



**MINUTES OF THE
PENINSULA AGRICULTURAL COMMISSION**
Committee Room 2, Saanich Municipal Hall
Thursday, February 9 , 2017 AT 7:30 PM

Present: Bob Maxwell in the Chair; Carol Davidson; Bernadette Greene; Linda Geggie; Bev Marley; Terry Michell; Larry Sluggett; Dianne Williamson; Councillor Murray Weisenberger, North Saanich. Also present was Isobel Hoffmann, Recording Clerk.

Guests: Lora Morandin, Pollinator Partners.

Regrets: Councillors Derman and Graham; Satnam Dheenshaw; Phil Christie; Jack Mar; Anne Richmond & Robin Tunnecliffe (Metchosin Reps).

Agenda: Presentation from Dr. Shannon Berch is postponed until March.
Moved by Bernadette Greene and Seconded by Carol Davidson: "That a request for PAAC support for a grant application by Pollinator Partners (Lora Morandin) to VanCity be added to the Agenda."

CARRIED

Minutes: Moved by Carol Davidson and Seconded by Linda Geggie: "That the Minutes of January 12, 2107 be adopted as circulated."

CARRIED

TREASURER'S REPORT – Carol Davidson

Carol will meet with past treasurer Sam Charlton next week to arrange for the transfer.

The secretary reported on the Administrative Budget for 2016, noting there was an increase of just over 9%. The costs cover salary as well as postage, stationery and photocopying costs. Invoices will be mailed to the sponsoring municipalities shortly.

The secretary stated that Sidney has withdrawn as a sponsor of the Commission as of January 1, 2017. They acknowledged that "*the Town has been involved in PAAC since its inception and that its initial participation was a result of the Town being supportive of the mandate and work of the Commission. Certainly, nothing has changed in terms of the level of support for the work of PAAC from the Town. However, being an entirely urban community, compared to the other more rural communities, there are very few issues discussed at the PACC that directly relate or impact the Town and therefore our level of contribution, advice and support to the Commission is limited.*" Finally, it was noted it is also a question of the level of time commitment for the Council liaison and their increasing workload and schedule on other committee appointments.

Adjustments will be made to the 2017 administrative budget; Sidney's share was only 3% of the total, so there will be very little change to the costs for the remaining four municipalities.

SPEAKER'S BUREAU: Dr. Lora Morandin from Pollinator Partners

Dr. Lora Morandin gave a power point presentation on the issues facing bees and other pollinators in this area and world wide. Highlights of the presentation were noted as follows:

- 90% of the worlds flowers and plants need annual pollination.
- 87 of the top 128 global crops benefit from pollinators.
- One third of the food we eat is a direct result of pollination.

- Any animal can be a pollinator – transferring pollen from one plant to another; the most important of these are the bees, and in particular the honey bee.
- The honey bee is native to Europe, not North America. However, we have over 20,000 species of bees that are vital to the natural environment and crop pollination.
- It has been found crops have higher yields if pollinated by both the honey bee and native bees.
- Over the past 10 years, there has been a lot of winter loss of the honey bee populations; however, the number of bee colonies has been increasing for the last few years with bee keepers importing bees year-round.
- Three main reasons for the loss of honey bees: synergy between pesticides, verosa and lack of forage.
- Veroa is the biggest problem for the honey bee.
- Roundup is not as much of a problem as sprayed insecticides.
- No long-term data is available regarding the loss of bees, but we are aware that Europe has seen a 37% decline, and the US and Canada have about 25%.
- Habitat loss, climate change, invasive plants and diseases affect the bee populations.
- This leads to pollination problems across the globe, from California to China to Canada.
- Small scale restoration projects can help and enhance the bee populations: planting hedgerows; beetle banks; flower borders; pivot corners and planting cover crops.
- Lora illustrated examples of hedgerows, comparing crop yields before and after planting, noting the increase in pollinators and insects (which can reduce the need to spray crops), and doing a cost analysis on the cost of planting the hedgerow and the eventual increased yields.
- She concluded it took mostly 15 years for the growers to see a return on their investment, but there are so many other benefits to planting hedgerows; in some cases if crops are pollinator-dependent, cost benefits were seen after as little as 7 years.
- Compared to the US, there is very little financial support from the Federal Government in Canada for programmes to assist growers to support pollinator populations.
- Urban landscapes can be good for pollinators and individuals can make a difference – she will be discussing this at the Bee Workshop on February 20.
- Pollinator Partners works to conserve pollinators by funding research, holding education and outreach programmes and workshops, creating guides, working on policies, collaborating with other groups, NGOs, industry and grower groups.
- An annual conference is held bringing together all the stakeholders, together with other events such as Pollinator Week.
- Information and technical guides are available for free on-line at <http://www.pollinator.org>
- Funding for Pollinator Partners comes from government sources, industry sales, seed and pesticide groups, as well as donations. Currently they are receiving funding from the Fairmont Hotel.

