



**MINUTES OF THE
PENINSULA AGRICULTURAL COMMISSION
Committee Room No. 2, Saanich Municipal Hall
THURSDAY, JANUARY 9, 2014 AT 7:30 PM**

Present: John Buchanan; Linda Geggie; Bev Marley; Terry Michell; Mike Romaine; Nikki Tate-Stratton; Diane Williamson; Flora Wood; Councillors Stock (N.Saanich), Derman (Saanich), Cormier (C.Saanich). Also present was Rob Kline, Ministry of Agriculture and Isobel Hoffmann, Recording Clerk.

Guests: Ray Galey; Sharon Jack; Ray Baker, Mrs. Buchanan.
Regrets: Ryan Vantreight, Bob Maxwell and Councillor Loveless.

Welcome to New Member: Nikki Tate-Stratton

Ms. Tate-Stratton was appointed to the Commission for a three year term, commencing January 1, 2014. Introductions were made around the table.

Election of Officers for 2014

Flora Wood announced she was stepping down as Chair and as an active member of the Commission temporarily due to personal issues. She will attend meetings now and then as time permits, and expects to be a full PAC member again in the future.

Nominations were received for the following slate of officers for 2014; all agreed to the positions:

- **Chair:** Mike Romaine
- **Vice-Chair:** Bob Maxwell
- **Treasurer:** Bev Marley

Mike Romaine assumed the Chair.

Agenda: Late items to add to the Agenda: Information about registration for the egg addling workshop for the Goose Management Strategy.

Moved by Dianne Williamson and seconded by Bev Marley: "That the Agenda be approved as amended."

Carried

Minutes: **Moved by Bev Marley and Seconded by Dianne Williamson: "That the Minutes of November 14, 2013 be approved."**

Carried

TREASURER'S REPORT: Nothing to report

FLOODING ISSUES – DURRELL CREEK

– **Dwayne Halldorson, Saanich Engineering, to attend.**

Information was distributed to members, including a January 8, 2014 memo from Colin Doyle, Director of Engineering, providing background, recommending that Council agree to PAC's request, and propose the following actions:

1. That Saanich explore with the landowners the creation of a Local Service Area to construct and operate an irrigation pumping station at Interurban Road;
2. That Saanich re-initiate negotiations with the Federal Correctional Institute (Wilkinson Road prison) for access to the portion of the creek on federal property;

3. That staff continue to maintain Durrell Creek between Interurban Road and Wilkinson Road in a manner consistent with other natural water courses in Saanich, subject to the approval of access, as noted above.

Using a diagram, Mr. Halldorson provided an overview of the creek's statistics, noting past, present and estimated future elevations (over the past 10 years farmlands have dropped in elevation by 6"), changes in the levels of Colquitz Creek, flooding history and how the unusually heavy rainfall (117mm) over a few days last September caused considerable flooding on the farmlands. Average rainfall is about 60 mm.

- The memo from Saanich Engineering provides background information about the Integrated Watershed Management Plan (IWMP) for Durrell Creek. Copies of this plan were previously provided to PAC.
- The plan was to be implemented in phases; Phase 1 was completed about 10 years ago, making physical changes to the drainage infrastructure, and it achieved the major objectives of the plan. The intent of the Plan was not to eliminate flooding, but reduce the risk of flooding and eliminate flooding under normal weather conditions.
- Topography changes over the years which prevented the creek from draining properly resulted in installation of a temporary pumping system which was in place last summer until late September.
- The fact that the Wilkinson Jail is in the centre of the water course complicates matters; discussions have been initiated. Environmental issues also have to be considered with the Department of Fisheries, etc.
- The IWMP does allow for installation of a permanent pumping station at the upstream side of the Interurban culvert. A Local Service Area is recommended in that case, which would see landowners assuming a portion of the costs.
- A suggestion from the Ministry of Agriculture is to create berms to isolate the farmland. The landowner would need to pump over the berm into the natural water course. This system is used on the mainland to protect farmlands from flooding.

Ray Galey stated:

- Due to the wet fields, he planted about 3.5 weeks later last spring, which in turn meant he had a later harvest and because of the fall flooding he lost most of his crops.
- What is going to happen this spring? He wants to see long-term solutions so this Class A land can be farmed.
- He cares about food sustainability and participated in the meetings regarding Durrell Creek when the IWMP was formed. It was said at the time that if it didn't work, pumps would be installed.
- The creek was bone dry this summer and work could have been done to pull out the canary grass, etc.
- Municipalities are not allowed to use farmland as storm water retention. He stated concern about the water retention on Camosun College Interurban campus.

