



**MINUTES OF THE
PENINSULA AGRICULTURAL COMMISSION
Committee Room 2, Saanich Municipal Hall
Thursday, November 9, 2017 AT 7:00 PM**

Present: Bob Maxwell in the Chair; Phil Christie; Satnam Dheenshaw; Bernadette Greene; Carol Davidson; Jack Mar; Bev Marley; Terry Michell (7:25 pm); Larry Sluggett; Dianne Williamson; Councillors Weisenberger (N.Saanich), Thompson (C.Saanich) and Anne Richardson (Metchosin). Also present was Derek Masselink, Regional Agrologist; and Isobel Hoffmann, Recording Clerk.

Guests: Jane Evans, Saanich Planner; Jeff Weightman, CRD; Spring Harrison, North Saanich, Paul Welle, Michael Doehnel (7.25 pm); Ray Galey (7:20 pm)

Regrets: Linda Geggie; Robin Tunnicliffe.

Minutes: The Minutes of September 14 and October 12, 2017 were adopted as circulated.

TREASURER'S REPORT – Carol Davidson

- The budget sub-committee met recently to discuss a proposed annual budget.
- We have a total of \$22,000; one suggestion was to use some of this money to apply for matching grants – such as through the Habitat Conservation Trust Fund in BC to assist with the pollinator habitats.
- The Buy Local programme also supports many programmes and projects and may have grants available.
- In addition, the sub-committee suggested that \$1,000 be allotted to the Saanich Fair 2018 as well as \$1,000 to the Pollinator Initiative.
- Some seed money to help new and emerging farmers with start-up costs was also mentioned, channeling this through Halliburton Farms in three \$1,000 grants.
- Panama Flats in Saanich has a large agricultural component and it would be beneficial if Saanich could provide a few acres of this agricultural land to start an operation similar to Halliburton Farms for new farmers. Carol suggested that PAAC write a letter to Saanich on this matter, urging them to move ahead with some sort of plan.

Discussion ensued noting the following:

- \$1000 for start-up costs is not enough.
- If we decide to proceed with the grants for start-up funds, we will have to have a mechanism in place for disbursement and criteria in place to decide on the successful applicants.
- The Egg Producers and Young Farmers Association disperse grants of \$1,000 \$3,000 and \$5,000 each year. There is an interview process in place to determine the recipients. To date, 18 people have been assisted through University and they are all still working in agriculture.
- 4-H also has vetting criteria they use.

Jane Evans, Saanich Planner stated that drainage on Panama Flats is going to be a huge cost – and that is the stumbling block. She is unsure if Saanich has looked at any options – the Parks and Environment Departments are working on the project.

It was agreed the sub-committee would bring back a written proposal for the next meeting.

Ray Galey entered the meeting at 7:20 pm

SPEAKER'S BUREAU:

Jane Evans: Saanich Agriculture & Food Strategy

Jane circulated copies of the draft strategy, which has been reviewed by the Task Force. A list of the 13 top short-term actions based on public input, PAAC input and aligned with previous Council direction were presented.

Jane stated there are 71 actions identified in total and we need to identify the most important.

- Throughout the year there have been public open houses and displays at recreation centers as well as an on-line survey.
- She asked that PAAC provide feedback on the actions and implementation strategy.
- The strategy has seven themes, which in turn lead to various objectives, resulting in priority actions and ongoing actions. The on-going actions are basically policies.
- The seven themes are:
 1. Provide a foundation to take action on agriculture and food security
 2. Connect gaps in the local food system and improve food self-sufficiency
 3. Strengthen awareness of the local food system
 4. Improve interconnection between food production and the environment
 5. Manage land use to protect and support farmland
 6. Support multi-generational farmers and emerging farmers
 7. Expand opportunities for urban agriculture

*** Terry Michell and Michael Doehnel entered the meeting at 7:25 pm ***

Jane continued:

- With respect to Panama Flats and initiating a concept plan, If PAAC identifies Panama Flats are something that needs to be considered for future farming then Council should be advised about this.
- She reviewed the 13 top actions that have been identified. PAAC discussion ensued and the following top priorities were suggested by Phil Christie and Bernadette Greene. **Other members still have to provide input and will do so by email.**
 1. Implement the Council-approved concept plan for Panama Flats (Action 1.9)
 2. Support the CRD in efforts to establish a regional food and farmland trust (Action 6.10)
 3. Explore regulatory changes that support the establishment of farmers markets (Action 2.2)
 4. Update the Saanich Climate Adaptation Plan and Climate Action Plan to continue and expand on actions that enhance the resiliency of the local food system (Action 4.14)
 5. Develop a policy for farmworker housing (Action 5.13) *Note, the CRD was willing to assist*
 6. Update Boulevard Management Bylaw to allow edible landscaping and pollinator habitat on boulevards (Action 7.3)

Ray Galey stated we need young farmers. 95% of the food we grow is from commercial farms. He had to hire 18 temporary workers this year but had nowhere to house them. He has had a good year, particularly with agri-tourism. He left the meeting at 7:45 pm

Discussion noted this is a big list to implement and it is understood there are only so many issues that Council can work with at any one time. All the key issues are on the list and it was agreed that concentrating on the top issues was a good start.

