



**MINUTES OF THE
PENINSULA AGRICULTURAL COMMISSION
Committee Room No. 2, Saanich Municipal Hall
THURSDAY, APRIL 10, 2014 AT 7:30 PM**

Present: Bob Maxwell in the Chair; Linda Geggie; Bernadette Greene; Bev Marley; Niki Tate-Stratton; Councillors Derman (Saanich), Cormier (C.Saanich) and Loveless (Sidney). Also present was Isobel Hoffmann, Recording Clerk.

Guests: Mary Alice Johnson (Juan de Fuca); Kevin Brown; Ray Baker

Regrets: Councillor Stock; John Buchanan; Mike Romaine; Dianne Williamson; Ryan Vantreight; Rob Kline.

There was no quorum for this meeting, therefore adoption of the Minutes of March 13, 2014 were postponed to the May meeting.

Minutes: **Postponed until May**

Agenda: Added to the Agenda: proposed deer count in Central Saanich

PAC welcomed a new non-voting member representing the Juan de Fuca Electoral Area, Mary Alice Johnson. Mary has a certified organic farm in Sooke. She is involved with the Sooke Food Chi organization, helped put together a Sooke Farmland Trust Society, and is involved with farm mentorship and a soil programme across Canada.

TREASURER'S REPORT: No Change

SPEAKERS' BUREAU:

No speakers were scheduled for tonight's meeting. The list of speakers suggested at the March meeting was discussed as follows:

1. Stacy Toews, Level Ground Trading Co. Niki advised she will contact.
2. Councillor Vic Derman (Climate Change) – scheduled for May meeting
3. Marketing & Farm Co-ops – Mike Romaine to arrange a speaker
4. Agri-Tourism (Brent Warner?)
5. Island Chef's Collaborative- Linda Geggie may know of someone
6. Reed canary grass control & management – no suggestions for a possible speaker
7. 4-H Group – Bev Marley to contact
8. Dr. Elizabeth Vibert (African Women's Farm Collaborative) – Bernadette Greene to arrange

It was suggested information on scheduled speakers be posted on the PAC website as perhaps there are members of the public who would like to attend.

TERMS OF REFERENCE

- The Terms of Reference were considered and approved by the Municipalities of Central Saanich, North Saanich and Sidney. Saanich Council will consider the matter on April 28, 2014.

- Councillor Loveless stated that Sidney Council appreciated Mike Romaine attending the Council meeting to speak to the TOR. Mike Romaine also attended and spoke at the Central Saanich Council meeting. Ryan Vantreight and Bob Maxwell were at the North Saanich meeting.
- Councillor Cormier stated Central Saanich is preparing an economic development strategy, which will have agriculture as a major component. She noted that the 1997 Saanich Peninsula Agriculture Strategy document still contains relevant information. (This document was critical in the formation of the Peninsula Agricultural Commission in 1998)
 - The first meeting will be held April 25 to develop the Terms of Reference.
 - She will keep the Commission updated on the progress.

CORRESPONDENCE

- Letters from Central Saanich, North Saanich and Sidney endorsing the Terms of Reference.
- Letter from Central Saanich addressed to the CRD providing input on the Regional Sustainability Study and Food Systems Sub-Strategy. (see discussion below on Farmland Trust).

REGIONAL AGRICULTURE & FARMING ISSUES (as related to discussions about a Farmland Trust)

At the March meeting, considerable discussion ensued regarding a proposal by Saanich to introduce a Farmland Trust, an issue originally raised by the Saanich Environment Committee. Saanich Council has referred the matter to staff to prepare a report on how such a trust would work. PAC had identified some issues and a brainstorming session was suggested for this meeting to consider the following:

- The present state of agriculture
- The issues farmers face
- The potential solutions to address these issues
- Form a sub-committee to take the lead on this topic
- Prepare a report defining the problems to assist Saanich staff

It was noted at the March meeting that PAC does not have to come up with solutions, just identify issues. Staff have the knowledge and resources to determine potential solutions.

