

**MINUTES**  
**PENINSULA AND AREA AGRICULTURAL COMMISSION**  
Held at Saanich Municipal Hall, Committee Room 2 and via MsTeams  
Thursday, March 14, 2024, 7:07 p.m.

Present: Chair Robin Tunnicliffe; Jenni Michell; Terry Michell; Larry Sluggett; Katie Underwood; Dianne Williamson; Councillors De Vries (Saanich) and Marshall (North Saanich); and Isobel Hoffmann, Recording Secretary.

Guests: Megan Halstead, Regional Agrologist; Cassidy Daskalchuck, Saanich Planning (via Teams) Shellie MacDonald, Haliburton Farms (7:45 pm); Matthew McLean, Kathleen Zimmerman, Noah Brotman, CRD

Regrets: Anita Bull, Linda Geggie, Councillor Paltiel, Central Saanich

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### **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

**MOVED by Dianne Williamson and Seconded by Katie Underwood: "That the Minutes of February 8, 2024 be adopted as circulated."**

**CARRIED**

**CHAIR'S REMARKS** (the full report is attached to and forms part of these Minutes)

Highlights:

- The Chair stated she is participating in the development of an agricultural plan for Metchosin; the process is in its final stages and progressing well. There are 8 serious farmers in Metchosin, perhaps 10, and some residents are critical of the \$40,000 budget for the Plan.
- She recently visited Prince Edward County, a small island of 1000 km<sup>2</sup> two hours north of Toronto. The region, which has an agricultural plan, is promoted as the Mecca of Small Farming and Culinary Tourism, sees about 500,000 tourists each year. There are a lot of tourism venues: wineries, restaurants, art studios, B&B's, guest houses, and fine food stores. Sadly, all with very little local product. Fields were fallow, and poorly planned new developments with large homes for the 25,000 year-round residents. Very little actual farming.

### **TREASURER'S REPORT**

- The Treasurer reported that we have a balance of \$17,314 in a GIC and \$1,042 in our chequing account.

### **COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVE REMARKS**

**Councillor Marshall, North Saanich:**

- Council is working on the OCP and has established an agricultural working group which has four working farmers as members.
- An open house was held to get public feedback on the District's strengths and weaknesses from an agricultural perspective.
- She has heard no updates on the Governance Review.

**Councillor De Vries, Saanich:**

- Saanich is updating its OCP, taking into account agricultural issues, with a focus on land use and agricultural policies.

**SPEAKER'S BUREAU: No speakers scheduled****CORRESPONDENCE:**

- PAAC wrote to Saanich Council expressing concerns over its recent decision to send the applications for 4400 and 4251 Blenkinsop Road to the ALC without a recommendation. The applicants wanted to use the existing barns for non-farm use, which PAAC saw as setting a precedent and the barns could still be used for agriculture.
- PAAC letter to Saanich Planning regarding an ALR exclusion application for property at 4660 Elk Lake Drive (Wildwood Nurseries). PAAC did not support the application.
- Funding request from the Guardians of our Salish Estuaries (GOOSE) for \$5,000 to assist with egg addling programs this spring.

## The Chair stated:

- She spoke to Graeme Fowler of GOOSE regarding the funding request, as it was understood that since the CRD has now officially adopted the Goose Management Strategy as a service, and is fully funded with a \$260,000 budget with contributions from regional municipalities, that the CRD would be leading the egg addling program.
- Mr. Fowler is disappointed with the delay in implementing the service. Mike Hicks, a retired CRD director from Sooke, believes that a direct service contract would work for goose control.
- GOOSE works with the municipalities of Parksville, Courtney and Campbell River who budget for GOOSE to do the work. With the proper resources, GOOSE is effective in its work and have found a source to use the goose meat.
- Apparently the CRD maintains they cannot operate on private land – which is not the case anywhere else on the Island. The prime habitat for geese is on private lands.
- The Capital Region is a prime habitat for geese on the Island and if managed properly it would reduce the overall population.
- As well as \$7000 from PAAC over the past two years, GOOSE also receives funds from Royal Bay and Butler Bros.

