



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

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Present: Jack Mar in the Chair; Sam Charlton; Phil Christie; Linda Geggie; Bev Marley; Bob Maxwell; Nikki Tate-Straton; Dianne Williamson; Councillor Stock (N.Saanich). Also present was Isobel Hoffmann, Recording Clerk.

Guests: Ryan Vantreight; Jane Evans, Saanich Planner.

Regrets: Councillors Derman, Graham, McLennan and Kahakauwila; Kim Lonsdale; Terry Michell; Bernadette Greene, Rob Kline.

Minutes: Moved by Dianne Williamson and Seconded by Phil Christie: "That the Minutes of September 10, 2015 be adopted as circulated.

CARRIED

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

- \$1,590 has just been received as reimbursement of Farm Tour expenses from the *SOI Growing Forward 2* programme.
- Approximately \$350 has been paid out in miscellaneous expenses for the Saanich Fair.
- The new account is in effect and she had to purchase cheques.
- She will give a full update at the next meeting.

### **SPEAKER'S BUREAU: Ryan Vantreight**

#### **Proposed Water Extension Service to Longview Farm, Central Saanich Road**

Ryan stated:

- There has always been water on the site, either by using retention or irrigation ponds.
- A potable water source is now required to meet food security and food safe requirements to be able to wash the produce in the warehouse, and to meet current and future needs.
- He is looking for PAAC support to ask Central Saanich for an extension of water service to the property, which is just on the edge of the Urban Containment Boundary.
- As required, he has an Environmental Farm Plan as well as a report from an agrologist in support.
- The main warehouse facilities were built in 1989 and there was no waterline to the site, although there were 3 wells, which were gravity fed to the main warehouse.
- The waterline stops at Mt. St. Michaels.
- Having a municipal water source is something we need as the water tables change and ground water restrictions may change in the future.
- In response to a comment that the water extension could lead to future development, Ryan stated the main facilities on site, including the warehouse and greenhouses, are massive.
- We need a potable water source for the greenhouses and the washing facilities, as well as for fire protection because there is no current water service for this.
- There will be a caveat if that something happens to the main water line and pressure drops, the water to the farm will be shut off so residents can have potable water.
- The proposed location is the only place for the water line without ripping out all the infrastructure.
- The name "Longview" was chosen not only because it is what his family used to call the farm, but because the owners have a long vision to support agriculture.

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- We now have 150 acres of certified organic produce, as well as 3.5 acres of greenhouses.
- In order to keep the certified organic status, water has to be tested twice a year so we need a reliable, safe source of clean, potable water.
- The municipal water supply will not be our main source of water – it will be too expensive.
- He noted it is possible the new water line may help other farmers.

In response to a question about the amount of fill put on the property adjacent to the Pat Bay Highway over the past few years, Ryan stated that the Municipality and the ALC have asked that we address this. There is nowhere to take the fill at this time but we will make sure it is safe. The new owners made a commitment to improve the land but it is a staged process.

\*\*\*Linda Geggie entered the meeting at 7:50 pm\*\*\*

**MOTION: Moved by Bob Maxwell and Seconded by Bev Marley: “That the Peninsula & Area Agricultural Commission support Longview Farm's request for an extension of municipal water service to the property at 8277 Central Saanich Road.”**

