



**MINUTES OF THE  
PENINSULA AGRICULTURAL COMMISSION  
Committee Room No. 2, Saanich Municipal Hall  
THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 10, 2015 AT 7:30 PM**

**Present:** Bob Maxwell in the Chair; Sam Charlton; Phil Christie(7:50 pm); Linda Geggie;Bernadette Greene; Jack Mar; Bev Marley; Terry Michell; (7:52 pm) Dianne Williamson; Councillors Derman (Saanich), Graham (C. Saanich), and Stock (N.Saanich) (8:05 pm). Also present was Isobel Hoffmann, Recording Clerk.

**Guests:** Phil Christensen; Dean Rebneris; Melissa Hayley (Sidney Council); Ray Baker.  
**Regrets:** Councillors Graham and Kahakauwila; Kim Lonsdale; Nikki Tate-Straton.

**Minutes:** Moved by Jack Mar and Seconded by Bev Marley: "That the Minutes of June 11, 2015 be adopted as circulated.

CARRIED

### **TREASURER'S REPORT – Samantha Chartlon**

- Balance at \$88 plus the \$1,000 term deposit.
- Isobel noted that we are still waiting on the refund from the province's SOI Growing Forward programme for the bus tour, which will be \$1,590.
- These funds can then be used to reimburse various PAAC members for materials purchased for the Saanich Fair.

### **SPEAKER'S BUREAU: Phil Christensen**

#### **◆ O'Donnell Creek Drainage**

- When he was a PAAC member, he tried to remediate property in the Oldfield Valley that floods every year. The culvert is in the wrong location.
- This 29-acre piece of property is adjacent to the old Veyaness railway right-of-way. When Bear Hill Road was developed in the 1960s, Saanich replaced the old culvert, but it was 1 m higher than the original.
- The property on either side of the culvert is under water many months of the year. This directly affect 7 or 8 properties in the area.
- With the drought this summer, the farmers were able to grow a great crop of strawberries and pumpkins, proving that the soil is viable. In fact, this is some of the best quality soil around.
- There are 3 properties directly involved with the culvert: the two on the west side have always been agreeable to the work being done and understand it is necessary. The property owner on the east side would not give permission. However, he has now passed away and there are new owners.
- Now that Frank Leonard is Chair of the ALC, he feels there is a good opportunity to finally get the matter resolved. He supported the project when Mayor of Saanich.
- Saanich Council had previously set aside funds for the work in 2004, but because the one property owner would not give his permission, the money was used for other projects.
- Lowering the culvert will have a huge positive impact on the valley.
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- Staff from the Fish and Wildlife Branch and CRD Parks have been on-site and he noted there are small windows when the remediation work can be carried out.
- The municipality will save money on road maintenance, which is continually needed due to the flooding.
- This issue comes under PAAC's mandate and he urged PAAC to help take the matter to Saanich Council and the ALC to finally remediate the property and reclaim the farmland.

Discussion noted the following:

- Linda Geggie suggested PAAC and/or Phil talk to Ben Bowker, Manager of Storm and Waste Water Management at Saanich, and work with staff to bring the matter to Council.
- Noted that one of stumbling blocks when looking at this before was keeping access for the residents of the Bear Hill area.
- There are plans on the books somewhere for this work; these should be resurrected and Saanich encouraged to approach the new landowner and to obtain the required permission and rights-of-way to install the culvert at the correct height.
- Phil Christie said he is willing to take on this task as part of the Agricultural Land Base Strategy and will work with Kim Lonsdale (who heads the Resource Stewardship Strategy). They will talk to staff and get the ball rolling. He understands that are certain windows when the work can be done due to Fisheries requirements; he believes the work could be done in the late spring.
- Noted the work on this project could be a template for Panama Flats – which has similar issues with flooding.
- Councillor Derman asked to be kept up to date and requested information from past discussions at PAAC be sent to him.

\*\*\*Councillor Stock entered the meeting at 8:05 pm\*\*\*

#### ◆ Home Site Severance

Phil Christensen stated:

- He is thinking about asking for a home-site severance on his property on Oldfield Road.
- His parents bought the land in 1975, a few years after the ALR was initiated.
- It has been in the family ever since and has always been farmed.
- He is looking at his options for retirement and he wondered if members had any thoughts about his proposal.

Discussion noted:

- There has been some flexibility on these type of issues.
- Many things need to be taken into consideration: size of the entire property, size of the proposed severed site, how much of the property would continue to be farmed.
- Noted the site being considered for the home site severance currently has no access.
- Questioned whether the application would set a precedent and encourage other farmers to apply for the same thing.
- PAAC has been asked to look at home site severance applications before.
- Noted there are not many properties in Central Saanich that would qualify for home site severance. This particular property is in Saanich however.

