



**MINUTES OF THE
PENINSULA AGRICULTURAL COMMISSION**
Committee Room No. 2, Saanich Municipal Hall
THURSDAY, MAY 14, 2015 AT 7:30 PM

Present: Bob Maxwell in the Chair; Samantha Charlton; Phil Christie; Linda Geggie; Kim Lonsdale; Jack Mar; Dianne Williamson; Councillor Stock (North Saanich). Also present was Rob Kline, Ministry of Agriculture; and Isobel Hoffmann, Recording Clerk.

Guests: Bruce Greig, Central Saanich Planner

Regrets: Mary Alice Johnson, Tom Henry, Nikki Tate-Stratton, Terry Michell, Bev Marley, Bernadette Greene, Councillors Derman, Graham and McLennan.

Minutes: Moved by Jack Mar and Seconded by Dianne Williamson: "That the Minutes of March 12, 2015 be adopted as circulated.

CARRIED

Agenda: The Agenda was approved as circulated.

TREASURER'S REPORT – Samantha Charlton

Still trying to change the signatories on the account at Island Savings; bank policies have changed and are more complicated since the last time PAAC added new signatories to the accounts. It was agreed that Bob Maxwell would be the second signing authority on the account. Isobel will arrange for the required letter and copy of the Minutes to be sent to Island Savings. At this time, Bev Marley and Mike Romaine remain as signatories.

SPEAKER'S BUREAU: Jessica Dennis – Municipal Support for Farmland

Ms. Dennis presented a power-point presentation on "*Farmland Conservation and Access, exploring a local government Farmland Trust*", an initiative of CR-Fair with the potential land trusts in Saanich and North Saanich. Partners are CR-Fair, Farmfolk-Cityfolk, Saanich, North Saanich, Vancity and the Real Estate Foundation of BC.

- We are seeing a decline in young farmers, with the average age now being 57 and only 5.6% are under 35.
- The rising cost of agricultural land, non-farm use prohibitions, ALR exclusions, and continued population growth with increasing land use competition, contribute to the cause of less land being in active production.
- Local and Regional government support for farmland trusts has been shown by Saanich and North Saanich Councils, the CRD through its Regional Sustainability Strategy, and Agricultural Area Plans in other municipalities such as Delta, Pemberton and Metro Vancouver.
- The purpose of this initiative is to explore models and mechanisms to support the use of publicly owned lands for farming.
- There are four phases to the project:
 1. Hold individual stakeholder meetings & complete background research;
 2. Liaise with various groups, such as the CRD Roundtable, PAAC, Environment & Natural Areas Committees and the Healthy Saanich Committee.
 3. Report back to Saanich Council
 4. Work to integrate with North Saanich and the CRD to explore options.

- Stakeholder groups include Farmland and Conservation Trusts, local government and provincial ministry staff; the VanCity Community Foundation, private farmland Investors and farmer organizations.
 - In part, the “trust approach” removes land from the real estate market and manage it for public benefit, creating a land bank to support farming and food production over the long term.
 - Farmland trusts need to be integrated with diverse strategies – such as the Regional Sustainability Strategy, local OCP's and zoning regulations, Agricultural Area Plans.
 - Property taxation strategies, training and start-up capital for new farmers, programmes to support farm viability and linking land and farmers have to be considered.
 - Farmland Trusts would require land acquisitions and long-term leases to farmers, covenants, land use planning, training, farmer support, succession planning and public engagement programmes.
 - Some of the common concerns may include trust create an unfair advantage for certain farmers; or because there are no “new” farmers, there is a lack of demand for farmland trusts.
 - Also, the recent bankruptcy of TLC and because land is expensive it may not be feasible.
 - Noted that farmland trusts are not going to solve all our problems; however, there are benefits to the farming community, such as providing land access for current and new farmers and keeping land in production.
 - It would also allow for succession planning for non-family farm transfers and mentorship, providing an on-going circle of current farmers to outgoing farmers to new farmers.
 - In a 2014 public opinion poll, 81% of respondents identified food and farming as a priority land use, and 95% supported the ALR.
 - Some of the questions to be addressed include:
 - *Who holds the land and manages the acquisition* – local government or a non-government organization?
 - *How is the land acquired* – donations, purchases, amenity contributions?
 - *How are operations and acquisitions financed* – public funds, non-profit, revenue or investments?
 - *How is land made available for farming* – direct lease to farmer, lease to a non-government organization who sub-leases to the farmer, or community food initiatives?
 - Current examples of land trusts include the Southlands property in Delta and the Sandown property in North Saanich.
 - Salt Spring Island has a farmland trust which is operated by a non-profit trust as a result of local government policy, and leases 10-acre plots to farmers on the 60-acre Burgoyne Farm..
 - In 2000, the CRD established a park levy on taxpayers, which will be increased to \$20 per households by 2019. The CRD has obtained 4,485 ha of parkland, totalling over \$48 million, contributing 66% of the funds, with partners contributing the other 34%. This is an example of a government-community partnership to purchase and manage the land.
 - The CRD also has a Regional Housing Trust Fund to provide grants enabling organizations to develop affordable housing. Almost \$6 million has been granted between 2005 and 2012.
 - Could the same formula or method be used for a Farmland Trust?
 - In Saanich, the Haliburton Farm Society leases land from the municipality; farmers have a five-year renewable lease. There are inter-generational farmers, an on-site market, educational tours and community volunteers. It is very successful.
 - Throughout the course of doing the research, it was understood there is a need for and promise in the land trust approach. There are existing models – both successful and unsuccessful.
 - Diversified financing strategies are required. Implementation at the regional or municipal level have different benefits. The Farmland Trust can be part of an integrated strategy.

