



**MINUTES OF THE
PENINSULA & AREA AGRICULTURAL COMMISSION
Committee Room 2, Saanich Municipal Hall
Thursday, APRIL 12, 2018 AT 7:00 PM**

Present: Phil Christie; Carol Davidson; Linda Geggie; Jack Mar; Bev Marley; Larry Sluggett; Councillors Weisenberger (N.Saanich), and Thompson (C. Saanich); Robin Tunnicliffe (Metchosin). Also present was Isobel Hoffmann, Recording Clerk.

Guests: Ivo van der Kemp, Planner, Central Saanich; Jane Evans, Planner, Saanich; Jeff Weightman, CRD; Gregory Atkinson, Executive Assistant to Minister of Agriculture; Bernadette Greene; Susan Tychie, CR-Fair; Ty James & Rajan Pillay, Westcoast Microgreens; Anne Topp, Pam Harrison.

Regrets: Councillor Haynes; Terry Michell, Satnam Dheenshaw and Dianne Williamson.

Election of Chair, Co-Chair and Treasurer for 2018:

The Secretary advised that Bob Maxwell has resigned from the Commission, although he will still attend meetings from time to time and be available to provide assistance and comments when required. As well, new member Paul Welle had to resign due to health reasons.

The Commission agreed that it would keep with the same format of having two Co-Chairs, who would take turns in chairing the meetings.

The secretary called for nominations for Co-Chairs:

MOVED by Larry Sluggett and Seconded by Phil Christie: "That Jack Mar be appointed as Co-Chair."

Jack accepted the nomination and the Motion was Put and Carried

MOVED by Bev Marley and Seconded by Carol Davidson: "That Phil Christie be appointed as Co-Chair."

Phil accepted the nomination, noting that at times his work schedule can interfere with PAAC meeting schedules, and the Motion was Put and Carried

The Secretary called for nominations for Treasurer.

MOVED by Phil Christie and Seconded by Bev Marley: "That Carol Davidson be nominated as Treasurer."

Carol accepted the nomination and the Motion was Put and Carried

The secretary advised that we currently need two new members. An application has been received from Larry Kimmett of BC Farms and Food and will be processed to the Municipal Councils for approval. If members know of anyone else who may be interested in joining PAAC, she can provide an application form.

In addition, the secretary stated that Derek Masselink, Regional Agrologist, has taken a temporary position with the BC Public Service Agency for a year to run a government-wide Innovation Hub. The Ministry will fill his position as soon as possible, but in the meantime Derek has requested Kyle McStravick, a Land Use Planner with the Strengthening Farming Programme, to attend.

Jack Mar assumed the Chair

Minutes: The Minutes of February 8, 2018 were adopted as circulated. Note there was no March Meeting.

TREASURER'S REPORT – Carol Davidson

Carol reported there are no major changes to the bank account, other than a few cents in interest.

SPEAKER'S BUREAU:

– Susan Tychie, CR-Fair: Farm Focus Group

Susan stated:

- The purpose of forming a Farm Focus Group is to find a collaborative approach to closing the supply gap.
- Some of the issues and groups that affect the food system include: producers and consumers, grocers, farm markets, food storage and processing, transportation, regulations and investments for new infrastructure.
- CR-Fair is joining forces with researcher Patricia Reichert from Royal Roads on a new initiative to increase agricultural production in the Region.
- The core aims of the research include:
 - Building a robust supply-oriented local food system, based on community sustainability values;
 - Work with farmers to increase the supply of local produce throughout the Region and seasons;
 - Develop infrastructure for the distribution and processing of food;
 - Work as a community to ensure economic success to sustain the local supply chain.
- At the Farmer2Farmer workshop last month, farmers were asked what they needed to access new markets, what can be done to increase food production and farmers' incomes in the CRD, what is the most important infrastructure that farmers need and how can we increase diversity for farmers.
- Some of the answers included: business planning, certifications, crop planning, distribution, financing, food safety, labour, marketing, land access, pricing, regulations, storage, and value-added.
- The current leadership group is represented by the Ministry of Agriculture, VanCit Victoria Foundation, Cool-Aid, Thrifty Foods and farmers Terry Michell and Tom Henry.
- Thrifty Foods was approached about initiating a pilot project this year to help grow the local food system.
- The core benefits of this exercise would include:
 - More local investment in local food infrastructure
 - Sustainable incomes for all producers of the local food supply chain
 - A strong local food economy
 - A stronger local food culture that supports community food resilience
 - Less dependence on global food supplies
- According to the Gross Farm Receipts from the 2016 Census information, 80% of farmers earn below \$25,000 annually.
- Many farmers are still not making a living wage from farming.

