



**MINUTES OF THE
PENINSULA AGRICULTURAL COMMISSION**
Committee Room 2, Saanich Municipal Hall
Thursday, **SEPTEMBER 14, 2017 AT 7:00 PM**

Present: Jack Mar in the Chair; Bob Maxwell; Bernadette Greene; Carol Dexter; Larry Sluggett; Dianne Williamson; Councillors Weisenberger (N.Saanich) and Holman (C.Saanich). Also present was Jeff Weightman, CRD and Isobel Hoffmann, Recording Clerk.

Note: there was no quorum for this meeting.

Guests: Aida Mashari.

Regrets: Terry Michell; Bev Marley; Phil Christie; Linda Geggie; Councillor Graham; Anne Richmond; Robin Tunnicliffe.

Minutes: The Minutes of September 14, 2017 will be carried forward to the next meeting for adoption as there was no quorum.

TREASURER'S REPORT – Carol Davidson

- No change from last month.
- Discussion on the proposed Annual Budget postponed to the next meeting.

SPEAKER'S BUREAU: no speakers scheduled.

CORRESPONDENCE

- a) PAAC letter to Central Saanich re Deposit of Fill Application for Meadowbrook Road (Maber Flats) was received for information.

BUSINESS ARISING

- a) **Website/Social Media:** proposed meeting with Saanich Web Development (Jane and Isobel). Carry forward.
- b) **Visions Sandown:**
Bernadette stated that Linda had emailed the North Saanich Planner in June to arrange a site meeting with PAAC members and to review the current status of the project at Sandown. No response was received. In May, the Municipality had provided documents to PAAC and asked for comments; PAAC members felt that an on-site visit would have been helpful. It was agreed that PAAC now write an official request to the Planner, with a copy to Council.

Councillor Weisenberger stated that the ALC has recently approved the Water Management Plan but nothing has happened with respect to remediation of the site. A bond will have to be posted by the owners to ensure that the remediation takes place. The developers have a significant investment in the property; he will be happy when the land is transferred and the remediation has been completed. The matter is on Council's agenda next Monday.

Referring to a report prepared by CR-Fair, Councillor Weisenberger advised he would like to see Farmland Trust or a similar organization look at the recommendations made by CR-Fair and have an implementation plan prepared.

Bernadette noted that some of the recommendations and concepts in the Visions Sandown Report are not in keeping with ALC regulations. One of these recommendations was for a public perimeter trail system; the ALC wants a covenant to not allow park use on the property.

- c) **Farm Worker Housing:** Satnam was to review the draft Farm Worker Housing information from the June meeting; he was not present at the meeting.

Carry forward

PAAC HISTORICAL AGRICULTURE AND FOOD PROJECT

PAAC has been trying to arrange for someone to carry out interviews of the long-time farmers on the Peninsula for some time. At previous meetings a list of questions was compiled to ask the farmers. Bev Marley recently made contact with a teacher at Stelley's High School who indicated this would be a good project for students. Bev wasn't present to elaborate but members agreed this would be a good fit. No details have been worked out as yet.

Carry forward

AGRICULTURAL ISSUES – NEW

Councillor Holman stated that Central Saanich has recently reviewed its Strategic Plan, making modifications to reflect current issues – such as Maber Flats and agricultural drainage issues in general. PAAC should be aware and advise the municipality if there is something they could be doing to promote agriculture.

She noted that the design team realized the Maber Flats property was not large enough to build a retention pond; the focus was changed to work with the property owners to determine what improvements could be made to control the flooding. The District could buy more land or change the parameters of the project, but ALC requirements still have to be met. We can look at downstream improvements to see what this does to the water levels. Consultation has started: the municipality has to consider what might be possible and determine if the property owners are willing to work with Central Saanich. Council is waiting to hear from staff on the next steps.

Larry Sluggett stated he recently had a good meeting with the senior engineer at Central Saanich. Apparently a large rock obstruction has been removed from a ditch in Maber Flats. This changed the water level dramatically by 24”.

He noted that a lawsuit has been filed against the municipality because of the flooding and some residents in the Mt. Newton Valley are looking at this with interest. If the water problem is dealt with in the Maber Flats area and it sends water downhill faster and floods the Mt. Newton Valley, there could be more problems and therefore more lawsuits.

AGRICULTURAL ISSUES – CURRENT

- a) **Goose/Deer Management Strategy (Bev Marley)**

Bev was not present but Jeff Weightman from the CRD advised that the Food and Agriculture Task Force are planning some education on the issue, such as egg addling workshops. There are only about 8 or 10 farms that have reported nesting sites. It is hoped to train a small crew of volunteers and send 4 or 5 people to each site.

The CRD is following the cull operations in Parksville, which have been quite successful. There could be some grants available to proceed with another cull on the Peninsula.

Regarding deer management, Jeff advised he has not heard anything recently. The CRD is prepared to help in any way we can. He understands the deer issues have been improving.

Councillor Holman noted that it was recently reported the number of vehicle accidents involving deer was increasing on Salt Spring Island. She questioned if ICBC would be interested in making a contribution to the deer management programme. Jeff noted that ICBC has been approached on a number of occasions about this as the number of accidents continues to increase, but according to ICBC the numbers are still not high enough to warrant their participation.

