentional act by the government, as it had been for decades in this country."

SAANICH NORTH AND THE ISLANDS MLA ADAM OLSEN, ON THE HOUSING CRISIS

Blackburn watershed property not appropriate for dog kennel

BY SUSAN DE STEIN

Regarding *Trustees chart course for Salty Dog operation* (Dec. 20, 2023 Driftwood):

The Salty Dog operation, now with Islands Trust's blessing, continues to be an affront to its neighbours and to any resident of Salt Spring who values the environment and respects zoning regulations and adherence to the law, including this dog-loving Blackburn Road resident.

Trustees appear to have been influenced by numerous supporters and by what the Driftwood called "star power," quoting Raffi Cavoukian saying the Salty Dog location on Blackburn Road is an "essential service" and praising the dedication of its staff. Note that this "star" is the partial owner of the property, which strongly suggests his viewpoint is less than objective (and whose pocketbook, too, would be compromised should compliance with bylaws be required). The property owners obviously did a great job of rustling up enough support to leave only a few dry eyes at the meeting.

This property, zoned primarily Rural Watershed 1, was bought and developed by its owners who had to know full well that it was not zoned for a dog kennel, indeed, as few properties on the island are zoned to allow for a dog kennel — and for good reason (barking, neighbours, envi-

INRESPONSE

ronmental concerns, etc.)

Of course, multiple patrons of the operation attended the trustees' meeting, no doubt at the behest of Salty Dog's owners. Some ridiculously pointed out the dangers of the island becoming a regime like the totalitarian Soviet Union and yet others quoting the Magna Carta(!). Neighbours have written to trustees with their objections, as I did, but could not attend the meeting. I also wrongly assumed that trustees would err on the side of enforcement and would not tolerate such a blatant disregard for Islands Trust zoning regulations. These letters, including one of mine, a copy of which was provided to the Driftwood, were not quoted in the Driftwood story. None of these objections were cited in the article.

The property itself has been an eyesore since it was purchased, with owners putting in at least two driveways and cutting swaths of trees, then parking trailers and cars on the property and erecting ugly temporary shelters.

Almost immediately after the local Trust committee's discussion just before Christmas, the property benefitted from the Trust's "suspended enforce-



DRIFTWOOD FILE PHOTO

Fulford-Ganges Road side of Salty Dog Retreat, denied a temporary use permit by the Salt Spring Local Trust Committee but still operating while land use and official community plan amendments that could legitimize the use are explored. As of last week, Trust staff confirmed no new applications had been received for the property.

ment," becoming even more of an encampment, with at least one additional trailer, at least one more port-a-potty, a camp-like area for burning (a fire pit with surrounding chairs), and additional cars, suggesting multiple inhabitants of the property. It is an eyesore to say the least, with debris, trash and derelict (or close to derelict) trailers and cars that never seem to move — all visible from the road on various areas on the lot.

So, I'd like to build a cottage on my rural acres, and I guess I should just go ahead and do

that, despite the fact my property is zoned Rural Watershed 1, as is Salty Dog's, (and I am therefore technically not allowed to have a secondary dwelling). "Ask forgiveness, not permission" seems to be the rule these days. I bet I could easily find a contingent of supporters to attend a rezoning or temporary use permit application hearing to say I'm a model citizen.

Oh, and what if I'd then like to become a dog rescue operation? Surely my 10-plus fenced acres (which include a little creek that feeds into Cusheon

Lake, a source of drinking water) would be ideal. I'd be providing an essential service (think of all those sweet-faced rescue dogs!) and having the cottage to house helpers would help ease homelessness. I could tug on lots of heartstrings to get it both funded and supported by my dog-loving friends.

Surely my neighbours would understand the barking, the traffic and perhaps a port-a-potty or two, and ignore any riparian or watershed issues regarding a sensitive creek. They'd understand, don't you think?



PHOTO BY JOHN DENNISTON

BIG SPLASH: Vesuvius resident and photographer John Denniston had a full view of Polar Bear Swim action at Vesuvius Beach on New Year's Day. See last week's paper and our website at gulfislandsdriftwood.com for more Polar Bear Swim photos.



PHOTOS BY BILLIE WOODS

NEW YEAR'S EVE FUN: Stephanie Rhodes, right, was among people wishing all the best to Dale and Susan Schweighardt at the New Year's Eve party at Moby's Pub. After more than 10 years at the helm of Moby's, the Schweighardts recently sold the pub business to Mike and Maria Jacobsen, while below, visiting Odd Luv band members Tina Haidari and Darcy Ladret entertain the crowd.



