

Notes from December 1, 2013:

# GIRO Strategic Planning Day



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(Photo Courtesy of Chris Bowers)

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## Introduction

On December 1, 2013 GIRO hosted a community strategic planning session moderated by Sustainable Gabriola. The objectives of the session were:

- To ensure a common understanding of the task and the approach;
- To create a welcoming, safe environment that encourages people to imagine a positive and successful future for GIRO;
- To seek consensus wherever possible and where not possible, to record the diverse richness of perspectives; and,
- To have a shared understanding of the purposes of GIRO, the values and principles to support it into the future and to have begun the work of addressing key topics of concern to the community.

The following notes outline the rich and varied input from participants of the December 1<sup>st</sup> session. The purpose of these notes is to provide the basis for a strategic plan developed by the GIRO board in partnership with GIRO members. The notes include both verbatim responses from participants as well as summaries of the six topic tables: a) GIRO purposes, b) Funding model, c) Board/Community governance, d) Restore and clothing store, e) Volunteers and Staff, and f) Wild Card.

## Values and principles

Participants of the workshop identified the following guiding principles and values for GIRO

- Participatory democracy
- Fairness with consumers and community
- Transparency
- Collaboration
- Leadership
- Proper processes
- Kindness
- Courtesy
- Generosity
- Joy
- Inclusion of new Gabriolans
- Education
- Modeling the 4Rs – Rethink, Reduce, Reuse, Recycle
- Integrity
- Respect and courtesy to staff and volunteers
- Fiscal responsibility
- Sustainability of organization
- Accountability

## Purposes re: Recycling, Reusing and Reducing

Joan Eamer, table moderator

Anne Landry, Recorder

### Major Themes from Table Discussions: Education, Purpose, Enterprise

#### Education

- Came through as the area that currently receives the least emphasis and that this should change
- Many suggestions for education were made, including: one-on-one at GIRO when people bring in recycling; short, semi-regular newspaper articles; Facebook page; on-line newsletter; community behind the scene tours; more involvement with the school including field trips to GIRO and work experience for high school students; Welcome Wagon handouts; educate businesses on what they could be recycling; make use of the new graphic that could include putting them on the website, putting a larger version up at GIRO and asking RDN to send them out with their information; educate about putting more emphasis on other Rs, e.g., Rethink and Reduce

#### Purpose

- There were a few suggestions for changes/additions to GIRO's purposes: Restore is not in the original purpose so should consider adding "providing inexpensive goods to Gabriolans" and/or "to facilitate and promote the sharing of resources amongst Gabriolans"; add Reduce and Reuse to purposes – they should come first; consider name change from Recycling Centre to Eco Centre as this would be more encompassing.

#### Enterprise

- There were discussions about various enterprises that GIRO could be involved in that would integrate GIRO more into the community, reduce the ecological footprint of Gabriolans and potentially make money.
- Ideas included: coordinate various enterprises that would actually be carried out by others, e.g., reuse of building materials that now go to the landfill – 2x4s could be collected at GIRO, nails removed by another group and the useable material sold; using GIRO as a place where building materials headed to the landfill, e.g., gyprock, could be collected, contractors charged a fee and then the material could be taken to the landfill more efficiently, saving money, fuel and time.

### Detailed Notes from Discussions

FIRST group

- New to island; no complaints
- Could be more education; not visible, e.g., could add email blasts
- What could community members do make GIRO run more smoothly? e.g., Dean's notes in the paper
- GIRO does better sorting job than RDN curbside – so doing a good job
- Be really detailed with guidelines – what you need to do when you bring stuff to GIRO
- Reducing seems the weakest of the Rs, e.g., working with grocery store on plastic bags
- Reducing and Rethinking connected – need more rethinking
- GIRO could have more programming under education with goal of reducing the ecological footprint of Gabriola; reducing footprint becomes goal of GIRO
- Another arm of GIRO to develop
- Encouraging people when they come to GIRO so they learn what to do and go away happy and are able to take on more next time
- One-on-one when come into GIRO

- Why do I bother going to GIRO – I have a blue box – GIRO education could answer this question
- Curbside picks up stuff that then gets thrown out – people don't get educated this way
- Programming in the school – field trips to GIRO should be done; could be math class, etc.
- New people moving in are the ones that need education
- As consumers we are programmed for convenience shopping
- Education should be broader than just wash jars – should be on rethink, reuse, etc.
- Welcome Wagon – used to give out handouts (costs \$125.00 for handouts) – could be small payment for big impact
- Joan's graphics are useful to see which recyclables are revenue generating for GIRO and which need payment so you can make personal choices what goes in blue box and what goes to GIRO
- GIRO has opportunity/capacity to nurture community initiatives to reduce footprint, e.g., initiative of Gertie – could GIRO be playing a role during incubation period, to assist fledgling programs to help them get going – would be showing leadership – GIRO a mature organization and so could take on supporting new initiatives – e.g., space, expertise, financial - this should be part of board's job – this would support purpose number 3
- Don't maximize potential of GIRO at the moment
- Other groups do some work similar to GIRO's work – e.g., scouts, 4-H, collecting cans and bottles – could stockpiling and sorting happen at GIRO? Then bottle guy would come – help maximize potential of GIRO in terms of working with other groups – could say – all bottles/cans coming in one day will go to scouts, 4-H, etc. – logistics might be tough

#### SECOND group

- Education about what GIRO takes/does not take; wash your containers, etc. – getting school groups to visit on regular basis – way more than just info
- Semi-regular, short (200-300 words) "GIRO bites" – this is what happens to newspaper, this is what happens to glass, etc. – could be point form – would need someone dedicated to this project – more likely to go into a paper if only to one paper or different people writing for each of the papers
- A lot of these things have been thought about but not followed through – education was a huge part of the last strategic plan
- Staff and volunteers are busy, working hard to get the recycling done – need more people to take on new initiatives; could be committees made up of members, not necessarily board members, who want to get involved – working committees
- Graphics have a lot of information on them – important for people to know what makes money and what has to be paid for, e.g., GIRO makes money from cardboard, it's worth it to bring to GIRO
- Some program/peer group to have kids come in more one-on-one and volunteer time – very busy when GIRO is open, might be easier on non-open days; kids could be mentored, get involved
- Educating businesses about some things they could be recycling
- Restore is not in original purposes – should, "providing inexpensive goods to Gabriolans" be part of the purpose? – "to facilitate and promote the sharing of resources amongst Gabriolans" between members of the community
- Better to keep prices reasonable to keep products moving
- E.g., had a \$1.00 day – made \$800 that day
- People aren't complaining about \$2.00 for pants – it's more about teapot and 4 cups for \$23.00, made in China
- We still need a free section at the Restore

#### THIRD group

- New graphics are the most education I've received from GIRO – should be more available for people – some info comes from RDN, but best to link directly to GIRO
- When first came 1995 – it was hard to figure out what to do – much better now, but always changing; also with newer products, e.g., electronics – what should I do with them? – what is best approach?
- Graphics very useful – put on website – put a bigger version up at GIRO
- Graphics were to have been done a couple of years ago, but board's energy is being used up with fighting with certain individuals on the island
- Don't have time to move forward as board's time taken up by dealing with day-to-day in fighting

