



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

Present: Mike Romaine in the Chair; Bernadette Green; Bev Marley (8:00 pm); Bob Maxwell; Linda Geggie; Nikki Tate-Straton; Dianne Williamson; Councillors Derman (7:50 pm) (Saanich), Cormier (C.Saanich), and Loveless (Sidney). Also present were Rob Kline, Ministry of Agriculture (7:50 pm), and Isobel Hoffmann, Recording Clerk.

Guests: Gary Holman, MLA, Saanich North and the Islands; Coralie Breen, N. Saanich; Mark Johnston; Jacklin Hoole.

Regrets: Mary Alice Johnson, Tom Henry, Ryan Vantreight; Councillor Stock (N.Saanich).

Minutes: Moved by Diane Williamson and Seconded by Linda Geggie: "That the Minutes of September 11, 2014 be adopted."

CARRIED

Agenda: The Agenda was approved as distributed.

TREASURER'S REPORT – nothing to report

GLEN MEADOWS REZONING – NORTH SAANICH

Information was distributed to the members prior to the meeting.

Mark Johnson stated he is working for the Criddle Family, who have owned and operated the Glen Meadows Golf Course since 1962.

- The golf course has been in operation since before the ALR was introduced, and before North Saanich existed.
- Mr. Criddle senior is now 94 years old, and as the course requires considerable capital upkeep, the family is looking into other options for the property that fit into the plans for North Saanich and meet the family's requirements to net a good return on their investment over the past 50 years.
- The 130-acre property is situated on McTavish and West Saanich Roads, zoned Golf Course Commercial, and although within the ALR, agriculture use is not permitted. It has on-site irrigation and does not rely on municipal water.
- As well as the golf course, there is a club house, tennis courts, curling rink and residential properties where the family live. These residential properties are not included in this proposal.
- An agrologist has examined the soils; the family does not want to use the best agricultural lands for the proposed residential development.
- The proposal does not require ALR exclusion.

Gary Holman, MLA, entered the meeting at 7:45 pm

- The proposal includes a 100 acre donation to the municipality to use under the existing farmland strategy; estimated this parcel would be worth between \$2 million and \$2.5 million.
- It is proposed to establish a Rural Agricultural Neighbourhood (RAN) zone with 35 lots on the remaining 30 acres, with an average lot size of 27,000 sq.ft., developed with micro farms and farm gardens.

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- There will be a strata farm road, on-site irrigation and sewer treatment system so the municipality will not be burdened with construction costs or maintenance.

*** Councillor Derman and Rob Kline entered the meeting at 7:50 pm***

- A portion of each lot will be set aside for a single family home (approximately 30%) and the remainder would permit agricultural activities only. It is proposed there will be no restriction on outbuildings used for agricultural purposes (eg: greenhouses).
- This is a just a concept plan, it will be up to the municipality to decide the final details regarding the size of the home site's, outbuildings, etc.
- A portion of the strata fees would be used to hire a farmer who will assist strata owners, as well as farming the common areas.
- A capital fund with initial seed money of \$100,000 will assist the farmer with startup costs, and an additional \$30,000 will be provided to develop the farm market business. These funds will be held either by the municipality or the strata.
- The existing on-site building would be retained: the clubhouse to be used for receptions, educational workshops, etc., and the curling rink on the lower floor may be used for a possible Peninsula farm market.. Discussions will take place with the North Saanich Agricultural Society re the market.
- The RAN Strata Corporation may own and operate the buildings. Perhaps a restaurant, as well as a farmers market could be developed, with the restaurant using food grown on-site.
- A farm plan will have to be produced each year by the hired farmer, who will be responsible for the strata's 3-acre commercial farm and maintaining the frontage of the property.

*** Bev Marley entered the meeting at 8:00 pm***

- There has been huge compaction on the land over the years; an agrologist's report, has been obtained and will be submitted with the application to the ALC.
- With respect to the agricultural areas on the strata lots, while we cannot force people to physically farm the land, strata corporation bylaws will be prevent residents from building a pool or tennis courts for example on the designated farm area. Live stock will also not be permitted.
- The farmer hired to oversee the common areas and assist the residents, would also be responsible for hiring additional labour if necessary.

Discussion ensued regarding the strength of a Strata Corporation Bylaw over the Right to Farm Act.

