



**MINUTES OF THE
PENINSULA AGRICULTURAL COMMISSION
Committee Room No. 2, Saanich Municipal Hall
THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 12, 2015 AT 7:30 PM**

- Present:** Bob Maxwell in the Chair; Linda Geggie; Bev Marley; Terry Michell; Dianne Williamson; Jack Mar, Kim Lonsdale; Samantha Charlton; Councillors Graham (C. Saanich) and McLennan (Sidney). Also present was Rob Kline, Ministry of Agriculture; and Isobel Hoffmann, Recording Clerk.
- Guests:** Michael Doehnel; Steve Holroyd, Saanich Engineering; Ray Galey.
- Regrets:** Councillors Derman (Saanich) and Stock (N.Saanich); Mary Alice Johnson, Tom Henry, Nikki Tate-Stratton, Bernadette Greene and Phil Christie.
- Elections** Co-Chairs for 2015: Bob Maxwell and Jack Mar
Treasurer for 2015: Samantha Charlton
- Minutes:** Moved by Dianne Williamson and Seconded by Kim Lonsdale: "That the Minutes of January 8, 2015 be adopted with a minor change of adding Samantha Charlton as a 'Regret' for the meeting."
CARRIED
- Agenda:** The Agenda was approved with the addition of the status of Farm Worker Housing and a request from Central Saanich Council for clarification on the role of PAAC and how Council can be of assistance.
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TREASURER'S REPORT –

Arrangements will be made to have the new Treasurer, Samantha Charlton, added to the Island Savings Account. The secretary advised she will discuss with Saanich Finance about transferring a small amount of money to PAAC's Island Savings account from the annual grant fund, so that charges under \$25 could be paid directly by PAAC rather than going through the cheque requisition process.

SPEAKER'S BUREAU: No Speakers

CORRESPONDENCE

- a) Letters from municipalities confirming the appointments of Samantha Charlton, Phil Christie, Jack Mar and Kim Lonsdale to PAAC for a 3-year term.
- b) Letter from N. Saanich acknowledging PAAC's letter re the Agricultural Economic Strategy, advising the letter has been received for information.
- χ) Letter from Saanich acknowledging receipt of PAAC's letter re Regional Coordination of Agricultural Matters, noting that Council supports in principle the direction taken by PAAC as outlined in the report.
- d) Letter from N. Saanich acknowledging receipt of PAAC's report re the Glen Meadows rezoning, noting that the information has been referred to staff.

AGRICULTURAL ISSUES – CURRENT

a) Goose Management Strategy (Bev/Rob)

- The workshop planned for February 17 was canceled as only five people registered.
- Another workshop for wildlife nuisance permits and egg addling is planned for Saturday, February 28, from 9:30 a.m. To 3:30 p.m. at the Saanich Fairgrounds, Dogwood Room, 1528 Stellys X Road, Saanichton.
- The workshop is free and lunch is provided.
- Bev asked members to distribute the posters to anyone they think would be interested.
- Egg addling will not reduce the geese populations, but it will help to maintain at current levels.
- A cull is the only way to reduce the population, which at the last count was estimated at over 9,000.
- People need to understand how important it is to have an egg addling programme.
- Everyone needs to get involved – not just the farmers.
- You cannot addle eggs unless you have attended a workshop and been trained.
- The Airport Authority and DND are involved in the programme; the School Districts and golf courses don't seem to be interested.

Discussion noted:

- There is no dedicated funding from the Ministry of Environment; there should be a problem wildlife agency that monitors the geese populations and helps to control them. Having farmers addle eggs is not a viable solution.
- Saskatchewan has Wildlife Crop Insurance and the government pays for the planting of lure crops to direct the geese and other wildlife away from farm crops.
- Questioned why federal and/or provincial conservation officers are not dealing with this issue rather than local governments.
- PAAC has written to the Ministries of Agriculture and Environment in the past, perhaps it is time to write again, ask for a meeting with the CRD's working group.
- This issue has been talked about for many years and our farmers are still suffering the consequences.
- It was suggested that the food industry should get involved and the geese and deer could be killed for food, but Bev advised apart from having no place to process the meat, the cost of carrying out the kill and processing would be high, and the geese are not tasty.
- Combined federal pressure with local community action and local parks staff could help.