- Public education person would be useful
- Improve board relations
- Community liaison person
- Agree with current purposes, but we're not getting them done
- Purposes not just job of board
- Build on existing good will and energy
- Every time I go to GIRO, I get educated
- Staff is doing a terrific job one-on-one when I go
- GIRO is completely self-supporting – can't get better than that
- Field trips by school groups
- Ask RDN to mail new graphics out with their information
- GIRO and RDN were not working well together 10 years ago, but now they are working well together
- RDN waste management staff very willing to cooperate with GIRO
- Most people on Gabriola don't know what a gem they have; RDN staff were very impressed (gob-smacked) by what they saw
- Have a sign over the cash suggesting you might sign up as a volunteer – do this rather than have someone “enforce”, coming up to you telling you, you should volunteer
- GIRO has a lot of volunteers, and a lot of happy volunteers
- Have RDN come over once a year when people could dump their couches, etc. instead of people taking them to GIRO and GIRO having to pay to transport stuff to RDN (staff time, ferry, don't like taking stuff to dump), but don't have to pay a tipping fee
- Do with old vehicles on Gabriola, what Mudge did recently with BC Hydro
- Questions at table where you drop stuff off – Is it clean? Is it reusable? Would you buy it? Sometimes in summer, hard to go to bottom of boxes when they're brought in and find things that shouldn't end up at GIRO, e.g., things that are broken

#### FOURTH group

- Would like reuse and reduce added to the purposes – they should come first
- Education – is area GIRO could most expand on what it does
- Stuff comes into GIRO that is junk, and has a cost that cannot be reused, recycled, etc. Need to educate people on what is appropriate to bring to GIRO
- Education should have a number of things going on – youth, schools, should involve community workshops (where people are told what goes on) and also tours on-site – schools kids and public to see what goes on at GIRO
- School kids volunteering at GIRO – work experience for high school kids
- Goal – Zero waste on Gabriola had been talked about as goal when he was on the board; educate around this goal
- Waste is a resource we do not utilize; from an educational perspective, waste is not a problem if used as a resource
- Form a committee to look at new technology, new ways of using materials – e.g., old 2x4s that can be re-used
- Construction debris is largest amount of garbage in landfills
- Social enterprise – GIRO partners with other organizations – GIRO location is a place wood could be collected, then another organization processes it (e.g., takes nails out of 2x4s)
- Paid, sustainable employment best result from this – make part-time money
- A purpose of GIRO – to create paid, sustainable employment
- GIRO would act as clearing house for used building materials that cannot be reused – conserve fuel, costs – would have to be at a cost to contractors (so they don't have to make individual trips to landfill) – could sort on site and charge like landfill – will save contractors time, money, fuel – GIRO may be central point, but might be done by another organization
- Clothing – education needed about what is clothing that should be brought in and what is unusable, junk – and let people know what they can do with junk – is it clean? Is it reusable? Would you buy it?
- Can't expect to continue with same operating model as at start as way more things being taken, higher population, increased size and scale implications
- Four paid staff- uses 75% of revenue; staff should continue

- Prices should not continue to rise; prices go up and people will stop buying
- Prices should be able to continue to rise to keep in line with new projects
- If GIRO is to continue with same level of staff and fulfill purposes, it needs more sources of funds, e.g., grants, enterprise
- RDN won't put money into GIRO for operations

#### FIFTH group

- Concerned with what we are recycling at GIRO that we have to pay to have recycled, e.g., plastics – put them in blue bins; and material that GIRO makes money on should go to GIRO
- Would be good if we could take some things when they make money, then educate not to bring them when they are not profitable – put it up on a board – may be more complex than this – GIRO does more sorting than RDN – RDN staff took offence with this statement
- How could we meld RDN and GIRO better?
- Education – Facebook page – can tell about fluctuations in prices – can also put it up on a board at GIRO
- Purposes - Consider changing name to EcoCentre, instead of Recycling Centre, as a broader name would be more encompassing
- Is GIRO a business or a service?
- Constitution should be changed to be explicit that GIRO is a service, not a business – can get money in other ways, e.g., grants
- Take advantage of opportunities for service
- Social dimension is important
- Letter to RDN to ask where stuff in our blue boxes go
- Education – when we drop off stuff at GIRO, what does it cost, where does it go?
- Newsletter on-line to members
- More information on the website
- Demos of repurposing

## Board/Community (Governance) Table

Facilitated by John Peirce

*Notes in italics added for clarity during transcription*

### Governance:

GIRO is a participatory democracy now. We should allow the Board to do its job. How can we increase participatory democracy? (question directed at person who used this term in plenary session).

Could recruit new Board members by old members, but (*must be*) elected at a general meeting. Strongly felt that election should involve membership.

To nominate (new Board members) from floor or not?

- (*Policy*) should be clarified.
- Can be some predictability if sometime prior to general meeting if nominees known by all (*membership*).
- Bios of Board nominees prepared ahead
- This makes case for increased knowledge – able decision
- Current practice, as with many Boards, makes finding nominees (*possible*)
- Nominations from the floor also accommodated
- Need to have nominations from the floor
- Ask membership re slate appointed (*nominated*) by Board
- Criteria for Board membership should be available (openly)
- Various levels of involvement and commitment is ideal
- Executive vs Board membership are currently differentiated
- Clear policy is necessary to increase customer involvement in governance
- Ask membership re election process being clear in by-laws AGM
- Need better election process

Lots of documentation (*needed for new/potential board members re*) Board expectations

- Responsibilities and duties
- Copies of constitution, bylaws, policies
- Need actual GIRO constitution (*meaning something specific to GIRO, not boilerplate from the Society Act*) take to Members (*for agreement and approval*)

### Role of Staff and board

- Setup standards (Board)
- Staff train volunteers, i.e, policy
- Keep track of \$ and report to staff, board, public = transparency
- In times of transition #1 issue is transparency
- Depends on Chair's capacity to manage
- Caught between law & order and a process approach (need to reduce law & order)
- New Board has (*needs??*) facilitator to encourage team at the beginning
- Staff & Board have facilitated sessions to encourage teamwork & collaboration
- How do we turn common purpose into action? – This needs to be facilitated and supported
- Everyone is happier – staff, volunteers and board

- Need to have staff & Board get back to job of GIRO
- Some actions – such as putting up minutes on website have been delayed due to “requisition” energy
- Better shape than we’ve been – Board is working well
- But that stuff is coming up with these meetings – because people care – let’s work together
- Let’s move from this day forward

#### Board should be held accountable

- Need review of Board actions
- Reviews can be internal, 360, external - (*focus on*) lessons learned
- Keep record of all actions and all the work of volunteers
- Stronger record keeping
- Board members mucking in to understand day to day & also to support staff and volunteers
- Board members are volunteers - remember when commenting
- More info about partnerships that are happening such as donations to those in need (fire, Commons, etc.)
- Why does GIRO give money to Commons if GIRO needs money?
- Idea of whether GIRO “needs” money is questioned
- GIRO’s books balance
- Is it better to give money to address GIRO’s purposes?
- Better communications about donations and supports
- Need for transparency and communications

Liaison Officer position (*used to exist*) be revisited (*and possible reinstated*).