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DISTRICT**

**NOTICE TO RATEPAYERS OF
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Have you considered running for a
Trustee position on the NSSWD Board?

The North Salt Spring Waterworks District will be
holding a virtual Candidate Information Session for
those who are interested in learning more about
becoming a Trustee.

@ January 24, 2024 7:00 p.m. via Zoom

A presentation by District Staff will be
followed by an opportunity for Q&A.

For more information and the link to the meeting,
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Roses

Sending a bushel of country roses to all the people who helped make the Christmas free-be-do magic happen: Fulford Hall committee, Brody Paine, Mary Ann McColl, Country Grocer, Thrifty Foods, Fields, Harry Burton, Susan, Don, Claudia and Michael Pickstone, Sharon Williamson, Melissa and Charles Hingston, Patricia and John Flannagan, Kate, Judith, Natalie, Margaret, Sonja and Ted Baker, Jeannie, Ben and Jasmine Grey, Christie, Nancy, Patrick, Adrienne, Jim Akerman, Jack and Lefty, Edgar, Marilyn, Tone, Paul, Savannah and family, Maggie Warbey, Lions Club and CHIR-FM. Thank you from Michael and Helga Bagnell.

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CONCERT PREVIEW

Celebrated violinist leads Victoria Baroque

Aisslinn Nosky brings excitement to ArtSpring stage

BY KIRSTEN BOLTON
 FOR ARTSPRING

Victoria Baroque returns to ArtSpring for a Saturday, Jan. 13 matinee with new guest director and showcase violinist Aisslinn Nosky, a Vancouver Island-born global phenomenon who The Boston Globe calls “perpetually fabulous” and The Toronto Star calls “a fearsomely powerful musician.”

With her signature fiery energy and splendor, Nosky leads Victoria Baroque in concerti by Bach, Vivaldi, Handel, Telemann and a mesmerizing contemporary piece called *Falling Still* by Canadian composer Emily Doolittle.

The theme explored in this rich program of music is one of connection: Connection and dialogue between colleagues, between teachers and students, between composers and music lovers, and between the creativity of the natural world and artfulness of human composition. Fittingly, Bach, Vivaldi, Handel and Telemann were all colleagues, students or teachers of each other.

At the centre of this program is the composition from Doolittle, whose creative work and research explores the music-like aspects of animal songs and natural sounds.

Doolittle describes her piece *Falling Still* as “inspired by hearing a European blackbird sing against a gentle background of early morning rain. There is no birdsong in this piece, however.”

She goes on to say “instead, I was interested in exploring the intersection of two different kinds of beauty; that created by a living being like a bird (represented by the flexible, ever-changing melody of the solo violin), and that which is simply the result of an inanimate process like the weather (represented by the continually repeating chord progression in the strings.)”

Like R.S. Thomas’ poem, *Falling Still* draws audiences into meditative stillness, open to the natural world and the flow and pressures of history.

Nosky began playing violin at age three and made her solo debut with the CBC Vancouver Orchestra at age eight.



PHOTO BY SIAN RICHARDS

Victoria Baroque guest director and violinist Aisslinn Nosky, who brings her signature verve to Salt Spring on Saturday.

She has since captivated audiences around the world with her innovative interpretations and impeccable technique as a soloist, director and conductor with orchestras in Boston, Manitoba, New Zealand, Holland, Tafelmusik Baroque Orchestra and the Niagara Symphony.

In 2011, Nosky was appointed concertmaster of the Handel and Haydn Academy of Boston. She is also concertmaster of Bach Akademie Charlotte and has been guest conductor with the Eybler Quartet, which she co-founded. Nosky serves on the faculty of EQ: Evolution of the String Quartet at the Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity. EQ is an

intensive summer course for emerging artists that celebrates the lineage of the string quartet, both as a historical genre and as a freshly invigorated practice in the 21st century.

Now in its 13th season, Victoria Baroque presents dynamic, personal and engaging performances of music from the Baroque and Classical periods with explorations of chamber, orchestral, vocal and choral works. Its mission is to bring audiences closer to the sound-world of the 18th century, “embracing the dance-driven rhythmic vitality, as well as the lyrical and conversational aspects, of baroque music.”

