

## **President's AGM Report, Tuesday, February 20, 2024**

2023 was the busiest year in the six years I've been involved with PHARA, and thanks to you, our voice is stronger than ever when it comes to dealing with issues that affect us all.

I'd like to thank the board for their dedication to our many projects. I won't go into great detail here, as most of our projects were well detailed at our fall Town Hall meeting.

First and foremost, is the ridiculous DMP amendments being proposed by the province and the shIshálh Nation. We continue to work with our legal counsel to force the province to rethink the entire DMP process. I'm happy to report that we're having success in holding the province's feet to the fire. Now that the comment period is over, on March 8 the province will release a summary of the comments, so hopefully good news is coming. If not, then we have a good chance of beating the province in court, though that could cost half a million or more.

As noted earlier, following the adjournment, our DMP experts and our SCRD rep Leonard Lee will be available for 30 minutes to discuss the latest 2024 news.

### **Illegal Encampment**

Our significant efforts over the past years to have those squatting on MOTI right of way in Garden Bay Road finally met with some success, though one person remains tucked in the corner. I'm confident we'll never see another encampment on the site. Huge thanks to the Duncan family and friends for doing a great job of cleaning up the site after the unfortunate death of Mac Duncan.

### **Garden Bay Pub**

Through the efforts of locals and PHARA members, we've managed to force the owner of the burned out remains of the Garden Bay Pub to install fencing around the site at some cost. At least that is something. The caretakers repeatedly say that the owner will be rebuilding within weeks, though I don't believe it. It's a real shame that someone can leave such an eyesore for so many years.

### **Official Community Plan**

PHARA is still on the case to have the SCRD rework Area A's bylaws since the Official Community Plan was adopted by the SCRD back in 2018. As such, the 1990 bylaw still stands, and we now understand the SCRD is planning on having each area redo its OCP. This is likely an effort to streamline the bylaws across the entire SCRD instead of Area A having our own separate set of bylaws. I was chair of the OCP revision committee for three years and it is

disappointing that that work was in vain. It is likely that our community will now have to create a new OCP committee. Keep that in mind if you're interested.

### **Daylighting Paq Creek**

We continue to work on our project to daylight Paq Creek where it runs through a failing culvert under the elementary school field. Dave Bates, a well-known local biologist has volunteered to help and that is a huge bonus. Once we get some number and engineering studies, we will apply for funding based on salmon stream restoration.

### **Community Gardens**

We're also working on a way to get funding to carry on the excellent work of Don Fraser for our Community Gardens that surround the Community Hall, Triple B burgers and the Bargain Barn. Don will soon be moving on and we need to maintain those gardens which are the nicest part of our downtown. We are pursuing an alternate approval process through the SCRD to fund the continuing upkeep of the gardens and if approved by the majority of the community, it would cost each taxpayer approximately \$25 per year. A new local business association is being formed following the merge of the three coast Chambers of Commerce and they will also be working to provide funding. We hope you will support whatever is necessary to carry on Don's legacy.

### **Trails and Parks Improvement Projects**

In 2021, we presented a proposal to the SCRD for four recreational improvement projects that we felt would benefit the community and tourism. The first two were to improve the parking, trails and beaches at Don Bosch Regional Park and to complete a trail around Katherine Lake Regional Park. These two have been taken over by SCRD Parks and will be part of a parks master plan and public meetings will be held. But don't hold your breath. Unfortunately, the 2024 budget proposals for the masterplans for those two were not supported.

The other two: improving signage for our main recreational and tourist draws to our community (such as Francis Point Provincial Park, Mt Daniel and so on), and construction of a safe pedestrian walkway between the pumphouse on Garden Bay Lake and John Henry's. Those two are mired in bureaucracy due to issues with an upcoming SCRD master plan for signs and the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure.

### **Architectural Plan for Madeira Park**

It may be pie in the sky, but significant funding is potentially available from a private source for an overall plan to beautify the Madeira Park village, upon submission of a detailed ten-year plan. This could include purchase of property within the village to create high density housing, multi-use building, facelifts to existing buildings, reinstating a village campsite, improved and concrete sidewalks and a central sewage treatment plant. To this end, we worked with a UBC

masters student which put a lot of this on paper after interviewing a great number of locals. We're still working on this one but it isn't being planned as a taxable project. If there are any engineers and architects out there that could donate a bit of advice to the project, we'd love to hear from you. Just email [board@para.ca](mailto:board@para.ca)

### **Incorporation**

We have brought up the subject of the province providing funding for a study on the pros and cons of incorporating as a municipality, but we have not had sufficient support for the community, so that is currently shelved. Should there be further interest, we do have detailed files from the last attempt.

### **Derelict Boats**

We haven't had much work in the way of derelict boats this year. Many of what were formerly derelict boats are now liveaboards, which is also illegal. We're waiting on a visit from Transport Canada to flag the few derelicts that remain and to enforce the pollution regulations.

### **Sundowner Inn**

We all know our beloved Sundowner Inn in Garden Bay represents a major landmark and piece of Pender Harbour history and we all want to see it play a large role in the community. It would be great for housing but unfortunately, despite there are buyers out there interested, the owner is not returning calls asking about her plans for the building.

### **Ocean Clean Up**

Lastly, the idea of cleaning up abandoned nets and underwater junk in our harbour has been on our radar for a number of years now. However, until now, without a project lead, it hasn't gained any steam. Fortunately, though, Rob Alliston's SeaWolf Diving, a local Marine Salvage & Commercial Diving outfit has volunteered to take on the project and donate their services. This has been somewhat complicated by DFO regulations and paperwork. Rob's crew had to document every site, take photos, log GPS coordinates and so on before they could even apply for a permit. Thankfully, with the help of the Ocean Legacy Foundation which has agreed to pick up and recycle the fishnets and other recyclables, our approval to proceed has come through. The project will begin in early March. Thanks also to PODS for letting us use their Irvines Landing site as a staging area. We could use a couple of volunteers to help with dragging the nets and junk around and to feed lunches to the SeaWolf crew. Please email us [board@phara.ca](mailto:board@phara.ca).

### **Need for Volunteers**

As you can see, there's a lot of projects your community group has on its plate. Some will pan out, some won't and the ones that fail will mostly be due to a lack of volunteers to help tackle

some of these projects. Our current board simply doesn't have the necessary volunteers and resources to make these and other projects a reality. Maybe some of these ideas are pies in the sky, but if we don't dream....

Please give it some thought and if you would like to consider being a member of our Board of Directors, please put your hand up when we get to nominations. We're looking specifically for active, can-do, hands-on members. I will be retiring as president this year and the community will have to step up so we can continue our good work.

**End of president's report**