Media Relations Position (*needed*)

Ombudsman Committee (*of members not on Board*) to take inputs to the Board

Staff attend (*Board*) meetings up until voting **\*\*Table Consensus**

- Staff participate – what type of staff participation works?
- Monthly report is option

What is the mandate of the Board? Administrative/Policy/Operational?

- This (*type of mandate*) would determine staff involvement in meetings
- Board serves (*the*) society. In GIRO that means staff & volunteers.
- Should elicit feedback from staff & volunteers.
- Board creates policy based on feedback from staff, members and volunteers *and then* Staff implements

Board needs to focus more on purposes/meaning than semantics

- More vision, spirit, culture as Board focus
- Task of new board – constantly being in communication with community – over communicate
- Forum, like today, should happen annually
- Surveys (every year) are a form of communication

Suggestion Box – put it somewhere where people don’t feel watched (e.g. bathroom!)

- Board has already decided that they need more suggestions boxes
- Emails are fine (*as suggestion box*) for those who are comfortable with people knowing who you are

Communication to membership – particularly re renewal of memberships

- Board member attend on Wed. and Sat. for public to talk with

- volunteer signup
- membership
- circulate around
- GIRO Board Hat for easy identification

Board make a certain anniversary date for membership and let people know

- i.e., April 1 You have to have your membership renewed by March 31 (example)

## Community

Anything that goes in landfill is a failure on the Community's part!

We need the cash to move the trash is not sustainable

GIRO needs to beat its own drum more

Welcome Wagon link – taking new Gabriolans to GIRO

Need to ID in community re what to take to GIRO, item, cleanliness, etc.

- e.g. triage (*meant that there needs to be some (more?) intelligent screening of items coming in*)
- Educational video is forthcoming – also see GIRO website
- Difference in expectations between those donating and those buying
- **Education of public, e.g, signage of what's acceptable** \*\*general consensus of table
- **Is it clean? / Would you buy it?**
- GIRO policy re what's needed as well (*to provide stock for reselling*) (e.g., too many VCR's
- Try not to set up barriers to functional recycling – otherwise it (*items brough to GIRO*) ends up in the environment
- School tours as education
- Need better info about everything GIRO does – social media, web site
- We need a two pronged education effort:
  - o What can we do with your stuff – people need to know
  - o Tell me what I can do with it if GIRO doesn't take it
  - o Personalities are difficulty (*at gate keeper role*)

Good relationships

- individuals in need and other orgs
- Should be encouraged and recognized (i.e., *fivis (can't read Fay's writing!)*)
- JOY – Celebrate good news stories
- Relationship to other orgs (??)
- Relationships with other community orgs need to be developed
- GIRO should be at events such as Fall Fair, etc. – education
- INFO-GIRO w/ simple stuff (*info*) at events and places to put "stuff" (e.g., *facilities for recycling event stuff onsite*)
- Good relationship between GIRO and GABE shop - symbiotic

Establish a GIRO run by GERTIE to be able to take pipes, chickens (??) etc.

- (*Have a large item run by GERTIE mentioned but not recorded*)

**Other**

- Need large “free” section
- Set time limits on resale or giveaway (*and then move items on to next org as appropriate*)

## Funding Model Table

Nancy Hetherington Peirce, table moderator

### Funding From The Rdn

- Grant income is too small [relative to other income sources]
- Funding from the RDN is difficult to obtain
- RDN won't agree to give money for operating expenses
- Dependency on funding sources can be a problem if many conditions are attached to the funds received.
- Don't try for RDN funding, because it has conditions
- Could we organize a way that GIRO could receive the percentage of RDN taxes (from Gabriola taxpayers) that equals the saving from not servicing RDN blue boxes on Gabriola
- Get a referendum on the next municipal election (2014) to support RDN funds going to GIRO (from taxes paid to the RDN be Gabriolans)
- Talk to Howard Houle re details of organizing a referendum
  - GIRO Board members would need to be very clear with Gabriola taxpayers regarding the use of any proposed funding to Gabriola (from people's RDN taxes)
- About 3,000 properties on Gabriola pay garbage fees
- The southern Gulf Islands receive funding from the Capital Regional District for their recycling depots – but these islands do not receive individual property pick-up service for garbage and recyclables from the CRD.
- The changes in 2014 for glass recycling will remove the funding that the RDN gives to GIRO for its glass recycling service on Gabriola.

### Paid Staff At Giro

- How do GIRO's wages compare with other wages on the island?
- Ensure fair work for the pay received
- GIRO should pay a "living wage", not a minimum wage
- Keep the proportion of volunteers to staff as high volunteers / low staff
- The original philosophy of GIRO emphasized volunteer workers, not paid staff
- To be sustainable, GIRO should:
  - Keep a cap on the number of paid staff
  - Look for other sources of funding partnerships
  - Encourage more volunteer staff
- The "culture" of an organization is shaped by "small things". Suggestions for some "small things" that could improve the culture of GIRO:
  - Change the pricing signs to say "prices are for your guidance"
  - Change the auction system to one that uses one-time sealed bids
  - Have a box at the exit that asks people to donate some coins – it all adds up
- OK to provide some paid staff, for continuity and efficiency
  - The current complexity, volume, and regulations at GIRO means that paid staff are needed
- Certain staff members should have specific expertise

### The Auction

- The auction should stop because it favours richer people over poorer people
- Current system for the auction is flawed
  - Suggestion: sell  $x$  tickets at \$1 each, where  $x$  = the fair value of the item. Then have a draw, and the fair value is obtained in an equal way.
- For the auction, try a lottery (find a type that does not need a licence)
- Auction is done too often
- Try raffles – licences are reasonable

### Miscellaneous

- Distribute the extra money that GIRO has (the ~\$100,000 “savings”) into some “designated funds” so this money will not attract the notice of the CRA
- Prices are reasonable, compared to other thrift/reuse stores
- Prices are getting too high; suggested ways to lower prices
  - Use more volunteers and less paid staff to do the work that is needed
  - Address and solve the problems in finding volunteers
- Encourage donations to GIRO (money, items)
- Could the Board organize a day for a “community garage sale”, where GIRO would receive money from individuals renting tables
- Could we set up a bin to take some products and charge reasonable rates
- Do more applications for specific projects, as a way to bring in more money
- Try “one-off” fundraisers
- Avoid having the Board doing “hands-on” work
- Education of the public is very important work for GIRO

## Restore and Clothing Store

Moderator: Michael Mehta

Recorder: Ginny Hayes

### Pricing

Several participants were concerned about a perceived inconsistency in pricing and lamented the fact that no standards seem to exist for setting prices. For these individuals, the primary concern appeared to be based on fairness in that pricing would vary from day-to-day and from staff member to staff member. This belief was not universally held and other participants recognized that the setting of prices is subject to variability based on the condition of the product, number of similar items in stock, demand, and season. Others disagreed with this point of view and asserted that, “prices were usually so low anyway that this is not a problem” and that “GIRO is the best value with the best range of products ever seen.”