**CARRIED**

Ryan thanked the Commission for their time and left the meeting at 7:55 pm

## **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 stated:

- She and Bob Maxwell went to the recent Goose Management meeting at the CRD.
- The group is looking for a way to move forward since the pilot cull was carried out.
- The focus has mostly been on agriculture issues – because most of the funding came from that sector.
- Now decided in order to take the programme forward we have to focus on other issues – such as our beaches, parks, schools, airport runways, DND, etc., and obtain funding from these sources as well.
- In the Okanagan, an environmental company has been hired to handle the egg addling programmes. - at a cost of about \$100,000 annually. Kate Hagmeir, who was the CRD's consultant, has the contract.
- Addling is only sufficient to maintain the populations, it does not reduce them.
- Farmers do not have the time to look for eggs and addle them.
- To date, the School Boards and the Municipalities do not want anything to do with this either.
- If an egg addling programme was to extend throughout the PAAC member municipalities, we might have a better shot at reducing the populations.
- The 80 geese brought to this area in the 1980s has now expanded to 9,000+.
- The CRD needs to introduce a Wildlife Management Programme – because it is not just geese, it is deer and rabbits too. PAAC has been pushing for this for many years.
- Geese can live for 20 years or more; they start producing at around 2 years of age until 18 or so, laying 4 to 5 eggs a year.
- The problem is on the entire Island, and they are not only destroying crops, beaches and parks, but also riparian zones.
- She resigned from the committee some months ago out of frustration that nothing was happening, but agreed to keep attending the meetings for now.

- She noted there is a little money left, which could be used to hire Kate Hagmeir or someone similar to put together an RFP, and then we can make a pitch for the funds to carry out the work. We need a long-term commitment.
- The quality of life for the geese is not good and this concerns her greatly. There is nowhere for them to rest and they have to feed at night, when they should be resting. Reducing the population humanely is the best solution.

Bob Maxwell stated:

- With the many hours of volunteer time and municipal contributions, he thinks we must have spent between \$80,000 and \$100,000 on this problem.
- However, we now have a Goose Management Plan; a successful pilot cull has been carried out and protocol developed. We need to move to the implementation phase and not lose momentum.
- The question is: who is going to pay for the implementation.

Discussion ensued noting the following:

- Are there other local groups and organizations that could be involved? AVICC perhaps?
- We do get help from the Regional Wildlife Biologist and cooperation from Canada Wildlife Services.
- We should look at the model used in the Okanagan – where did their funding come from? How did they get municipalities and regional districts involved? What are their successes and failures?
- Perhaps Kate Hagmeir could attend a PAAC meeting – or at the least we could have a conversation via Skype or teleconference. With the help of Rob Kline, she should be able to figure out how much has been spent in this region to date
- It is a lot of work for farmers to tally up the crop damage from geese; we are talking hundreds of thousands of dollars.

Both Bev and Bob will attend the October 23<sup>rd</sup> meeting and report back at the next PAAC meeting.

**b) Deer Management Strategy (Rob not present – nothing to report)**

**c) CRD Food Systems Strategy (Linda Geggie)**

- The strategy has been stalled at the CRD level; the money ran out before the final stage.
- Jeff Weightman has been working hard to get some more funding in order to complete the document.

**CRD Corporate Plan**

Linda stated unfortunately she only has one copy of the Plan, but agricultural land and food security forms part of the CRD's priorities in its Corporate Plan. She read the following actions from the Plan:

- ◆ Review opportunities for regional agricultural incentives and initiative food security educational programming.
- ◆ Develop new policies to encourage farming and agritourism and propose land-banking solutions through the completion of the Food & Agricultural Strategy
- ◆ Establish a working group to identify agricultural priorities and a task force to identify infrastructure priorities.

- She noted there is nothing in the document about geese or deer.
- She will keep the Commission posted on further progress.

**d) ALR Core Review (Linda Geggie) – Nothing to report**

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

Linda stated:

- A submission was put forward from Jessica Dennis on Farmland Trust to the Saanich Planning Department. Staff will now prepare a report to Council and the matter will be forwarded to a Council meeting.
- The CRD Corporate Plan also has a section regarding Farmland Trusts.