\*\*\* Shellie MacDonald entered the meeting at 7:45 pm\*\*\*

## Discussion ensued:

- Information has been sent to Samantha Hammond at the CRD about 3 farmers who are experiencing problems with geese and she was going to try to get in touch with the landowners and teach the farmers how to addle the eggs. Apparently it was felt that businesses, such as golf courses, have staff who could be taught to addle eggs.
- In discussions with the CRD, it seemed that they would continue to inventory the goose sightings, but not necessarily take direct action.
- Firbank Farms on Island View Road has at least 2,000 geese on the property, that move between here and Mitchell's farms. The situation is critical.
- The time to addle eggs is now, not in mid-April as is proposed by the CRD. Breeding has started; in Central Saanich farmers are shooting and chasing geese. If addling doesn't start now, the opportunity for this breeding season is missed.
- The GOOSE employees walk the fields and find the nests; drones are inefficient in this task.

- Graeme Fowler is dedicated to this cause and is effectively finding nests and adding eggs with funds from private donors without assistance from municipalities or the CRD.
- There should be a direct services contract with GOOSE. The First Nations have an agreement with GOOSE.
- Noted that financial support from PAAC will come from the donation received from the BC Fruit Growers and not from municipal grant funds.
- Noah Brotman received an email update from Samantha Hammond, noting in part that breeding season has begun and the CRD will be starting to grow the egg adding program and provide training.
- The CRD will be engaging with the First Nations guardians program to further increase our ability to addle eggs. They have applied for a regional permit and can add additional areas, including private land, with a land authorization form. This form gets included in the Canadian Wildlife Service permit report that's due at the end of the egg adding season. The program will run from April to May.
- People are asked to report high concentrations of breeding geese and if they would like to participate in the egg adding program. The communications plan has been approved and is being implemented. The goal is to raise public awareness and share stories about the impacts the growing populations of geese are having on the region.
- The Regional Canada Goose Working Group had its first meeting on March 13, 2024. Samantha indicated that an invite was sent to PAAC; inquiries can be sent to [Goose@crd.bc.ca](mailto:Goose@crd.bc.ca) (Note: invite was not received)

**MOVED by Terry Michell and Seconded by Dianne Williamson: “That PAAC support the grant request from Guardians of Our Salish Estuaries (GOOSE) in the amount of \$5,000 to assist with egg adding in the 2024 season.”**

**CARRIED**

It was discussed how best to move forward in order to see some immediate action. A suggestion to use the media was not supported at this time. It was agreed to send a letter to Jody Watson and Samantha Hammond at the CRD suggesting that GOOSE be used as a direct contractor, ask for comments and regular updates on the program with a follow up letter to be sent to the CRD Board.

## **AGRICULTURAL ISSUES: NEW**

### **Dumping of Fill on Farmland**

A recent article in the Vancouver Sun shed light on the amount of fill being dumped on farmland. <https://vancouversun.com/news/local-news/bc-farmland-illegal-dumping>

Discussion ensued:

- Dumping on farmland has increased by 300% in some areas.
- Questioned if there is any monitoring done on the soils that are dumped, where they come from, or if they have contaminants or particles that could damage the farm soils.
- Signs are sometimes posted indicating there is fill is being deposited – but no indication of where from.
- Most municipalities have a Deposit of Fill Bylaw – but is it being monitored?
- Trucks are seen all the time dumping load after load onto ALR properties all over the South Island and it is worse on the mainland. The ALC has insufficient staff to monitor this issue.
- The ALC apparently issues fill permits, and the soils have to be tested and are used as additives in compost. Even gravel has lime and calcium and can be beneficial to soils.
- Not all material that is dumped is beneficial however and is not monitored or mapped.

- The CRD's aerial atlas is updated regularly – last time was 2023. It would be interesting to view the atlas to see the land changes over the past 10 years or so.
- Inspections are often carried out on a complaint basis.
- If there is no sign on the property indicating dates and the amount of fill, then it is likely not a permitted site.
- When building permits are issued on sites that need excavating, are there no controls or questions about where the excavated soils are going to the dumped?

**Action:** The Chair offered to research this issue further. With so much construction taking place these days it is something that we must be diligent about. This is a relevant issue for PAAC and something to keep on our radar.

## **AGRICULTURAL ISSUES: CURRENT**

a) Water Update: Mike Doehnel (not present)