***Dianne Williamson left the meeting at 7:50 pm ***

- Less than 20% of the agricultural land in Saanich is being used for farm production. The ALR was designed to protect farmland for food production.
- Regarding farmers markets (identified as a top priority above), some members noted these can be difficult for farmers as it takes time to prepare the food for market and then the time away from the farm to sell it. Some farmers feel we don't need any more markets as there is a glut already.
- Jane noted Saanich had a trial farmers market this year operating under a Temporary Use Permit that was quite successful. Saanich does not have any permanent markets and any future ones will go through a public engagement and research process.

MOTION: Moved by Phil Christie and Seconded by Bernadette Greene: "In general, PAAC is supportive of the Saanich Agriculture and Food Security Draft Plan. In this context, PAAC would like to see the following items emphasized, Actions 1.9; 6.10, 2.2, 4.14, 6.8, 7.3, realizing that staff resources are limited and not all items can be addressed initially."

Carried

CORRESPONDENCE

- PAAC letter to North Saanich re Visions Sandown, asking for an on-site meeting. No official response received to date.

Councillor Weisenberger stated the municipality received notice today that everything is ready to turn the land over the North Saanich. It will be a full year or more before we will be able to get on the land. A bond has been posted to ensure the required remediation work is completed. Drainage costs could be \$2 – 3 million for North Saanich. He is hoping there will be a Farmland Trust to manage the land with some general direction from the District.

Bernadette stated there are rumors circulating that demolition of the buildings was going to start next week, but this is not true. She is trying to arrange a site visit for PAAC members within the next few weeks; she will check with the Planner and advise members by email on proposed dates.

BUSINESS ARISING

Farm Worker Housing: Satnam was to review the draft Farm Worker Housing information from the June meeting.

Carry forward for discussion at the January meeting

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. **Agreed that a proposal be put in writing to the school.**

A member questioned whether it might be better to get a professional to conduct the interviews rather than students. The other option, which has been mentioned before, is to approach Brad

Morrison with the Sidney Museum. Apparently reps from the Saanich Fair have been working on a history of agriculture as well.

Carry forward

AGRICULTURAL ISSUES – NEW

- **Panama Flats**

Further to earlier discussion on the use of Panama Flats (page 2):

MOTION: Moved by Carol Davidson and Seconded by Phil Christie: “That PAAC write a letter to Saanich Council to request that Saanich consider a long-term leasing programme for a portion of the agricultural lands at Panama Flats to new farmers who have graduated from the Haliburton Farms programme and/or other emerging farmers who qualify.”

CARRIED

Note that qualifying criteria is yet to be determined. This would be part of the Saanich Agriculture and Food Strategy. Jane advised that Saanich already has the specifications for Haliburton Farms.

- **Winter Lecture Series – January thru April, 2018**

When funds were received from the Fruit Growers Association in 2016, part of the criteria was to use a portion of the funds towards education and information sessions to assist farmers, both established and emerging. Last February, PAAC hosted a very successful lecture on pollinators.

- In 2018, four sessions have been planned: January 25, February 22, March 29 and April 26. All sessions will be held at the fairgrounds; the Oak Room has been donated and there will be no cost to attendees.
- The first session will be presented by Jack Mar on the history of farming, planting and growing. For example: What crops yield the highest returns? What is the cost of production?
- The other 3 sessions will be based on input from a survey to be emailed to various groups, organizations and individuals on the PAAC mailing list.
- The room will hold about 40 participants; format will include a presentation, with time allotted for questions, then a mix, mingle and networking opportunity, with experts on hand to answer questions in a more informal setting.
- Light refreshments will be served. Bev offered to arrange. There are full kitchen facilities.
- Over the next week or two, information to be compiled and the Secretary will email.
- Suggested groups include the Young Agrarians, DFMA, SIPOA, CR-Fair as well as PAAC contacts.
- Max has drafted the questionnaire; to be reviewed, formatted and emailed with the information about the lectures.