In response to comments and questions from the Commission Lora responded as follows:

- The right type of seed is very important – and can be expensive.
- Planting a variety of crops is better for pollination and wards off disease.
- Trees are also excellent sources of pollen.
- She liked the idea of circulating a petition to all the bee groups and organizations on the Island to get government funding.

CORRESPONDENCE

- a) PAAC letter to Saanich regarding traffic and other agricultural concerns on Blenkinsop Road; acknowledgment received from Saanich noting the issue has been referred to the Administrative Traffic Committee.

- b) PAAC letter to Farmlands Trust (Greater Victoria) Society requesting financial support for the upcoming Winter Lecture Series on Bees on February 20, 2017. A response has been received from the Trust indicating they will provide \$100 in support for this first lecture, as well as on-going support for future events.
- c) PAAC letter to CR-Fair supporting the creating of an agricultural land bank, further to the presentation by Keeley Nixon to PAAC in November on Farmland Trusts.
- d) PAAC letter to the ALC, BCAA and the Apicultural Office regarding bee habitat and farm classification on ALR lands. Response received from the ALC noting that this was not within their purview.

Note: no response received to date from sponsoring municipalities to PAAC's January 16, 2017 letter requesting Councils participate in an exploratory Bee & Pollinator Habitat Enhancement Initiative.

PAAC HISTORICAL AGRICULTURE & FOOD PROJECT – Linda Geggie

Linda advised that for reasons unknown we lost the support of the UVIC research programme student, who was meant to interview old time farmers with the intent of producing a historical agricultural and food project in the future. It was suggested that we try to find someone else to contact the interviews soon, and perhaps a video-ographer as well. The secretary advised she has a person in mind for the interviews; she will contact her and report back at the next meeting.

AGRICULTURAL ISSUES – NEW

◆ Proposed Winter Lecture Series – Save the Bees

- The event is scheduled for Monday, February 20, 2017 at the Saanich Fairgrounds. Doors open at 6:00 pm and the programme will start at 6:30 pm, wrapping up between 8:30 pm and 9:00 pm.
- Registration is going very well, with over 50 people signed up, coming from all areas of the CRD, as well as Pender Island and up-Island.
- Rack cards have been distributed to key locations, many emails have been sent to individuals, groups and organizations, and posting made to various websites.
- Refreshments are organized; handouts and other display materials are planned; some of the people registered who have bee-related businesses are bringing display and printed information.
- With Max's help, the secretary is working on a handout package, which will include an agenda and evaluation form, as well as a questionnaire asking for input for future workshops and lectures.
- Lana Popham, MLA Saanich South and Agriculture Critic for the Opposition, has confirmed her attendance and will provide opening remarks.
- Carol Pickup, Chair of the Farmlands Trust, (FLT) will also be attending and has requested to provide opening remarks.
- Concern noted that we don't want the 'opening remarks' to detract or take away too much time from the purpose of the evening. The agenda will have times noted beside each topic, and hopefully we can get the main programme officially started by 6:50 pm at the latest.
- Gary Holman, MLA for Saanich North & the Islands has also confirmed his attendance.
- Buckerfields has donated 7 mason bee houses and coupons for more bee houses.
- Bev agreed to approach Integrity Sales for other door prizes.

