Funding for Gabriola Guardian program

The RDN Board is allocating $18,000 in funding to the People for a Healthy Community to continue offering the Gabriola Guardian Program. This important program directly supports those at risk of or experiencing homelessness on Gabriola Island.

The Gabriola Guardian Program was initiated after a 2010 research project showed that access to affordable and appropriate housing is essential to meeting the needs of some of Gabriola’s most vulnerable residents. During the first year of the program (2012-2013), 30 individuals were matched to suitable rental accommodation and provided with additional supports.

The process of supporting some individuals with multiple needs is labour-intensive. Gabriola Island does not currently have any designated affordable or supportive forms of housing, and affordable private rental housing is very limited. The Gabriola Guardian Program provides an effective, practical, and low cost approach to housing people using existing private rental housing.

The RDN is able to provide funding to this program thanks to a total of $470,000 that Island Health provided to the RDN in 2011 and 2012, to fund capacity-building initiatives in the region to end homelessness. The RDN distributed 60 per cent of this funding in July of 2012 to organizations working to end homelessness, and placed the remaining 40 per cent ($188,000) in a reserve fund to allow future projects to be considered for support.

Huxley Community Park Master Plan

The RDN is asking Gabriolans to take a fresh look at Huxley Community Park to consider how they would like this village centre park to be improved and managed over the coming decade. The end result of this process will be the Huxley Community Park Master Plan.

Situated on North Rd between the Folklife Village shopping centre and The Commons, Huxley Community Park was created in 1997, as a result of the development of Folklife Village. The Gabriola Recreation Commission Association (which ultimately became the Gabriola Island Parks and Recreation Commission and then the Huxley Park Sports Association) leased the 0.8 hectare (two acre) green space from Brenda Huxley and coordinated the construction of the tennis courts in 1989. The sport court was built by volunteers and completed in 1994.

The Huxley Park Sports Association, with help from the Ball Hockey club continued to monitor and maintain the Park until it was donated to the Regional District of Nanaimo as a community park in 2011. Park development and maintenance is now funded through the Regional District of Nanaimo Electoral Area B Community Parks function.

Through input from the community Gabriolans have identified the following top five improvements and additions they wish to see in the park:

1. Improve sport court facilities (sport court & tennis courts)
2. Improve skateboard/bike park
3. Provide access to public restroom facilities
4. Expand walking trails through the park
5. Provide a community gathering area/special event space

The RDN developed two concept designs incorporating these elements, and in the early Spring of 2014, asked the community to take a look at the concepts and to complete a short questionnaire. Input from the questionnaire will now be used to help develop the final preferred concept plan for the park. This preferred concept plan will be available for public review and comment in the summer of 2014.

Gabriola Island Village Trail

The RDN has retained the services of Topographics, a local landscape architecture firm on Gabriola Island to undertake the design work for a new trail along North Road, between the junction of South Rd and North Rd and Tin Can Alley. The trail will be located within the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure (MoTI) road right-of-way along the 1.4km stretch.
The preliminary concept plan for the trail is now available at www.rdn.bc.ca, as are the results of the questionnaire distributed at the March 29 open house. I encourage residents to have a look at both. The concept plan will be revised based on input the RDN has received from the community and in collaboration with the Ministry of Transportation prior to the preparation of construction drawings.

Funding for trail design is through the federal Community Works Funds. Projects within the region’s Electoral Areas that will improve public infrastructure and reduce greenhouse gas emissions are eligible to receive these funds. The Gabriola Village Trail will serve as a safe and enjoyable non-motorized corridor, linking Gabriola’s Village with nearby parks, the Gabriola Commons, the Elementary School, and other community destinations.

**RDN Rebates**

The Green Building Incentive Program celebrated its most successful year in 2013, and the RDN will continue to support residents in Electoral Areas and the District of Lantzville in taking action to improve their built environment.

Green Building Incentives help homeowners invest in reducing household energy and emissions. In 2013, over $50,000 was distributed to residents in RDN Electoral Areas and Lantzville, helping residents upgrade their homes and save money over the long term while generating local economic benefits for the region. For example, for every dollar the RDN invests in the woodstove exchange program, residents put $6.50 back into the local economy. For home energy retrofits, the ratio can be as high as ten dollars for each dollar invested by the RDN.

For 2014, the RDN has made adjustments to the Program to reflect changes at the provincial and federal levels. In response to the end of the popular provincial LiveSmart BC program, the RDN will now rebate half the cost of an initial home energy assessment, up to $150. With no confirmed provincial funding for the Woodstove Exchange program for 2014 RDN incentives will be offered again starting in October.

At the federal level, the EnerGuide rating system for home energy efficiency is evolving. Once released, the new rating systems will be incorporated into the RDN’s Home Energy Assessment and Sustainable Development Checklist Incentives.

In addition to the RDN’s Green Building Incentives, Rainwater Harvesting and Rural Water Quality Protection Rebates continue to be available region-wide through the Drinking Water and Watershed Protection Program. These include:

- up to $750 for residential rainwater harvesting systems with 1000 imperial gallons of storage or more;
- cost-sharing for various well protection upgrades, $50 - $500 available;
- 50 per cent off full-spectrum water quality tests for private well owners.

See www.rdnrebates.ca for details and pre-approval application forms. For more information about the Rainwater Harvesting and Rural Water Quality Protection Rebates, email watersmart@rdn.bc.ca or call (250) 390-6560. For more information about all incentives offered through the RDN, visit rdnrebates.ca or call (250) 390-6510 or (250) 954-3798. The RDN will continue to publicize new incentives as they become available.

**Dogs Off-Leash in RDN Parks**

I have received some questions with regard to whether or not dogs are permitted to be off-leash in our community parks. The RDN’s Parks Bylaw No.1399 Section 5.9 states that dogs must be under control at all times, meaning the dog must either be on a leash or be able to respond and return immediately when called by its owner. The Bylaw is available on the RDN Website at www.rdn.bc.ca.