



**MINUTES OF THE
PENINSULA AGRICULTURAL COMMISSION
Council Chambers, Saanich Municipal Hall
THURSDAY, MAY 12, 2016 AT 7:30 PM**

Present: Jack Mar in the Chair; Samantha Charlton; Carol Davidson; Phil Christie; Linda Geggie; Bev Marley; Bob Maxwell; Terry Michell; Larry Sluggett; Councillor Graham (C.Saanich). Also present was Isobel Hoffmann, Recording Clerk.

Guests: Jane Evans, Planner, Saanich; Ray Baker; Ray Galey

Regrets: Councillors Derman, McLennan, Weisenberger and Kahakauwila; Bernadette Greene.

Agenda: Moved by Bob Maxwell and Seconded by Dianne Williamson: "That the following items be added to the Agenda: Farm Worker Housing, Proposed Historical Book on Agriculture on Peninsula."

Carried

Minutes: Moved by Sam Charlton and Seconded by Bev Marley: "That the Minutes of April 14, 2016 be adopted as circulated."

CARRIED

TREASURER'S REPORT – Samantha Chartlon

- Bank balances same as last month.
- She will arrange for a higher-interest return term deposit this month.

SPEAKER'S BUREAU:

Institutional Purchasing – Susan Tychie, Research Consultant – CR-Fair

- This is a pilot project running through the summer and up until October 31, 2016 to make local produce more accessible to chefs in assisted living facilities within the CRD and to increase local farm production.
- Chefs will identify up to 12 local produce items and pricing requirements will be matched.
- The food orders will be handled through a local produce wholesaler – including delivery.
- Farmers know at the beginning of the growing season they will have to supply so many pounds of vegetables to the institutions throughout the summer and fall.
- Farmers will not have to do any marketing and will work with the local distributor.
- In the CRD, produce needs to be GAP certified (Good Agricultural Produce). However, because the produce doesn't have to be displayed in a store or at a market, #2 quality tomatoes for example could be used. The things important to the chefs are freshness and reliable delivery.
- Susan stated she is working with local farmers, including Terry Michell. This is a good way to increase food production on local farms – a win-win for all involved.
- Prices naturally fluctuate over the summer; we try to get highest price possible for the farmer.
- We have five institutions on board now and are looking for one or two more.
- This could be a large and steady market for farmers.
- Looking at the bigger picture, this may encourage others to put land into production: if they have a contract with a hospital or institution, perhaps apply for a bank loan to get them started.
- She attended the BC Food Systems Network Conference in Vancouver where it was noted that the Ministry of Agriculture has a goal of increasing local food consumption in BC by 40% by
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2020. The only way we will be able to do that is to allow purchasers to have a different set of values – eg: a Healthy Community.

In response to questions from the Commission, Susan stated:

- The current crops being provided are zucchini, winter squash, beets, carrots, cabbage, potatoes and cucumbers.
- Chefs are also interested in cauliflower, broccoli, green beans, and strawberries but we cannot find a price match because the price varies over the seasons.
- The prices are set through the wholesaler. Some chefs are willing to pay a little more.

Linda Geggie entered the meeting at 7:50 pm

- GAP certification is required for a lot of institutions she talked to; all VIHA ones require GAP.
- There is definitely a lot of interest at the chef and director level at these institutions for fresh, local produce.
- [Http://crfair.ca/about-us/vision/](http://crfair.ca/about-us/vision/)

Aaren Topley – CR-Fair – Farm to School Programmes (F2S)

The goal for the Farm to School programme is to bring healthy, local food into our schools and provide students with hands-on learning opportunities that foster food literacy, all while strengthening local food systems and enhancing school and community connectedness.