- While the room has been donated by the North & South Agricultural Society, and \$100 has been donated by FLT, there are other costs: refreshments, printing, honorariums for the two speakers (\$150 each). The other costs will be covered from the monies given to us last fall by the Saanich Fruit Growers Association.

MOTION: Moved by Bev Marley and Seconded by Dianne Williamson: "That funding up to the amount of \$1,000 be approved to cover the costs of the February 20, 2017 Save the Bees workshop."

Carried.

Proposed Grant Request to VanCity for Pollinator Partners – Dr. Lora Morandin

Lora stated:

- Pollinator Partners will be applying for a grant to VanCity through their Environmental Fund.
- Application due by April 3, 2017.
- The grant is intended to support agriculture projects, for both farmers and non-farmers.
- One of the specific areas they are funding is environmental sustainability in agriculture, which would cover pollinators.
- She asked if PAAC would be open to a partnership with Pollinator Partners and provide a letter of support for the application.
- The funding would be used to host a two-day Citizen Scientist Workshop for the public, farmers and municipal staff, and as well as this, to do a blitz on the Saanich Peninsula to ascertain who is pollinating our crops.

Discussion briefly noted that PAAC may have to get support from the sponsoring councils before agreeing to becoming a partner to the project, but it was felt this would not be a problem.

Lora advised she will continue to work on the application and provide more details to PAAC in time for the March 9 meeting, which still leaves sufficient time for the April 3 deadline.

CARRY to next meeting

AGRICULTURAL ISSUES – CURRENT

a) Goose Management Strategy (Bev Marley)

- A positive and productive meeting was held on January 25, 2017 with representatives from the Ministry of Agriculture, Canadian Wildlife Services, and the CRD. Norm Doerkson Chaired the meeting.
- Approximately \$7,000 is left from the original provincial grant and this can be used for the upcoming egg addling in the spring; permits are already in place. Kate Hagmeir has agreed to run the addling programme this year, at a cost of \$6,000.
- There are apparently other grants that can be applied for, such as the Agri-Risk Initiative Fund and the committee agreed to pay someone \$1,500 to complete the grant application.
- If we are successful with the grant, it will be good for 3 years, which will provide consistency and allow future planning, rather than going from year-to-year. Funds would be managed by Invasive Species Council.
- She is pleased that something is finally happening after all these years and she credits Norm Doerkson for his persistence and this positive step forward.

- Central Saanich has also been a strong supporter, changing bylaws to make it easier for the hunters.
- Crop insurance rates have increased dramatically over the past 10 years due to damage from the geese.

b) CRD Food & Agriculture Strategy (Linda Geggie)

Note this item was moved ahead in the Agenda because Linda had to leave the meeting at 8:30 pm

Linda stated:

- The strategy was finally approved by the CRD Board in December and the first task force meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, February 28, 2017.
- She will be able to provide an update at the next PAAC meeting on the priorities for implementation.

c) Saanich Agriculture and Food Security Plan – Jane Evans (not present)

Nothing to report at this time

d) Shellfish Harvesting Community Update – Jack Mar – not present

e) Farm Worker Housing

Terry Michell stated he heard from Ray Galey that he went to the Saanich Council Open Forum, held before the regular Council Meeting to discuss Farm Worker Housing. As a result, four Council members and staff are meeting with him next week.

Note: Council previously agreed to include FWH in its Agriculture & Food Security Plan.