Many participants mentioned that pricing is not absolute and that staff often exercise discretion in setting prices, and that they are willing to haggle, and that some buyers “can and will challenge” the price given by staff. One participant relayed a story indicating that this was not the case.

A few participants noted that, in general, prices have increased dramatically in recent years, and that this was likely driven by the need to cover operating costs, specifically from paid staff.

Less concern was expressed about the price of clothing and some participants noted that pricing was very consistent and fair in that product class.

Several suggestions and alternative models were mentioned:

- A needs-based approach that included a sliding scale based on some assessment of a buyer’s socio-economic status or ability to pay. There was lukewarm response to this idea.
- A suggested donation approach with appropriate signage. This would also allow people who wish to pay more for items to continue to do so.
- That training of staff on setting prices and sensitizing them to negotiation might be valuable.
- More analysis is required on how prices are set for high-end or “premium” items.
- Adoption of a time-on-shelf model with declining prices based on time to sell. This could use colour-coded stickers that reduce the price in set steps (e.g., one month = 10% off, two months=\$25% off, etc.).
- There was good support for the idea that GIRO should review the pricing models used by other similar organizations and conduct a best practices analysis.

### Auctions

There was very little support for the auction approach in its current state. Many participants focused on inequality issues, and there was a feeling that the auction excludes systematically lower income people. Statements like the following were noted: “bidding can be forced up by wealthier people,” “auctions are antithetical to community,” and they “pit neighbor against neighbor.”

Other concerns about the auction approach included:

- Equity and access since items can be bid up last minute on Saturdays and not everyone can be available to counter-bid if they so desire due to work schedules, etc.

- Several participants recognized that the auction was a useful tool to increase the exposure of items to a wider segment of GIRO users, and that it might have an impact on reducing the activity of resellers. That said, other participants noted that the auction does not by itself prevent items from being re-sold, and a minority of participants did not see re-sale as problematic since it is an employment opportunity for some islanders. This perspective generated little support.
- Some participants noted that the auction is an important tool for raising funds for GIRO and that it might be the best way to maximize the return for donors to the organization when valuable items are donated. This discussion led to the following policy question for GIRO to consider: “Should donors have a say in how their donations are priced or if they should be auctioned?” There was split opinion on this topic by participants.
- It was mentioned that the Internet has changed the nature of auctions in recent years since buyers can refer online to prices elsewhere.
- A few participants raised concerns indicating that the current auction approach is “far from silent” and that a “sealed bid” is desirable.
- Two alternatives were raised with limitations noted:
  - (1) A lottery with legal implications and associated cost and time for administration of it.
  - (2) Draw: Strong support for this approach existed.
- The idea of a bazaar was also strongly supported as an option for more fairly moving higher-value or premium items at reasonable, fixed prices.

### Free Table Items

In general, there was strong support for continuing and potentially expanding this approach, and good support for increasing this practice to clothing.

Some questions and policy areas were raised including the following:

- Since it appears as though people are more likely to return free items, should such items be deemed non-returnable? How could this be done? There were mixed views on this idea with some in support and others not seeing return as problematic.

### Quality Control Of Donated Items

Several staff participants noted that a need exists to enhance educational messaging to donors about the suitability and quality of items donated. Concerns about extra work, and health and safety from handling inappropriate and unclean items were raised. Clothing was the biggest concern. Additionally, some participants mentioned the importance of maintaining and improving the building infrastructure at GIRO to protect more items from the elements.

### Supply Chain Management (Flow Of Items)

A few participants were quite concerned about how items were triaged for disposition. These participants were concerned that “the best items were being cherry picked and sent to Value Village and to the Canadian Diabetes Association.” This discussion was connected to a more general one on the need to emphasize re-use. There were contrary views on the issue of disposition with other participants recognizing that “not all items can be accommodated by GIRO, and that duplicates should be sent off-island.”

### Other Principles And Priorities

It was generally agreed that, “all efforts should be made to keep things out of landfill.” Related to this principle was a parallel discussion about moving forward a constitutional amendment to “re-define GIRO as an Eco-Centre”

where a “focus on reuse” becomes the priority. It was also noted that, “pricing can be used to accomplish this goal.” Recycling was seen as the last resort by many participants involved in this particular discussion and a shift away from a “need to get the cash to get rid of the trash” was noted. This discussion also brought up the notion that a “general refresh of the purposes of GIRO” is needed, and some participants expressed a belief that this should also include a re-examination of the mission to explore how socio-economic differences might be accommodated.

The suitability of the name “Restore” was raised by some participants.

It was suggested that higher value items be held for a few days in storage, and then rotated into inventory, to avoid a perceived problem related to a small set of buyers who “lurk on site” and “stake out” the drop off area.

## Volunteers and Staff

Moderator: Judith Roux

Recorder: Susan Yates

### Summary of community input on “Staff and Volunteers” Table

#### A. Background information (provided by staff attending discussions):

- Currently there are 2 full time paid managers (1 in charge of restore; 1 in charge of recycling); and 5 part time paid staff. There are approximately 15 volunteers working at different times.
- There is a “volunteers handbook” and a 1-page form given to potential volunteers to fill out.

#### B. How are things working currently? (seen from viewpoint of current staff and volunteers):

- It is pretty smooth-going at this point but more volunteers are needed.
- Volunteers are pretty reliable on the whole
- Currently most volunteers can multi-task
- It is felt that volunteers are thanked after each shift
- Volunteers just want to be part of the solution and enjoy the experience

#### C. Problems occur when:

- Potential volunteers have a specific job in mind and only want to do that
- Potential volunteers appear on days when GIRO is open to the community and staff managers are challenged to welcome them, deal with applications, begin training and still do their job
- Volunteers can't keep regular or minimum hours
- Volunteers are not responsible, reliable, cannot commit to coming when promised
- Volunteers cannot come on “closed days” for training
- Volunteers are not treated with respect, don't feel welcomed

Observations: : Volunteering at GIRO is not glamorous. Dust and mice can be a problem. This requires dedication. “One complaint can spoil your whole day!”

#### D. Best situation occurs when:

- Volunteers are asked: What would you like to do? What are you good at.
- Jobs are matched with volunteer capabilities
- Volunteers are available for any job, can adapt to whatever needs doing
- Volunteers commit to a certain number of hours per month
- “Check-in” meetings are held, permitting staff and volunteers to defuse tensions and permit new ideas to be aired.
- Training hours work with staff availability

- Volunteers are able to come on closed days (Tuesdays and Fridays) to learn routines and be trained
- There are enough volunteers to establish 2-hour work shifts
- Volunteers are trained to set prices or deal with bargaining
- GIRO's role in the community is recognized as a tourist attraction, a community social hub
- Build on this, with annual "Beer and burger" events for community information.

