



**MINUTES OF THE
PENINSULA AGRICULTURAL COMMISSION
Committee Room No. 2, Saanich Municipal Hall
THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 11, 2014 AT 7:30 PM**

Present: Mike Romaine in the Chair; Bev Marley; Linda Geggie (7:45 pm); Nikki Tate-Straton; Terry Michell; Dianne Williamson; Councillors Derman (Saanich), Cormier (C.Saanich), Stock (N.Saanich). Also present was Rob Kline, Ministry of Agriculture, and Isobel Hoffmann, Recording Clerk.

Guests: David McAllister, Central Saanich Planning; Ray Baker, Poplar Lane Farm; Jeff Weightman, CRD; Gary Holman, MLA, Saanich North and the Islands; Gordon Bedhard, ALC; Adriane Pollard, Saanich Environmental Services..

Regrets: Bernadette Greene; Mary Alice Johnson, Tom Henry, Bob Maxwell and Ryan Vantreight; Councillor Loveless.

Quorum: Note, there was no quorum until 7:45; the minutes were adopted after that time.

Minutes: Moved b Diane Williamson and Seconded by Bev Marley: "That the Minutes of July 3, 2014 be adopted, with two minor changes: on page 2 deleting reference to 45 litres of wine; on page 3 Councillor Cormier was referring to the design of the Sidney Hotel when stating the design may "grow on her" and not the proposed new building at 1819 McTavish Road."

CARRIED

Agenda: The Agenda was approved as distributed.

TREASURER'S REPORT

Bev advised there was no change; volunteers at the PAC tent for the Saanich Fair were paid by a donation from another group.

GLEN MEADOWS REZONING

Information was distributed to members but unfortunately the applicant was unable to attend due to a personal emergency. The matter has been postponed to the October meeting.

BUSINESS ARISING FROM MINUTES (JULY 3)

◆ North Saanich Economic Agricultural Development Strategy

At the July 3 meeting, Janine Schille from North Saanich suggested that PAC may wish to participate in the development of the North Saanich Economic Agricultural Development Strategy. She identified 8 priorities where PAC could play a role and indicated that although nothing had been officially decided yet, there could be some compensation for PAC's participation. It was agreed to review and discuss at the September meeting. The Chair reviewed the 8 points as follows:

1.1 Expand the existing Flavour Trail

1.2 Support development of 'Buy Local and Peninsula Grown' campaign

- 2.2 Support development of a business plan for “food hub” on Sandown or other municipal lands
- 2.4 Create a brochure and campaign to promote the location of agri-food businesses and investment in District of N. Saanich (DNS)
- 2.5 Promote development of a plan to increase use of private, community and LG facilities for food production & processing, recovery and distribution
- 3.2 Promote to the CRD and BC govt an agriculture investment fund for the region
- 4.3 Advocate with agricultural stakeholders across the Peninsula with post-secondary institutions & BC govt to create extension services for the region
- 5.4 Support food security and agriculture components of the Regional Sustainability Strategy (CRD)
- 5.6 Identify bylaws elsewhere that maybe considered and adaptation to DNS to support agri-tourism & agri-food

(Note: after the meeting, a revised document was received and this information was submitted to PAC members)

The Chair stated:

- the main difficulty is the lack of time for members to devote to the review.
- There could be ways PAC could assist in moving the strategy forward.
- For example, N. Saanich had mentioned there could be some compensation – would we be able to use these funds to have a staff person work with us? Or perhaps we could invite a key speaker to a PAC meeting to discuss the identified priorities?
- The key questions for PAC to consider are:
 - Should PAC become involved, and if so, how?
 - How would we proceed? Establish a sub-committee? Or would we serve as consultants?
 - What are the next steps?

Action:

- Circulate the priorities to PAC members to indicate support and to prioritize.
- Advertise for someone on a project-basis to assist with the review - (university student?)
- Perhaps we could locate a retired public servant with an interest and/or expertise in this field to assist.

****Linda Geggie entered the meeting at 7:45 pm****

Agreed a list of the priorities from the N. Saanich Agricultural Strategy will be circulated to members for review/comment. **Further discussion at the October meeting.**

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The Chair suggested that we take this topic off the table at this time. It could be revisited at a later date.

TERMS OF REFERENCE

The main thing that still needs to be considered, other than appointing two additional members (see *discussion under PAC membership*), is a name change. He suggested that members review the following suggestions, looking at the acronyms as well, as some of them are not particularly good, and advise of their preference. The secretary will circulate a survey to the membership.