Jeff advised he knows of a number of hunters who can help control the deer population and the province is looking at ways to simplify hunting/tracking permits and regulations.

b) CRD Food & Agriculture Strategy (Linda Geggie)

Linda was not present but Jeff Weightman advised that the CRD Food and Agriculture Strategy task force has met five times this year and developed a priority list, which includes:

Wildlife: A meeting was held today with the Wildlife Protective Services Committee; a task force has been set up to ask the Ministry of Agriculture for funding to study infrastructure needs, such as an abattoir. If we get Ministry support, we can begin to move forward with this idea. PAAC will be asked for input in developing the Terms of Reference.

Regional Food and Farmland Trust: A report was considered by the CRD Board and it was agreed to look at a Regional Farmland Trust feasibility study in 2018.

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

d) Shellfish Harvesting Community Update – Jack Mar

Jack stated the meeting scheduled for September 19 was postponed.

Jeff Weightman stated there was a meeting of the ***Council last week and the shellfish harvest project was discussed. The goal was to try to narrow it down and choose one beach to remediate. No decision was made. He can send a follow up email request. He noted there were people from Saanich and North Saanich at the meeting, but he didn't recognize any other councillors. Jack noted he did not receive an invite.

e) Island Pollinator Initiative (IPI) – Max reported that progress is being made and the project is moving along well. They had a great display at the Saanich Fair which generated a lot of interest. IPI has connected to many other groups, including one in Duncan. They also have a Facebook page. People seem to be very interested in the project.

Councillor Holman stated that BC Communities in Bloom offer grant funding to municipalities and groups to plant flowers in areas to attract pollinators.

Noted that schools are also interested in participating in pollinator programmes and are looking to include such programmes in their curriculum. Farmland Trust planted many sunflowers this year; they are one of the best flowers to attract pollinators. Agreed that municipalities should plant on vacant lands.

AGRICULTURAL STRATEGY – SUB-COMMITTEE REPORTS

- a) **Water (Michael Doehnel)** - not present
- b) **Farm Economics (Terry Michell)** – not present
- c) **Agricultural Land Base (Phil Christie)** – not present
- δ) **Education and Outreach (Linda Geggie)** – not present

Aida Mashari stated she is actively looking for land to farm for herself and her friends. She asked if there was a way to get municipalities to issue long-term leases on public property. She is looking for at least one acre for herself or 3 acres for herself and her friends.

PAAC responded as follows:

- Eventually, land will be available at Sandown to lease, but this could be a few more years.
- Jack noted there will be about 35 acres available in Langford in a couple of years. He asked Aida to contact him after the meeting.
- Noted it would be helpful to know the impediments facing young farmers looking for land, whether they want long-term or short-term tenures, and what are some of the barriers.
- Perhaps she could contact MLA's to discuss; at this year's UBCM discussions took place with Ministry officials about how to provide incentives to increase local food production. If land tenure is part of this perhaps we can do something positive about increasing food production.
- Only a small percentage of ALR land is actually being farmed for food production.
- You would think that between the ALC and local governments someone could come up with a way to provide incentives to land owners so young farmers can have long-term tenure at an affordable rate.
- The biggest impediment is getting a long-term lease.
- Municipalities own land that is in the ALR: Saanich for example owns Panama Flats, but apparently are considering reverting the land to its natural state – and yet it is good, accessible farmland. Why can't these areas be leased on a long-term basis to potential farmers? If we don't increase our local food production we could be in serious trouble one day.
- Is it worth asking Saanich to consider designating some land on a long-term lease for new farmers, perhaps with the help of Haliburton Farms?
- Metro Vancouver released a research paper on leasing land with the census information. Trying to find the land can be a problem; the province recently launched a matchmaker site with a land data base.
- The arrangement between Central Saanich and Newman Farms works well. Farmland Trust owns a portion of the land. Noted there may be an opportunity for leasing some land here.
- Linking Land to Future Farmers is another programme that was established about 20 years ago.

Aida stated it is not just the high cost of land, it is all the other setup costs as well, and farming is not something you make a lot of money on either. She thought the Haliburton Farm model was a great way to farm. She has six years experience and has had to start over many times as often the property owners will sell the land. She passed her contact information to the Secretary and thanked PAAC for their time.

Councillor Holman noted this would be an interesting project for PAAC to explore: what are the opportunities and the barriers to leasing farmland.

OTHER BUSINESS

Legalization of Marijuana - UBCM

The legalization of marijuana and the implications this will have on farming was discussed at this year's UBCM.

- The question: is there non-arable land that could be used to grow marijuana?
- It was noted during these discussions that using agricultural land would likely not be an issue as the warehouses would likely be situated on industrial-zoned lands.
- A company is producing marijuana in greenhouses on 100 acres in the Fraser Valley. The pricing is very competitive right now, but as more and more people start to grow the crop and the market floods, the prices will go down.

Adjournment: On a Motion from Linda Geggie the meeting adjourned at 8.35 pm

Next Meeting: The next regular PAC meeting is scheduled for **Thursday, NOVEMBER 9, 2017 at 7:00 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