- It was also noted that even if residents don't want to farm their individual properties, it is still maintaining a land bank for agriculture.
- We have a lot of farmland on the Peninsula – but we have a shortage of farmers.
- PAC generally liked the “thinking outside the box” concept.
- Questioned if the option of having the majority of the land as common property for farming has been considered, under the management of the hired farmer, with strata owners buying a standard, smaller lot just for a home? This might offer more security and comfort - and be less expensive.

Mr. Johnston cited examples of smaller farm lots in the McTavish and West Saanich Road areas, some of which support local restaurants and the farmers make a good living off the land.

- The Municipality would also be a strata owner, and therefore have input into the strata bylaws. 100% approval is required before bylaw changes related to agriculture are made.
- In response to comments, he confirmed that this is just a concept plan: smaller lots may be difficult to obtain ALC approval. He has already met with the ALC and they support the concept as outlined.
- He agreed there will be less return on investment for the family if the lots were smaller, and while the property has operated as a golf course since 1962 and could be sold as such, golf courses are losing money.

- The property could also be divided into two large parcels for a different use – but then we wouldn't be getting as much agricultural use or benefit.
- A consultant has been hired to look at different agricultural possibilities – everything from berries and grapes, to horses and cattle, none of which requires ploughing the entire field.
- He has been told that 2.5 acres is sufficient to grow vegetables to support 100 people for a year.
- Assuming the total RAN and commercial farm combined is about 12 acres, this would support 480 people in produce for a year.
- It is a way of changing unproductive agricultural land into a productive farm, as well as helping farmers who cannot afford to buy land the opportunity to farm by providing capital costs and a farm market on site.

In terms of the next steps, Mr. Johnston stated:

- The OCP requires upgrades to McTavish and establishment of bike lanes – a distance of 1,000m.
- The family is looking for support of the proposal and also comments.
- He has met with North Saanich regarding the rezoning process, anticipated to take about 12 months.
- The ALC component would take about 6 months.
- The subdivision component would also take about 6 months.
- A subdivision application has already been made to the ALC.
- The family is about 10 months into the 2-year process; hopefully this time next year some detailed questions can be answered.
- The proposal may look a little different next year than it does now.

In response to comments from PAC, Mr. Johnston confirmed:

- The agrologist has indicated it will take some years to bring the soils to the point where they will produce good crops.
- Of the 30 acres set aside for development, about one third of this will be for roads, etc.
- He was unsure if any changes to the strata bylaws concerning the agricultural buildings would require approval from the ALC; he will check on this.
- In terms of the existing curling rink, the group is losing money and it could shut down tomorrow. North Saanich does not want to assume the responsibility for the operation. He has met with the rink operators.
- There is no buffer area between the residential areas and the agricultural land; there will be a buffer between the RAN properties and the 100 acre parcel. For example, the municipality would not be able to build a barn or feed lot within 100 m of a residential parcel.

The Chair stated it is nice to see such an innovative project and he understood that it will come back to this commission in the future. Comments from PAC will be passed to North Saanich.

Ms. Breen, North Saanich, stated that this is the last of five commissions that have had an opportunity to comment. There will be community consultation as well. The application will come back to Council before any further steps are taken, but this will not be until after the fall elections, likely not until January. This will give PAC time to make comments and a Motion.

Mr. Johnston stated if questions or issues arise that the Commission would like to see addressed, he will come back to a future meeting.

BUSINESS ARISING FROM MINUTES (SEPTEMBER 11)

a) North Saanich Agricultural Development Strategy

PAC was asked to review specific sections of the Strategy and provide comments, and/or advise whether they could assist North Saanich taking the strategy forward. Information was distributed to PAC members prior to the meeting.

- It was agreed that at this time, PAC does not have the capability of undertaking this task; Commission members are volunteers and there simply is not enough time. However, should the municipality hire a consultant, assign a staff member, ask for specific comments on a particular priority, or use the Commission as a sounding board, we would be pleased to assist.
- As a number of municipalities are undertaking agricultural strategies, the question was raised whether regional funding would be available to fund PAC with additional resources. It was noted that the CRD is restricted on what services it can fund and this would not be one of them unless specifically requested by a municipality. It has to be an established function.
- It was suggested it would be beneficial for municipalities to work together on the agricultural strategies, perhaps hiring the services of an agrologist to assist with the development of the plan.
- Councillor Derman advised that on October 6 Saanich Council approved the development of an agricultural strategy, and he suggested there might be an opportunity for a cooperative effort between other municipalities and integrating services.
- He suggested there are two ways to get municipalities to look into a cooperative venture: the individual councillors on PAC could bring a report to their municipalities, or PAC could send a report to the Councils, outlining what the venture would look like. It does not make sense for each municipality to have its own strategy.
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Linda Geggie stated:

- There has been increased interest by the municipalities in agriculture and food security: Saanich is forming a task force, Central Saanich is prioritizing its strategy, North Saanich is developing a strategy, the CRD is working on the Regional Food Sustainability Strategy with the assistance of CR-Fair.
- There are over 60 organizations in the regional that are all doing little pieces of the puzzle and we need to cooperate and work together.
- Asking advisory bodies within the municipalities for input is not going to get the job done: we need paid staff and partnerships with consultants and organizations that can actually do the work required.
- CR-Fair has been trying for years to get this off the ground and come up with a plan with key priorities, it is very challenging and we need the CRD and the municipalities on side.

Discussion continued, noting the following:

- Farmers have been doing well this year – growing more and selling more per farm.
- Organizations such as the DFMA have initiatives that seem to work.
- The idea of a staff resource person for municipalities to assist small scale and new farmers with their questions would be very helpful. At one time, you could call the Ministry of Agriculture for advice. It is very expensive to get professional advice.

Councillor Cormier noted services that used to be provided by senior levels of government have been downloaded to municipal governments, and these additional services are funded from property taxes.

Mr. Hollman stated:

- He was a CRD Director for Salt Spring Island.
- Salt Spring developed and implemented a farm plan, established an agricultural alliance, obtained the required infrastructure (an abattoir) and established a Farmland Trust.
- The Islands Trust worked with a local group to establish a market garden on a 65-acre parcel and they found a way to move the strategy forward.
- You need to have a group that “owns” it in order to move the plan forward.

Councillor Derman stated:

- There should be a way to look at the agricultural community in a broader sense.
- CR-Fair is one of the players, but there needs to be a group that is action-oriented to implement the plan(s).
- He sent a report to Saanich Council in 2011 recommending a comprehensive strategy to make farming viable and to attract young farmers. Finally a staff report has been received, although nothing will happen until after the election.
- He would be happy to arrange for a staff member to attend the next meeting to discuss the Terms of Reference for the task force. Unfortunately there was no time to bring the matter to PAC before the report went to Council as he was not aware of it sooner.

The Chair stated:

- As per Councillor Derman's suggestion, he will bring a draft report to the next meeting, highlighting some of the issues, making suggestions on key areas where coordination could be enhanced.

CARRY for further discussion at the next meeting.

b) Proposed name change for PAC

As per the revised Terms of Reference, a suggestion had been made to change the name of “Peninsula Agricultural Commission” to something that would be more inclusive for not only Metchosin, but for any other municipalities that wish to join PAC in the future.

A list of 6 options was circulated to PAC members to vote on their preferred choice. Although some comments noted that PAC was acceptable, well-known, and it was not necessary to change the name, the majority of the votes were for the Peninsula and Area Agricultural Commission – or PAAC for short.

MOTION: Moved by Dianne Williamson and Seconded by Linda Geggie: “That the Commission's name be changed to the Peninsula and Area Agricultural Commission.”

CARRIED

The secretary to advise the sponsoring municipalities, change the letterhead and arrange for an update to the website accordingly.

CRD DEER MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

The Chair stated need to advise the CRD that we want the strategy to continue. The farmers behind the project are Ryan Vantreight, Terry Michell, Jack Mar and Larry Sluggett. At the last meeting, Jeff Weightman from the CRD told PAC that the CRD was willing to help and have a staff person on board until at least March 2015.

Discussion noted:

- The traps Mr. Weightman mentioned are a better for smaller farms where shooting is not an option.
- The traps are expensive and not government funded; there could be opportunity for someone to make the traps and sell or rent them.
- Or perhaps a few small farms could collectively purchase a trap and share its use.

Bob Maxwell suggested PAC should write to Jeff Weightman and the CRD thanking them for their good work on the deer strategy, and for hiring Mike Webb until March 2015.

