The Gabriola Commons. A miracle born of vision, and dedication to community

Editorial

It's easy to look at The Commons in current day, and say, "of course that exists on Gabriola."

But it didn't happen overnight.

First, the property had to go up for sale. That happened in 2005.

With legacy funds from Gabriola activist Jay Mussel, the Amazing Grace Ecological Society (AGES) purchased the farm.

What many today don't realize, is AGES Directors Heide Brown, Shelagh Huston, and Chris Mussel were personally financially responsible for ensuring the mortgage on the Commons was paid.

This lasted until 2008, when the Commons Foundation, who were able to legally take over the title and mortgage from AGES.

Without AGES, the community could very well have lost the opportunity to create The Commons.

There are many for whom current Gabriola can thank for the Commons existence. Those three AGES directors - and the late Jay Mussel - are certainly on the top of the list to need recognition.

Ownership was only the beginning.

The next win in the Commons history was the rezoning of the property. Due to the Commons sitting within the Agricultural Land Reserve, having the Commons rezoned meant getting approval from the Agricultural Land Commission for non-agricultural uses of the land. That was achieved in 2006.

In 2007, an application was made to the Islands Trust for a land-use bylaw (LUB) amendment, which would balance the uses of the Commons. Three years later, the Islands Trust approved the rezoning, and in doing so, created a zoning completely unique at its time in Canada. One that recognizes the propety as a community commons.

All of this happened during a time when Gabriola was working towards the fundraising, rezoning, and building of the Gabriola Community Health Centre, itself a remarkable Gabriola achievement.

And donors paid the Commons mortgage, even as the entire country was going through an economic recession.

One more remarkable feat to mention.

Thanks to donors, the Commons paid off the mortgage in 2017, thirteen years ahead of schedule. There was a ceremonial burning of the mortage in early 2018.

People arrive on Gabriola, and they inevitably ask, "what's the Commons?"

The answer is, "there's no easy answer to that."

Encapsulating the vision of the Commons. The story of the Commons. The scale of the Commons. What it means to Gabriola, is nigh on impossible.

It's a community space. It's Gabriola's space.

And it is there because of the donors and volunteers, past, present, and by necessity, into the future.

As mentioned in the article in this *Sounder*, the Commons has seen the regular donor list dwindle from those 200 donors in 2005, to just 50 in 2025.

While the mortgage is gone, as anyone knows, there is no end to maintenance, upkeep, improvements, and unexpected costs.

The Commons will always need donors and volunteers.

And as long as islanders continue to give and be part of it, the Commons will remain a unique place, on Gabriola, where land and people meet.

Gabriola-Nanaimo Ferry Schedule
IN EFFECT APRIL 1, 2025

FERRY TRAVELLERS SHOULD BE AT THE TERMINAL **10 MIN** PRIOR TO SAILING TO ENSURE THEY ARE ABLE TO BOARD THEIR INTENDED SAILING.

LEAVE GABRIOLA	LEAVE NANAIMO
• 5:15 AM *MON-FRI ONLY*	5:45 AM *MON-FRI ONLY*
• 6:20 AM	
• 7:05 AM *MON-FRI ONLY*	• 6:55 AM *EXCEPT SUNDAYS*
• 7:35 AM *EXCEPT SUNDAYS*	7:35 AM *EXCEPT SUNDAYS*
8:10 AM	• 8:10 AM
• 8:45 AM	8:45 AM
9:20 AM	• 9:20 AM
• 9:55 AM	9:55 AM
10:35 AM	• 10:35 AM *EXCEPT WED (DG)*
• 11:15 AM	11:15 AM
11:50 AM	• 11:50 AM
• 1:10 PM	1:10 PM
1:45 PM	• 1:45 PM
• 2:20 PM	2:20 PM
2:55 PM	• 2:55 PM
• 3:30 PM	3:30 PM
4:05 PM	• 4:05 PM
• 4:40 PM	4:40 PM
5:15 PM	• 5:20 PM
• 5:55 PM *EXCEPT WED (DG)*	6:30 PM
• 7:05 PM	• 7:40 PM
• 8:15 PM	• 9:25 PM
• 9:55 PM	• 10:30 PM *EXCEPT WED*
• 11:00 PM *EXCEPT WED*	• 11:30 PM

SAILINGS WITH • ARE THE GABRIOLA-BASED SHIP
DC: THESE SAILINGS ARE REPLACED BY DANGEROUS CARGO SAILINGS. NO OTHER PASSENGERS OR VEHICLES ARE PERMITTED

<- SCAN THE QR CODE TO CHECK THE GABRIOLA FERRY CAM

THE FERRY WEBCAM HAS BEEN MADE AVAILABLE TO THE COMMUNITY THROUGH THE VOLUNTARY EFFORTS OF "THE LUNCH BUNCH", A SMALL GROUP OF RETIRED LOCAL RESIDENTS WHO MEET FOR LUNCH ONCE A MONTH, AND WANTED TO GIVE SOMETHING BACK TO GABRIOLA AND THE COMMUNITY.