- 📁 South Island Agricultural Commission (SIAC)
- 📁 Peninsula & Area Agricultural Commission (PAAC)
- 📁 Capital Region Agricultural Commission (CRAC)
- 📁 Peninsula Regional Agricultural Commission (PRAC)
- 📁 Peninsula Agricultural Commission (PAC)
- 📁 Other

CORRESPONDENCE

a) **ALC Act Changes**

PAC sent two letters to Deputy Minister Sturko re the ALC Act changes, (July 28 and August 11) requesting additional time for input; the request was denied. Councillor Cormier stated Central Saanich agreed with PAC's recommendations, and also sent a letter to the Deputy Minister asking for an extension and to have meetings in Victoria. She will forward a copy of Central Saanich's letter to the secretary.

On August 22, the last day for input, the Deputy Minister met with some farmers at Terry Michell's home. The Deputy Minister indicated the input from the consultation process would be drafted and reviewed by staff, after which additional input would be obtained from the UBCM, the ALC and the reference group. A final draft will be taken to the House before the end of the year.

Terry Michell stated:

- about 15 farmers from Saanich, Central Saanich and North Saanich were at the meeting, including some from PAC (Ryan Vantreight, Bernadette Greene, Mike Romaine).
- The Deputy Minister discussed the comments he had heard from around the province as well as some of our local farmers.
- The Minister said they wanted to increase agricultural sales by \$2 billion from the current \$12 billion annually. A deal has just been signed with China for BC cherries and other deals with China will be explored.
- Farmers noted we need to buy the "Buy BC" programme back so more of our local produce is consumed in this province rather than importing produce to BC and exporting our produce elsewhere.
- Another point raised was home severance: how can the next generation of farmers be interested in farming if they cannot have their own home on the farm?

b) **Deer Management Strategy**

PAC sent a letter to the CRD (July 11), further to the CRD Board's recommendation to review budget and time line implications for extending the deer management programme. PAC requested a meeting to discuss the continuation of the programme, and Jeff Weightman from the CRD attended this meeting to elaborate. (see further discussion under Agricultural Issues - Current)

c) **Hagan-Graham Detention Facility**

Letter dated August 27 from Central Saanich re Hagan-Graham Agricultural Detention Facility. David McAllister from Central Saanich was present and reviewed the proposal outlined on various schematics.

- An open house was held in July and Central Saanich Council referred the matter to PAC for comment.
- The municipality has entered into a conditional land sale and donation agreement to acquire land for the construction of a drainage facility in the Hagan-Graham watershed. No land will be removed from the ALR.
- This 25-acre parcel has been known to flood since the 1970's.
- The subject area starts in Saanich and goes across Keating Ridge, through the business park and on to Maber Flats.

- Although most of the drainage goes from south to north, there is an area near the Fairgrounds where water goes from east to west.
- The advantage to this is we are able to take the water from both sources, decreasing the catchment area by about 60% by using berms and other methods.
- The municipality wants to ensure that water is contained on the parcel.
- He outlined the summer and winter profiles and the benefits of the drainage works.
- The concept has been reviewed by a consulting agrologist who looked at the impact of achieving the drainage criteria and rated the benefits at a 3:1 ratio – increased productivity from surrounding farmland, flood control to mitigate flood risk and improved water quality as well as potential for residential development.
- Water could be stored and managed, and this will help with down-stream irrigation users.
- The fish habitat would be improved and there may be opportunity for public recreation and education opportunities near the channel areas.
- He asked that PAC provide input and let Council know whether or not to proceed as outlined with the conditional purchase and sale of the property in order to construct the drainage works.
- Central Saanich offers the following commitments:
 - retain ALR designation on the property
 - improve drainage
 - continued participation in the Canada Geese control efforts
 - provide opportunities for local farmers to lease portions of their property
 - provide education opportunities.

In response to comments and questions from PAC, Mr. McAllister stated:

- The current soil classification is Class 2, with peat at the surface, going down to clay. The peat is deepest at the south end of the property, with test holes indicating depths of 50' to 60'.
- Because of the wetness, some of the soil is Class 3, although some areas could be Class 4 or 5.
- The soil quality would improve with better drainage.
- Regarding water quality, the problem starts upstream and is currently untreated. Water quality improves the further you get from the discharge area.
- The municipality would like feedback by the end of the month as the conditions on the sale agreement need to be removed by October, and the Council meeting is October 6th.
- If the sale agreement is successful, we will complete the concept design plans and additional input will be sought at that time.
- The cost of the drainage system is approximately \$2.7 million, with \$1.05 being the land costs.
- The municipality is looking at securing grants throughout the 8-year capital construction time line. Rob Kline advised there are no more grants through the ARDSA programme.

Comments from PAC were noted as follows:

- The Martindale Flats area is another area with a huge drainage problem.
- Would not want to see all the drainage funds spent in one area when there are other areas with severe problems.
- The overall concept of the drainage works was good, but allocation of funds should be considered.
- This is a good illustration of how the municipality is trying to address good objectives.
- The plan has been well thought out and there are many benefits.
- A lot of farming in the Martindale area has tapered off because of the flooding.