**f) Saanich Agricultural and Food Security Task Force – Jane Evans**

Jane Evans, Saanich Planning, stated:

- Saanich will be releasing an RFP for the Saanich Agricultural and Food Security Plan for a consultant and to form a task force.
- She distributed copies of the RFP and application forms, should any PAAC members wish to put their names forward for the Task Force.
- They are looking for people with a variety of experience with agriculture and/or food security.
- It is important we get a broad outlook on the task force.
- There will be public engagement meetings – and this will include PAAC.
- She asked PAAC to think about how they would like to be engaged in the process; she sees PAAC as being a stakeholder and an advisor.
- The scope of the Task Force is to develop policies, action items and prepare an implementation strategy. We need to consider issues as a region – not just locally.
- Hopefully we will be able to form partnerships throughout the region with the many active organizations that already exist. Saanich doesn't want to duplicate any services.
- October 22<sup>nd</sup> is the deadline for applications for the RFP and November 6 is the deadline for the 9-member task force. She hopes the contract will be awarded by late November.
- Information will be posted on the Saanich website ([www.saanich.ca](http://www.saanich.ca)), in the Saanich News and the Times Colonist. She asked if there were any other venues available.
- Eventually there will be a web page devoted to the Task Force to keep everyone up to date.
- There are plans for Open Houses and Stakeholder meetings.
- The consultant will determine where and when the task force will meet.

Linda Geggie offered distribute the information through the CR-Fair networks. It was also suggested that Bob Thompson with the DFMA would have some good contacts. Isobel will forward contact information.

Phil Christie stated it is very difficult for farmers, especially small-scale farmers, to get help from agrologists and the Ministry of Agriculture. At one time, there was support from the province, but this has dwindled over the years. Real food security comes from the larger more productive farms – and we have some of the best farmland in the world here on the Island.

Jane stated :

- Both North and Central Saanich have completed Food Strategies and both municipalities stated the need for a regional agrologist.
- Saanich will be another voice for this and it needs to be strongly stated in the plan.
- She knows that other municipalities also support the need for an agrologist.
- She went on the PAAC Farm Tour in June and she learned a lot about the issues facing farmers; but the public don't hear about these things. We have to keep knocking on the door.
- The CRD needs full support from all the member municipalities before it can move forward.
- She noted that Kelowa just hired a regional agrologist for \$100,000 per year.

Bob Maxwell stated that PAAC should write to the Ministry of Agriculture urging that when Rob Kline retires his position be maintained. All agreed farmers need a “go to” person with “boots on the ground” and we must continue to be forceful in our support of agriculture.

Discussion noted:

- We know what the issues are (drainage, deer, geese, the need for a regional agrologist, etc.).
- Issues facing farmers on the lower Island were identified in a report to the Councils prepared by past chair, Mike Romaine, last year.
- This information should be provided to the consultant to streamline the start of the process; there is no need to waste time and money researching “the issues”.

Jane agreed, noting that we need to look at the gaps rather than repeat what everyone else is doing. We also need to make the entire community aware of all the issues.

**It was agreed to invite the consultant to attend PAAC's January 14, 2016 meeting.**

**AGRICULTURAL ISSUES – NEW** - nothing to report

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

- a) **Water (Michael Doehnel)** – not present
- b) **Farm Economics (Terry Michell)** – not present
- c) **Agricultural Land Base (Phil Christie)**

#### **Martindale Flats:**

Phil prepared a discussion paper on the initiative, which was distributed to the Commission.

- He attended an on-site meeting with some farmers, Bob Maxwell, and Jack Mar recently.
- As noted at the last PAAC meeting, the problem is water flowing from the Keating Ridge area during high intensity storms causing water surges in the main ditch that crosses Dooley Road and Lochside Trail on Martindale Flats. The ditch then overflows into the nearby fields.
- Also, as noted previously, the farmers feel the runoff water was not properly addressed when the housing was developed on the Ridge and feel this is something that the municipality should address.
- It was agreed that we need to involve all the farmers in the affected area to hear what they want.
- We need to talk to local municipalities and other agencies to determine who is willing to participate in and contribute to the project. It is understood there are several agencies willing to contribute funds.