- Some of the schools involved are Royal Bay, West Montessori, Rock Heights, Vic High, and Torquay – from elementary to high schools.
- The schools have one or more of the following: salad bars, hot lunches, school gardens, soup days, culinary programmes, fundraisers and community celebrations.
- Some schools do farm tours, have a farm they consistently buy from, or students work on the farm.
- This is one of the first models of this type in Canada; UBC researchers are monitoring.
- Programmes are tied into the curriculum. They have found some of the benefits of the programme are increased consumption of fresh fruit and vegetables; a willingness to try new foods; enhanced food literacy; and expanding community partnerships.
- The Farm to School Policy will be discussed at a meeting with School District 61 on June 20. It will likely take a year or more to complete.
- Heather Parker, an urban farm in Victoria from City Harvest, helps Reynolds and Vic High schools to build and maintain the gardens, and work with the students. During the summer, Heather continues to maintain the crops and sells them to get some revenue in return for her services.
- Farmers growing on school fields is working well on the mainland; he hopes it will catch on here.
- Regarding VIHA regulations for the salad bar, for example, schools are considered a “closed population” because they are not open to the public, so the food safe regulations do not apply in the same way.

Discussion noted:

- On the Peninsula there are many boards and societies that need new (and younger) people to volunteer.
- Perhaps students involved in the farm programmes could be taught how to participate and chair meetings and volunteer on some of these farm-related societies.

- Part of the curriculum for the higher grades could involve the business end of farming.
- Members agreed this was a good programme; it will give youngsters a taste of agriculture, a feel for the soil and may encourage some of them to work on farms.
- It is a positive use of provincial health and school board funding; a collaborative way to bring funding to the table to benefit agriculture.

Saanich Agriculture Food Security Plan – Jane Evans, Saanich Planner

Jane distributed additional information to the Commission, noting that last month the Task Force met and formed the following Vision Statement:

In Saanich, food security starts in our backyard. By 2030, Saanich is home to a thriving, accessible, and environmentally responsible food system, which is renowned for its vibrancy and resiliency. Our food is celebrated and recognized for its role in nourishing people, livelihoods, and relationships. Saanich is seen as a leader in advancing food security, including initiatives toward greater food self-sufficiency on the South Island, as well as dignified access to affordable, healthy food for all people. Ecosystems flourish as a result of responsible land and water stewardship on both urban and rural agricultural lands, which form the centre of our community. We protect and support our farmland and are proud to provide a vibrant agricultural legacy to future generations.

- The Task Force is comprised of 9 people: farmers, distributors, residents, and a consultant.
- We are identifying strengths, weaknesses and challenges and will prepare a list of themes.
- We will look at what our local government can do to help with these challenges and how many issues can be covered by Saanich Municipality.
- Partnerships will be considered.
- PAAC's input and feedback is important.
- Jane scanned through PAAC minutes from 2010 to 2016 and came up with a list of 20+ items to consider, ranging from education, outreach and farm economics, to stormwater management, drainage and composting, farm worker housing and farm succession.
- All of these topics have been added to the list of strengths and challenges.
- A public survey will be released July 31; she would also like to interview farmers and urban gardeners.
- The goal is to have the input collected by the end of August.
- There are a number of changes happening to agriculture recently, including the closure of 3 golf courses (Royal Oak, Prospect Lake and Glen Meadows) and the proposal to use school fields for growing fruit and vegetables.
- The information collected through this process will be shared with other local municipalities.
- **She would like the opportunity to discuss the strengths and challenges with the Commission and it was agreed to meet one hour earlier (6:30) for the June 9 meeting.**

CORRESPONDENCE

- a) Letter sent to Victoria Airport Authority regarding the future use of ALR lands; the matter will be discussed by the Board at its meeting on May 31, 2016.
- b) Letter sent to Saanich re the Deposit of Fill application for 5895 Old East Road. No formal acknowledgment received to date. Informal discussion with Robert Grant (Saanich Engineering),

who advised that the application is not yet approved and if neighbours have concerns they should be reported to Bylaw Enforcement.

- c) Letter to the ALC requesting a rep attend a PAAC meeting to discuss agricultural issues (copies of the above two letters were sent to them). No official response received to date, although Gordon Bednard replied by email to advise he was not available for the May or June meeting.