The Chair passed along suggestions from Mike Romaine about gathering facts on the following:

- How many farmland trusts do we have?
- How long have they been in operation?
- How many acres are in farmland trusts?
- How do these farmland trusts affect established farmers?
- Who do the farmers utilizing the trust lands sell to and how do they market their produce?

After a brief discussion, it was realized that a lot of research has already been done on this subject and rather than expending more energy, we should collect the information, review, and consolidate into a concise report to submit to Saanich to assist them with the Farmland Trust Report, and include issues that need to be addressed:

- Central Saanich and North Saanich already have agricultural plans and have considered the first three points noted above.

- From a regional context, information has been collected for the Regional Sustainability Study and the Food Systems Sub-Strategy.
- Ramona Scott, Farm Folk – City Folk, has prepared a report which could be useful.

Other comments were noted as follows:

- Although frustrating to see good farmland sitting idle, the new property owners are essentially stewards of the land; it could be used again for food production or leased to a farmer.
- One of the roles of the CRD's food strategy is to provide opportunities for young farmers, such as leasing land.
- Linda Geggie and Mary Alice Johnson sit on the board of Linking Land and Farmers; information is posted on a website and there are great benefits (including tax benefits) to this programme, but more publicity is needed. Perhaps this is something PAC could help with, or it could be part of PAC's Saanich Fair display this year.
- Tenure is always an issue with leasing land.
- Developers are known to buy agricultural land, let it lie for a few years and then develop it.
- The timing of this report could tie in with the Regional Sustainability Study, although it was acknowledged with an election this fall, things might not move as quickly until after the election. It would be helpful to provide a copy of PAC's report to all CRD directors.
- Perhaps handouts could be prepared for the Saanich Fair or the harvest dinners organized by farm groups in the fall to gather more information and input from farmers.
- Noted that input has never been sought from the business and marketing side and perhaps this should be considered.

Formation of Sub-Committee:

It was agreed that Linda Geggie, Nikki Tate-Straton and Mary Alice Johnson work together to gather information and facts and report back to the Commission in due course. For future meetings, it was agreed to include this item under the "Education and Outreach" section of the Agenda, which Linda chairs.

AGRICULTURAL ISSUES – Current

- **Goose Management Strategy (Bev Marley, Rob Kline)**
 - Bev stated that information had been sent out by the secretary to all on the PAC email list regarding the egg addling programme and only one response has been received, from Ryan Vantreight.
 - Before a permit can be issued to addle eggs the property owners have to give permission to enter their property (permission for 1 to 3 years is sought). She fears that because things are taking so long to arrange, the window of opportunity has been missed for this season.
 - The permit process is underway for a pilot cull; Canadian Wildlife Services are involved and we want to keep this low key if possible and to carry out the cull in a respectful manner.
 - When we started having problems with geese, their population was about 1,000; now the population is reaching 9,000.
 - Geese can live about 20 years, start breeding at age 2 or 3 and have up to 4 off-spring each year.

- Egg addling doesn't actually reduce the population, but once you have a workable number of geese you can maintain the population.
- It is not a one-time thing, but has to continue year after year. This requires a lot of funding.
- About 45 people took the egg addling training – not many farmers. But if people don't come forward to advise they have nests on their property and give permission to access their property, it will have been a waste of time.
- She handed out a few forms at the meeting and the secretary offered to resend the original email.
- Volunteers can help to search for nests on a property; only those trained in the egg addling can actually addle the eggs. They have a system in place to mark the nest sightings so time is not wasted doubling back over the property.
- An environmental company is willing to lend a hand with the programme.
- It has been noted that addling eggs from 200 nests a year would be a good start.
- They have spoken to schools, golf courses and the airport; they are mostly doing their own thing.
- Contact has been made with bird, natural habitat and environmental groups.
- It is a lot of hard work and she hopes that people will respond to the enquiry about geese on their properties, or neighbouring properties.

- **Deer Management Strategy (Ryan Vantreight)** - not present

Proposed Deer Count in Central Saanich

Councillor Cormier advised that Central Saanich had a presentation from the CRD last week and has agreed to conduct a deer count in the municipality. The proposal is to do three separate counts at night, turn on lights and count the deer. The question is how to get access to properties and make people aware that someone could be walking on their property in the middle of the night. One of the suggestions was to include information in the municipality's newsletter "are you interested in participating in a deer count?"