Tickets for Saturday’s show are available online and at the box office, including \$5 youth tickets and \$15 Theatre Angel Tickets, which are now available upon request in person at the box office or by phone.

ArtSpring’s Theatre Angel Program reserves 20 seats per performance at reduced cost for anyone having budgetary barriers to attend the arts. No criteria is required.



RFP Call for Artists
 to perform at 25th Anniversary

communications@artspring.ca for details

CONTEMPORARY MUSIC

Trio performs at All Saints

Simon Millerd, Mike Bjella and Dan Reynolds

SUBMITTED BY MUSIC MAKERS

Hosted by Music Makers of the Anglican Parish, local trumpeter Simon Millerd will be presenting a concert of original music with some off-island friends this weekend.

On Saturday, Jan. 13 at 7 p.m., Millerd will be joined by Dan Reynolds on piano and Mike Bjella on tenor saxophone, clarinet and flute for a unique, enveloping sonic landscape that is enhanced by the excellent acoustics in All Saints by-the-Sea. Their music follows the tradition of jazz as a “melting pot” of different influences, being highly influenced by classical, folk and Indian Carnatic music.

Reynolds, a brilliant pianist and composer from Vancouver, has been joining Millerd for periodic jazz vespers services at the church over the past year. Bjella is no stranger to the island and will be

travelling from Vermont to bring us his highly energetic, inspired and joyful improvisations.

Bjella and Millerd will also be giving workshops at the high school and with local big band Swing Shift at the Salt Spring Island Multi Space for those who are interested in jazz, improvisation, original music and creativity. Get in touch with Michelle Footz at mfootz@sd64.org to learn how to participate. (All welcome, bring your own instrument.)

Reynolds and Bjella have a beautiful duo recording entitled *Love Songs* that is available everywhere. Millerd will soon be releasing a new album called *The Hush*, which features both Bjella and Reynolds, some of which was recorded live at All Saints church last summer. They will again be recording the Jan. 13 concert.

Concert tickets are available at the door for \$20 and \$10 for students. Infants are welcome free of charge. The concert will be one set, no intermission, approximately one hour and 15 minutes in length.

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PERSONAL NARRATIVE

The Flame storytelling event comes to ArtSpring

Renowned workshop leader on island
Jan. 20-21

BY KIRSTEN BOLTON
FOR ARTSPRING



PHOTO COURTESY THE FLAME
Deb Williams, a renowned storyteller, actor, playwright, teacher and co-founder/artistic producer of The Flame.

They say no matter who we are, what we all have in common is a story to tell and a need to be heard. It's how we connect. But what makes a great story, and how can you be a better personal storyteller?

Enter Deb Williams, award-winning storyteller, actor, comedienne, playwright, teacher and co-founder/artistic producer of The Flame — Vancouver's premiere storytelling event — who brings her transformative two-day weekend storytelling workshop to ArtSpring for the first time on Jan. 20-21.

From shy beginners to accomplished public speakers, storytellers of all ages, genders, orientations and cultures are welcome to join what Williams describes as "a joyful, creative and supportive space to learn the foundational rules of effective storytelling."

For the past 15 years of her 35-year career, Williams has led

more than 1,000 storytellers through her workshops in honing the art, craft and structure of creating and presenting compelling stories from life experiences. With practice, tips and encouraging feedback, participants will leave the workshop with several polished and meaningful stories that are entertaining, self-deprecating, heartfelt, unpredictable, healing and community-forming.

Williams acknowledges people arrive with different levels of understanding and skill, and her approach is to quickly deter-

mine each student's expectations for personal and artistic growth. Together, they create criteria for "what makes a great story" and a customized approach. "One of the reasons I'm so inspired to offer these workshops is I have had shy people arrive nervous, suspicious, thinking they don't have any interesting stories," says Williams. "By the end, they have a new confidence and vitality in their ability to shape and share stories about themselves and their lives with family, friends and community. It's a wonderful, empowering, very human transformation."

Williams also has a long list of glowing testimonials from professionals who have engaged with the workshop, ranging from published authors and playwrights, PhDs, teachers, psychologists and social workers, theatre actors and directors, TV personalities and even someone looking for tips for his TED Talk. The class is appropriate for anyone where story matters, personally or professionally.

"Some retake the class over and over, choosing to tell their stories on the stage and other storytelling venues," says Williams. "Many have gone on to create their own touring shows,

write memoirs, novels, children's books, start their own storytelling circles, or incorporate it into their practices. There's so many different ways to share our stories and be stimulated by things we've already done, so you might as well make use of them!"

