



**MINUTES OF THE
PENINSULA AGRICULTURAL COMMISSION**
Committee Room No. 2, Saanich Municipal Hall
THURSDAY, JANUARY 8, 2015 AT 7:30 PM

Present: Mike Romaine in the Chair; Linda Geggie; Bernadette Green; Bev Marley; Dianne Williamson; Councillors Stock (N.Saanich), Cormier (C. Saanich) and McLennan (Sidney). Also present was Isobel Hoffmann, Recording Clerk, and *Jack Mar, Phil Christie and Kim Lonsdale (new members - positions still to be ratified by Councils).*

Guests: Ray Baker; Lee Hardy; Bruce Greig, Central Saanich Planning.

Regrets: Councillor Derman (Saanich) Mary Alice Johnson, Tom Henry, Bob Maxwell, Terry Michell, Nikki Tate-Stratton.

Elections It was agreed to postpone election of officers (Chair, Vice Chair, and Treasurer) until the next meeting. Three current PAAC members were not present, and the new appointees have not yet been officially ratified by the Councils.

The Chair announced this would be his last meeting; he is resigning due to family commitments. He encouraged members (both existing and new) to think about putting their names, or the name of another member, forward as Chair. Please advise the secretary of any nominations by January 22. Bob Maxwell is the current vice-chair; he was not present to indicate whether he wished to stand for another year. Bev Marley has been Treasurer for a number of years and advised she would like to step down.

Minutes: Moved by Bernadette Greene and Seconded by Linda Geggie: "That the Minutes of December 11, 2014 be adopted as circulated."

CARRIED

Agenda: The Agenda was approved, noting that discussions re the Central Saanich Agricultural Advisory Committee would be added to #5, Business Arising from Minutes.

TREASURER'S REPORT – The Treasurer advised she will be stepping down from this position. New Treasurer to be elected at the February meeting.

SPEAKER'S BUREAU: No Speakers

BUSINESS ARISING FROM MINUTES – December 11, 2014

Central Saanich Agricultural Advisory Committee (AAC) (*letter from Central Saanich dated November 12, 2014; report dated October 21, 2014*) *Note: this issue was a late item at the November 13 meeting and discussed briefly at the December 11 meeting.*

Bruce Greig stated:

- In 2011, Central Saanich completed its Agricultural Area Plan process, which was endorsed by Council.
- The document has 107 tasks and an informal committee (the AAC) was struck to hear comments from farmers on what the municipality can do to move forward with the plan and help the farmers. The committee was also asked to give advice to Council on agricultural matters.
- The question now is should this informal committee be formalized, and how does this relate to PAAC.
- In the past, many ALC applications have been referred to PAAC. .../2

- Council is also interested in creating a new Economic Development Committee; its proposed Terms of Reference note that this committee should not duplicate the roles and efforts of the existing AAC and PAAC.
- PAAC is being asked for some direction and input on the formalization of the Agricultural Advisory Committee.
- The report dated October 21, 2014 provides details on the proposal, noting 3 possible options:
 1. expand the mandate and resources of the AAC – which would result in fewer referrals to PAAC;
 2. continue with the AAC as is;
 3. wrap up the AAC.
- The current members of the AAC have provided comments, noting they would like to see the committee formalized and enhanced.
- The idea of having a regionally-funded agrologist was raised again, and Central Saanich Council is lobbying this to be a service provided by the CRD.
- Currently, the AAC does not have dedicated resources; he noted that PAAC is also challenged with a lack of resources and volunteers.
- There will be two recommendations going forward to Council from the Agricultural Advisory Committee:
 1. The Agricultural Advisory Committee recommends to Council its support for a more formalized and expanded mandate for the Committee, along the lines of the suggested Terms of Reference from the Ministry of Agriculture, so that Council decisions on municipal bylaws, policies, projects and developments that may affect farming can be better informed by the agricultural community.
 2. The Agricultural Advisory Committee sees the need for funding to support the function of the Committee, similar to the staff support on items considered by the Advisory Planning Commission, for the District to take effective action on the tasks identified in the Central Saanich Agricultural Area Plan.”