- Linda Pendray, owner of Pendray Dairy Farm, has tried to get a home site severance for her daughters, who work on the property but cannot live there.
- Phil will have to provide details to Saanich Council when making the application and Council will refer to PAAC for comment at that time.

## **CORRESPONDENCE - none**

## **AGRICULTURAL ISSUES – CURRENT**

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

*(noted we still need a volunteer to sit on the committee since Bev resigned)*

Bev Marley stated:

- Although she officially resigned as PAAC representative due to frustration of nothing getting done, she was involved in the recent cull that took place in Central Saanich.
- The one-day cull was successful, carried out in a professional manner with a veterinarian and other professionals attending from the mainland.
- Culls can only happen during a 2-week window during the moulting season.
- She is not sure what is going to happen next as it is likely the small cull did not make too much of a difference.

### **b) Deer Management Strategy (Rob)**

Councillor Derman stated:

- The Urban Wildlife Sustainability Society made a presentation to the CRD recently.
- The presentation was well organized and took a scientific approach to the urban deer problems, proposing to catch and tag the deer and use Spay-vac to sterilize them.
- The CRD committee was impressed with the presentation, which was one of the most well-thought out approaches he has seen to date.
- The Society asked the CRD for \$32,000 in funding but were turned down at this time. The CRD does not have a Wildlife Management Service and some of the directors were concerned about the precedent of granting funds.
- A staff report has been requested on how the CRD may partner with the Urban Wildlife Sustainability Society and other similar groups to take advantage of the volunteers and the expertise.
- He invited the group to make a presentation to Saanich Council on Monday, September 14, 2015.

Councillor Stock stated:

- She represented Mayor Finnal at the CRD's Finance meeting and spoke in favour of the request but acknowledged there would be a precedent giving a one-time grant to such a group.
- She told the Finance Committee about the issues farmers have with deer and the high receipts generated from agriculture, which are being greatly affected as the deer population increases.
- Problem deer are a regional issue – not a local issue.

Councillor Derman noted that the CRD does have a precedent: When the US American Bullfrogs became a threat to CRD Parks and regional water supplies, the CRD provided a grant on a partnership basis. This project with the deer could be funded with a similar arrangement.

Discussion noted that this does nothing to address the number of deer right now. The deer are sick and malnourished. Noted it could be ICBC that partners with the Wildlife group due to increasing accidents resulting in death and/or serious damage to vehicles.

Not all municipalities will approve hunts due to the urban nature of some areas. Central Saanich has issued some hunting permits and the First Nations People also help to keep the population down a little.

- c) **CRD Food Systems Strategy (Linda Geggie)** nothing to report.
- d) **ALR Core Review (Linda Geggie)** – Nothing to report
- e) **Farmland Trust (Linda, Nikki, Mary Alice)** – Nothing to report

## **AGRICULTURAL ISSUES – NEW**

### **◆ Flooding – Martindale Valley**

Terry Michell stated:

- The ditch system again flooded fields in the Martindale Valley during the two periods when we had heavy rainfall, even though we had a drought this summer. He took a video of the flooding – the ditches looked like a river 20 minutes after the rain started.
- We have asked Central Saanich several times for a flow meter to record the water volumes.
- Last week when it rained heavily for a few days, it was a rush to dig up the fields of carrots and pumpkins at Jack Mar's farm before they were destroyed from being under water.
- Central Saanich cleans the ditch annually from Dooley Road to the ocean, but that doesn't help with the water that comes down from the Keating Ridge development.
- The excess water could be diverted into a retention pond.
- It is the shoulder months when there is usually the problem – March/April/May, and September/October/November.
- Tons of produce can be lost within a few hours.

Jack Mar stated:

- He has done a lot of research on different methods to address the flooding, one of which is directional drilling and eventually directing the water to the ocean.
- The drawback is it is very costly. He noted the water would be polluted and not useable, which is unfortunate. He noted there is a rise of 150' and a drop of 300'.
- He acknowledged that Central Saanich is a small municipality and it would be unfair to ask the taxpayers to absorb the cost of directional drilling; however, the federal government has funds, as does Investment Agriculture to help with the engineering costs.
- He has lots of background information and research and assured the Commission there is money out there.

## Discussion noted:

- We have been warned there are changes in our weather patterns with increased heavy rains at times: we need to change our infrastructure accordingly.
- A flow meter is needed - and it needs to be maintained.
- Saanich municipality cleans their ditch areas as well, but it is the hard surfaces on the Ridge that cause the problem.
- Noted that direct drilling is an expensive option; it would be cheaper to dig a ditch and bury the pipe.

Terry noted the Central Saanich Agricultural Advisory Committee has discussed this issue several times.

- Building a holding pond has been suggested, releasing the water slowly. This would take some land out of production – but would save 150 acres from flooding on a regular basis.
- Central Saanich does have a Stream Water Management Plan which included an improvement of making the ditches wider.
- He noted it took about 10-15 seconds for some the ditches to fill up with the heavy rains.