For people who are seeking a simple weekend of fun or searching to learn a new art form, The Flame Workshop describes itself as a safe place to be vulnerable, embarrassed, laugh, support others and receive encouragement. It has proven to foster connection, new friendships and revitalization, with many participants then setting up local writing or creative groups to continue the communication and exchange.

At the end of the workshop, willing and selected storytellers take to the ArtSpring gallery floor on Jan. 21 to present their perfected stories to family, friends and supporters. Each participant will leave with two to three personal stories of a few minutes long and the skill set to see their lives as story-filled adventures.

This is a two-day workshop. Participants must be able to attend both days (10 a.m. to 4 p.m. each day). Take-home materials provided. Workshop price is \$80, plus

GST. The performance is set for Jan. 21 at 7:30 p.m. with tickets costing \$10.

Register or purchase performance tickets online, in person, or call the box office at 250-537-2102. Space is limited.

The Flame
Storytelling Workshop and Performance

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25th ANNIVERSARY

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what's on this week

Wed. Jan. 10

LIVE ENTERTAINMENT

GISS Theatre Company Presents *Alice in Wonderland*. At ArtSpring. 7:30 p.m.

ACTIVITIES

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

Thur.

Jan. 11

LIVE ENTERTAINMENT

GISS Theatre Presents *Alice in Wonderland*. See Wednesday listing.

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

ACTIVITIES

Mother Goose. For babies, young children (0-4 years) and their parents/caregivers. Salt Spring Public Library. 10 to 11 a.m.

Local Community Commission Town Hall. SIMS board room. 5 to 7 p.m.

Fri.

Jan. 12

LIVE ENTERTAINMENT

GISS Theatre Presents *Alice in Wonderland*. See Wednesday listing.

Fridays With DJ Boomtown. Moby's Pub. 9 p.m. til 12:30 a.m.

ACTIVITIES

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

Fri. Jan. 12

ACTIVITIES

ASK Salt Spring. Saanich-Gulf Islands MP Elizabeth May is this week's guest at SIMS. 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Road Safety Priorities. Meeting organized by a new Cycle, Walk, Ride, Drive Consultative Group to determine top safety priorities for Salt Spring. Bring your ideas to meeting at SIMS. 1:30 p.m.

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

Friday Game Night. For ages 13 to 19. Library program room. 7 p.m.

Sat.

Jan. 13

LIVE ENTERTAINMENT

ArtSpring Presents: *Victoria Baroque*. Bach, Vivaldi & more at ArtSpring. 2:30 p.m.

Vixx. At The Local Pub. 6 p.m.

Gisto & the Grateful Living. Reggae, Afrobeat jam band at the Legion. Doors at 7 p.m.

Simon Millerd, Dan Reynolds and Mike Bjella. Concert of original music at All Saints. 7 p.m.

ACTIVITIES

Community Meeting With MP Elizabeth May. GISS Multi-purpose Room. 6 to 7:30 p.m.

Sun. Jan. 14

LIVE ENTERTAINMENT

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

ACTIVITIES

Salt Spring Forum: University of Toronto Professor Alison Smith. Guest speaks on the topic of homelessness. Mahon Hall. 3 to 4:30 p.m.

Mon.

Jan. 15

ACTIVITIES

Salt Spring Island Fire Protection District. Trustees meeting at the Ganges Fire Hall. 7 p.m.

Tues.

Jan. 16

ACTIVITIES

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

Wed.

Jan. 17

LIVE ENTERTAINMENT

GISS Dance Presents Affinity. High school show at ArtSpring. 7:30 p.m.

ACTIVITIES

Knit Purl Community. People of all levels of knitting/crochet/needlework skill meet every third Wednesday. Library program room. 5 to 7 p.m.

Music Bingo. See last Wednesday's listing.

CINEMA

• *Napoleon* runs Friday, Jan. 12 through Tuesday, Jan. 16 nightly at 7 p.m., plus a Sunday 3 p.m. matinee. Rated 14A; 157 minutes.

See thefritz.ca for more movie info.

EXHIBITIONS

• *This Is Us*, an exhibition by a group of artists of the Yellow Submarine, is at the Salt Spring Public Library Community Program Room through Jan. 29.

• Salt Spring Photography Club exhibits in the ArtSpring lobby from Jan. 8 to 31.

