



**MINUTES OF THE
PENINSULA AGRICULTURAL COMMISSION
Council Chambers, Saanich Municipal Hall
THURSDAY, JANUARY 12, 2017 AT 7:30 PM**

Present: Phil Christie; Carol Davidson; Satnam Dheenshaw; Jack Mar; Bev Marley; Bob Maxwell; Terry Michell; Larry Sluggett; Dianne Williamson; Councillors Graham (Central Saanich); Metchosin Council Representatives Robin Tunnicliffe and Anne Richmond. Also present was Derek Masselink, Regional Agrologist; Isobel Hoffmann, Recording Clerk.

Guests: Jane Evans, Saanich Planner;

Regrets: Councillors McClellan, Derman and Weisenberger; Bernadette Greene.

The Secretary called for nominations for Co-Chairs and Treasurer for 2017.

Election of Officers for 2017:

Moved by Carol Davidson and Seconded by Phil Christie: "That Jack Mar and Bob Maxwell remain as Co-Chairs for 2017."

Carried

Moved by Phil Christie and Seconded by Jack Mar: "That Carol Davidson be appointed Treasurer for 2017."

Carried

Bob Maxwell assumed the Chair.

Appointment to CRD Saanich Peninsula Water Commission:

The Secretary noted that Michael Doehnel, past PAAC member, has agreed to continue to represent the agricultural community and PAAC on the Saanich Peninsula Water Commission. The CRD has been advised accordingly and we thank Mike for his continued diligence as our representative.

Minutes: Moved by Phil Christie and Seconded by Larry Sluggett: "That the Minutes of November 10, 2016 be adopted with a change to the second point at the top of page 5: "Municipalities are asking *what can we do for agriculture*", and page 8 re Agricultural Land Base, "Portions of Maber Flats have not been farmed for years".

CARRIED

TREASURER'S REPORT – Carol Davidson

The Past-Treasurer, Sam Charlton, has resigned from the Commission as she will be traveling most of the year. No official report was available. Carol and Sam will make arrangements regarding the transfer of banking records and adding Carol as a signing authority on the account.

SPEAKER'S BUREAU:

- No speaker's scheduled. Two speakers are scheduled for February - Lora Morandin from Pollinator Partners and Shannon Berch regarding truffle cultivation.

CORRESPONDENCE

- Confirmation has been received from all sponsoring municipalities, except Saanich, regarding council representatives for 2017. Saanich Council will be reviewing committee appointments on February 20. All other Council representatives remain the same, with the exception of Metchosin, who has appointed Robin Tunnicliffe and Anne Richmond (alternate) to represent their council. PAAC welcomed Robin and Anne to the Commission and were grateful to have Metchosin represented once again.

PAAC HISTORICAL AGRICULTURE & FOOD PROJECT – Linda Geggie

Linda was not present. Carry to next meeting.

AGRICULTURAL ISSUES – NEW**◆ Proposed Winter Lecture Series**

At the November meeting, Bob Maxwell put forward the suggestion of PAAC hosting a Winter Lecture Series on various issues of interest to emerging farmers (young and/or new farmers). The Farmlands Trust has indicated they would financially support this initiative. Bob prepared a questionnaire for review listing various topics and PAAC was asked to indicate their level of interest for each one – low, moderate or high.

Jack Mar stated:

- He has acquired a room at no charge through the North and South Saanich Agricultural Society.
- The room at the Saanich Fairgrounds is available during February and March, Mondays or Tuesdays, and could accommodate up to 25 people, although a larger space is available as well.

Discussion continued:

- Funding for other costs can come from the monies received from the Fruit Growers Association, as the money was granted on condition that a portion of it be used in an education series to help emerging farmers.
- Re content for the lectures, noted that often more discussion is needed on some issues discussed at the Farmer2Farmer workshops; also, accounting sessions at the last F2F were overflowing.
- Discussion ensued regarding the logistics of the event and the first topic for a lecture.
- Agreed that the first Winter Lecture topic would be on bees and other pollinators. Lindsay Dault and Lora Morandin to be approached as possible speakers
- Date suggested was Monday, February 20, time to be decided, but probably early evening.
- Information on the lecture can be distributed through emails, websites, DFMA, CR-Fair, Young Agrarians, 4-H club, etc.
- The Secretary to email Lindsay and Lora to see if they are interested and available; then an organization meeting to be arranged.
- The Fruit Growers Association should be acknowledged as being partially responsible for this lecture series, as well as assistance from the Farmlands Trust, who had previously indicated they would like to help.

CARRY to next meeting for further discussion

● Enhancing Co-Existence for Large Carnivores & Farmers

Correspondence between Nitya Harris, Chair of Co-existing with Carnivores Alliance and Mike Badry, Wildlife Conflicts Prevention Coordinator with the Ministry of Environment was distributed.

Nitya has asked if Mr. Brady could attend a PAAC meeting requesting PAAC support of her plan to reduce farming conflicts with carnivores on southern Vancouver Island. This item has been postponed until the March PAAC meeting as Nitya is not available in January or February. Mike Badry noted in an October 28, 2016 letter that the Ministry supports the project as it addresses important human/wildlife conflict affecting agriculture.