#### E. Volunteer coordinator:

- The 2009 GIRO Strategic Plan called for a "Volunteer coordinator". All but one person who came to the table over the afternoon agreed that this was necessary. to relieve the pressure on managing staff and to make everything run more smoothly.
- Duties of a volunteer coordinator :
  1. Maintain current list of volunteers (particularly those available for occasional concentrated workbees)
  2. Plan training (work with managers on closed days - set up "boot camp" to train volunteers)
  3. Coordination – match volunteers to tasks
  4. Keep tabs on volunteer well-being. Express appreciation.
  5. Work with communication volunteer to reach out to community
  6. Conduct exit interviews when volunteers leave (why did they quit?)
- Should this be a paid position? or should a Board member take this on?
- Can decision-making by staff be shared with volunteers?

#### F. The Board:

- When does a board member engage in the action at the depot?
  - Currently board members do the diabetes bags. Could/should this be done by volunteers?
  - Should each board member volunteer a minimum number of hours at the depot (to be familiar with operations?)
  - "There should be at least on board member at the depot on open days". This would be good for communication with the community
- "A strong managerial board should allow for competent and happy staff and volunteers"
  - Is the board large enough?
  - Are the levels of management distinct between board, managers, staff, volunteers?
  - Is staff trained to treat volunteers with care?
  - Board members need training also!
- Focus on going forward with a positive attitude. Clarity on future direction is most important!

#### G. Funding Model

- Assess the model on which GIRO could/should operate:
  - **Community model** (with mostly volunteers) or

- **Business model** (with paid staff).
- Creating local employment seems to be seen as a good thing. Should this be reflected in GIRO's mandate?
- "The business model causes discord between Board/staff/volunteers/public"
- Is the funding model part of the problem (re wages, sources of revenue, cost of "free store" items?)
  - stress of increasing revenue to pay staff
  - funding is more available for capital expenses than ongoing operation costs

#### H. Need to look at communication!

- Inspire more community participation with improved website and Facebook page
- Sandwich board at GIRO with latest news and requests

#### Raw data

##### Session 1:

- More information needed before commenting
- We were fortunate to have GIRO manager, Denise ... at the table and she was able to supply some of the information needed:
  - Currently there are 2 paid managers: 1 in charge of restore; 1 in charge of recycling
  - There are also 5 paid part-time staff
  - There are approximately 15 "very dedicated" volunteers, working at different times on closed and open days. The volunteers are organized by the managers.
- Question was asked: Do we need more volunteers?  
Clear "yes" as an answer.
- Where are there problems? Answer: Often potential volunteers have a specific job in mind and only want to do that. It is easier for GIRO to place volunteers who can be available for anything, who can adapt to whatever jobs need doing
- Volunteers like to be asked:
  1. What would you like to do?
  2. What are you good at?
- The best time for new volunteers to come is on "closed" days (Tuesdays and Fridays). When they come on "open" days to volunteer the managers are challenged to welcome them, deal with their application, and still do what they need to do on open days.
- Training is also a necessity and it is difficult to do this on "open" days.
- Perhaps a "boot camp" to train volunteers on "closed" days would be something to pursue.
- Perhaps volunteers need to commit to a certain number of hours per month.
- It was pointed out that there is a "volunteers handbook" and a one-page form given to potential volunteers to assess their skills and availability. (Some tasks require strength and fitness.)
- More education may be needed in the future as more technical items are accepted for recycling.

- The GIRO Board could/should have a liaison person for volunteers to relieve the pressure on managers.
- “Check-in” meetings with staff and volunteers are useful - help defuse tensions and permit new ideas to be aired. Issues are sometimes not resolved because people don’t feel they can speak out.
- Question: When should a volunteer become a paid staff member?  
Answer: The Board must determine this.
- A healthy roster of volunteers should enable an efficient ratio of staff to volunteers

## SESSION 2

- Is the funding model part of the problem? (i.e. competing for revenue to supply funding for staff?)
- It is very difficult to manage volunteers who don’t can’t meet regular or minimum hours.
- Discussion on the position of a “volunteer manager”:
  - Would this be a board member?
  - Another volunteer
  - Should not be paid staff unless their current job is changed to include volunteer management/coordination
  - Would plan for the essential training
  - Would work hand-in-hand with managers
- Some jobs currently done by the Board (e.g. diabetes bags) could be done by volunteers
- Assess the model on which GIRO could/should operate:
  - Business model (with paid staff) or Community model (with mostly volunteers)?
  - Re: paid staff: Creating local employment seems to be seen as a good thing. Should GIRO’s mandate make this explicit?
- More reliable volunteers should ensure equilibrium of paid staff
- Match jobs with volunteers capability. Can the volunteer sheet indicate this?
- Specific jobs require commitment from volunteers
- Currently most volunteers can multi-task
- Funding model question: Is there a problem with wages, sources of funding and cost of “free store” items?  
(Funding is often available for capital expenses, but not ongoing operation costs)

## SESSION 3

- Training is an issue if a volunteer can only help on an open day
- Would a Sunday orientation day a few times a year work?
- Training hours could to flexible to work with staff availability
- Volunteering at GIRO is not glamorous. It requires dedication to training and task. Encountering dust and mice can be a problem.
- Are there guidelines for volunteers? Answer: Yes there is a manual.
- Does someone keep a list of volunteers available for occasional tasks/concentrated workbees?
- Is there a GIRO Facebook page? (for those who frequent Facebook)

- The website doesn't have information which would inspire more volunteers to come
- Idea: Establish regular work bees for training and tasks
- Closed days are a good time for new volunteers to learn routines
- Volunteers must be responsible re their dedication of time
- Need a volunteer coordinator
- Idea; Sandwich board at GIRO for latest news and requests (with recycled balloons (?))
- Each board member should volunteer a minimum number of hours (to be familiar with operations)
- The Business model causes discord between Board/staff/volunteers/public
- A strong managerial board should allow for competent and happy staff and volunteers.
- Is there an "on-call" list of volunteers for specific tasks?
- Staff and volunteers need name tags for open days
- Are volunteers recognized and celebrated?