• Anna McColm shows photographs of sandstone at Country Grocer's cafe through January.

• Natascha Wille exhibits *Faces of Forgotten Horses* at the Salt Spring Coffee Cafe.

Alice in Wonderland
GISS Theatre Company show at ArtSpring.
Jan. 10, 11, 12 at 7:30 p.m.

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ISLAND LIFE

LAND PRESERVATION

Pair of parcels conserved on Galiano Island

Habitat areas grow by almost 130 acres

BY ROBB MAGLEY
DRIFTWOOD STAFF

Two Galiano Island properties recently purchased for environmental protection marked a first for one conservation group: both were acquired without a public fundraising campaign.

Galiano Conservancy Association (GCA) development coordinator Martine Paulin said the recent protection of 116 acres at Quadra Hill — and the addition of more than 10 further acres to the existing Mount Sutil Nature Sanctuary — were each accomplished through partnerships that had been developed over several years.

“These two landmark acquisitions enhance biodiversity, increase habitat connectivity, support climate action and protect several provincially listed species at risk,” said Paulin, adding that the now-expanded Mount Sutil property was GCA’s first land acquisition, shortly after the charity was founded in 1989.

The expansion of the remote and relatively undisturbed Mount Sutil meadows and bluffs came thanks to a partnership with the BC Parks Foundation (BCPF), Sitka Foundation and an anonymous donor — protecting an additional 10.4 acres of coastal Douglas-fir forest and sensitive Garry oak bluff habitat. The new protected area, now owned by BCPF and currently referred to as the Mount Sutil Extension, will be leased to GCA for ongoing stewardship, allowing for more effective control of invasive plants and documentation of species-at-risk across both properties. Garry oak and associated ecosystems are home to over 100 provincially listed species at risk, according to the GCA.

The parcel on Quadra Hill is another stretch of coastal Douglas-fir forest long

identified as a “missing piece” in a corridor of protected habitats, connecting Trincomali Channel to Georgia Strait, known as the Mid-Island Protected Areas Network.

The ecologically diverse property was listed for sale by a motivated seller in late 2021, according to Paulin, and has been owned for the past two years by the Aqueduct Foundation, one of the largest grantmakers in Canada, which agreed to step in as an interim owner at the GCA’s request, in order to provide temporary protection until adequate funds could be raised to purchase the land for conservation purposes.

That project was undertaken with the financial support of the Government of Canada through the federal Department of Environment and Climate Change, and an initial opportunity grant from the Islands Trust Conservancy. Further contributions from Sitka Foundation, Habitat Conservation Trust Foundation and private donors enabled GCA to complete the acquisition.

“The ecological value of Quadra Hill is hard to overstate,” said Paulin. “It is home to rare and varied ecosystems, is part of the upper catchment area for the Great Beaver Swamp Nature Reserve and is important for groundwater recharge.”

And, according to GCA, because it is surrounded by existing conservation areas and a common-property forest, the protection of Quadra Hill enhances habitat connectivity and supports a diversity of plant and animal communities across three watersheds.

The Quadra Hill property also plays a role in climate action, according to the GCA, storing an estimated 40,000 tons of carbon dioxide equivalents, and is expected to sequester an additional 8,000 tons over the next 30 years.

For more information, visit www.galiano-conservancy.ca.



PHOTO BY MICHELLE THOMPSON

View from Mount Sutil, on one of two areas recently conserved on Galiano Island. The other area is Quadra Hill. Both acquisitions were the result of funding partnerships.

SOCIAL ISSUES

Homelessness researcher next Salt Spring Forum speaker

Alison Smith at Mahon Hall on Sunday

BY DRIFTWOOD STAFF

A University of Toronto professor who has written a book about the issue of homelessness in Canada is the Salt Spring Forum’s guest at an event this Sunday afternoon.

Alison Smith volunteered in a homeless shelter in East Vancouver when she was a graduate student at UBC. Today, she is an associate professor of political science at the University of Toronto, where her research focuses on housing, homelessness, inequality and social protection.

In 2022, Smith published *Multiple Barriers: The Multilevel Governance of*



ALISON SMITH

Homelessness in Canada.

According to the University of Toronto Press, the book “explores the forces that shape intergovernmental and multilevel governance dynamics to help better understand why,

despite the best efforts of community and advocacy groups, homelessness remains as persistent as ever.”