Letters to the Editor

Newspapers aren't "junk mail"

The best newspapers have a special bond with their readers. They're trusted, because they're trustworthy. They tell it like it is, not to curry favour or push an agenda, but because they know that the truth, no matter how unpalatable or inconvenient it might be, is better than falsehoods. They're always there for their communities no matter what, and will move heaven and earth to cover the places they call home. It's not easy work, but, for those who have it as a vocation, there's no life like it.

To borrow liberally from the unofficial creed of the U.S. Postal Service: Neither snow nor rain nor heat nor gloom of night stays these newspaper people from the completion of their weekly editions.

So it's perhaps ironic that the biggest headache for many newspapers is the post office. When it works, mail is largely an efficient way to get the paper into readers' hands. However, too often decisions made by Canada Post and/or its largest union, the Canadian Union of Postal Workers (CUPW), make delivery difficult – whether it's the frequent strikes or lockouts, or having unaddressed newspapers capriciously reclassified as "junk mail."

As part of its on-going contract dispute with Canada Post, CUPW is refusing to deliver flyers. This can be a boon for some newspapers as it will inspire flyer customers to switch to their local papers. However, it also means unaddressed newspapers aren't being distributed. These publications are the mass media of their communities, often sent to every household. So, while the union and Canada Post fight it out, it's readers who are taking it on the chin.

Under the leadership of News Media Canada, the Ontario Community Newspapers Association and several of its sister organizations have called upon the heads of both CUPW and Canada Post to make sure that newspapers continue to be delivered. The associations have also brought this to the attention of the relevant federal ministers in the hopes that they will intervene on behalf of Canadians.

However, for the moment, papers like this one will do whatever it takes to get copies into the hands of readers. Unfortunately, it will mean asking readers to do more to get their papers, which is not something publishers take lightly. Your efforts are greatly appreciated and remind all involved just how vital the paper is to the community.

This paper will keep delivering news to its readers come what may, and hopefully when you come to collect your copy you won't be troubled by snow, rain, heat or gloom of night.

After all, as the last postal strike showed, the strong bond between this paper and the community goes both ways.

– Gordon Cameron is the Executive Director of the Ontario Community Newspapers Association.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR POLICY - *The Gabriola Sounder* welcomes letters to the editor for publication. Letters must be signed and a phone number included so the writer's identity can be verified. *The Sounder* reserves the right to edit letters for legal considerations, taste, and brevity. Please try to keep your letters under 300 words to ensure your 'Letter to the Editor' appears as close to its original form as possible. Thank you to everyone who took the time to send us comments. Keep your input coming.

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Weekly joke: Why is glue bad at math?

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The *Sounder* will be coming out on Thursday, Oct. 2 next week, due to the stat day on Tuesday, Sept. 30 to recognize National Day for Truth and Reconciliation and Orange Shirt Day.

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Joke Answer: It gets stuck on problems.

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SMILES & SNARLS

SMILE - of gratitude to Laura Peloquin who was mistakenly not acknowledged for organizing the recent CATS ALIVE fundraiser at Island Meat and Deli. It couldn't have been done without you Laura.
~ CATS Alive

SMILE - to Rhonda of team "Stay Fit" for bringing islanders together with a goal (10km), and a cause (cancer research fundraising). I saw you at the Terry Fox run and was and continue to be inspired by your energy, enthusiasm and care for those around you.
~ Connie Bernard

SMILE - to the BC Ferries staff for their patience with an enraged passenger Sunday morning. Despite my obvious distress (my father is dying), they showed compassion and were calm while helping me.
~ John Gooding

To submit a smile or snarl, call 250-247-9337 or email derek@soundernews.com
Submissions subject to editing.

ORGANICS, GARBAGE, & RECYCLING SCHEDULE

GARBAGE & ORGANICS:
Th. Sept. 25/Fr. Oct. 10
RECYCLING & ORGANICS:
Fr. Oct. 3/Mo. Oct. 20

GABRIOLA WALKING GROUP

Wednesday walks begin promptly at 10:00am.



Dogs on leash please.

Sept. 24: Park Wild Cherry Terrace East. Walk Area Trails.

Oct. 1: Park Descanso Bay Park. Walk Area Trails.

Oct. 8: Park Tait. Walk Area Trails.

Gabriola Sounder

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PUBLISHER AND SALES
SARAH HOLMES
SARAH@SOUNDERNEWS.COM



EDITOR
DEREK KILBOURN
DEREK@SOUNDERNEWS.COM



REPORTERS, LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE
HOPE LOMPE

PHOTOGRAPHY: JEANETTE MARTIN

REGULAR CONTRIBUTORS
BOB MEYER
AARON HOLMES
DOUG SMITH
SUSAN YATES

CIRCULATION 2,825
Office Hours: Tues to Thurs: 9am to 4pm. Fri: 9am to Noon.
Office Address: Madrona Marketplace East Unit 1, 510 North Road, Gabriola, BC.
Mailing Address: PO Box 62, Gabriola, BC. V0R-1X0

Phone: 250-247-9337
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