AGRICULTURAL ISSUES: NEW

6187 HUNT ROAD – ALR SUBDIVISION APPLICATION – FATT FAMILY

Jane Evans, Saanich Planner, stated:

- The Fatt family want to save the 1912 heritage building on the property for their mother, subdividing 0.39 ha from the property for the heritage home, and then build a new home closer to the water for the son to live and continue to farm the remaining 10 ha parcel, transferring ownership of the land to the next generation through an inter-generational transfer
- According to the consultant's report, the site selected for the new house has less agricultural capabilities. A full soil capability report was submitted with the application and distributed to PAAC with the application.
- A report is being drafted for Council's consideration and the application will be sent to the ALC for approval, who have guidelines for ALR subdivision applications. A Heritage Revitalization Agreement can be requested.
- She stated that at some point, the family may sell the heritage house and its property to allow someone who appreciates heritage to look after it and keep it for the good of the community.

Discussion noted:

- A driveway will have to be built the length of the property to access the proposed new house, although it was noted all-weather roads are needed for farm equipment as well.
- It is understood the family wants to eventually sell the smaller, subdivided parcel with the heritage house. Questioned whether this could be the thin edge of the wedge.
- Some members could not see the rationale for subdividing agricultural land.
- Approval is up to the ALC and they could turn it down if they feel it does not benefit agriculture.
- The heritage house could be moved to another site entirely.
- Jane Evans advised the house is on the heritage register; it is not officially designated.
- The brother, Ian Fatt, owns and farms the land adjacent to this property.
- Farmland is not being taken away; the size of the property is being maintained other than a footprint for the new house, We need to encourage farmers to keep farming; if things are made too restrictive, then people bend the rules.
- A covenant could be placed on the property to prevent another house from being built.
- The Fatt Family has not had a home site severance before this application and they have been farming for over 100 years; the severance is to allow the parent to continue to live on the property.
- In effect, there is no net loss for agriculture.
- PAAC agreed there were no major concerns about the subdivision.

Keating Corridor Business Analysis – review of Open House

Larry Sluggett was unable to attend but Carol Davidson was there and reported as follows:

- Central Saanich was looking for input about the strip of land that has not been developed yet.
- Some of the issues were having better access to area from the highway with an interchange, improved bus service and more restaurants in the immediate area.

Shellfish Harvesting Update – Jack Mar

- Nothing to report at this time; a meeting has not been held this month.

Farm Worker Housing – Terry Michell

- Terry stated he was discussing this issue recently with Ray Galey who advised he has not been able to make progress with the zoning for farm worker housing (FWH) in Saanich.
- Municipalities have different regulations.
- Pendray Farms in Central Saanich is zoned A-3, is considered a commercial farm and has on-site FWH.

Ray Galey stated he has 16 workers this year and he should have appropriate accommodations.

- In Saanich, FWH is not permitted in A-1, A-2 or A-3 zones. Central Saanich has different regulations.
- He wants Saanich to establish a new zone for FWH, seasonal housing, which would be built to code and inspected before the help is hired.

Jane Evans, Saanich Planner, pointed out that Saanich farms are closer to urban housing – unlike the farms in Central Saanich. She would be interested to see the regulations from Central Saanich.

Discussion noted:

- How can we say we support and encourage farming but not provide basic accommodations for farm workers?
- We provide float homes for fishermen – why not homes for farm workers?
- Saanich farms may be closer to urban areas, but there is zero vacancy in the rental market.
- One of the arguments from Central Saanich farmers is how can they pay a mortgage if they are only allowed to rent the farm accommodations for 3 months of the year.
- Noted that accommodations should be allowed for at least 6 months – the work is there.
- Ray noted he has gone through over 20 workers so far this year because there is nowhere for them to live; you cannot run an operation when people only work two or three days.
- Suggested this issue could be considered as part of the Saanich Agriculture Food Security Strategy.

MOTION: Moved by Terry Michell and Seconded by Carol Davidson: “That Farm Worker Housing is an urgent need in Saanich and PAAC suggests that this issue be included as part of the current Saanich Agriculture Food Security Strategy.”

CARRIED

Information to be obtained from Bruce Greig at Central Saanich as this municipality permits FWH.