In response to questions, Bruce stated:

- Regarding a regionally funded agrologist, he understands there is a need for a “boots on the ground” position in the region.
- Central Saanich has provided input on the CRD's Regional Sustainability Strategy and he believes the timing is right to move forward on the suggestion of a regional agrologist, as well as looking at the business development side of agriculture.

Commission discussion noted:

- We have many agricultural committees throughout the region but there is no action.
- It is more important to spend money on a regional agrologist (“boots on the ground”) to assist new farmers and provide expert advice.
- All the municipalities should be involved and contribute to the funding of this position, which could directly assist on the farm and also provide advice on the marketing end of things.
- There are federal and provincial programmes (eg: Growing Forward) that can assist farmers with up to \$5000 for a consultant to help on the farm. It is a national programme available to any farm with an income over \$5000 annually.
<http://www.agr.gc.ca/eng/about-us/key-departmental-initiatives/growing-forward>
- The government does not do a good job of marketing this programme; only larger farms are aware of it.

Councillor Cormier stated:

- Council is considering whether to formalize funding for its local agricultural advisory committee that has been operating on a temporary basis for two years.
- Consideration is also being given to the link and division of duties between this committee and PAAC. The AAC was originally created to assist with moving the District's Agricultural Area Plan forward.
- The committee originally looked at prioritizing 107 tasks identified in the Agricultural Area Plan and Council approved an expenditure for one of the priority items, but because of a lack of resources, this task has not yet been finalized.
- She supports the continuation of AAC, the question is how to move forward with the Agricultural Plan and take action on the identified priorities working both with PAAC and the AAC on a volunteer basis.
- She is a liaison on the new Economic Development Committee, which also includes two appointees from the agricultural community; these positions are critical in moving forward with the Plan.

The Chair stated:

- PAAC would like to continue its role of reviewing projects on a broader scale, with regional overtones, rather than smaller, local projects. It would be important to ensure that roles are not duplicated.
- PAAC has also discussed the need for regional coordination and ways in which PAAC could contribute. This suggestion was outlined in the recent report sent to the Councils regarding regional coordination of agricultural issues.
- Some concerns about funding have been noted previously by PAAC. There is only so much funding available and Central Saanich partially funds PAAC as well.
- Regional coordination of agricultural issues is key.
- PAAC is becoming over-loaded and should play a broader role in a regional capacity.
- On the other hand, we do not want to be isolated but rather maintain our connection with the municipalities. Having appointed Council representatives is a way of doing this.

The Commission noted:

- The points raised by the Chair are important re thinking about the relationship between PAAC and the AAC.
- The Central Saanich AAC is already a functioning committee and its initial purpose was to assist with moving the District's Agricultural Area Plan forward; PAAC cannot focus on this aspect.
- Several municipalities have their own Agricultural Plans and they each need a Committee to be tasked with moving the plan forward in a pro-active manner.
- It is important to make sure there is coordination – perhaps a liaison could be appointed?
- Two of PAAC's members sit on the Agricultural Advisory Committees in North and Central Saanich and it would be a concern if they had to resign from PAAC.
- Central Saanich has the most agricultural land and is significant in terms of production.

Discussion ensued re solutions to move forward and implement agricultural area plans. Varied suggestions were put forward:

- Staff resources, external directors or a point person to manage and follow-up on recommendations from the agricultural area plans throughout the region.

- Position(s) could be funded through partnerships with the municipalities and/or other levels of government (eg: Ministry of Agriculture, CRD).
- Commitment of a few hours a week from a qualified resource person, with a facilitator to bring it all together.

