

**PENINSULA & AREA AGRICULTURAL COMMISSION MEETING
COMMITTEE ROOM #2 – SAANICH MUNICIPAL HALL
THURSDAY JUNE 8, 2023 7:00 PM**

In attendance: Robin Tunnicliffe in the Chair; Katie Underwood; Dianne Williamson; Anita Bull; and Isobel Hoffmann, Recording Secretary.

Guests: Megan Halstead, Regional Agrologist; Cassidy Daskalchuck, Saanich Planning; Andrea Pickard, Planner Central Saanich and Ashley Deiter; Barry McLean.

Regrets: Terry Michell; Jenni Michell; Larry Sluggett, Linda Geggie

Minutes: No quorum: Adoption of the April 13 and May 11, 2023 Minutes was deferred

The Commission welcomed potential new member Barry McLean, who has submitted an application to join PAAC. Members discussed current farm and crop conditions on their farms.

TREASURER'S REPORT - Jenni Michell – not present

- Isobel reported that funds had been received from Saanich to cover expenses for the Farmers' Institute meeting in April. She will pass the cheque along to the Treasurer.
- An invoice in the amount of \$625 has been processed through Saanich to cover the Community Bus for the Farm Tour on June 10.

7081 CENTRAL SAANICH ROAD – Proposed Cat Sanctuary

Andrea Pickard, Central Saanich Planner, and Ashley Deiter, who will be operating the proposed cat sanctuary, attended.

Andrea stated:

- This is a unique property that sits between the Pat Bay Highway and Central Saanich Road.
- Until recently it was a golf course and driving range it is in the ALR.
- Ashley, the applicant, has an agreement with the property owner to operate a cat sanctuary within the existing buildings that were used for the golf course operation, which sit vacant at this time.
- A Temporary Use Permit will have to be approved by Council for the non-conforming use and public input will be sought. In addition, approval will be required from the ALC.

Ashley stated:

- Tenants are farming the land but the buildings are vacant.
- The proposal is to allow for stray, rescue or feral cats to be fostered, using the space for prospective owners to meet with the cats inside the building in a home-style setting.
- All fees will go to the rescue operation.
- There will be a small retail area to buy all things cat related, with some food and beverages as well.
- There will be no change in zoning as if approved it would be a temporary use.

Anita Bull entered the meeting at 7:25 (outside doors had been locked)

Andrea continued:

- Temporary Use permits are reviewed every 3 years and can be renewed one time; the TUP would be registered on title.
- The buildings on site are not farm buildings.
- Central Saanich Council reviews each application on its own merit as there are usually many unique aspects from one application to another.

PAAC comments were noted as follows:

- Although the concept of a cat sanctuary is unique it doesn't have to be on ALR lands.
- It was thought that the buildings were originally advertised for a farm store use.
- Recently a few non-farm use applications on farms (ie: using farm buildings for storage & rental space for recreational vehicles) have been considered by PAAC and not supported.
- We have to be consistent in our decisions.
- This is ALR property still capable of being farmed.
- It is understood that the property is in fact being farmed, so the buildings could be used for farm use.

The Secretary to advise Central Saanich of PAAC's discussions accordingly.

Central Saanich Signage Standards

Report from Brit Burnham dated May 8, 2023 seeking input on recently developed signage standards. Comments would be welcome.

Andrea stated the District would like to make signage consistent for both farms and businesses. Welcome signs, directional signs and trail signs will also be standardized and updated.

In response to a question from PAAC, Andrea advised that if a farmer wanted a directional sign to their farm, the cost would be \$200.

Andrea Pickard and Ashley Deiter left the meeting.

SPEAKER'S BUREAU – none scheduled

AGRICULTURAL ISSUES: CURRENT

- Water update – Mike Doehnel – not present**
- Spring Farm Tour 2023 – Linda Geggie (Robin and Isobel)**
 - The registration via Eventbrite is slow; only 14 registered to date and the event is just two days away. Response from Councillors has also been slow to non-existent.

- Three notices have been sent : Save the Date (March); the official invite providing detailed information (May) and a reminder a few days ago.
- It is disappointing that more new councillors have not shown interest as this tour is for their benefit. Three Metchosin Councillors, including the Mayor, will be attending.
- The bus has been confirmed and will be at Michells by 8:45 am, departing at 9am.
- The second pickup is Saanich Hall, leaving at 9:30 am for the first stop at Bilston Creek Lavender Farm in Metchosin.
- The other two farms are Sea Bluff (Robin's farm) and Still Meadow Sheep Farm. The 3 farms are within a few minutes of each other.
- Lunch will be at Sea Bluff .
- Three speakers have been confirmed: Mike Doehnel, Shellie MacDonald and Jody Watson.
- Linda Geggie will be the MC.
- At Mike Doehnel's request, invites were extended to the CRD Water Board; some are attending.
- Information packages will be assembled after this meeting, including bios on the 3 farms, the timetable, an evaluation sheet, info about PAAC, a ticket for a free drink at Bilston Creek, as well as information and "swag" provided by the Ministry of Agriculture.
- A few copies of the Annual Report will be on hand if participants want them.

c) **South Island Farmers' Institute – Katie Underwood**

Katie stated:

- The official paperwork has been submitted to register the South Island Farmers' Institute; a few revisions have been made to the application based on feedback.
- She has been talking to Jenni Michell about doing an event at Harvest Rd (Michell Farm)
- It seems that the Farmer2Farmer workshop will be back after the COVID hiatus early next year. This would be a great networking opportunity to promote the South Island Farmers' Institute.
- Thirty people have signed up to date and paid their fees.

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

Megan stated:

- The Ministry has set aside funding for extreme weather preparedness; applications close at the end of June.
- The first intake of applications didn't have much criteria; there will be more criteria in the second intake.

- The Ministry will match up to \$35,000 and it can be used in the event of flooding, fires, extreme temperatures, etc. for replanting perennial crops (fruit and nut trees for example), or for cover crops to wipe out disease before replanting regular crops.

UPCOMING EVENTS/WEBINARS

- Saanich Fair September 2 to 4, 2023 (PAAC is not participating this year)

NEXT MEETING: The next PAAC meeting is scheduled for Thursday, September 14 , 2023 at 7:00 pm at the Saanich Municipal Hall, Committee Room No. 2

ADJOURNMENT: The meeting adjourned at 7:45 pm

Isobel Hoffmann, Recording Secretary