Derek Masselink stated:

- The Ministry of Agriculture would support and participate in this initiative as no-one is looking at it right now. Wildlife Biologists are also interested.
- The Carnivores Alliance group was originally looking for \$5,000 from the Habitat Conservation Trust Fund.
- It appears that interactions between carnivores, humans and farm animals is increasing and Nitya's programme proposes to mitigate the risk to livestock.
- He noted interactions are more prevalent in the Western Communities and up-Island rather than on the Peninsula.

Phil Christie stated:

- He agreed that there is minimal interaction with carnivores on the Peninsula.
- He fully supports protection of wildlife, noting that 95% of the province is wild.
- However, he is not 100% sure of the objectives proposed for the programme.
- He could support a group of experts working on the programme to lessen the impacts of carnivores on livestock on farms.
- He does not think it is a good idea to force farmers on the Peninsula to co-exist with bears and cougars, etc.
- Programmes are needed for areas where carnivores are prevalent and need to be controlled.
- He doesn't think that a farm committee should support co-existence of carnivores and farms.

Jack Mar pointed out that cougars have been spotted near Shoreline School and other populated areas. We don't want a cougar to attack a child, or anyone, and having the province take the lead in a wildlife programme may be a good idea.

Mr. Masselink pointed out that any funding provided is not from the Ministry directly, but from the Agriculture and Habitat Conservation fund.

Nitya is scheduled to attend the March 9, 2017 PAAC meeting. Carry for further discussion.

AGRICULTURAL ISSUES – CURRENT

a) Goose Management Strategy (Bev Marley)

- Bev stated the next meeting will be January 24 or 24, 2017.
- It seems that the egg addling programme will continue this year.
- Norm Dirkson is trying to get some more volunteer help (students perhaps) and to simplify the application process needed to legally access someone's property to addle the eggs.
- Norm has met with Central Saanich Mayor, Ryan Windsor, and a representative from the Ministry of Environment to discuss the fact that the geese come under the *Migratory Bird Act* and whether this could be changed.
- The Ministry representative had a good understanding of the problems facing farmers.
- Another cull will be discussed.
- Bev advised that research indicates while the addling programmes do not reduce populations, they do maintain the current population. If done correctly, addling can be very successful.

It has been suggested we have another workshop, or perhaps a “webinar”, which may appeal to some people. We have to start somewhere.

- It is estimated the population of geese on the Peninsula is now 9,000.
- Another way to control the geese is to change the habitat – such as clearing brush around the lakes and ponds, which will reduce the nesting areas, or at least make them easier to locate.
- Application to access a person's property is good for 3 years.

Derek Masselink stated:

- The Ministry is interested in pursuing this problem and he is preparing a report looking at the egg addling programmes and other issues. The cull last year in Parksville was very effective.
- He noted there is a 4-pronged approach to reducing the geese:
 1. Egg addling
 2. Hunting
 3. Hazing
 4. Culling – when the adults are molting.
- The big struggle is public communication and education. People often do not understand what is at stake. We must be attentive to the education component. Habitats are being ruined by the non-migratory geese. He is hoping that the First Nations will become more involved in this issue.
- Bev pointed out that people have mentioned the high cost of the cull last year in Central Saanich – but the cost was not just for the cull, it was also 4 years of research. We had so many restrictions on where and when we could carry out the cull, it just made it more difficult and less effective.

b) CRD Food Systems Strategy (Linda Geggie) Not Present

Derek Masselink reported as follows:

- The CRD Food & Agriculture Strategy was approved by the CRD Board on December 14, 2016.
- This strategy is the first one associated with the Regional Growth Strategy to be passed.
- Ten recommendations within the Strategy have been identified and a Task Force established (Terry Michell is a member) to implement the recommendations (next meeting in February).
- He noted this is a big coup for agriculture with an agreement reached region-wide.
- Three years ago there was a distinct lack of agreement between smaller and larger producers, and the First Nations is now involved as well.
- He will send a link to the document to the PAAC secretary. The document covers many key areas, including drainage, wildlife, economic development, organic matter and recycling, and farmland trusts.

c) Saanich Agriculture and Food Security Plan – Jane Evans

Jane circulated copies of the *Key Themes Study* dated September 2016 and noted there will be an Open House on Wednesday, January 18, 2017 at the Cedar Hill Golf Course to discuss the five key themes identified by the Task Force following public and stakeholder engagement last year:

1. Connecting gaps in the local food system to improve food self-sufficiency
2. Strengthening local awareness of the local food system
3. Improving the interconnection between food production and the environment

4. Managing land use to support farmland
5. Supporting multi-generational farmers and emerging farmers

She asked PAAC members if they cannot attend on January 18, to look over the draft list of potential actions and send comments to her.