#### SESSION 4

- New provincial regulations to permit recycling depots to accept more categories of recyclables? GIRO can accept or decline this option. (It appears that the current board has refused – Ron)
- The 2009 GIRO Strategic Plan called for a volunteer coordinator (some at the table felt this was not necessary)
- Volunteer coordinator is needed (this task should not be given to staff)
- Volunteer coordinator must work with the manager of each department
- Volunteers must feel welcomed and be treated with respect.
- Volunteers just want to be part of the solution and have fun!
- Planning and training are essential for volunteers
- Training is essential for volunteers including how to set prices or deal with bargaining.
- There are some physical requirements in some department
- Exit interviews would be informative when volunteers leave (why did they quit?)
- Decline in volunteers results in stress for staff
- Are volunteers unhappy or is gossip encouraging this? Ask volunteers!
- It is felt that volunteers currently get thanked after each shift.
- Volunteer appreciation event? (Christmas party – big dinner)
- Volunteers are most helpful if they don't limit their help to special jobs
- Decision-making by staff – can it be shared with volunteers?
- Re: hierarchy: Is the Board large enough? Are the levels of management distinct: between board and managers and staff and volunteers? Is staff trained to treat volunteers with care?
- Board members need board training
- Focus on going forward with a positive attitude. Clarity on future direction is most important.

#### SESSION 5

- Need for a volunteer coordinator? (Discussion followed)
- Volunteers are pretty reliable on the whole.
- There needs to be a reliable, current list of volunteers for regular and occasional tasks
- Volunteer coordinator could do:
  1. Training (work with managers) on closed days
  2. Coordinating for tasks
  3. Appreciation
  4. Maintaining current list
- It is pretty smooth going at this point but more volunteers are needed.
- Education and community outreach could be part of the job of a volunteer coordinator
- 2-hour shifts work well if there are enough volunteers
- There needs to be better, more informative signage at GIRO (responsibility of Board or volunteers?)
- GIRO is a tourist attraction! It is a community social place. This could be part of the Welcome Wagon information to newcomers.
- There could be at least one board member there on open days. This would be good for communication.
- How about an annual “Beer and burger” event for community to learn about GIRO
- One complaint can spoil your whole day!

## Wild Card Table Comments

Moderator: Jim Ramsay

Key themes:

### Fundraising

- Fashion shows
- Repurposed Art Shows
- Coffee shop at GIRO
- Work experience for high school kids

### Build on GIRO's current activities

- Refurbishing computers
- Make use of freecycle
- Coordinate large item pickup for island
- Volunteer pickup and delivery
- High school work experience

### Education/Reduce

- Invite community members to send photos of refurbished items (post for inspiration)
- Partner with other groups to emphasize Reduce & Re-use goals
- Research group to identify new recycling options
- Work with grocery store to reduce packaging
- Support GERTIE financially plus buying bus tickets for 'good' recyclers

### Themes from the other tables

- Pricing should focus on recycling rather than profit
- GIRO's purposes should drive need for volunteers and staff
- Volunteers should be valued and respected
- Provide tokens for those in financial need

### Raw Notes

- Fundraising Ideas:
  - Fashion Shows.
  - Re-Purposed Art Shows.
- Coordinate better with The Commons and PHC for mutual purposes.
- Form group to coordinate refurbishing of computers
  - volunteer (Rusty) is available to undertake.
- "Why should I drop items off at GIRO when curbside recycling is available?"
- Consider a work experience program for high school kids.
- Add a coffee shop.
- Consider a volunteer pickup and delivery service.
- Make use of Freecycle (email):
  - add to website.

- Coordinate large item pickup for the Island.
- Invite the community to send in email photos of repurposed items:
  - functional and artistic.
- Establish a research group to consider new ways to extend recycling processes.
- Pricing:
  - prices should be regularly reviewed and items re-priced if not selling;
  - or put in free box;
  - focus on recycling not to make a profit.
- Investigate why the falloff in volunteers.
- Are we dealing with a cycle where we emphasize staff which causes need for more money, which means price increases? Is there a disproportionate number of staff?
- GIRO should be mostly run by volunteers:
  - What should ratio be?
  - They should be valued and respected.
- How should premium items be priced?
  - Maximize reuse and recycle
  - Give donors a say in pricing?
  - Community to give pricing guidelines to GIRO Board.
- Reduce Agenda: GIRO to take on leadership role in promotion of support of new community initiatives to reduce carbon footprint.
  - Consider support to GERTIE, both financially (for 5 years) and buying bus tickets to distribute to “good” recyclers.
  - Work with grocery store to reduce packaging.
  - Support Gabriola growers such a through a produce exchange.
- Consider a token system for the financially needy, i.e. donors pay extra for tokens to be distributed (how?) to others in need.
- Recycled Teflon is a health hazard – even new it lets off gases when heated to a certain temperature (look up online) but when scratched it is absolutely and unfortunately garbage! [Note: this last item was added by someone when I was not at the table.]

## **Graphic depictions of GIRO operations**

**What happens to stuff you donate to GIRO?**

P. 25

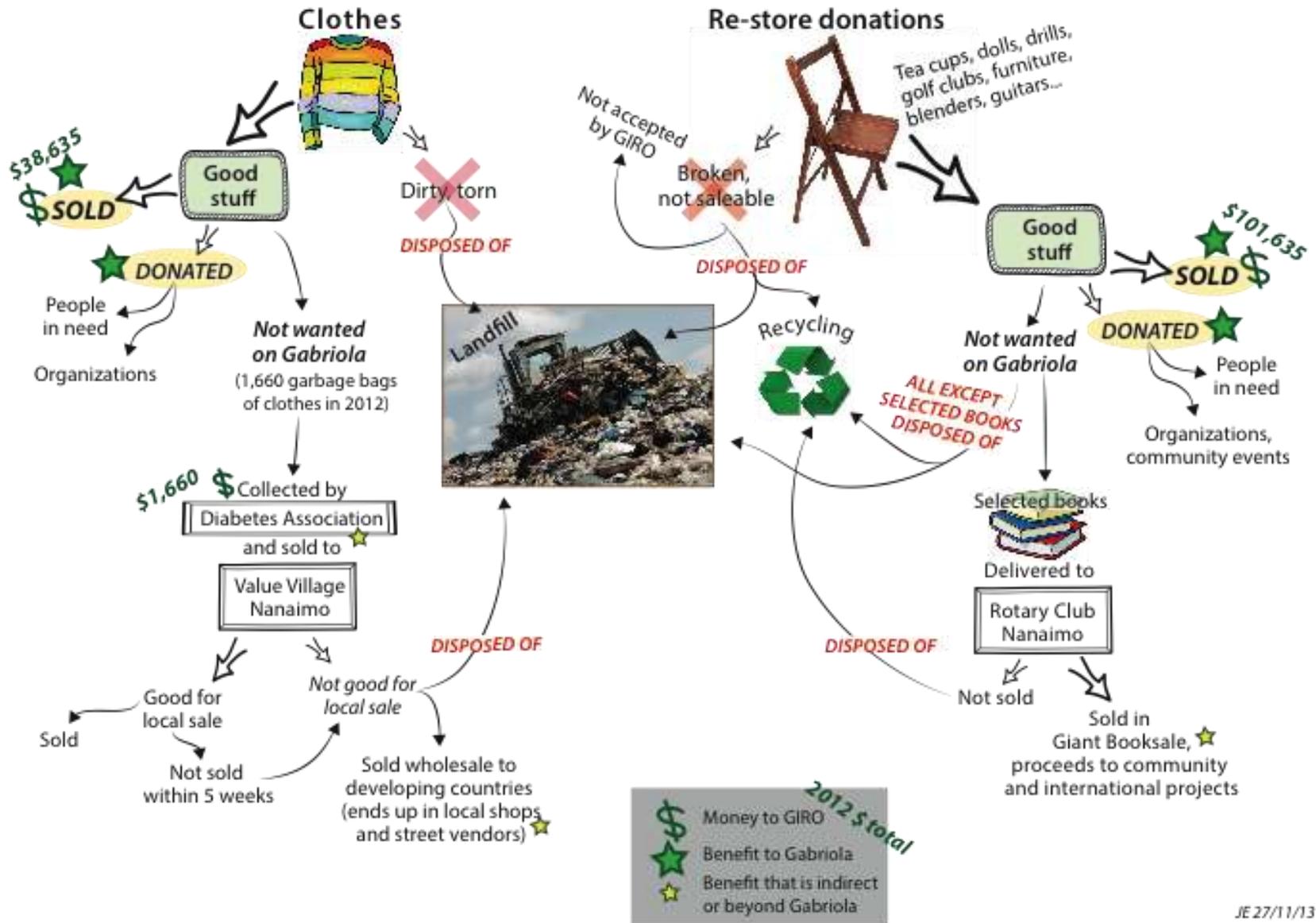
**What happens to stuff you drop off at GIRO for recycling or disposing?**