Discussion noted the following questions from PAAC members:

- There are hard business questions to be asked – it is important to have the right business model.
- The public recognizes that parkland is accessible and benefits the public; will they feel the same way about supporting farmland trusts?
- Regarding “unfair competition” when leasing lands, young/new farmers should have a break – perhaps a free year and then increasing the lease in five year increments, working up to a fair market rate. Start-up costs are high.

The Commission thanked Ms. Dennis for an informative presentation, and asked to be kept informed of the progress of the project.

CORRESPONDENCE

- a) **Resource Guide for Small Scale Farmers from Farmland Trust:** one copy of the guide was received and circulated to PAAC for information. More copies are available upon request.
- b) Report from C. Saanich re **6379 Old West Saanich Road**, regarding application for non-farm use. **Bruce Greig, Central Saanich Planner**, was present to discuss (*see below*)
- c) Update from Jane Evans re Saanich Agriculture and Food Security Plan. Unfortunately Jane was unable to attend but she advised things are on track. She thanked PAAC members who contributed comments on the programme and she will keep PAAC updated.

AGRICULTURAL ISSUES – CURRENT

a) **Goose Management Strategy (?/Rob)**

- Bev has advised she is resigning from position as the PAAC representative on this programme; she is disappointed and frustrated about the slow progress and feels she has done all she can do to try to get the strategy moving in a positive direction.

Discussion noted that for over 10 years we have been trying to get this programme underway.

- It is too big an issue to rely on volunteers and farmers to do the work.
- The limited amount of egg addling does very little to solve the ever-growing problem and it is a lot of work getting the required permits.
- The CRD needs to take a strong lead and initiate a “Problem Wildlife Department” (PAAC has sent a letter about this previously a number of years ago).
- Other government agencies, such as Ministry of Environment and Wildlife Canada need to get involved and be pro-active, perhaps develop a Pest Management programme.
- There needs to be a good communications plan that tells people the dollar value of the destruction caused each year by wildlife (geese, deer, etc).
- Most people have no idea of the destruction caused, nor do they know the difference between resident and migratory geese.

b) **Deer Management Strategy (Rob)** – Nothing new to report at this time. (see above)

c) **CRD Food Systems Strategy (Linda Geggie)** – She spoke with Jeff Weightman recently who advised that the Strategy is still with staff at this time.

- d) **ALR Core Review (Linda Geggie)** – Linda advised that Frank Leonard has just been appointed as Chair of the ALC; he will also be acting CEO until such time as a new CEO is appointed. There will be changes implemented in the near future.
- e) **Farmland Trust (Linda, Nikki, Mary Alice)** – Nothing to report.

6379 OLD WEST SAANICH ROAD – NON-FARM USE APPLICATION

Bruce Greig, Central Saanich Planner, was present to elaborate on the March 2, 2015 report from Central Saanich that was circulated to PAAC members.

- The two-acre ALR property in question is zoned A-1 and is owned by Chris Stansfield, who operates Garden City Tree and Landscape Ltd.
- The business has expanded over the past 3 years and now has 11 employees. Complaints have been received and inspection of the property notes that commercial vehicle parking and storage, as well as business activities beyond the scope and scale of a Home Occupation business exist.
- Central Saanich Council has referred the application to the ALC. The applicant is requesting Non-Farm use approval to authorize additional parking areas and a landscape business in conjunction with a nursery business. The landscaping component is a non-farm use, although edible plants are grown, plant salvage is also a large factor in the operation.
- The non-farm uses would occupy approximately 25% of the southern property.
- If the application is approved by the ALC, the zoning issue still has to be addressed. Mr. Greig noted this may be a case for a Temporary Use Commercial Permit rather than rezoning; the TUP can be approved for up to 3 years under certain specific conditions, and it can be renewed. The permit can regulate hours of operation and types of vehicles used, for example.
- The current operation seems to be more industrial than agricultural and farmland is cheaper than industrial land.