Rob Kline agreed that contacting provincial and federal officials again is a good suggestion; we should always keep the pressure on.

- Primarily this is a federal problem and they do have geese and deer strategies – but they will not move on this unless there is a community effort and the community (local and regional) is involved.
- Public groups like PAAC and other producer groups can also assist.
- He noted that the Working Groups for the Goose and Deer Management Strategies are led by the CRD, and that Central Saanich, Langford, North Saanich and DND are also involved.

Ray Galey stated that the Airport Authority is involved due to safety issues.

- For farmers, the main concern is severe crop loss.
- Geese destroyed acres of carrots he had planted in just two nights – a loss to him of \$3,500.
- Food sustainability is at risk and no income for the farmer.
- This in turn means he has to lay off some farm workers.
- He would like to continue planting a variety of vegetable crops but feels there is no point planting leafy vegetables as they will be gone overnight.
- Firearms cannot be discharged in Saanich whereas this is permitted in Central Saanich.
- Saanich leaves the farmers to deal with the problems themselves.
- This is unfortunate as there is a lot of good farmland in Saanich.
- Something needs to be done to help the farmers. Why aren't the School Boards and soccer coaches involved? The kids have to play on fields covered in goose feces.

Regarding the suggestion of exploring crop insurance for farmers, noted that the farmers would be putting in a claim every year, which in turn would cause premiums to rise. As well, insurance might be part of the answer, but it will not solve the problem of increasing geese and deer populations year after year.

Kim Lonsdale offered to draft a policy paper and bring to the next meeting.

CARRY FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION

b) Deer Management Strategy (Rob)

- The cull is on-going in Oak Bay. No one knows exactly where or when – locations are not disclosed to the general public. The permit ends mid-March. A total of 25 deer are to be culled.

c) CRD Food Systems Strategy (Linda)

- The Regional Sustainability Strategy (RSS) has been released for public consultation; February 15th is the deadline for feedback.
- The original RSS had only a couple of agricultural issues listed: maintain the ALR and a statement about agriculture in general. The current strategy has a whole plethora of statements.
- The public is concerned about food and food security; it will be interesting to see the public's comments about the revised RSS.
- Once the public input stage is closed, the document will be redrafted and considered by the CRD's Board of Directors.
- The supplemental Food Systems Strategy is also being developed and many PAAC members have been involved with this committee over the years.
- Jeff Weightman has advised that the draft RSS and Food Systems Strategy will come back to PAAC for a review.
- There will also be public forums held on issues such as Land Trusts.
- A number of large tracts of municipal land are up for discussion – such as Panama Flats, Sandown, Haliburton Farm.
- If portions of these lands are leased to farmers, it is important we don't create unfair markets.
- It is also acknowledged that any farmer leasing these lands will have a lot of work to do to get the land up to productive standards. There are definitely pros and cons to this issue.

Discussion noted the following points:

- Re farmland trusts, long-term leasing will be an important aspect so the farmer's initial capital investment will be worthwhile
- The CRD's strategy should align with provincial and federal strategies regarding food security. Too often we have a patchwork quilt of regulations and statements with no overlap.
- Increasing food production means lower prices or compensation for existing growers.
- Local consumption and marketing should also be a consideration as well as support for local growers. If increased production is encouraged we also need to look at distribution and branding.
- There are a few gaps in the strategies, particularly regarding job creation in agriculture and alignment with provincial and federal goals.

The Chair stated he reviewed local municipal OCP's and highlighted supportive statements relating to food, agriculture and food sustainability. Most municipalities have a huge "to do" list, and some of the items have been on the list for a long time. He felt it was a bit worrisome that there has been no action to date. A copy of his findings was circulated to members for information.