P. 26

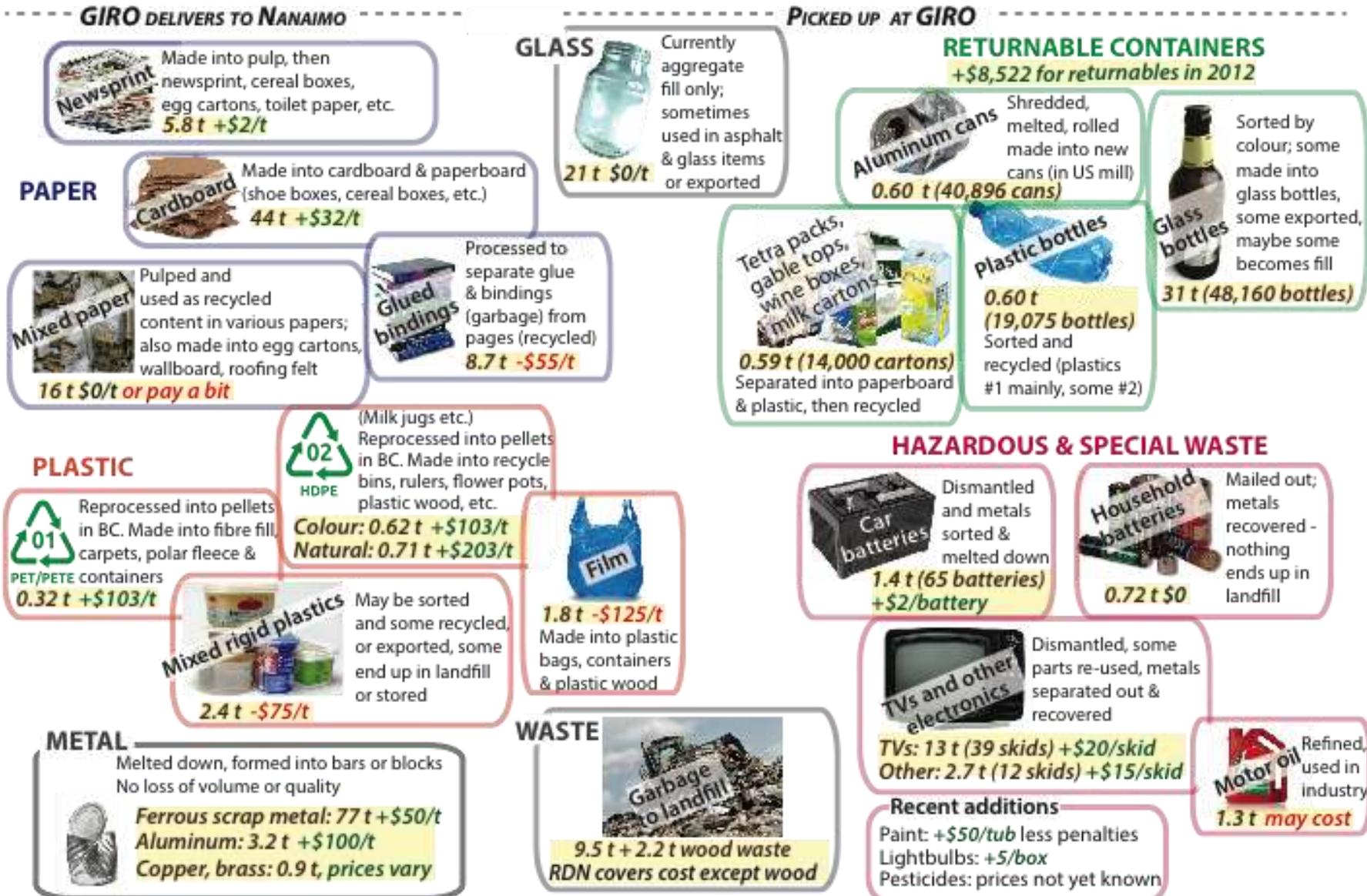
**GIRO materials processed 2000 and 2012**

P. 27 - 30

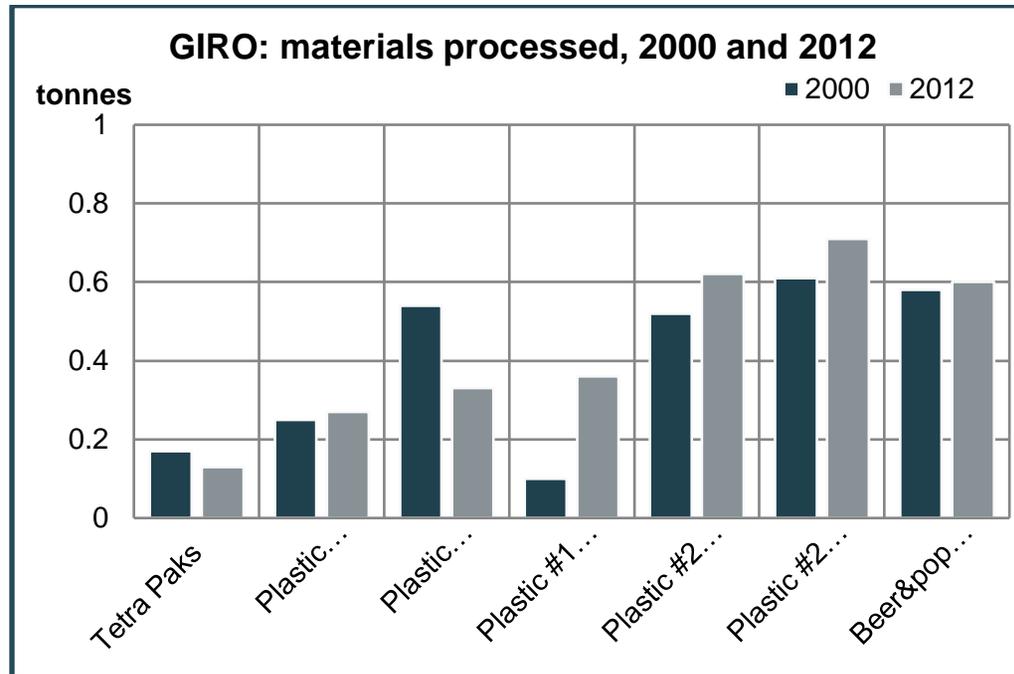
# What happens to stuff you donate to GIRO?