PAAC noted that this is a good model and in particular crop planning was a good idea. The Commission asked Ms. Tychie for a follow-up presentation when there is something more to report.

Linda Geggie noted that the Minister of Agriculture is proposing a programme to supply hospitals with local food and discussions are currently underway with Island Health. As well, a fruit and veggie programme has been introduced to local schools.

– **Ty James, CEO & President of West Coast Micro-Greens and his partner, Rajan Pillay**

Ty stated:

- West Coast Micro-Greens provides produce to the Red Barn Markets, Country Grocer and local restaurants.
- The Company's Mission is to work with the community, schools, governments, non-profits, urban farmers, residential and commercial growers to achieve better results in farming.
- Food is a fundamental human right and as a society we can resolve food security issues and nutritional deficiencies.
- As an example, he noted that every year hundreds of pumpkins are left to rot in the fields. Squash typically sells for about \$1.89 lb in the stores, with the farmers getting \$1 per pound if they are lucky. And yet squash can be processed and packaged, and sold for \$6.99 per pound in a spiralized or diced form; someone is making money on this – but not the farmer.
- Further diversification of squash can include pumpkin seed protein powder, juices, and essential oils for shampoos and candles.
- Unfortunately we do not have the infrastructure in the Region for our farmers to realize greater earning potential. Farmers lose a lot of economic opportunities on the Island.
- According to the 2016 Census information, 70% of the BC's agricultural industry (\$9.8 billion) was in the value-added sector: food producers and packagers.
- Provincial revenues in the food and beverage sub-sector are projected to grow to \$15 billion by 2020.
- Three local companies have been very successful: Daiya (a plant-based cheese company) recently sold to a Japanese pharmaceutical company for \$405 million; Gardein (a Richmond-based company who make meat-free products) was purchased by Pinnacle Foods for \$154 million; and Vega (plant-based nutritional products) was sold to White Wave Foods in Denver for \$550 million, US.
- He showed a picture of a *Food Port* in West Louisville which produces, stores, processes and packages on a large scale, employing over 500 people in both the food and construction industries.
- Farmers continue to grow the same stuff and sell to the same retailers. As well as competing with each other, they are competing with farmers south of the border.
- There is however an opportunity for farmers to diversify and have an island-grown and island processed brand.
- Thrifty Foods is introducing the Island Good brand.
- We can dehydrate food, which also increases the vitamin content. It is just a matter of using the commodities we have in a different way.
- He understands that last summer, Gobind Farms had hundreds of pounds of berries that Satnam could not sell, leaving at least 30% of the crop in the fields.
- It is not necessarily the production of food, but how to deal with this is a smarter way.
- We are simply not processing enough food or extending its shelf life.
- There has to be an equitable solution for everyone involved.
- Trying to find a property with the right zoning and the right size to grow and process food is a challenge. He wants to have greenhouses so he can grow food 12 months of the year and provide consistent deliveries to his customers.
- He noted PAAC's objectives fit with his goals: increasing economic returns for farmers, sustainable farming, fostering stewardship, increasing public awareness through education, and establishing a focal point for farming issues.
- The Ministry of Agriculture has been very supportive of his ideas and he is looking forward to see the recommendations from the Ministry regarding the ALR.

PAAC comments noted:

- The company is on the right track and has a good business model.
- Land is available on the east coast of the Island; the growing could be on ALR land but the processing/storing end of it does not have to be on ALR land, especially as large structures will be limited in terms of lot coverage on ALR lands.
- Also land is cheaper further up-Island.

CORRESPONDENCE

- **2017 Administrative Costs:**

The Secretary advised that the total administrative costs, including overhead expenses, were \$9,870.02, an increase of \$138 from 2016. This is detailed in the 2017 Annual Report.

- **Farm Worker Housing**

Letter from the Director of Planning and Building Services, Central Saanich, regarding Farm Worker Housing advising that staff will be initiating a Farm Worker Housing Project in the spring and will be consulting with PAAC accordingly.