With respect to a meeting including all local farmers affected by the flooding, Terry Michell has offered to host the meeting at his market venue at the corner of Island View and the Pat Bay Highway. Isobel suggested that Central Saanich could assist with providing the names of the owners and occupants of the affected land. If PAAC drafts a notice of where, when and what, we can ask if Central Saanich could mail the notice to those involved.

**A motion was passed at the September 10, 2015 meeting recommending Central Saanich be asked to install a flow meter on the Keating/Tanner Ridge area to help address the flooding. The letter was delayed pending the outcome of the on-site meeting. Agreed to redraft this letter including the request for Central Saanich to mail notices to the affected farmers.**

### O'Donnell Creek

Linda Geggie advised that Ben Bowker with Saanich Sewer and Drains Department, has visited the site and talked with Phil Christensen re the flooding issue in the Oldfield Valley. Isobel collated information from past minutes on this issue.

**d) Resource Stewardship – Kim Lonsdale** – not present

**e) Education and Outreach (Linda Geggie)**

Bob Maxwell noted there are no information pamphlets about agriculture displayed at the Saanich Municipal Hall. Isobel will arrange to have some of PAAC's new brochures displayed. She will also send some brochures to the other municipalities for display purposes.

### VisionSandown Ideas Fair

Linda Geggie distributed information about the event to be held October 15, 2015 from 7:00 pm to 9:00 pm at the Saanich Peninsula Presbyterian Church on East Saanich Road.

She stated:

- The intent of the Fair is to get input from the public on what they would like to see happen with the 83 ha of property that was formerly the Sandown Race Track.
- A walk on the property is scheduled for November 2 for the farming community to get their ideas on which areas they think should be developed, what area should be left for agriculture – and what type of agriculture: livestock, raised beds, etc.

Councillor Stock stated:

- The municipality was supposed to complete the agreement with the developer for the 12 ha parcel that the Randall family received in exchange for the municipality obtaining the 83 ha. The family had a dispute with the developers and are trying to find another developer.
- This is apparently the same developer involved in the proposed Gateway Project in Sidney.
- There are many ideas for the Sandown property, and it is possible that all the suggestions below could be accommodated:
  - North Saanich Farmers' Market
  - Perimeter Trail for horses
  - Community Gardens
  - Leasing land to young farmers

In response to a question about what triggers North Saanich owning the property, Councillor Stock stated the Randall Family has to clean up the site and develop the front 12 acres.

- It does not include remediation of the soil – which she is aware could take 30 years or more.
- An environmental assessment also has to be completed.
- North Saanich is doing studies and engaging in public consultation.
- They invite farmers to come forward with their ideas.
- The ALC gave us five years before something needs to be initiated; that deadline is November, 2016. The project does not have to be finished – just started.

Discussed noted:

- At this point, not a lot is known about the land; environmental studies will be expensive and it seems a huge liability for a small municipality like North Saanich.

- It is vital the studies are done correctly.
- It was pointed out that the taxpayers in North Saanich will have to cover the costs.
- Sandown is a long term initiative, which is why we need to be careful in the initial planning stages.
- A young farmer is not going to want to wait 5 years or more for the soil to be remediated – they will want to plant now.

Linda noted there are University students working on this – looking at existing models and projects of the same scale.

- Sandown is a great opportunity, a long term project and teaching opportunity – it is not a gift.
- We could encompass an ecological restoration project through one of UVIC's environmental programmes; perhaps the land could be part of the campus with an on-site classroom.
- There will be many things happening on this site; it will be very synergistic. Perhaps initially the actual farming area will be quite small.

**UPCOMING EVENTS:** VisionSandown, October 15, 2016, 7:00 pm, 9296 East Saanich Road.

Adjournment: On a Motion from Bev Marley the meeting adjourned at 9:22 pm

Next Meeting: The next regular PAC meeting is scheduled for **Thursday, November 12, 2015** at 7:30 pm, Saanich Municipal Hall – **IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBERS**

**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  
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