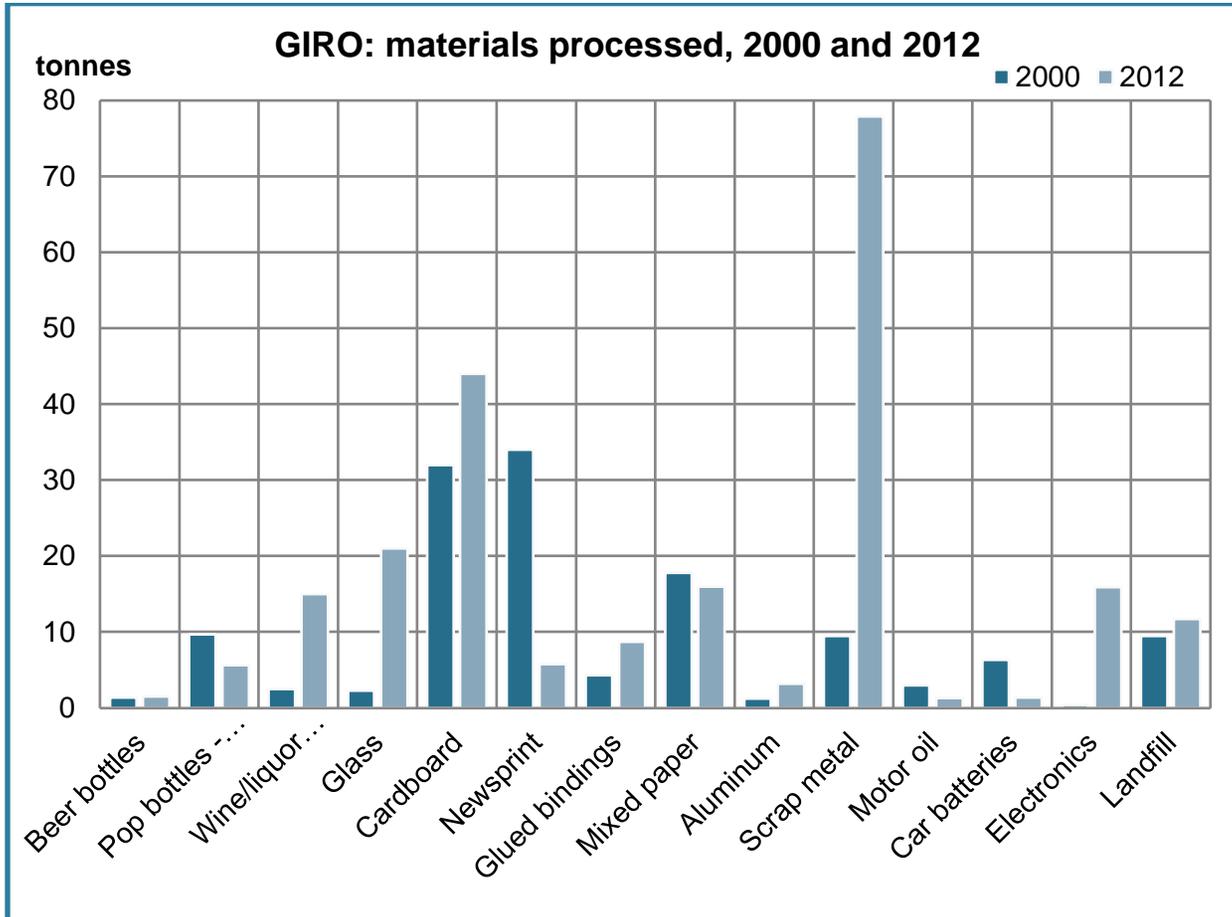


# What happens to stuff you drop off at GIRO for recycling or disposal?



Prices are current (they fluctuate). \$0 - no payment or income, -\$ GIRO pays, +\$ income to GIRO. Amounts processed are 2012 totals (t=tonne)





## GIRO 2012 – MATERIALS PROCESSED

	GIRO 2012 TOTALS	Tonnes	Count
<b>RE-USE</b>	Amounts sold and donated not known		
<b>BULK MATERIALS</b>			
<b>Paper</b>	Cardboard	44.	
<b>Paper</b>	Newsprint	5.8	
<b>Paper</b>	Glued bindings	8.7	
<b>Paper</b>	Mixed waste paper	16.	
<b>Plastic</b>	#1 plastic (PET)	0.36	
<b>Plastic</b>	#2 plastic (colour)	0.62	
<b>Plastic</b>	#2 plastic (natural)	0.71	
<b>Plastic</b>	Film	1.8	
<b>Plastic</b>	Mixed rigid plastics	2.4	
<b>Glass</b>	Glass	21.	
<b>Metal</b>	Aluminum	3.2	
<b>Metal</b>	Copper/brass	0.90	
<b>Metal</b>	Ferrous scrap metal	77.	
<b>RETURNABLES</b>			
<b>Mixed</b>	Tetra juice		2,600
<b>Mixed</b>	Tetra juice box		1,080
<b>Mixed</b>	Gable top juice		875
<b>Metal</b>	Pop cans (aluminum)		25,920
<b>Metal</b>	Beer cans (aluminum)		14,976
<b>Glass</b>	Wine, hard liquor		28,800
<b>Glass</b>	Beer bottles		5,760
<b>Glass</b>	Pop bottles		13,600
<b>Plastic</b>	Plastic bottles S		12,600
<b>Plastic</b>	Plastic bottles M		4,250
<b>Plastic</b>	Plastic bottles L		2,225
<b>Paper/plastic</b>	Wine boxes (bag-in-box)		70

<b>Paper/plastic</b>	Milk containers (coated paperboard)		9,375
<b>MISCELLANEOUS</b>			
<b>Mixed/hazard.</b>	Car batteries PC		65
<b>Mixed/hazard.</b>	Household batteries	0.72	
<b>Mixed/hazard.</b>	Motor oil	1.3	
<b>Mixed/hazard.</b>	TVs	13.	
<b>Mixed/hazard.</b>	Other electronics	2.7	
<b>LANDFILL</b>			
<b>Waste</b>	Landfill	9.5	
<b>Waste</b>	Wood waste	2.2	

JE 27/11/13