Discussion noted:

- A nursery is an agricultural use, but the landscaping is an industrial-type business.
- There are lots of trucks and equipment carrying sand, soil and gravel, and the owner parks these commercial vehicles on-site. Good agricultural land is being used as a parking lot. The entire valley is agricultural. Some members did not see how the current operation supports farming.
- It will set a precedent and do permanent damage to good agricultural soils.
- Growing nursery stock is one thing, but heavy commercial vehicles should not be stored on the property. Noted however that other properties zoned A-1 (such as one on Veyaness) have multi-operation businesses that work well.
- Due to the current economic pressures, it was noted that secondary activities keep the farmlands going. The trucks could be parked out of sight to appease the neighbours and hours of operation restricted.
- It is understood that the owner is just trying to make a living, but the rules have to be fair to all, including property owners in commercial zones who are paying higher taxes.

Mr. Greig noted that some of the machinery and equipment used for the nursery business also supports the landscaping portion of the business.

- The municipality is responding to complaints from neighbours; he is aware that there must be all kinds of “illegal” uses on farmland that we never hear about.
- The ALC has wrestled with parking of vehicles on farmland before; if the vehicles support the farm business, then it seems to be okay.

MOTION: Moved by Phil Christie and Seconded by Kim Lonsdale: “That with respect to the property at 6379 Old West Saanich Road, the Peninsula and Area Agricultural Commission recognizes the operation of the industrial-based landscaping business with its employees and commercial vehicles, and the distinction between that and the nursery side of the business. PAAC supports the nursery operation but does not support the application for a landscaping business and the heavy truck traffic activities related to this type of business.”

CARRIED

AGRICULTURAL STRATEGY – SUB-COMMITTEE REPORTS

- a) **Water (Michael Doehnel)** – not present
- b) **Farm Economics (Terry Michell)** – Not Present
- c) **Agricultural Land Base (Phil Christie)** – nothing to report as yet; meeting to be arranged with other members of the sub-committee (Sam and Jack). It was noted by Jack that the nematode restrictions are still in place in Central Saanich and will likely not be removed for another two or three years.
- d) **Resource Stewardship – Kim Lonsdale** – There is a lot of information available, he is working his way through the material.
- e) **Education and Outreach (Linda Geggie)**

Saanich Fair:

- Linda noted if PAAC would like to be part of the fair's programme this year, we need to move quickly before the printing dead line.
- She has been speaking to Bob Thompson, and he is going to assist again with the very popular zucchini races.
- We do need an educational component – for many years we have been talking about having a “festival of squash”. This would involve not only a large display of various squashes, but providing recipes.
- We need ideas for speakers for presentations over the three days of the fair. Members were asked to think about this and submit names to Isobel.
- Isobel will circulate a copy of last year's minutes (September) when PAAC provided feedback about the 2014 fair programme talked about recommendations and suggestions for this year's fair.

Spring Farm Bus Tour:

- Bev was not present so Isobel provided an update on the status of the tour.
- An information pamphlet is being prepared which will outline the farms on the tour and the time lines.
- To date about 22 people have registered. Although we have arranged for a 48-passenger coach, Bev would like to keep the number of attendees to about 35 in order to accommodate for the lunch.
- Speakers have been arranged for the morning and afternoon portions of the tour – Mike Doehnel and Ryan Vantreight .
- With the help of Rob Kline and Kim Lonsdale, a grant has been submitted to the BC Strategic Outreach Initiative Fund (part of the Growing Forward programme). Meal costs are not covered under this grant and PAAC will have to pay for all costs up front, receipts will then be submitted for reimbursement.

- Because canceled cheques are required for reimbursement, Isobel requested PAAC support a motion for \$1,000 to be transferred from PAAC's educational account (currently administered through Saanich) to Island Savings. This way, cheques can be written for minor amounts rather than processing cheque requisitions through Saanich accounting. This account holds the additional educational grant funds received from the participating municipalities on an annual basis - \$2,000 per year. These funds are also used to support the Saanich Fair.
- Bev has arranged for most of the food to be donated, including the wine.
- The tour at Sea Cider has been partially discounted.
- Bev is trying to arrange for a lunch time speaker from the BC Horse Council.
 - Discussions on-going about possible honorariums and/or gifts for the speakers, the bus driver, etc.

MOTION: Moved by Kim Lonsdale and Seconded by Jack Mar: "That the Peninsula & Area Agricultural Commission authorize the secretary to request a cheque in the amount of \$1,000 from PAAC's educational account #2462.3760.8028 in order to facilitate the payment of sundry expenses for the PAAC farm bus tour on June 13, 2015."

CARRIED

Adjournment: On a Motion from Kim Lonsdale the meeting adjourned at 9:10 pm

Next Meeting: The next regular PAC meeting is scheduled for **Thursday, June 11, 2015** at 7:30 pm, Saanich Municipal Hall.

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