“These multilevel dynamics are very apparent on Salt Spring Island,” states the Forum, “making Smith the perfect person to help guide our community toward solutions.”

The Jan. 14 event runs from 3 to 4:30 p.m. at Mahon Hall.



Islands Trust

North Pender Island Local Trust Committee NOTICE OF FIRST READING Draft Bylaw No. 234

NOTICE is hereby given pursuant to s.467 of the Local Government Act that the North Pender Island Local Trust Committee will consider first reading of draft Bylaw No. 234, cited as “North Pender Island Land Use Bylaw No. 224, 2022, Amendment No. 1, 2023” at its Regular Business Meeting scheduled at 10:00 a.m., Friday, January 26, 2024, to be held at the St. Peter’s Anglican Church Hall, 4703 Canal Rd, North Pender Island.

What is Draft Bylaw No. 234 about?

Draft Bylaw No. 234 will, if adopted, amend the North Pender Island Land Use Bylaw No. 224 (LUB) to permit multi-family dwellings at the **Plum Tree Court Senior Housing Society** property located at 5719 Canal Road, Pender Island. Currently, the LUB limits the use to only two-family dwellings at this property. There is no proposed change in overall density.

The Local Trust Committee is not holding a public hearing for this bylaw under the authority granted in Section 464(2) of the Local Government Act that states that a local government may decide not to hold a public hearing on a draft bylaw if an Official Community Plan is in effect for the area that is subject to a draft zoning bylaw, and the draft bylaw is consistent with the plan. Draft Bylaw No. 234 is consistent with the North Pender Island Official Community Plan No. 171.

How Do I Get More Information?

A copy of the draft bylaw may be viewed at the **Islands Trust Office, 200-1627 Fort Street, Victoria, BC**, or on the Islands Trust website <https://bit.ly/NPBylaw234> commencing Friday, January 12, 2024 and ending Thursday, January 25, 2024 during regular business hours (8:30 am – 4:30 pm).

Enquiries or Written Comments may be directed to **Brad Smith**, Island Planner by email bsmith@islandstrust.bc.ca, or phone at (778) 679-5185. For toll-free access, request a transfer to the above telephone number via Service BC: in Vancouver at 604-660-2421 and elsewhere in BC at 1-800-663-7867. Written submissions must be received at the Islands Trust Victoria Office via email to vicphsub@islandstrust.bc.ca or Mail or Drop Off: Islands Trust, 200-1627 Fort Street, Victoria, BC, V8R 1H8, no later than 4:30 p.m., Thursday, January 25, 2024.

Jas Chonk, Deputy Secretary

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ISLAND HISTORY

Lemon and strawberry harvests tell the tale

60 years ago

Some items from the Jan. 9, 1964 issue of the Driftwood.

• Though everyone here knows that Salt Spring Island is the banana belt of B.C., outsiders sometimes argue the point. Just to prove us right, the Driftwood this week has received a report from Miss W. Colmer of Fulford Harbour that she has picked a half dozen strawberries from her garden.

Then the clincher came when Mrs. Murakami brought in a lemon weighing 1-1/4 pounds produced by a four-year-old tree at her home on Rainbow Road. The Driftwood has the lemon in the window to prove our story. The strawberries, unfortunately, wouldn't keep well enough.

• Temperatures were high during December and varied little from those recorded for the previous year. Last month claimed a high of 57 degrees on the 31st, and a low of 27 on the 2nd and 10th. Total precipitation for 1963 measured 42.61 inches, a slight increase over the 1962 total of 41.57 inches. More than half of the rain recorded for 1963 fell in the last three months of it.

• The old hospital building on Ganges Hill is showing signs of life once more. Fifteen high school students from the other Islands were welcomed to the new dormitory on January 5th with a snack of fresh cinnamon buns and cocoa.

50 years ago

From the Jan. 17, 1974 issue of the Driftwood.

• There were almost 100 Salt Spring Islanders present on Wednesday last week, when the Salt Spring Island Chamber of Commerce called a protest meeting in Ganges to consider the astronomical increases in commercial assessments.

The meeting endorsed the recommendation that every property owner be urged to file a protest against his assessment in an effort to bring

LOOKING BACK

to the government's attention the widespread indignation over increases in assessments. The meeting also approved a letter to the premier and the minister of municipal affairs protesting the increases.

One property owner reported that his land assessment had increased to 15 times what it was when he bought it 15 years ago. Assessment on vacant land is up to more than double last year's level; vacant or commercial land is now assessed at 50 per cent of its current market value. Residential land is still assessed at 23 per cent of that value.