- Noted that over the years, many services have been downloaded to the local government level. Farmers do not care where the funding or assistance comes from – but it doesn't negate the fact that these resources are needed.
- People have been calling for a regional solution to many issues for a long time. There are strong recommendations in the Regional Sustainability Study, which hopefully will be completed soon.
- The secretary to provide a summary of the above to Central Saanich with respect to its request of November 12, 2014 for comment on the formalization of the District's Agricultural Advisory Committee.

The Chair thanked Mr. Greig for his input and taking the time to attend the meeting.

CORRESPONDENCE

- a) PAAC letter to Councils recommending appointments of four new members to PAAC
- b) PAAC letter to North Saanich re Agricultural Economic Development Strategy

Correspondence was received for information.

AGRICULTURAL ISSUES – CURRENT

- a) **Goose Management Strategy (Bev Marley/Rob Kline)**
Information sheets on the workshop were distributed.

Bev stated:

- A Wildlife Management Workshop has been planned for January 17, 2015 but to date only one person has registered; in part she believes low registration is because of a lack of timely information.
- The morning will be devoted to geese management; the afternoon to deer.
- This is not only a workshop but also a venue to obtain for permission to addle eggs on farms and private property. The forms have to be completed before making application for a permit.
- Anyone who thinks they may have geese nesting on their property should complete a form.
- We have volunteers who are trained to addle the eggs.
- The problem is that the addling maintains the population: the main concern is about reducing the population – and this can only be achieved by a cull.
- A pilot project is proposed for this year and the CRD is looking at suitable properties; permission from the owners is required.
- Central Saanich has been a leader in anything to do with geese and deer management.
- In response to a comment about a surprising sensitivity around a goose cull when people are allowed to hunt them, Bev stated some people do not understand that you can hunt geese on the Peninsula nor do they understand the damage that geese have caused.
- The cull has to be done at the right time – when the geese are molting.
- It will done in a humane and respectful manner, with a vet on hand at all times during the cull.

- b) **Deer Management Strategy (Rob Kline/Ryan Vantreight)** – Not present.

c) CRD Food Systems Strategy (Linda)

Linda stated:

- The working groups for the Food Sustainability Strategy and the Regional Sustainability Strategy have met recently and provided comments to Derek Masselink, consultant for the CRD.
- The Strategies are now sitting with the CRD and perhaps it is time for PAAC to write a letter to request information on the current status and the next steps.
- Jeff Weightman is the CRD staff person working on this issue, and he is apparently waiting on instructions from the Board.
- The RSS has been on hold since before the fall municipal elections.

The draft is now available but has not been sent to the Councils as yet.

MOTION: Moved by Linda Geggie and Seconded by Dianne Williamson: "That a letter be sent to Jeff Weightman at the CRD regarding the status of the Regional Sustainability Strategy and the Food Sustainability Strategy, noting the importance of moving forward in a timely manner with this document."

CARRIED

Copies of the letter to go to Bob Lapham, CAO at the CRD and sponsoring municipal councils.

d) ALR Core Review (Linda)

- Linda stated the changes proposed to the ALR regulations are in the regional development phase. We may see some new regulations this spring.
- Phil Christie noted it appears there are some very important changes being made through this new legislation which will particularly impact small scale farmers. He does not know how much influence this commission would have on these changes.
- The Chair advised that PAAC was involved in the review and covered as much as we could. Letters were sent to the Ministry. The Minister of Agriculture advised the legislative changes were to be made by year-end. We have not seen a draft of the proposed changes.
- Linda advised she will check on the progress for the next meeting.

e) Farmland Trust (Linda, Nikki, Mary Alice)

Linda stated:

- Over 50% of our farmers will retire within the next 10 years.
- The issue of getting new (younger) farmers on to the land is serious and it is strategic to look at farmland trusts.
- Last fall, Saanich Council approved a task force be struck to look at farmland trusts.
- There are a number of large properties that could come under the Farmland Trust umbrella – Haliburton Farm (currently active), Panama Flats, Sandown Raceway, and Glen Meadows Golf Course.
- CR-Fair has directed two researchers to look at different models currently operating under Farmland Trusts, hold discussions with stakeholders and municipalities to look at how these models may or may not be a fit for the Capital Region.