A letter was received from CR-Fair asking if PAAC would support the Farmer2Farmer programme in the amount of \$3,000 to \$5,000. Some members thought this was a big ask, but others noted that CR-Fair is a well-run, prominent organization. The F2F workshop has a big impact on the farming community; we have the money from the Fruit Growers Association and we should not be afraid to use it. Apparently it costs about \$12,000+ to host the event. CR-fair has done other fundraising as well. **It was agreed to discuss this request at the next meeting.**

AGRICULTURAL ISSUES – CURRENT

a) Goose/Deer Management Strategy (Bev Marley)

- Jeff Weightman stated he met with the sub-committee recently to discuss plans for 2018.
- The first two weeks in February have been targeted for training and late March/early April for the addling.
- He has heard nothing about deer.

b) CRD Food & Agriculture Strategy (Linda Geggie not present)

c) Saanich Agriculture and Food Security Plan – see pages 2 & 3 of the minutes.

d) Shellfish Harvesting Community Update – Jack Mar. No additional information.

e) Island Pollinator Initiative (IPI) (Bob Maxwell)

Bob advised a meeting was held last week; many people are involved and eager to work on this project. Lora is actively looking for more funding; she also spoke to Saanich Parks about planting more pollinator-friendly plants in the parks and boulevards.

Jack Mar stated that Victoria has advised they don't want to plant anything that will create additional pollen because of people with hay fever. It was noted they need to understand the issue from an agricultural and food security perspective.

AGRICULTURAL STRATEGY – SUB-COMMITTEE REPORTS

a) Water (Michael Doehnel)

- According to the 2016 Water Usage Report, agriculture repaid \$1.2 million to the municipalities in 2015 and \$1.4 million in 2016.
- Approximate water usage in 2016 from agricultural use only meters was close to 2015 volume
- The Saanich Peninsula Waste Water Commission conducted a survey with regards to the use of biosolids on farmlands with 31 farmers as well as landscaping companies and forestry workers. Not all questions were answered, but the results were 1/3 of respondents were willing to accept biosolids, 1/3 did not and the remaining respondents said they were too busy to talk. The survey was anonymous and there is no data or statistics to support the results.
- The CRD Integrated Resource Management Group is continuing its activities re co-mingling of garden waste and biosolids. The SPWWC has indicated farmers were no interested in co-mingling. Most farmers do not want to use biosolids.
- There has been discussion at the CRD level about allowing the Peninsula Waste Water Commission to operate on its own. Currently they pay \$500,000 a year to deliver the waste to the Hartland Dump.
- The SPWWC will request Councils to endorse separating rather than integrating waste water management.
- Regarding water rates, the average municipal retail rate is between \$1.90 and \$1.50 per cubic meter. The agricultural rate is \$0.2105 per cubic meter.

Derek Masselink stated this rate is a concern for the CRD. They want to get a better understanding of how water is being used; he has been trying to encourage them to do an agricultural land use plan and then they can make a model of the agricultural water demand to determine if the water is being used efficiently or not.

Terry Michell stated he does tours and has had CRD reps on his farm; they were very impressed with how farmers were using drip irrigation systems. Michells has an environmental farm plan and there is government funding for water-saving techniques. He knows of a few farms who take advantage of this.

b) Farm Economics (Terry Michell)

It was a good year for crops even though it was a very dry summer. Not too much produce was lost before the final fall harvest and prices have been good on most things – lower than prices on the mainland, who suffered a more severe drought than we did on the Island.

He stated we have to move forward with the Farm Worker Housing; this is what is holding up farms expanding because it is difficult to get farm labour.

c) Agricultural Land Base (Phil Christie) – nothing to add

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

UPCOMING EVENTS

- **Island Agricultural Show 2019:** Saanich Fair is planning to put in a bid to host the Show. A letter of support from PAAC would be appreciated.
- **PAAC Christmas Gathering:** Janice and Max will host the event on Thursday, December 14. Isobel will sent out emails accordingly.
- **Metchosin School House:** Anne Richmond reported that Metchosin Council has bought the old school house and will be exploring its potential. It will be operated by a commercial agent for five years. It sits on ALR land and comes within the District's purview.
- **The Metchosin Farmers' Market** this year was successful; a new covered area will be built. Many producers are associated with this venture, but there is little desire to see more markets spring up in the area.

Adjournment: On a Motion from Bev Marley the meeting adjourned at 9:10 pm

Next Meeting: The next regular PAC meeting is scheduled for **Thursday, January 11, 2018** 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, Recording Secretary