She noted she would like to have some local food on hand at the Open House to showcase local agriculture. Some of the PAAC members offered to assist and contact information was provided.

d) Shellfish Harvesting Community Update – Jack Mar – nothing to report

e) Bee Habitat Update – Bob Maxwell

- Bob stated that Lora Morandin with Pollinator Partners, will be speaking to PAAC at the February meeting. She is very knowledgeable about all bees – not just honey bees, and insects as well.
- As noted earlier (*see Agricultural Issues – New*) Lora may be taking part in the first Winter Lecture Series in February.
- It would be ideal to develop a working group with gardeners, owners of small acreages, parks and public works departments of local municipalities, etc.
- There are many public areas that could be planted with pollinator plants to feed the bees and other pollinators. It would be a great community builder. He noted that many of the highways in the USA provide amazing habitats and that some of this is government-funded.
- Our bees are going hungry in May, July and August because there is not enough nectar. One acre of pollinator crops (wild flowers, borage, etc) is necessary to support one beehive.

The following was noted:

- The issue of municipalities taking steps in this direction was mentioned at the last meeting and a draft letter has been circulated to PAAC asking the Councils if they are interested in participating in an initiative to enhance the bee habitat on southern Vancouver Island. It was suggested that this information be sent to all CRD municipalities – and beyond, as it affects everyone.
- PAAC also wrote to the BCAA, ALC and the provincial Apicultural Office regarding classification and use of agricultural lands for bee habitats. Derek Masselink received a copy of this information.

Discussion noted that there is a lot of policy that will have to come into effect to support these suggestions. However, this is just the start. Declining pollinator populations is a serious issue that needs to be addressed.

AGRICULTURAL STRATEGY – SUB-COMMITTEE REPORTS

a) Water (Michael Doehnel) - Not present

b) Farm Economics (Terry Michell)

- Farmers will need to look into well registration (this was mentioned by Mike Doehnel at the last meeting).
- There is no fee if wells are registered before March; there will be a charge after that.

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- The Forest Land and Natural Resource Department is holding workshops for producers and people with ground water. A workshop was held in November in Duncan and was well-received.
- BC is the last jurisdiction in North America that does not register ground water.
- There are a lot of concerns about contamination; in some respects it is helpful to register **(First in Time, First in Right??)**
- The cost for the agricultural sector will be minimal; costs for the commercial user will be higher, but still affordable.
- The process is not being done for money but it is more about how our resources are being managed.
- If there is a need for a workshop in this area, similar to the one held in Duncan, Derek Masselink stated he can pass along the information to the person concerned at Forest Land & Natural Resources Operations.
- Noted that the Agricultural Workshop held in Abbotsford on the 27-29th January has a session on this.

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

Maber Flats (Phil Christie, Larry Sluggett, Terry Michell)

Larry Sluggett reiterated concerns about the Zbeetnoff report being out of date, the fact that the consultant has stated he did not have enough funding to carry out due diligence, and more data should be collected before any action is taken by Central Saanich. As a result, Central Saanich Council has directed staff to talk to Mr. Zbeetnoff about updating his report.

He understands there will be a series of public meetings with the main objective to carry out some preliminary design work and assess whether agriculture will benefit. ALC approval is needed before any work can take place.

Phil Christie pointed out we need a strong mandate for agriculture on Maber Flats. There has been a lot of urban encroachment over the years; tough land use decisions were made a long time ago.

Larry confirmed that some of the land has been subdivided into 5-acre parcels and road access mapped out; an OCP amendment would be required to change this. Once road access is approved, subdivision follows. He again noted that this is some of the best farmland in the province and yet to date there has been no due diligence.

Martindale Valley

****Jack Mar left the meeting citing a conflict of interest with this issue****

- Phil Christie stated a joint meeting with Saanich and Central Saanich Councils was held on December 1st, 2016 to discuss the Martindale Valley drainage issues. He was present at the meeting, together with Larry Sluggett and Terry Michell.
- At the meeting, Terry spoke about an integrated water management plan for the two municipalities.
- Both Councils are very supportive of agriculture; they understand the issues, sympathize with the farmers, and now have an idea of the millions of dollars farmers lose in produce every year due to flooding.
- He noted during his two years on this Commission many issues have been discussed and he is pleased to see good progress on some of the more serious concerns: things finally seem to be

happening regarding the goose problem, and the outcome on the Martindale Valley issue is exceptional with the strong Council support.

*** Jack Mar returned to the meeting***

e) Education and Outreach (Linda Geggie) – not present

OTHER BUSINESS

Metchosin Farm Gate Sales

Robin Tunnicliffe stated that unfortunately Metchosin doesn't keep stats on farm gate sales. However, the new "Metchosin Grown" tag is trying to get residents to buy local. A weekly market is held on Sundays and is very popular, with people coming from Sooke, Langford and other areas. There are 20+ vendors and 3 farmers who participate. "Wind Whipped" is a new farm with a commercial kitchen. The District has an agricultural commission; both she and Anne Richmond are members. They only meet when there is an issue, and there are not many issues in Metchosin it seems.

Upcoming Events:

Farmer2Farmer workshop on Thursday, March 2, 2017.

2016 Annual Report

The secretary reminded members and in particular sub-committee chairs, that their reports are requested by the end of January for the PAAC Annual Report.

Adjournment: On a Motion from Bev Marley the meeting adjourned at 9:20 pm

Next Meeting: The next regular PAC meeting is scheduled for **Thursday, February 9, 2017** 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, Recording Secretary