Mr. Halldorson stated:

- The plan worked for 10 years, and it is now time to talk to the property owners about installing an irrigation system and explore options.
- If this spring is similar to last spring, perhaps a sump pump could be installed.
- In answer to a question about berming the farmland and using the unused road allowance, he noted that DFO approval would be needed.

- He acknowledged that the farmland has one of the more productive soil types and it is worth preserving.
- Municipalities can control dykes unless it causes flooding of other properties; Camosun College is a wetland retention pond, including the soccer fields around the site.

Mr. Galey left the meeting.

- PAC discussion noted even if the long-term strategy is approved to install dykes, berms or a pumping station, approvals are required, it all takes money and it seems the problem will not be solved for this spring's planting season.
- Suggested that pre-approvals could be obtained from the DFO so that if and when pumps or berms are required, they could be installed quickly.
- The Saanich Strategic Plan calls for increasing commercial farmland, and yet we see farmers bearing the costs for ensuring that residential areas are not being flooded.
- Farmers are required to provide public goods and services, pastoral views, floodplain drainage, etc., and perhaps we need to compensate our farmers more accurately.

Councillor Derman noted that the recommendation is for Council to consider the option of installing a pump station – not to install one. The item is on the January 13th Council agenda and unfortunately the public cannot speak to the issue, but letters can be submitted to Council.

The Chair stated that PAC encourages the suggested recommendations in the staff report, and would urge Council to make it a priority to consider options to initiate Phase 2 of the IWMP. Also, the suggestion of obtaining pre-approvals from DFO seems like a good idea. A copy of the minutes to be made available to Mr. Halldorson.

Mr. Halldorson left the meeting.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST AND TERMS OF REFERENCE

Responses to the TOR received from Metchosin (in support), and from Sidney and Central Saanich, who have some concerns. No response to date from N. Saanich or Saanich. Copies of the correspondence have been provided to PAC members.

- The Chair stated it seems that perhaps we were not as clear as we could have been regarding the TOR as the concerns indicate that while PAC's input is valued in its current form, taking on a more independent role as an advocate for farming is not supported as that is the role for an independent society or group.
- We need to provide some assurance to the municipalities that any opinions provided are not those of individual farmers on PAC, which is why he suggested meeting with the municipalities to discuss face to face.
- The draft Conflict of Interest document has not gone anywhere as yet. He is not entirely sure why we need to get legal advice if the document is one we will be using internally.
- With respect to the TOR, we need to talk to the Councils who have already provided input to have a clear discussion on what it is that we are trying to accomplish.
- He understands that Saanich is currently working on a response, which may be available by the February meeting.

- Non-profit societies get confirmation of their mandates at the AGMs; PAC needs to do the same, or least have discussions with the municipalities to make sure that what we are doing is right so we feel comfortable moving forward working in partnership.

Councillor Derman stated:

- The current PAC mandate states that PAC does nothing until Council sends them something to consider. He understands PAC wants to look at agricultural issues when they hear about them, and he does not have a problem with this.
- Where there is a problem is if PAC took action by themselves, making presentations or recommendations to other bodies.
- Council's advisory committees do not do this: they recommend Council take action and Council then makes the decision.
- PAC cannot sit as an independent commission and still receive support from the municipalities, clear Conflict of Interest guidelines would also be required in that case.
- If on the other hand, PAC continues to send its recommendations to Council for action and/or endorsement, then Conflict of Interest guidelines are not as important because PAC will not be making the actual decisions.
- Councils will be concerned if this group wants to act independently, and yet still be considered an "advisory" committee and receive funding.

The Chair stated:

- Councils could suggest PAC make presentations on agricultural topics, for example the current ALR/ALC issue, where PAC members could provide a valuable function that would not embarrass or compromise the position that Council would be taking.

After a brief discussion, it was suggested that we take a look at the TOR again: the initial intent was basically to bring the document up to date, as the original TOR was put together in 1998. PAC still wants to provide unbiased responses to agricultural issues and be self-initiating where appropriate. It was not the intent that PAC take action independently on any issue.