The government calculates land in Ganges at the price of over \$300,000 per acre.

• The total precipitation for the year 1973 was slightly below the average of about 37 inches.

• Travel will be easier for Salt Spring Islanders heading into Victoria. On Wednesday, Jan. 23, the Bowen Queen will be brought into use between Fulford and Swartz Bay. The new vessel for the run is the sister ship of the Mayne Queen. She will replace the small Salt Spring Queen, whose capacity has been further curtailed by restrictions on her maximum load in deference to her lack of stability.

• Exceptionally high tides this week have brought the water table up in the island coastal areas. They also brought flooding to some low-lying areas.

Among the victims of the tides was Moutat's Mall in Ganges. The lower floor shopping area was closed on Tuesday morning when the tide flooded back into the store area.

• New alternative class at Salt Spring Island Elementary School has the required enrolment, but no teacher has been engaged.

On Monday afternoon last week Trevor Wheeldon reported to the trustees on the committee's views on teachers. He stated that there had been seven applicants interviewed,

but the parents' segment of the committee had only seen three of them.

Donna Watt noted that the committee vote had been split on making an appointment, and that parents wanted the board to make a decision. Mr. Wheeldon outlined at length the qualifications of the candidate favoured by the parents.

"He is not conventional. He does not wear a tie, and his hair is long," commented Mr. Wheeldon.

• Provincial government ministers are moving away from the public. Several weeks ago Chairman C.M. Baltzer of the Gulf Islands School District told his board that the department of education was engaging more and more senior staff.

"Before long we'll have about nine echelons to go through before we get to the minister," he forecast.

25 years ago

From the Jan. 6, 1999 issue of the Driftwood.

• Salt Spring's birth rate may have dipped slightly last year with 62 babies born to island women and registered locally so far.

That figure, obtained from Salt Spring's public health office, is fewer than the 70-80 average recorded in previous years.

However, health nurse Pam MacKenzie stresses the figure could change as hospitals on Vancouver Island and the Lower Mainland may be slow to send birth notifications to Salt Spring.

Of the 62 babies born to island women, 23 were delivered at Lady Minto Hospital. Island doctors delivered about half of those; the other dozen births were directed by local midwives.

Twelve island women gave birth at home.

• The Chamber of Commerce-sponsored Polar Bear Swim drew close to 250 people to the beach, although only a hardy 53 crossed the water's edge.

Stunning weather conditions brought out a heavier than usual

crowd, especially following the snows of the previous two swims. In fact, 1997's was cancelled by the legendary dump of the white stuff.

But 10-degree temperatures and bursts of sun removed any excuse for staying inside. Even the Beachcomber Motel's parking lot was jammed with those looking for pancake-and-coffee sustenance. With folk-singer Valdy on the emcee's mic preparing people for the high-noon deadline, coats came off and costumes went on — a seaweed hat here, an eye patch and a set of Poseidon horns there.

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TIDE TABLES
at Fulford Harbour

JANUARY 2024 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
10	618	3.5	11.5	14	17	0.2	0.7
	1029	3.3	10.8		824	3.6	11.8
	1335	3.4	11.2		1359	2.7	8.9
11	1431	3.4	11.2	15	1735	2.9	9.5
	652	3.6	11.8		59	0.5	1.6
	1114	3.2	10.5		852	3.6	11.8
12	2249	0	0	16	1503	2.3	7.5
	724	3.6	11.8		1856	2.6	8.5
	1201	3.1	10.2		140	0.9	3
13	1529	3.3	10.8	17	919	3.6	11.8
	2333	0	0		1603	1.9	6.2
	755	3.6	11.8		2043	2.4	7.9
	1256	2.9	9.5		222	1.4	4.6
	1629	3.2	10.5		945	3.6	11.8
					1659	1.5	4.9
					2256	2.3	7.5

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ELECTRIC VEHICLES

Per-minute EV charging rate held

Energy-based change not yet accepted by BCUC

BY ROBB MAGLEY
DRIFTWOOD STAFF

Electric vehicle (EV) owners will continue to be billed based on how long they remain connected at BC Hydro charging stations, rather than on how much electricity they receive — at least for the time being.

Effective Jan. 1, a set of interim time-based rates are in effect, which regulators believe will provide a more equitable fee structure while a review of the utility's plans for energy-based rates is completed.