Kim Lonsdale noted that with every strategy you need people taking action that will lead to an outcome. Setting small goals can help with the implementation. Perhaps each municipality could be assigned a specific goal? He assumes the CRD has more capacity to put the strategies into action than the municipalities.

- Members had some concerns or disputed some of the points in the RSS; the secretary stated that Jeff Weightman advised although the deadline for public input was February 15, input from groups such as PAAC would be accepted until the end of the month – although the sooner the better. **Members were encouraged to email their comments to the secretary, she will compiled the comments and send to the CRD on PAAC's behalf.**

d) ALR Core Review (Linda Geggie)

- A final meeting was held between the Minister and his advisers about 3 weeks ago. The input phase has been completed and the document has been sent to the Policy Branch. PAAC will get to see the draft when it is available.

e) Farmland Trust (Linda, Nikki, Mary Alice) – noting to add at this time.

f) Temporary Foreign Farm Workers Housing

- Terry Michell stated this issue was discussed at length by PAAC about 3 or 4 years ago. The intent was to get the municipalities to develop a foreign farm workers housing policy which would outline the form and character, siting, setbacks and density.
- Many farms are only looking for 3 or 4 foreign workers, whereas larger farms may need 300+ at certain times of the year. The average farm would require up to 10 workers for 3 or 4 months of the year.
- He has talked to some of the growers on the mainland asking if the local municipality has a policy. Ladner, Abbotsford and a few others do.
- The question raised previously by the municipalities was if the housing is only required for 3 or 4 months of the year, what will happen to it for the remainder of the year.
- Any agricultural housing policy adopted within the region should be universal.
- If a farm had a large greenhouse operation (such as those on the mainland), then farm workers may be needed year-round.

Kim Lonsdale stated he has photographs of a facility in Saskatchewan for 12 workers; the building is constructed to municipal standards with appropriate permits, and approved by the federal government. It is a steel, insulated building, with a common room with a kitchen, laundry facilities, and bedrooms at the rear.

Discussion noted:

- All accommodations for foreign workers are inspected before the workers get on the plane.
- The workers are only permitted in the country for a certain time.
- The buildings would provide additional value to the farm; perhaps this would allow the farmer to maintain the two or three best employees on a year-round basis and hire additional workers during peak times.
- PAAC previously noted that farm workers could be shared between two or three farms to accommodate the different peak periods on the farms – but the workers continue to live in the same place so valuable farmland is not being used on each farm for the housing.
- Reference should be made to the municipality's agricultural strategies in their OCPs and LAPs if and when presentations are made to the councils.

- Where do we draw the line for accommodation? For example, Woodwyn Farms wants to build housing for the homeless to work on the farm – is this the same as employing foreign farm workers?
- Noted that Paul Hesje prepared a detailed study on Farm Worker Housing which was presented to the Councils; there has since been a change in council members – perhaps it is time to bring this issue to their attention once again..
- To hire a foreign farm worker for 8 months, the average housing cost is about \$7,000 each; including food and airfare, this increases to \$12,000 per worker.

Rob Kline stated:

- The Ministry has a Standards Paper regarding municipal guidelines for temporary housing for up to 250 workers.
- He will send this information to the secretary for distribution to PAAC members.

Action:

The secretary and Samantha Charlton to research the lower mainland and Vancouver Island municipalities to obtain any policies regarding temporary farm worker housing.

Pertinent information from past discussions, reports (including Paula Hesje's study) to be recirculated, with the intent of bringing this matter once again to the attention of the local councils.

g) Central Saanich Council – Request for clarification on its role with PAAC

Councillor Graham stated he has been asked by Central Saanich Council for an explanation about Council's role with respect to PAAC. Recently there has been discussion about the future of the municipality's Agricultural Advisory Committee and how PAAC fits in with this committee.