Councillor Cormier stated:

- Central Saanich Council had a heavy agenda the night that this item was discussed; more feedback could have been helpful.
- Council was accepting of the expanded mandate, the rub was the independence issue.
- Regarding the ALR/ALC issue, it is up to Council to speak out on this issue, but that does not stop a PAC member from joining independent groups who are speaking to the issue. However, PAC is publicly funded and must act accordingly.

The Chair stated:

- We can try to revise the TOR, addressing the concerns and resubmit to the municipalities.
- He noted that no members from the original sub-committee are present this evening and he wondered if there was a need for further discussion in this manner.
- He suggested that the document be revised to address the concerns raised, noting that we could discuss with the PAC Council representatives if necessary.
- He asked members to review the Conflict of Interest document with a view to adopting them as a working guideline.

CORRESPONDENCE

- a) Notice of Public Hearing January 8, 2014 re Central Saanich Land Use Bylaw Amendment re Temporary Use Permits.
Councillor Cormier stated she is not able to speak to the issue at this time but noted the hearing was well attended.
- b) Letter from N. Saanich re Licensed Medical Marijuana Production, complete with staff report, requesting comments from PAC.

PAC comments noted:

- There doesn't appear to be any way of preventing this type of use on ALR land and the ALC considers it an agricultural use.
- The compound recently built in Central Saanich adjacent to Michell's Farms on the Pat Bay Highway affects other farmers in the area. Dianne Williamson advised she ships her chickens at night and the security lights come on and off all the time.
- You don't need security fences and lights for growing lettuce.
- All municipalities should be pursuing this issue, because it will come down to "if Central Saanich has allowed it, why can't you?".

In response, Councillor Stock noted the community and the North Saanich Agricultural Advisory Group thinks it is something that should not be built on ALR lands.

- Apparently, in Ontario an old building, previously a Hershey's factory, is being used for production of medical marijuana. Although security fencing and lights are required, this is an industrial area.
- Council didn't want to just agree to the request, but wanted to investigate first.
- North Saanich has a population of 11,000 and approximately 1/3 of the land is institutional, 1/3 is agricultural and that leaves 1/3 for development.

Councillor Derman suggested asking Saanich's legal advisor to review what powers municipalities might have in this situation.

Councillor Cormier stated Central Saanich received information from staff that there is nothing Council could do to prevent the plant being built on ALR land.

- She applauds North Saanich for asking the questions.
- While she appreciates the need for medical marijuana, should good farmland be used in this instance, and at what expense to the community?
- Again it seems farmers are bearing the costs for the public good.
- However, if medical marijuana can make farming profitable, work needs to be done to ensure farmers get the help they need to make food production a priority. Building a compound on prime farmland is not the best use of the land.

Rob Kline suggested PAC members read the North Saanich staff report carefully. The report provides an option to initiate a Farm Bylaw that would prohibit medical marijuana facilities on ALR land and/or areas zoned for agricultural use. This would require the District of North Saanich to be regulated under Section 917 of the Local Government Act (LGA), giving the Minister of Agriculture authority to approve a North Saanich bylaw to prohibit medical marijuana facilities. The municipalities of Delta, Langley, Abbotsford and Kelowna are identified by regulation under Section 917 of the LGA to seek approval from the Minister of

Agriculture, and have requested the Minister to allow them to develop bylaws to prohibit such facilities.

- c) ALR/ALC Core Review: correspondence received from Saanich and Central Saanich affirming support for the preservation of the ALR and the ALC, and prior to any changes being made a full transparent consultation process be established with the agricultural community and the UBCM.
- d) Response from Central Saanich re the flooding issues in Martindale Valley/McHugh Ditch, advising that staff will endeavour to keep the Commission apprised of the progress of the Water Retention Plan for the Valley.

AGRICULTURAL ISSUES – Current

- **Goose Management Strategy (Bev Marley, Rob Kline)**

Bev Marley passed out information about the workshop on January 25, 2014 regarding permitting and egg addling, which is open to anyone.

- She has been to all the municipalities but they didn't want to hear about it. It is important that people know what they are doing if they are going to addle eggs. The Indian Reservations were very pleased to hear about the workshop. She also went to many farms with the information.
- She asked PAC members to spread the word, talk to their neighbours and others who would be interested and encourage them to come to the workshop.
- So far, registration is slow. Lunch is provided. She thought that golf courses would be interested. A workshop she attended at the airport was very well attended.
- Chasing the geese from place to place is not the answer. We now have over 7000 resident Canada geese; a goose can breed for 18 years or more.
- PAC suggested that the media be contacted, such as local papers, talk shows (C-Fax). Mike Waters at the CRD has been given clearance to talk to the media.
- Not known if Mike Waters has approached municipal parks departments, which would be a good idea.
- Apparently the Vancouver Airport has been training eagles to catch the geese.