AGRICULTURAL ISSUES – CURRENT

a) Goose Management Strategy (Bev Marley)

Bob Maxwell stated:

- All municipalities in Canada have to adhere to the *Migratory Bird Act* and many areas, including parts of the United States, have problems with resident geese.

- According to the *Migratory Bird Act* you can only hunt at certain times, kill so many birds at one time, etc. It is a nightmare.
- He suggested that the CRD municipalities forward a brief to the Federal government, gathering support from a slew of other municipalities affected, including the USA.
- This is a growing international problem and we need an international act – that works.

Councilor Chis Graham, Central Saanich, suggested sending a resolution to the UBCM as a starting point. Ryan Windsor, Central Saanich Mayor, would take the lead. The deadline for this year's conference is June 30, so there is still time to send the resolution to the councils for support.

MOTION: Moved by Bob Maxwell and Seconded by Bev Marley: "That PAAC request Central Saanich to support a Resolution for consideration at the upcoming UBCM conference, requesting amendments to the *Migratory Bird Act* to address the expanding resident goose populations throughout North America, and to make it easier for local jurisdictions to manage the populations, thereby reducing the continual damage to agricultural crops, and improve food security and the health and safety of our beaches, parks and waterways."

CARRIED.

Note: after the meeting, assistance was requested from Ray Mariachi, Regional Wildlife Biologist, to draft a resolution.

b) Deer Management Strategy - nothing to report

c) CRD Food Systems Strategy (Linda Geggie)

The Food Systems Strategy will be considered by the CRD Planning, Transportation and Protected Services Committee at a meeting on May 18, 2016. She will report further at the June meeting.

AGRICULTURAL STRATEGY – SUB-COMMITTEE REPORTS

a) Water (Michael Doehnel) - not present; nothing to report

b) Farm Economics (Terry Michell)

The dry, warm spring has resulted in crops being early for the second year in a row. He will be picking strawberries this weekend. New potatoes are ready as well.

c) Agricultural Land Base (Phil Christie)

◆ **Maber Flats** – no progress or information to report. The sub-committee report was sent last month to Central Saanich for review and comment. Councillor Graham stated he would follow up on the issue.

δ) Education and Outreach – Linda Geggie

Saanich Fair:

Linda requested this issue be placed early on the agenda for the June meeting so there is ample time for discussions.

Last year, the zucchini races and the squash recipe pamphlets were a success. We need to consider what to focus on this year and whether we want to host workshops. All agreed hiring a coordinator (from CR-Fair) who was on site all 3 days was worth the money. There were some minor printing costs as well. Isobel will include an excerpt from last September's minutes when we reviewed the 2015 Fair. Members were asked to come with some ideas to the meeting.

OTHER BUSINESS

Agricultural History Book

Bob Maxwell stated:

- He would like PAAC to consider the idea of doing a history of farmers on the Peninsula.
- This would be a good use of the funds from the Fruit Growers Association.

There was enthusiastic and unanimous support around the table to this suggestion. Comments noted were:

- Good to collect the historical information now while the "old timers" are still around.
- Noted that Central Saanich was initially part of Saanich; the Saanich Archives apparently has information and photographs.
- We would need a coordinator and perhaps put out a Request for Proposal.
- It doesn't just have to be a book, in keeping with changing times, it could be an audio and or video format as well.
- There are historical societies that could help, partner with PAAC, such as the Central Saanich Pioneer Society.
- Students at UVIC or Camosun in agricultural studies or literature programmes could assist.

Carry for more discussion at future meetings

REPLACEMENT OF REGIONAL AGROLOGIST POSITION

Bob Maxwell stated that with the recent retirement of Rob Kline, it is unsure if his position will be replaced. He suggested sending a motion to the Minister of Agriculture.

MOTION: Moved by Bob Maxwell and Seconded by Linda Geggie: "That PAAC send a request to the member municipalities that they write letters to the Minister of Agriculture requesting he address the urgent need for a District Agrologist position on the Peninsula."

CARRIED

Adjournment: On a Motion from Linda Geggie the meeting adjourned at 10:05 pm
 Next Meeting: The next regular PAC meeting is scheduled for **Thursday, June 9, 2016** at **6:30 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.