Mr. McAllister stated at the open house, because Central Saanich is a diverse community, there were many issues raised, such as the health of the stream, eco-systems, the impact on agriculture, and was this plan the best use of resources. Farmers were supportive of the project, but for different reasons.

Summary: PAC was generally in support of the project and was looking forward to seeing the concept plans. A copy of the minutes will be made available to Central Saanich Council by the end of the month.

AGRICULTURAL ISSUES – CURRENT

a) **Goose Management Strategy** - A meeting is scheduled for September 23, 2014.

b) **Deer Management Strategy**

Jeff Weightman, CRD, stated:

- Oak Bay had been planning to implement a “capture and euthanize” programme this fall, but it was decided it was too close to the municipal elections.
- The CRD pilot project ended September 14, 2014 and Oak Bay has asked that the project be extended.
- PAC had also written to request a project extension for the region, and the Board extended the project to March 2015.
- Last fall, the CRD put out a call to farmers to offer assistance but only got 26 people who might be interested and fewer still who expressed an interest in reducing the deer population on their farms.
- Perhaps the CRD didn't approach this the right way and he asked how they could help more.
- In response to a suggestion from Councillor Derman that PAC canvas the agricultural community, let them know the programme has been extended and who is interested, Jeff advised that the CRD has staff dedicated to this project until March 2015; he will do site visits and meet with people; a tool kit is available.
- The method of killing is with a shotgun; Oak Bay was planning to use clover traps and the CRD has been trying to locate more of these, which then allows the hunter to shoot the deer at point blank range, which is more humane.
- The traps are about 6' tall, cube shape, and collapse on the deer; the cost is about \$1200 a trap.
- The CRD is not able to act on behalf of the municipality unless the municipality empowers them to do so; or the municipality can apply for permits and get the traps themselves.
- The province has advised they cannot provide traps; this is a topic at the UBCM this fall and the CRD has made a submission of their plans for the traps.
- He is aware that deer are not often seen during the day; they do most of their feeding at night.
- Central Saanich recently changed their Firearms Bylaw and hunters work with the Central Saanich Police Department; the First Nations are putting together groups to hunt at night.
- He agreed another joint meeting and outreach re geese and deer for the farmers and hunters would be beneficial and the CRD would be open to that but we need clear direction. The biggest concern is liability; BC Wildlife did a presentation about insurance, and could be asked to attend again.
- It has been a frustrating experience; some farmers who obtained permits have been over-harvesting. Permits are for 5 deer and then you need to reapply. He recognizes this is a tedious process and it is one of the challenges we are trying to overcome.
- He will keep PAC in the loop regarding any progress.

Noted that the PAC Council liaisons could also report back to PAC, keeping communications open.

The Chair expressed appreciation to the CRD Board for granting an extension to the programme. PAC will attempt to get preliminary feedback to the Board by November.

c) **CRD Food Systems Strategy**

Linda Geggie stated that Terry Michell and Bob Maxwell have been involved in the process, together with Rob Kline and Jeff Weightman. Over the summer the working group tried to consolidate the priorities and define that “actionable” projects. The revised document will be given to the CRD and stakeholders, including PAC, for comment.

- d) **ALR Core Review Update – nothing further to report at this time (see correspondence)**
- e) **Farmland Trust** – The sub-committee did not meet over the summer; a meeting is planned with Saanich staff in the fall. Hopefully there will be something to report at the next meeting.
- f) **1819 McTavish Road DP** – Councillor Stock stated North Saanich Council passed the Development Permit at its meeting on September 8, 2014. Council appreciated PAC's comments and recommendations. There was discussion about the form and character of the buildings, but a point was made that a lot of farms in North Saanich have farm buildings in steel, stucco and wood. Because this subject application was an expansion of the farm's agri-tourism business, it was passed. North Saanich recognizes it needs some guidelines around form and character.
- g) **1020 Beckwith ALR Application** – Councillor Derman stated Saanich Council approved this application and sent it forward to the ALC. There was no change to the ALR – it was just a boundary adjustment. Some of there property not in the ALR was purchased to complete the trail system and to get control of the riparian area around the lake.
- h) **Panama Flats Rezoning** – Councillor Derman stated Council's Committee of the Whole referred the rezoning to a Public Hearing; it is unlikely this will be held prior to the November election. The area has a longstanding history of agricultural and trail uses. It is an important flood plain, as well a migration area and bird sanctuary. A few comments were received at the Committee of the Whole meeting that there seemed to be no protection for the birds. However, there is one large field where there is no intention of farming that can remain a bird habitat. Council had some concerns that if we just zone the property for agriculture, future councils will not understand, so a new zone will be introduced as a special conservation area within the ALR.
- I) **Noxious Weeds Bylaw – Adriane Pollard, Saanich**

Ms. Pollard stated she brought this issue to PAC last year; the public participation process is completed.