Discussion noted:

- Most farmers already know if they have deer on their property, and how many live there.
- Farmers have received emails from "deer huggers", which are very disturbing.
- Direct communication would be needed with each farmer or property owner.

- **CRD Food Systems Strategy (Linda Geggie)**

- The sub-committee has been meeting recently so the document can be forwarded to the CRD staff. The Food System Strategy is a sub-strategy of the CRD's Regional Sustainability Study.
- High-level guidelines have been included in the overall strategy and it will soon be ready for the public to review. This information will be presented in a "Public Engagement Ready Strategy".
- The challenge is that we want to end up something that is going to be effective. Salt Spring Island's strategy has been very successful and we need to look at why this has worked.
- The sub-committee is looking at keystone projects – projects that require collaboration with partners. Bob Maxwell has been involved in this process.
- Although the project is moving along now, she believes things will slow down a little leading up to the fall elections.

- Hopefully she will something more concrete to report at the next meeting.

Brief discussion ensued re suggestions for the strategy, noting the following:

- Mentorship – having an established farmer mentor a young farmer, or a farmer who is making changes to his farm in terms of crop and/or size, could be a valuable programme. Having a list of contacts, both those willing to be a mentor and those needing help, would be helpful.
- Linda noted this was discussed at the recent Farmer2Farmer workshop; a list is posted on the Farmer2Farmer website. Again, it is finding a way to make this known to the community.
- Bob Maxwell noted that the 20 or so farmers on Oldfield Road already cross back and forth between farms offering advice and sharing expertise.
- Mary Alice stated that Sooke has a Farm Mentorship Programme, matching 10 new 'wannabe' farmers with established farmers from the Sooke and Juan de Fuca areas.
- Again noted this is something that could be advertised at the Saanich Fair this year, perhaps preparing a brochure with information on mentors throughout the region.

- **ALC/ALR Core Review (Linda Geggie)**

- Information was distributed to the Commission regarding proposed Bill 24, outlining changes proposed by the province to the ALR and ALC.
- Linda Geggie stated Bill 24 has been introduced. The House sits until May 5 and it is proposed to send the Bill for 2nd and 3rd readings before then.
- A lot of attempts have been made by various groups to put pressure on the government because of the lack of adequate consultation.
- It is recognized that the ALR and ALC was formed over 40 years ago and changes are necessary, but people are angry about the lack of consultation.
- Yesterday the BC Agriculture Council passed a resolution saying they will oppose Bill 24 and Minister Thompson has met with them.

AGRICULTURAL STRATEGY – Sub-Committee Reports

Water: ((Michael Doehnel) – no report

Farm Economics (Terry Michell) –not present

Agricultural Land Base (Mike Romaine) Not present

Resource Stewardship (Vacant)

Education and Outreach (Linda Geggie) – Discussion to take place at the next meeting re the Saanich Fair. Some ideas were noted at this meeting (farmland trusts and mentorship).

UPCOMING EVENTS:

- ◆ Review of Saanich Peninsula Healthy Communities “You Are Where You Eat” - March 27, 2014

Councillor Cormier stated 97 people registered for the workshop and 78 showed up. She believes people found the information sessions very helpful. A full report will be prepared so the information gathered is not lost and can be put to use.

Some attendees suggested the format could have been more interactive rather than spending the day listening to speakers – all of whom were excellent, but it is hard to sit and listen to presentations all day.

◆ Inter Island Sheep Breeders Association Education Seminar – **Saturday, May 3, 2014**

Topics: Environmental Farm Plans & Soil Analysis and Composting

Saanich Fairgrounds, 3:00 – 7:30 pm. interislandssheepbreeders@yahoo.ca
www.interislandssheepbreeders.com

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 8:50 pm

Next Meeting: The next PAC meeting will be held on **THURSDAY MAY 8 2014**, 7:30 pm at the Saanich Municipal Hall, Committee Room No. 2.