A discussion ensued about past models that didn't work (eg: The Land Conservancy), how BC has a history of failure with land trusts, the inequities that could result from Farmland Trusts, ways to recruit

skilled farmers and conduct a proper analysis of the land, with drainage and irrigation as two of the major criteria to consider.

The Chair noted that PAAC had thorough discussions on this topic at its meetings last March and April and covered many of the concerns and issues. PAAC also formed a sub-committee to follow up on the progress of the Farmland Trust venture. There will be an opportunity for PAAC to provide comments.

Noted that current trends are not positive and we need to consider the option of Farmland Trusts.

AGRICULTURAL ISSUES – CURRENT

PAAC report to Councils on Regional Coordination of Agricultural Issues

The Secretary advised that this matter was scheduled for discussion at the Saanich Council meeting on Monday, January 12. Unfortunately it is on the Council portion of the meeting and therefore input can only be provided in writing.

WEBSITE: Members were asked to advise of any information items to place on the website.

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

AGRICULTURAL STRATEGY – SUB-COMMITTEE REPORTS

- a) **Water (Michael Doehnel)** – Michael, together with Terry Michell, submitted a combined Water and Farm Economics (Crops) report for the 2014 Annual Report.
- b) **Farm Economics (Terry Michell) – not present**
- c) **Agricultural Land Base (vacant)**
The Chair noted that this sub-committee relates to the Farmland Trust and ALR issues. He previously held this position and noted there is a role here for one PAAC's new members.
- d) **Resource Stewardship (vacant)**
The Chair noted this topic is the question of looking at things on a holistic basis – such as watershed management. Again, this role has been vacant for a time and is open for one of the new members. Both (c) and (d) have the opportunity to become active roles, making PAAC more valuable to the municipalities, providing input and insight.
- e) **Education and Outreach (Linda Geggie)**
 - **Spring Farm Tour for New Councillors** – PAAC has done this farm tour in the past. It is open to new and existing Mayors and Councillors and is a great opportunity to invite them to see what is involved in operating an actual farm and to help them become more knowledgeable about agriculture and farming in general.

It is suggested the bus tour be held in the spring (April). While going from farm to farm, a speaker(s) will provide an informative narrative. Lunch provided. The potential farms to be on the tour have to be considered and then permission obtained from the owners. Costs should not be too high: bus rental, lunch, honorariums for speaker(s). Estimated around \$1,000.

Rob Kline is looking into whether the Strategic Outreach Grant Initiative would be a fit for the tour. Linda offered to complete the application form and submit same, noting the process is simple, but we have to provide details about the project. She will touch base with Rob to check on the status. She will also talk to Bob Thompson to see if he could help with the tour; Bev Marley offered to assist.

UPCOMING EVENTS:

Wildlife Management Workshop (Geese/Deer) – January 17, 2014

Island Agriculture Show, Courtenay, February 13 & 14, 2015. <http://www.iashow.ca>

Farmer2Farmer Workshop, February 19, 2015.

Linda thanked PAAC for sponsoring this event again. Topics for discussion will include crop management, livestock, marketing and business.

Seedy Saturday - February 21, 2015 – all day event.

A popular event, with workshops and seed exchanges, held at the Victoria Conference Centre.

Agricultural Advisory Committee Workshop – February 18, 2015 in Abbotsford

ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2014

Sub-Committee chairs were reminded to submit their reports to Isobel by the end of the month. Thank you to Michael Doehnel and Terry Michell whose report has been received.

Adjournment: On a Motion from Dianne Williamson, the meeting adjourned at 8:50 pm

Next Meeting: The next regular PAC meeting is scheduled for **February 12, 2015, 7:30 pm**

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

Isobel Hoffmann