- The CRD has held meetings with the Ministries of Agriculture and Environment, the Canadian Wildlife Services, Central Saanich Police, as well as lots of farmers, and put together a concept plan.
- They went to the farms, and helped people fill out the required forms and developed the Deer Management Strategy within 8 months. We need to show our appreciation for this hard work.

Councillor Loveless stated the CRD spent \$150,000 on the strategy and were thinking of ending the programme, but the Mayor of Oak Bay asked for an extension. An additional \$70,000 was granted to extend the programme through to March 2015.

Rob Kline noted that the CRD would be eligible to apply for a grant under the Strategic Outreach Programme; he will look into this and contact the CRD.

CORRESPONDENCE

- a) Letter to Central Saanich in general support of the Hagan-Graham Agriculture Detention Facility.

AGRICULTURAL ISSUES – CURRENT

a) **Goose Management Strategy (Bev Marley/Rob Kline)**

A meeting was held on September 23, 2014. An egg addling workshop is planned in Central Saanich in the New Year.

- Suggested this could perhaps tie in with a deer management workshop.
- Veterinarians will be involved in the pilot project for the goose cull.
- We would like to hold the workshop by the end of November, but the CRD staff is undergoing a transition at this time so it may be difficult to arrange.
- Funding for the workshop is also in question.
- Bev hopes the administrative end of things will be easier this time; anyone who has, or thinks they will have, geese on their property will be asked to sign the permit form, so that when the time comes to addle the eggs, we don't have to wait for the permits to be signed, and thereby missing the opportunity to addle the eggs – which is what happened last year. There is only a small window of opportunity.

MOTION: Moved by Bev Marley and Seconded by Dianne Williamson: “That PAC partner with the CRD on the Goose Strategic Outreach Programme for the egg addling workshop in January, 2015.”

Bev advised a facility has to be booked, food and speakers to be arranged, as well as training for the volunteer egg addlers. You are not permitted to addle eggs unless you have had proper training. Kate Hagmeir is still involved with the programme and should be able to assist.

The Motion was then PUT and CARRIED.

b) Deer Management Strategy – see discussion above

χ) CRD Food Systems Strategy

Linda Geggie advised the strategy is still in limbo waiting for comments from some of the parties involved. Hopefully there will be something to report at the next meeting.

d) ALR Core Review Update – nothing further to report at this time

New Commissioners were appointed to the panel recently.

e) Farmland Trust (Linda Geggie/Nikki Tate/Mary Alice)

Nothing to report at this time.

AGRICULTURAL ISSUES – NEW

- **Saanich Agricultural Food Strategy – see discussion above (pages 4/5)**

AGRICULTURAL STRATEGY – SUB-COMMITTEE REPORTS

a) Water (Michael Doehnel)

Councillor Loveless advised that Mike Doehnel regularly attends the Water Commission meetings on PAAC's behalf and does a great job. It was suggested that we invite Mike to either attend the next meeting or submit a report on the year's activities, which could be included in the Annual Report.

b) Farm Economics (Terry Michell)

Terry was not present, but others confirmed this has been one of the best years ever due to the longer growing season and good weather.

c) Agricultural Land Base (vacant)

d) Resource Stewardship (vacant)

e) Education and Outreach (Linda Geggie)

Linda reminded PAAC that we had talked about having a tour of some farms, with an informative and educational component for new councillors after the fall elections. We have done this before, arranging a bus tour to two or three farms, providing lunch, and having one or two speakers on the bus while traveling from farm to farm. Rob Kline advised this would also qualify for a grant under the Strategic Outreach Programme.

PAC MEMBERSHIP

The secretary advised as per discussions at the last meeting, most of the sponsoring municipalities have agreed to include a few lines about the PAAC vacancies on their annual advertisements for members to their advisory committees. Under the revised Terms of Reference, PAAC can have an additional two members, bringing the total membership to twelve. With the resignation of John Buchanan in the summer, we need three new members.

OTHER BUSINESS

Councillor Loveless advised that she will not be seeking re-election this fall as she wants to devote her time to family and other matters. She stated she has thoroughly enjoyed her time serving on PAC, working with chairs John Pendray, John Kaye, Frank Edgell, Bob Maxwell and now Mike Romaine. She wished PAC well in its future endeavors.

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

Next Meeting: The next regular PAC meeting is scheduled for **November 13, 2014**, 7:30 pm

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

Isobel Hoffmann
Recording Secretary