- He noted the Terms of Reference have not been completed for the Ag Advisory Committee yet.
- As well, Council would like to extend an invitation for a member to speak at an upcoming Committee of the Whole meeting to bring us up to speed on PAAC's goals and let Council know how they can assist.

The Chair stated a few years ago, PAAC suggested it would be a good idea for each municipality to have its own agricultural advisory committee to consider more local issues. PAAC deals with the regional issues (eg: geese, deer, composting, water use).

Bev Marley stated she recalls many discussions about these regional issues.

- Rather than continuing to spend money on individual committees we need to have hands and feet on the ground to assist farmers directly.
- If each municipality would contribute to a fund, we could get a hands-on professional who would be available when needed.
- All farmers, especially new farmers, need advice and not everyone is lucky enough to have a mentor.

Rob Kline agreed that having a person available to provide hands-on expert advice would be great, but employees at the Ministry level have been reduced from 700 to about 300 across the province, and this includes the “Growing Forward” and group insurance employees.

- Central Saanich is the only municipality to approach the Ministry directly – and this was about two years ago.
- A request for a “boots on the ground” advocate should ideally come from the CRD on behalf of all the municipalities who have identified the need for such a person.

Discussion noted:

- Local governments can rely on PAAC for consultation as we have the necessary expertise and advocates in areas identified in the strategies.
- There is a lot of ground to cover and PAAC needs to consider exactly where our boundaries lie and how we can work together with the local municipalities.
- PAAC does not have the capabilities to monitor individual agricultural plans – this would come under the municipality's own Agricultural Advisory Committees.
- Noted that so far Central Saanich has not accepted the recommendations and comments presented by its Agricultural Advisory Committee, whose members are well-established local farmers.

The secretary was asked to contact Central Saanich Administration (Ruby or Liz) to arrange for PAAC to attend a Committee of the Whole Meeting.

AGRICULTURAL ISSUES – NEW

Referral from Saanich re proposed addition to the Colquitz Linear Park

Steve Holroyd, Saanich Engineering, stated:

- This proposal is indirectly related to the upgrade to Wilkinson Road in 2016 with a bridge across the Colquitz River and an extension of the Colquitz trail 400 m east of Wilkinson Road.
- During the public consultation period, the owners of 4436 Wilkinson Road approached Saanich advising they were interested in selling all or part of their property.
- At that time, the Parks Department got involved in discussions and an agreement was reached to purchase 1800 m² of the property fronting Wilkinson Road on both sides of the Colquitz, and dedicate same to parkland, adding to the Colquitz Linear Park.
- The goal is to eventually build the public trail extending from Cuthbert Holmes Park to Elk/Beaver Lake; Saanich has been working on this for a number of years.
- The Parks Department is not going to extend the trail at this time; they will wait until another piece of land has been acquired adjacent to Quick's Bottom Park. It is hoped to be able to re-engage discussions with these property owners and reach an agreement.
- The trail will be accessible for cyclists, the handicapped and the elderly, and will have a connection to Wilkinson Road.
- Staff will be working on the design this year and construction will begin early 2016, taking about six months.
- Most of the properties surrounding the Colquitz River Park will remain in the ALR.
- Much of the property at 4436 Wilkinson is under greenhouse production and it is expected the trail will have minimal impact. The owner rents the land to someone who works the property; there are seasonal sales.
- The agreement with the property owner calls for a split rail fence, with trees and hedging.
- He doesn't know if there is a direct correlation in the benefit of trails to agriculture.
- With respect to vandalism with the proximity of a trail to the property, the feedback from the police is that occurrences are actually reduced because there are more people around.

Terry Michell noted the sales at his farm market benefit from trail users.

MOTION: Moved by Linda Geggie and Seconded by Terry Michell: "That provided the agricultural impacts are minimal, the Peninsula and Area Agricultural Commission has no objections to the proposal."