Rob Kline stated:

- There are two components to the strategy: training for egg addling and a pilot cull – which is supposed to happen this spring.
- It will be targeted to those birds we know are impacting agriculture and will be a small scale cull. Everyone is aware of the problems with the deer cull, so things are proceeding slowly.
- No further details are available at this time.

- **Deer Management Strategy (Ryan Vantreight)** – not present. Rob advised things have been very quiet on this front; everyone is waiting to see how the Oak Bay cull plays out.
- **CRD Food Systems Strategy (Linda Geggie)** – nothing to report

PAC MEMBERSHIP

The current Terms of Reference allow for 10 members; the new terms call for 11-12 members. Nikki has just been appointed for a three year term – she replaces BJ who resigned last year. Now that Flora has announced she needs to step back for a while, we have one vacancy.

Two applications have been received. The Chair suggested that a sub-committee of PAC members review the applications and report back. The secretary will send copies of the applications to the sub-committee; once feedback is received, recommendations will be sent to the municipalities for endorsement. Dianne Williamson and Nikki Tate-Stratton were asked to review the applications.

AGRICULTURAL STRATEGY – Sub-Committee Reports

Water: (vacant)

Farm Economics (Terry Michell)

- A few crops were lost due to the cold spell in December but overall, everything has been harvested this year.

The Chair stated we do not have that much knowledge or expertise on farm economics but it keeps coming up in discussions. He suggested that if anyone knows of someone who is an expert in this area, it would be a good addition to PAC. Terry Michell noted that most farmers don't want to talk about it; farm economics is usually water-related – too much or too little.

Rob Kline stated that there is census data available, which could be used in PAC's annual report. Farm gate receipts do not vary much from year to year. It would be worthwhile to use the material as a boiler plate, including it in each annual report for comparison. He will pass the information along to the secretary.

Agricultural Land Base (Mike Romaine) Nothing to report.

Resource Stewardship (Vacant)

Education and Outreach (Linda Geggie)

- 3rd Annual Farmer to Farmer Conference: March 6, 2014.
- Linda advised that last year over 200 people attended – 180 of whom were farmers. It was a very diverse crowd.
- Bob Maxwell is a member of the committee planning this year's event, along with Bob Thompson, Robin Tunnecliffe and other CR-Fair members.
- The theme this year is farm profitability and the committee is looking for ideas and support, and trying to get speakers lined up by the end of January.
- Last year, PAC contributed \$400 to the event and she asked if they could do the same this year.
- Island Chef's Collaborative is preparing lunch.

MOTION: Moved by John Buchanan and Seconded by Bev Marley: "That PAC contribute \$500 towards the 2014 Farmer to Farmer Conference."

CARRIED

Rob Kline advised that John Buchanan has been asked to participate in a **predator control committee** (bear, wolves and cougar populations). A number of people across the CRD are involved. It was initiated by the Ministry of Environment and a meeting will be held January 27.

ANNUAL REPORT – members were reminded that we need to collect data for the 2013 Annual Report; sub-committee chairs were requested to provide information as per usual within the next few weeks. Information on the Goose and Deer Management Strategies can also be included. The report is generally submitted to the Municipal Councils together with the annual administration costs at the end of February.

OTHER BUSINESS:

Healthy Communities Forum

- Councillor Cormier advised the forum will be held at the Mary Winspear Theatre on **March 27, 2014** and is a collaborative event with Central Saanich, North Saanich and Sidney, who received a grant through the Healthy Communities programme.
- There will be a Sip and Savour event to promote local food and wine. Invites will be sent to various people, including PAC members. The event is limited to about 100 people. The theme will be "you are what you eat".
- The secretary mentioned that PAC has a banner with that phrase on it; she will pass it along at the next meeting.

WEBSITE - <http://saanich.ca/living/afs/index.html>

Members were reminded to pass along information they wish to be posted on the site.

Adjournment: On a Motion from Bev Marley, the meeting adjourned at 9:30 pm

Next Meeting: The next PAC meeting will be held on **THURSDAY February 13, 2014**, 7:30 pm at the Saanich Municipal Hall, Committee Room No. 2.