The Central Saanich Planner stated the District will be looking for input from PAAC on this issue. Councillors Thompson, Weisenberger and Haynes plan to meet to discuss each municipality's thoughts on the matter.

Proposed Amendments to the Land Use Bylaw 1309 regarding Cannabis Production - District of Central Saanich Report dated February 2, 2018

The February 2, 2018 report from Central Saanich, information from the March 5, 2018 Council meeting posing 5 questions for PAAC's consideration on proposed amendments to the Land Use Bylaw regarding cannabis production were circulated, together with an email from PAAC member Diane Williamson noting her comments and concerns.

Discussion ensued, noting the following comments:

- Other crops not considered "food" are grown on ALR lands, such as hay, hops and flowers.
- No matter what crop is grown in a greenhouse there can be problems with light pollution.
- We need to be cautious that we are not biased when considering proposed greenhouses for cannabis production.
- It is not just the greenhouses – there is a lack of infrastructure for processing cannabis.
- Greenhouses are part of agriculture; however, if they are too big, they may never be removed.
- Limitations would have to be put in place regarding the amount of fill used for the required infrastructure – both greenhouses and processing buildings.
- Deposit of fill is controlled by ALR regulations: fill must not negatively impact neighbouring land, affect drainage or land stability.
- Higher classed ALR soils (Class 1 and 2, perhaps 3) should not be used for greenhouses; there are ample class 4 and 5, less viable, farmlands for this purpose.
- Medical cannabis is a different variety from the other varieties and does not have the same issues as a grow-op.
- General agreement that there could be traffic issues given the number of employees needed and delivery trucks.

- Light pollution not only from the greenhouses but security lights will be a problem.
- Cannabis growing operations could be situated on light industrial land rather than ALR lands.
- The ALR was put in place to preserve farmlands for food production and our soils are the foundation for this.
- The ALR regulations are currently under review by the Provincial Government.
- Pressure on the best soils for development of medical marijuana is high -and it is big money.
- Land sales of large, contiguous plots of land are snapped up.
- Soils can be desegregate by greenhouses; their impermeable surfaces could cause huge drainage and run-off issues; it is important that we protect the higher class soils.
- Surface run-off cannot be any more than it was before a development started: Municipalities have the ability – and are obligated - to control this.
- The foundation for a greenhouse is the same for a house – remove the top soil and build a foundation. Fill is not needed for greenhouses – except to level the surface
- Large barns and buildings are also used for chicken production.
- Medical marijuana is a fragile industry: people will start production expecting huge profits, but it will crash. What will happen to all the infrastructure then?
- Referring to one of the proposed locations for a facility in the Martindale Valley, the Chair noted how the 98-acre parcel of land, which has always been a dairy farm, sold for \$13,000 in the early 1950s and now the property is worth \$100,000/acre. The slightly sloped property has been completely drain-tiled and water runs into McHugh Ditch.
- It was noted there are thousands of acres of greenhouses on the Mainland. Production is 10 times that of outdoor agriculture – and it is year-round.

Councillor Thompson, referring to question 3, asked if there was a difference between greenhouses for medical marijuana and those used for other food production, like tomatoes.

- Size appears to be an issue. The one proposal, which has not been reviewed by Council, indicates the size could be 22 acres.
- Council cannot stop people growing medical marijuana, but they do have some control over the permitted lot coverage to 35% - which on a 98 acre parcel would be a 25 acre greenhouse.
- He reminded the Commission that Council is looking at this issue in a general way and not for a specific application.

Discussion ensued regarding setbacks.

- Noted that if larger setbacks were imposed, it would result in structures being built in the centre of the property leaving a large “buffer” of farmland that is out of production. Doubtful the land could be put to good use.
- It was suggested that setbacks be increased on two or three sides to keep closer access to parking, roads and other infrastructure.
- There should be sound rationale to impose larger setbacks on all boundaries.

Pam Harrison, a rural Saanich resident, questioned why a moratorium is not being considered on all applications until the Province has completed its review of ALR lands. She concerned what will happen to the large greenhouses and other buildings if and when the industry collapses.

Bernadette Greene stated:

- the North Saanich Agricultural Advisory Committee researched medical marijuana and found many issues, such as: security lights as well as greenhouse lights add to light pollution; noxious odours from the growing and processing of the cannabis.