b) South Island Farmers' Institute Update – Katie Underwood & Shellie MacDonald

- Dan Ponchett was the guest speaker at the March Sustainer Series.
- Farmer2Farmer was held on February 15 and was very successful with over 120 attendees; participants were very engaged. Presentations from all four member municipalities were well received.
- The day long conference included 12 workshops and 7 breakout round tables which included open discussion with municipal staff and councillors on the following:
  - Pricing your Product; Understanding Soil Biology; Scaling up your poultry business; Crop Planning for Mixed Vegetable Growers; Temporary Farm Workers; Beekeeping and Honey Production; Transitioning to Organic Production, and many more.
- Eleven exhibitors showcased their materials and information:
  - Small Scale Meat Producers; Sandown Farm; Food Day Canada; SVIDFMA; the Peninsula Market; FireSafe; Shift Solar; Cooperators Insurance; White House Stables; CR-Fair; Living Lots.
  - The day wrapped up with an after party and trivia game sponsored by the Island Organic Producers Association.
  - In addition, there were 8 half-day field days during the 3<sup>rd</sup> week of February attended by 80+ farmers from Metchosin to North Saanich.
  - Topics included soil testing, small scale irrigation, small scale solar, irrigation ponds and dugouts, grafting solenacea and cucurbits, and machine maintenance.
  - Over 20 businesses and organizations donated cash or in kind support, or provided discounts towards the Farmer2Farmer workshops.
  - North Saanich, Central Saanich and the Metchosin Fire Department supported the event.
  - The AGM for SIFI was held at Farmer2Farmer; the Board now has 8 diverse livestock and soil cropping farmers from Sooke to North Saanich.
  - The Annual Certificate of Appreciation was presented to Bob Maxwell for a lifetime of supporting farmers.
  - Looking forward, SIFI will continue the Sustainers Series funded by the Knowledge Transfer Program for at least another 2 months, when the funding will run out.
  - Funding applications have been completed from various sources to support summer and winter programs for 2024 and 2025, including Farmer2Farmer and field days next year.
  - Noted that preparing the funding applications and completing the required reporting after the event for the Ministry of Agriculture is difficult and time consuming. They

- may need to look for other sources.
  - Katie thanked PAAC for their financial assistance, noting they were the impetus for getting SIFI off the ground, sponsoring the initial meeting and paying for the deposit room rental at the Fairgrounds for Farmer2Farmer.
  - Terry Michell is scheduled as a speaker at the next Sustainer Series.
- c) CRD Foodlands Access Program – Noah Brotman
- The Bylaw has been drafted and all signs are that the program is good to go.
  - One of the bigger questions is timing of when the program will start.
  - Most municipalities support the program and as soon as the bylaw is adopted and it gets the green light to go ahead he will be asking for letters of support.
  - Regardless of when the program starts, it will be a 5-year program, with acquiring capital investments as the first step.
  - The three organizations that responded to the request for qualifications for the farm site operator role are Haliburton Farms, Bear Hill Farm and Kwantlen Polytechnic University.

## OTHER BUSINESS

- a) **Vancouver Island Agriculture Adaptation Group – Bob Maxwell** – not present
- b) **Vancouver Island AgriService Newsletter – Meghan Halstead**
- Link to sign up: [https://agriservicebc.campayn.com/contact\\_list\\_form/signup/110236](https://agriservicebc.campayn.com/contact_list_form/signup/110236) newsletter will be published quarterly.
  - She had originally planned on doing the newsletters every 3 months, sending them to both Shellie and Isobel. This has been challenging.
  - Many workshops and webinars are planned. A list has been circulated.
  - Thursday, April 4, from 6:30 pm to 8:30 pm there will be an engagement session on Decoding Drought Management. Information [events02@vgnresources.ca](mailto:events02@vgnresources.ca) or call 1-877-906-1211. A virtual link will be provided upon registration.
  - The Ministry has a \$150 million budget for agriculture. \$83 million has been earmarked for water-related issues – to deliver programs and offer cost-sharing options.
  - \$50 million will be assigned to the Okanagan region to help the wine industry and the berry growers.
  - It was brought to Megan's attention that some farmers in the lower mainland are still waiting for assistance after the flooding 2 years ago; meanwhile others who received funding are paying high interest that affects their bottom line. Megan advised she will look into this and report back.
- c) **Annual Report - Reminder to submit reports by March 15, 2024**

A few reports from sub-committees are still outstanding. The Secretary advised she would like to get the report completed by the end of the month. She is also looking for pictures to add to the report.

## UPCOMING EVENTS/WEBINARS

- Tuesday March 26, 2024 – Land Sharing Network <https://treatyandsharnqnetwork.ca>
- Thursday April 4, 2024 – Decoding Drought Management [events02@vgnresources.ca](mailto:events02@vgnresources.ca)

## ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 8.52 p.m.

**NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, April 11, 2024 in Committee Room #2 at the Saanich Municipal Hall.

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Robin Tunnicliffe, Chair

I hereby certify these minutes are accurate.

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Isobel Hoffmann, Senior Committee Secretary