AGRICULTURAL STRATEGY – SUB-COMMITTEE REPORTS

a) Water (Michael Doehnel) - Not present

b) Farm Economics (Terry Michell)

The well registration has been extended for another year. Many farmers want more information. It was noted this is only for wells used for agricultural purposes.

c) Agricultural Land Base (Phil Christie) – not present

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

Central Saanich Senior Engineering Technician Yvan Sylvestre prepared a report to CAO Patrick Robins which was to be considered by Council on February 6, 2017 regarding Maber Flats Agricultural Drainage Facility Update and Proposed Scope Change. Unfortunately the meeting was canceled due to the weather. The recommendations in the report are as follows:

1. That Council receive the design briefing from Aqua-Tex Scientific Consulting Ltd. *“Maber Flats Drainage Detention Design – Additional Scope and Budget”* for information.

2. That Council receive the proposal from Mr. Zbeetnoff to update the Economic Benefit to Agricultural Production Facility on Maber Flats for information.
3. That Council consider completing only the feasibility study of the proposal from Aqua-Tex to conduct additional investigation and modeling of Graham Creek downstream of the proposed detention facility at this time.

Discussion ensued:

- The District should try to make arrangements with the homeowners in the area near the Creek to clear it out, which could help the drainage in the area.
- Noted this has been tried in the past with the veterinarian's property at the corner and the other home on the north side, but there is an obstruction that stops the flow. The District has not been successful in accessing the property.
- The proposed filter system should be relocated rather than using over 22 acres of prime agricultural land to filter the water from the industrial park.
- According to Central Saanich staff the flow meter on Martindale is still in progress.

Woodwyn Farms

- The owners have made an extensive application to Central Saanich for 40 year-round housing units.
- The application is currently under consideration by the Central Saanich Agricultural Commission, who have indicated that 40 units cannot be justified from an agricultural standpoint.
- There are many issues regarding permits, etc. There are some donated RV's on the property being used for housing currently that do not comply with the BC Building Code.

Martindale Valley

- Nothing to report at this time.
- It was questioned how many acres of land can be reclaimed and how many farmers will benefit directly from this costly drainage project?
- Terry Michell stated several farms will benefit from getting on to the land two to three weeks earlier in the spring and having a longer growing season into the fall. There are over 350 acres involved.
- Noted that Central Saanich has spent millions of dollars on Maber Flats – money which should have been spent on Martindale because it is tangible.
- Farmers have been pushing for something to be done about Martindale Valley for 25+ years; they are not pushing for Maber Flats, which is a natural wetland. The flooding in the Martindale Valley is caused by water from Tanner Ridge and the highway.
- Agreed it does not make sense from an environmental standpoint to drain wetlands.

d) Education and Outreach (Linda Geggie)

Linda reminded everyone about the Farmer2Farmer workshop on Thursday, March 2, 2017. A pre-conference farm bus tour is scheduled for March 1st. In the past, PAAC has supported the conference with a \$500 donation, which helps off-set the cost of the speakers. A request for this amount has been sent to PAAC from CR-Fair.

Registration: www.brownpapertickets.com/event/2851325

MOTION: Moved by Linda Geggie and Seconded by Bernadette Greene: "That PAAC support the 2017 Farmer2Farmer Conference by donating \$500 to the event."

CARRIED

OTHER BUSINESS

5058 West Saanich Road

Carol Davidson reported that after 14 months, a lot of stress and a lot of money, she now has ALR status for her property on West Saanich Road, and also has a sheep barn. Saanich Council supported the ALR application unanimously; the ALC has designated the entire 7.5 acres and will honour the covenant on the environmentally protected areas that covers an additional 5 acres.

Upcoming Events:

Save the Bees workshop on Monday, February 20, 2017.
Farmer2Farmer workshop on Thursday, March 2, 2017.

2016 Annual Report

The secretary reminded members and in particular sub-committee chairs, that their reports are needed as soon as possible.

Adjournment: On a Motion from Carol Davidson, the meeting adjourned at 9:25 pm

Next Meeting: The next regular PAC meeting is scheduled for **Thursday, March 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