



**MINUTES OF THE  
PENINSULA AGRICULTURAL COMMISSION  
Council Chambers, Saanich Municipal Hall  
THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 8, 2016 AT 730 PM**

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**Present:** Jack Mar in the Chair; Carol Davidson; Phil Christie; Bernadette Green; Bev Marley; Larry Sluggett; Dianne Williamson; Councillor Thornborough (N.Saanich). Also present was Isobel Hoffmann, Recording Clerk.

**Guests:** Bruce Greig, C. Saanich Planner; Jim Reisman; David Clark, Farmland Trust;  
**Regrets:** Councillors Derman, McLennan, Graham, Weisenberger and Kahakauwila; Bob Maxwell, Linda Geggie, Terry Michell and Sam Charlton.

**Agenda:** Moved by Larry Sluggett and Seconded by Dianne Williamson: "That the Agenda be approved as circulated."

Carried

**Minutes:** Moved by Larry Sluggett and Seconded by Dianne Williamson "That the Minutes of June 9, 2016 be approved, with a change to page 2 under composting, '*Firbank Farm, the last major poultry farm on the Peninsula, has over 100,000 birds*' and not 1000 as stated."

CARRIED

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## **TREASURER'S REPORT – Samantha Chartlon – not present**

### **SPEAKER'S BUREAU**

#### **– David Clark, Vice Chair, Farmland Trust (FLT) – re Martindale Flats**

Mr. Clark reviewed the comments in the FLT's response to Central Saanich and stated:

- Farmland Trust supports any initiative that will contain and control flooding in the valley.
- After reviewing the March 15, 2016 minutes of the Martindale Drainage Open House meeting and related documentation, the following four points were provided as feedback to Central Saanich:
  1. Farmland Trust supports protecting local food security and promoting the economic viability of farmland in Greater Victoria, and we fully acknowledge local farmers' concerns about flooding and drainage in the Martindale Valley.
  2. Because the Valley borders Saanich and Central Saanich, both municipalities should identify common solutions and share funding for a management plan to control the flow of water from the Keating Ridge area into the Valley. Such a plan could potentially address flooding during peak times for farmers (early spring to fall).
  3. Farmland Trust agrees with PAAC's September 10, 2015 motion recommending Central Saanich install a flow meter on Keating/Tanner Ridge.
  4. FLT also supports the Central Saanich Agricultural Advisory Committee's concept of building a retention pond to divert excess water from heavy storms and related rainfalls; this could potentially save hundreds of acres of farmland from annual flooding.
- He advised that Farmland Trust has aided the work at Newman Farm, which grows food to support the Open Door programme, as well as helping Madrona Farm by providing over \$400,000 to assist with farm operations.
- They want to encourage young people to get involved with farming and have produced a resource guide for young farmers. He will arrange for copies to be sent to the Commission.

The Chair thanked Mr. Clark for his input and for Farmland Trust's support to address the flooding issues in the Martindale Valley.

## CORRESPONDENCE

- a) **Letter from Saanich Planning re Farm Worker Housing:** As per PAAC's request, Farm Worker Housing has been included within the Saanich Agriculture & Food Security Plan, as well as other issues that were identified through public engagement. Jane Evans was not able to attend this meeting but will provide a full report at the October meeting.
- b) **Letters in support of Reinstatement of Regional Agrologist:** In response to the PAAC's letters of June 23, 2016 sent to all CRD municipalities, MLA's, MP's, the Premier and the Minister of Agriculture in support of reinstating a Regional District Agrologist, responses were received from Colwood, View Royal, Oak Bay, and Metchosin. However, we have been recently advised that Derek Masselink has been appointed as a District Agrologist for the Cowichan and South Island Areas. Derek will attend our October 13, 2016 meeting.
- c) **Letter from Central Saanich re Resolution re changes to the Migratory Bird Act:** Further to our May 24, 2016 letter sent to member municipalities, MLAs, MPs, CRD, Ministry of Agriculture and the Regional Wildlife Biologist, the District of Central Saanich agreed to take a resolution to the UBCM (September 2016) to petition the Federal Government to: exempt non-migratory resident Canada Geese from the *Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918*; that the management of the non-migratory geese be assigned to local and municipal authorities in BC; and that funding be requested from senior government levels to assist with the management regime at the local level. Hopefully our Council representatives can provide an update from the UBCM Convention at the October meeting.
- d) **Information from North Saanich re Vision Sandown:** A large package of information prepared by North Saanich was sent electronically to members and comments were requested.
- e) **Letter from Victoria Airport Authority re Sidney Gateway Project:** PAAC sent a letter dated April 22, 2016 to the Victoria Airport Authority, with copies to the ALC, MLAs and MPs, regarding the Gateway Project requesting that there be no net loss of agricultural lands and that a long-term vision for the continuation and expansion of agriculture on airport lands be considered. The ALC has denied an appeal and the project is moving ahead. A Public Hearing in Sidney is scheduled for September 12. The June 3 letter from the Victoria Airport Authority advised that there are a number of official channels PAAC can obtain information, such as through the AGM, the Airport Consultative Committee and the Environmental Management Committee meetings. As a tenant of the Government of Canada, the VAA is unable to commit the government to the future use of its lands.
- f) **Letter to Central Saanich re Maber Flats & request for a technical review & community workshop:** No official response to date from Central Saanich to our April 18, 2016 submission of a report on Maber Flats.\* A letter was sent August 23, 2016 requesting a technical review and a community workshop regarding the current status and vision for the Flats. In response, Central Saanich has planned an Open House on September 17<sup>th</sup>, 11 am to 3 pm. \***Note, Central Saanich advised after this meeting that the PAAC report on Maber Flats is on the September 12 Committee of the Whole Agenda.**