CARRIED
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AGRICULTURAL STRATEGY – SUB-COMMITTEE REPORTS

In answer to a question from Samantha Charlton regarding the objectives of the Agricultural Land Base and Resource Stewardship sub—committees, the Chair explained they were based on the objectives from the 1997 Agricultural Strategy. He gave examples of some of the issues that have been discussed over the years, including stewardship of land and water, flooding, bogs, creeks (ie Durrell Creek), and composting.

An outline of these objectives and a brief outline of the agricultural strategy for the Saanich Peninsula was provided to new members.

The secretary advised that new member Phil Christie had offered to chair the Agricultural Land Base committee.

- a) **Water (Michael Doehnel)** – nothing to report
- b) **Farm Economics (Terry Michell)** – He will be accommodating a bus tour from the CRD Waste Management Group on his farm.
- c) **Agricultural Land Base (Phil Christie)** – not present
- d) **Resource Stewardship**
New member Kim Lonsdale offered to chair this sub-committee.
- e) **Education and Outreach (Linda Geggie)**
As suggested at the last meeting, she spoke to Bob Thompson about estimated costs for a bus tour. His estimate was about \$5000, which seemed quite high. Emails have been exchanged between herself, Bev and Isobel. Isobel advised we had funds in our grant account which would cover the costs for a bus tour.**

Bev stated the intent of the tour is to be informative, fun and interesting for new Council members.

- She suggested four farms be included – two in the morning and two in the afternoon, with a lunch break at her farm, with a local winery participating.
- She believes the tour could be arranged for much less than \$5000, depending on the cost of the bus and how many people wish to attend. She didn't think it was necessary to compensate farmers' for their time as each stop would be between 45 minutes and an hour at the most.
- Farms on the tour should be diverse – such as poultry, grains, vegetables, greenhouses, etc, giving the participants a glimpse of what is happening on the Peninsula and how it relates to the 100 Mile Diet.
- Perhaps Mike Doehnel could be a speaker on the bus regarding water issues facing farmers; other issues could be raised – such as geese.
- Permission would have to be obtained from the farmers of course.
- She suggested the meeting place could be at Michells Farm where there is ample parking.
- Timing was discussed and Terry suggested early June – plantings are in the ground, berries just coming into season, weather generally good.

**Regarding a grant through the Strategic Outreach programme, Rob Kline stated he would not want to discourage PAAC from applying. The intent of the grant has to be a clear benefit to farmers and it is action-oriented.

Linda advised the application process is simple, but the event has to be clearly outlined, and the costs paid up front by PAAC first, then reimbursed if the grant is successful. It was suggested that once we have the plan for the tour in place, we apply for the grant (Linda or Kim will complete the application).

MOTION: Moved by Linda Geggie and Seconded by Kim Lonsdale: “That the Peninsula and Area Agricultural Commission set aside up to \$1,500 for a spring bus tour for new councilors, to be held on SATURDAY, JUNE 13, 2015.”

CARRIED

Action

1. **Secretary to send initial invite to municipalities to determine interest (extend invite to new councillors, planners and CAO's);**
2. **Quote to be obtained re bus rental – this would also depend on number of participants;**
3. **Determine which farms to be included on tour & ask permission;**
4. **Decide on speaker or speakers; honorariums to be provided;**
5. **Plan lunch and arrange for winery**

UPCOMING EVENTS:

Farmer2Farmer Workshop, February 19, 2015.

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

Agricultural Advisory Committee Workshop – February 18, 2015 in Abbotsford

The secretary advised that funding is available to help with transportation costs.

ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2014

A draft copy of the Annual Report was provided to members, as well as an accounting of the administration costs (labour and photocopying, postage, etc.) for 2014 (\$8,621).

No comments or changes were suggested; the Report and the invoices for 2014 will be sent to the sponsoring municipalities.

Adjournment: On a Motion from Samantha Charlton, the meeting adjourned at 9:35 pm

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

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

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

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

Isobel Hoffmann