 - This bylaw will be a model for other municipalities to use, particularly the list of plants and weeds.
 - Very little input was received about agricultural issues, although agriculture was the #3 priority based on the impact of noxious weeds.
 - The first Noxious Weeds bylaw was introduced in 1906 with the intent to protect agriculture.
 - During staff discussions, it was agreed that if farmers were going to be subjected to the bylaw, it should be on an education basis rather than enforcement.
 - The statement suggested for the bylaw is: **All private properties have to control or cut down weeds that are a potential detriment to agricultural soils.** This way, we do not have to list all the plants.
 - If a farmer has an issue with a particular type of plant, Saanich will try to partner with the people involved to address the problem and explain that the problem plant on their property is affecting the farm. This is very simple compared to the rest of the bylaw.
 - In some cases, pesticides are allowed on certain species.

- In response to a question about disposal of the noxious weeds, Ms. Pollard said the best option is to bag and tag it, and take it to Hartland Landfill. They are hoping to have something more local for Saanich residents. The plant cannot just be put into a regular compost pile as this will exacerbate the problem.

PAC comments noted:

- perhaps municipalities could have a special bin at the municipal yard.
- Having the list of plants is very beneficial; taking it a step further, a brochure with photos would be better, particularly highlight those plants that are poisonous.
- This is something that could be taken to the schools.
- In response to a comment about a possible difficulty enforcing the bylaw if a specific species is unidentified in the bylaw, Ms. Pollard stated there will be a list attached to the bylaw, other than plants that a farmer feels is a detriment to agricultural soils; it may come down to a court decision.
- Farmers have a problem with pesticide use, particularly on designated organic farms. It is often better to have thistles than to use pesticides. Ms. Pollard stated permits are required for using pesticides, and neighbours must be notified. If a farm was close by, further investigation would be carried out.

Ms. Pollard stated the next step is to take the bylaw to the province before approval. There will be a Public Hearing eventually, but likely not until the early spring next year.

AGRICULTURAL ISSUES – NEW

- **Strategic Outreach Initiative – Rob Kline**

Information was circulated to PAC members, and Mr. Kline stated:

- The initiative is part of the Growing Forward 2 programmes to support local and regional agriculture projects; up to \$5,000 per event or project is available, initially funded by the group and then reimbursed.
- Projects must be completed by February 28, 2015.
- A group can make more than one application for different events.

Discussion noted perhaps this could be used to fund the joint Deer/Geese workshop/open house.

AGRICULTURAL STRATEGY – SUB-COMMITTEE REPORTS

- a) **Water (Michael Doehnel)** – nothing to report
- b) **Farm Economics (Terry Michell)** – he will have a report for the next meeting
- c) **Agricultural Land Base (vacant)**
- d) **Resource Stewardship (vacant)**
- e) **Education and Outreach (Linda Geggie)**

- **Saanich Fair – Review of 2014 event:**

- In Linda's absence this summer, Nikki stepped into the roll of booking the presenters and the general organization, with the help of Bob Maxwell, Bob Thompson, and Isobel Hoffmann. Linda provided notes on past year's events to assist.
- Nikki stated the zucchini races were a huge hit and very popular.
- Next year, we really must start planning earlier in the year as there were some difficulties with the tent and other issues. Luckily, with everyone's help it came together okay.
- Suggested a binder for each year's event, listing contact names and numbers, who provides what, etc.
- We need to promote PAC more – perhaps review points we have focused on over the past year (outlined in each year's Annual Report), projects PAC has supported, etc.
- Noted we seem to be challenged in recruiting volunteers.
- The booth does not attract too much attention but people were asking about the squash. Perhaps we can build on this – a list of squash recipes perhaps.
- People don;t seem to understand the connections with PAC and how it connects to the community.
- We need to revamp and update the existing brochure.

Summary: Planning for fair to start in January next year; binder to be started, listing contacts, supplies, ideas for the booth; new brochure to be developed; list of PAC's accomplishments over the past year to be listed.

PAC MEMBERSHIP

John Buchanan resigned from PAC this summer due to a difficulty with time commitments. Two additional PAC members were approved by the recently adopted Terms of Reference. Suggested that the secretary contact the administration office of the participating municipalities asking if they will include a line about PAC membership in their annual ads for committee members. A posting to be placed on the PAC website and members were asked to think about possible new members as well.

Adjournment: On a Motion from Dianne Williamson, the meeting adjourned at 9:50 pm

Next Meeting: The next regular PAC meeting is scheduled for **October 9, 2014**, 7:30 pm

I hereby certify this is a true and correct
copy of the Minutes.

Isobel Hoffmann
Recording Secretary