## Discussion noted possible steps of action:

- On-site meeting with parties involved;
- Look into cost of flow meter;
- Ask Rob Kline to see if there are funds available – perhaps a 50/50 cost share arrangement with the municipality.

**MOTION: Moved by Terry Michell and Seconded by Bev Marley: “That it be recommended that the Peninsula and Area Agricultural Commission request Central Saanich Council to install a flow meter on Tanner Ridge to help address the continual flooding issues in the Martindale Valley, and further, to look at associated long-standing issues that need to be addressed to control the flow of water from the Ridge into the Valley.”**

**CARRIED**

## **AGRICULTURAL STRATEGY – SUB-COMMITTEE REPORTS**

**a) Water (Michael Doehnel) – not present**

**b) Farm Economics (Terry Michell)**

- He used about 25% - 30% more hydro this summer because he had to pump water to irrigate the fields. He actually burned out two of the pumps.
- Berry crops were early and excellent this year and those who planted ever-bearing varieties will get another crop; prices were up by 15% to 20% to reflect increased irrigation and manpower costs.
- California prices were also up this year due to drought conditions in the US.
- Many seedlings in the Fraser Valley got burned from the hot sun. Fortunately we are a few degrees cooler on the Island.
- Squash crops were good too this year.
- He has had 3 hay cuttings and will likely have a 4<sup>th</sup> cut. The price of hay is up also.
- It seems there are less imports: Save on Foods have been using local suppliers instead of relying on US distributors.

**c) Agricultural Land Base (Phil Christie)**

Phil stated he has yet to hold a meeting with the sub-committee but after the information this evening about O'Donnell Creek and Martindale Flats, they will start to look at these issues.

- He would like to focus more on the people who are farming rather than the land itself as there are a lot of changes in the demographics of farming – but it seems the support for farming is increasing.
- He noted the farm tour in June was very informative.

**d) Resource Stewardship – Kim Lonsdale – not present****e) Education and Outreach (Linda Geggie)****◆ Saanich Fair**

*(note, this was the first item discussed at the meeting; Linda left the meeting at 8:15pm.)*

Linda had prepared a slide show of the fair, but due to technical difficulties was not able to show it on the screen. She stated:

- The tent was shared this year with CR-Fair and about 30 people were involved in the event.
- The focus was on squash and we had a great display as well as squash recipe sheets – which were very popular.
- We had displays on the economic status of agriculture in the region and the Sandown Raceway.
- As usual, the Zucchini 500 races were very popular; lots of kids participated and their parents gravitated to the tent to talk to the volunteers and look at the PAAC displays.
- The seed matching game and the mystery box were popular with all ages.
- We had 3 speakers at the education tent; the first one on Saturday was well attended – about 30 people. However the Sunday and Monday talks only had a few people.
- Noted that even some of the volunteers were unsure where the tent was located. We need bigger signs, directions, and something noted on the handouts to indicate where the tent is (a map perhaps), as it has been in the same place the past few years.
- Perhaps we need to change the focus to a more hands-on approach – demonstrations, for example. The Compost Centre has indicated an interest in doing a demo.
- If education about agriculture is our intent – what is it that we want people to take home with them? Perhaps the “sit and listen” approach does not fit with the Saanich Fair.

\*\*\*Phil Christie and Terry Michell entered the meeting at 7:50 pm\*\*\*

**Note:** The cost of the Saanich Fair this was just under \$1,000. This included honorariums to the speakers, reimbursement for the entry cost for volunteers, microphone, miscellaneous supplies, squash recipe sheets. CR-Fair and PAAC cost-shared the hiring of an attendant to oversee the zucchini races each day (PAAC share \$150). Although not included in the cost of the fair, we also had new PAAC brochures printed.

**◆ Spring Farm Bus Tour**

Isobel advised the application forms have been completed and submitted to the Ministry of Agriculture for reimbursement of \$1,590 through the *SOI Growing Forward 2* initiative. Not all expenses were covered on the tour (food and alcohol were excluded). Bev noted almost all of the food was donated.

All members who attended thought it was a great tour and many positive comments were received from participants. Isobel has photos of the event and plans to put into a presentation that could be taken to the Councils, highlighting the comments from the farmers regarding the issues they continue to face with farming today.

**UPCOMING EVENTS:**

UVIC Environmental Law Center and Victoria Golden Rods & Reels Society are holding a public forum:

Elk/Beaver Lake – A Tale of Two Lakes. Can aging lakes be rejuvenated?  
Thursday, October 29, 2015 at 7 pm  
Law Lecture Theatre, Fraser Building at UVIC

Adjournment: On a Motion from Bev Marley the meeting adjourned at 9:10 pm

Next Meeting: The next regular PAC meeting is scheduled for **Thursday, October 8, 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.

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Isobel Hoffmann, Recording Secretary