BC Hydro's public EV charging net-

work will bill at 3.03 cents per minute at slower Level-2 chargers, with a sliding — and rising — per-minute scale as the capacity of the charging station increases. For example, a fast-charging station with up to a 25-kilowatt capacity will cost 12.23 cents per minute; a 100- to 200-kilowatt plug will cost drivers 40.4 cents for every minute they stay hooked up.

The British Columbia Utilities Commission (BCUC) approved the new interim rates in late December, after denying a similar plan over the summer as "materially different" from current rates; BC Hydro's earlier proposal introduced rates for charger power level intervals rather than set power levels, new rates for Level-2 charging, and a new

"extended stay" charge to address congestion issues.

The interim per-minute rates will remain in effect until the BCUC completes its review of BC Hydro's full application, expected later this year. BC Hydro's current application hopes for a permanent move to energy-based rates of 28.28 cents per kilowatt hour (kWh) for Level-2 charging, 34.34 cents per kWh for fast charging and an extended stay charge of 40 cents per minute.

Meanwhile, BC Hydro's EV charging network reached 162 fast chargers across the province last week as it opened a new 50-kilowatt unit in Boston Bar. The electric utility has announced a target of 325 before the end of 2025.

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COMMUNITY EVENTS

Festival of Trees keeps branching out

Community benefits in multiple ways

The 10th annual Salt Spring Island Festival of Trees fundraiser was the most-attended yet, according to organizers, raising more than \$6,200 for various local charities.

And in addition to the usual locals, the now decade-long tradition at the Harbour House Hotel seems to be attracting an increasing number of tourists. The festival this year added new events — Breakfast with Santa, Tastes of the World and Decadent Desserts — alongside the Forest of Miracles islanders remember from last year. Proceeds from the Forest of Miracles went to local organizations, including Copper Kettle and the Greenwoods Eldercare Society.

"It is a true symbol of community spirit and holiday cheer," said Harbour House general manager Kelly Armstrong, "uniting local artisans, businesses and volunteers to decorate a dazzling display of Christmas trees."

All of the highest bidders for the trees opted to donate them to families that needed a little extra support during the festive season, she said.

The original Festival of Trees component that sees food bank donations placed under

several decorated trees at the hotel also continued, with the Friends of Kenya tree declared the winner this year.

Southern Gulf Islands Tourism Partnership chair Randy Cunningham said the hope was for the Festival of Trees to continue growing as an event to attract tourists and build up the visitor economy during what has traditionally been the off-season.

"We're seeing that many visitors are eager to participate in community events," said Cunningham. "It's a way to connect the visitor with the place in a genuine way, which helps to create visitation that gives back to our islands socially, culturally and environmentally — not only economically."

Armstrong said travel trade polls have shown that travellers are looking for authentic experiences that are the essence of the communities they are visiting.

"We can see this with the Festival of Trees on Salt Spring, as well as the 'Tastes of the World' event," said Armstrong, noting that raising money for local student athletes' travel expenses gives visitors an opportunity to have a direct impact on the islanders' quality of life.

"It also supports Southern Gulf Island businesses and farms," said Armstrong, "by purchasing their products [for use during the event] during off-peak times."



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If you're among BC's approximately 2 million property owners, you should receive your 2024 property assessment in the mail early in January. If you haven't, call us toll-free at **1-866-valueBC**.

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The 2024 assessments are based on market value as of **July 1, 2023**.

If you have questions or want more information, contact us at **1-866-valueBC** or online at **bcassessment.ca**.

The deadline to file an appeal for your assessment is **January 31, 2024**.

For more property information and assessment highlights, visit **bcassessment.ca**



BC ASSESSMENT

Introducing the Firstborn of 2024

Neve

Neve, Salt Spring Island's first baby of 2024 was born Wednesday, Jan. 3, at 9:10 a.m. — a 7-pound, 11-ounce girl welcomed at home by parents Laura Moldovan and Lewis Muirhead.

A heartfelt thanks to the local businesses who helped welcome Neve with these generous gifts.

A \$50 gift certificate from *West of the Moon*. A \$50 gift certificate from *Pharmasave*. A \$50 gift certificate from *Salt Spring Books*. A baby onesie, booties, baby wash and baby bottom balm from *Old Salty*.

The Gulf Islands Driftwood is excited to offer the first born baby their first print media appearance and keepsake: an 1/8th page, colour baby announcement.



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