Phil Christie stated:

- In the sub-committee report (March 2016), we thought there had not been enough attention paid to agriculture in the studies completed to date; the Terms of Reference for the project need to be adjusted.
- He felt the problem is being looked at from two different perspectives. PAAC might be a little late to the table but he thinks it would be practical to update the Terms of Reference.
- There can be a drainage scheme which will enhance agriculture if it is installed at the right level the land could be farmed year-round.
- If the water levels during the winter can be reduced the land will be more productive.
- PAAC asked for a technical review so we could raise questions and share information.
- PAAC also asked for a community workshop and Central Saanich Council now proposes an Open House on September 17 rather than a technical review.
- He understands Central Saanich wanting to move forward with the issue but it can have some serious casualties if it is not done correctly.
- This is highly productive farmland; yet sand and gravel has been brought in to cover the good soils.

Larry Sluggett stated:

- He attended a Central Saanich Council meeting and advised Council that PAAC would prefer to discuss issues with staff and Council, noting there has not been enough discussion with the stakeholders and there are problems with the proposed plan.
- One of the most serious problems is that one third of the property has already been eliminated from the floodplain by raising the level of the fields (eg: Stelly's playing fields).
- Councillor Bob Thompson made a Motion that PAAC be given an opportunity to meet with the consultant, which was passed.
- The Regional Consultant was only given enough money to come to the Island and conduct some interviews. The data from the floodplain is from the 1980s, and most of the areas on the map are no longer in the floodplain.
- Many people don't understand what the Maber Flats Project is all about; there is a lack of understanding within the community. People do not have any idea what is going on and he questioned if this was a good way to spend our tax dollars.

Discussion noted that Jack Mar and Larry Sluggett met with Vern Michell recently, and they felt that Mr. Michell is one of the best people to speak to about this land as he has good historical knowledge about what has happened. He is concerned that Council do not realize that the area was one of the most productive potato growing regions in Canada. The soils are excellent and it takes thousands of years to be good quality soil like this.

Other points noted by the Commission during discussion were:

- There are environmental concerns to consider too with this land. The environment is impacted when we drain land; depending on how much water is taken off the the land, fields could need irrigation.
- Perhaps the reason agriculture was included in the plan was to get more funding to deal with the drainage problems that should have been dealt with a long time ago.
- Typically this land has been wet in the winter and dry in the summer. Now with residential development, we are no longer able to access Hagen Creek to clear it and allow the lands the drain.
- If we cannot access the creek, where and how will the water be drained and still protect this valuable farmland?

Phil Christie stated that Central Saanich intends to control the flow; there is a capacity issue as the water comes in surges. He hopes that we can work with the municipality on this matter. He understands there will be press at the Open House so information will be provided to the general public.

Bruce Greig, Central Saanich Planner, stated this is the first Open House meeting on September 17 and it is still early in the process. The intention of the open house is to get feedback and raise awareness within the community.

Councillor Thornborough stated you can see that fill has been used to raise the level of the playing fields at Stelly's.

**Carry for more discussion at the next meeting after the Open House and Council response to the sub-committee's March 2016 report.**

## **BUSINESS ARISING – June 9, 2016 - none**

## **AGRICULTURAL ISSUES: NEW - none**

## **AGRICULTURAL ISSUES – CURRENT**

- a) **Goose Management Strategy (Bev Marley)** – nothing new to report. Larry Sluggett noted he has about 500 geese on his property.
- b) **Deer Management Strategy** - Noted that less sightings of deer than before; the deer have changed their feeding patterns.
- c) **CRD Food Systems Strategy (Linda Geggie)** – Linda not present; carry to next meeting
- d) **6187 Hunt Road (Fatt Family) – ALR Subdivision** – The secretary advised the Saanich Planning report is drafted but has not been sent to Council yet.
- e) **Old East Road – Illegal Dumping of Fill** – nothing further to report at this time.
- f) **Shellfish Harvesting Committee Update** - Jack Mar advised that no additional meetings have been held; only one initial meeting has been held to date.

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

- a) **Water (Michael Doehnel)** - not present
- b) **Farm Economics (Terry Michell/Larry Sluggett)** – nothing to report

- c) **Agricultural Land Base (Phil Christie)** – Nothing further to report since the on-site meeting with Saanich staff regarding the Integrated Water Management Plan with Central Saanich. Intentions are good on both sides.
- d) **Education and Outreach – Linda Geggie – not present but a written report was submitted.**

#### **Review of Saanich Fair 2016**

- 20 volunteers participated, as well as 10 youth volunteers to help with the zucchini races.
- A paid volunteer was there to help with set-up and attended all 3 days of the fair.
- The displays and activities this year included:
  1. The Agriculture Then and Now photo gallery display.
    - Max built the gallery display boards; Linda and Max selected the photos.
    - Isobel created the information cards and headings to explain the photos.
    - The photos were mounted on foam board and laminated so they will last for many years.
    - A book was on hand to capture any stories or find people to be interviewed.
    - A number of people came forward with their stories and let us know they have family photos they could share with us.
  2. The squash display.
    - Bev arranged for more squash recipe booklets to be printed (as well as a second booklet of recipes).
    - As usual, there was a good display of squash varieties, as well as other vegetables.
  3. CR-Fair promoted the Action for Good Food Contest they are working on with the Black Press Media; 50 people signed up for more info. The challenge is for people to post a photo and give a brief description about what good food means to them and what they are doing to promote it.
  4. The zucchini races were a big hit again with over 1000 kids participating this year and over 600 races down the track. 200 kids received zucchini seeds and 150 kids signed up to grow their own zucchini next year. The youth volunteer team were great!
- Linda extended a bit thanks to:
  - Max for the gallery structure and helping with setup and take down.
  - Isobel for all her work to put the photo display together.
  - Spelts for sponsoring the zucchini races
  - Terry and Jack for delivering the produce and hay bales
  - Bev for arranging and preparing for the recipe booklets
  - All our volunteers!

The Secretary suggested that the photo gallery display could be set up in municipal halls, libraries, recreation centres, schools, etc. so we can reach a larger audience. Although a few people provided stories or comments at the Fair, a different setting may be more conducive to gathering facts and additional photos which would ultimately help with PAAC's proposed historical book on agriculture. As well, given the high cost of entire display it makes sense to use it more than once.

While members agreed this was a good idea, it was cautioned that we should be clear about our intent: what is the purpose of the display? Is there a theme?

Discussion continued, noting there is potential for this information to resonate with young people if it is set up in a school. Food security is a hot topic, as is educating children about our food and where it comes from.

Carry for more discussion

## **OTHER BUSINESS**

### **Agricultural History Book – Carry to October Meeting**

#### **Speakers Bureau: Suggestions for more speakers**

1. Lindsay Dault – Bee keeping. Bev has her contact information.
2. A rep from the horse community. Bev noted she has contacted the BC Horse Council on a few occasions with no success. It is acknowledged that the population and density of horses on the Island, and in particular the Peninsula, is higher than anywhere else in Canada. It is an important component of agriculture and it would be beneficial to have representation on PAAC. Jack stated he will contact Liz Ashton to ask her to speak to the Commission.

Adjournment: On a Motion from Bernadette Greene the meeting adjourned at 9:00 pm

Next Meeting: The next regular PAC meeting is scheduled for **Thursday, October 13, 2016.**

**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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