- Both these issues are things that could be address by Central Saanich Council.
- Also, she has heard that some of these operations employ up to 1500 people – where are these people going to park? Does this mean a parking lot has to be built on ALR land?

The Commission summarized its comments and concerns to answer the five questions from Central Saanich Council as follows:

- ***What are the risks of cannabis production on farmland?***

Deposit of fill; light pollution; noxious odours; increased traffic & parking lots (impermeable surfaces leading to drainage and run-off issues); setbacks; escalation of price of farmland; fragility of the industry; storm water management.

- ***What recommendations can you give the District of Central Saanich to mitigate any risks, including a bond to remediate soils, traffic congestion measures, water usage, etc?***

Amend design of greenhouses so they can be used for other food production if the industry fails/collapses; a bond placed on the infrastructure so buildings/greenhouses can be removed if required; consider parking & busing areas on non-ALR land; ensure there is an effective stormwater management plan in place; refer to the Ministry of Agriculture's guidelines regarding setbacks.

- ***What is the risk of greenhouses on prime agricultural land?***

According to the ALC, marijuana is a legitimate farm crop and can be grown on ALR land; there will be risks with this production similar to the risk of growing tomatoes in a greenhouse. However, it is a different type of industry – there are many unknowns. The risk is higher in one way because of the large number of employees and the processing involved.

- ***What are your recommendations about lobbying the province to preserve the best class of soils in the ALR, and specifically, what is your recommendation about suggesting that the province ban greenhouses from being placed on the highest class soils?***

The province should be lobbied to preserve the better classes of soils on ALR lands. We need to be more specific about the use of Class 1 – 4 lands – but this is a long- term planning issue. All greenhouses should be put on class 3 or lower capability soils – and the land would be less expensive as well.

- ***Should a municipality require a Transportation Demand Management Plan for large scale farming operations that may have a large traffic impact on rural roads?***

The Commission did not think this was within its purview to comment. It was noted that large traffic volumes are a risk and a concern.

This information was submitted to the Central Saanich Planning Department on Friday, April 13, 2018 to meet the deadline for the Public Hearing on April 16.

PAAC Historical Agriculture and Food Project: Nothing to add at this time.

AGRICULTURAL ISSUES – NEW – nothing to report at this time

AGRICULTURAL ISSUES – CURRENT

a) Goose/Deer Management Strategy (Bev Marley/Jeff Weightman)

Bev advised she has application forms for land owners to grant permission to access their property for the purposes of egg addling. Phil Christie has started a data base for properties with known nesting areas.

Jeff Weightman stated that although many people signed up for the egg addling workshop, not many people actually showed up. He plans to send in the permit requests in any event; it has been a very challenging process.

Discussion noted that the geese problem is worse than ever. Some farmers have hundreds of geese on their property, but not necessarily nesting sites.

Jeff noted that in Saanich you cannot discharge a firearm. Even though local bylaws can be overridden by the Farm Practices Protection (Right to Farm) Act you need a discharge permit from the local police. Bows and arrows are not permitted either. The only way to control geese in Saanich is hazing or scaring. Central Saanich is more cooperative in terms of issuing permits, but farmland is not in such close proximity to residential areas as it is in Saanich.

b) CRD Food & Agriculture Strategy - Linda Geggie

A consultant will be hired by the end of this month. A number of people on PAAC are also on the task force. Hopefully recommendations will be presented in the fall.

χ) Saanich Agriculture and Food Security Plan – Jane Evans

Jane stated the draft plan is completed and a Report to Council being prepared. There is some difficulty in moving the Plan forward and getting the attention it deserves, but hopefully progress will be made by the summer. She thanked PAAC for its valuable input to the Plan.

It was suggested that Saanich Council representative Fred Haynes may be able to assist with this issue.

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

No update this month, but Bob will continue to provide updates from time to time.

f) Sandown Update

Bernadette Greene stated:

- North Saanich Council has appointed a team to look at the recommendations from the Visions Sandown Report, prepared by CR-Fair.
- There are over 500 people involved in the process, including farmers and stakeholders.

- We have to decide where we want to go and what we want to do and not do with the property, and determine the greatest needs.
- Some of the interests expressed include:
 - Processing areas and commercial kitchens.
 - Farm worker housing (seasonal housing).

PAAC noted:

- Islands West is considering building a processing plant, and Coldstar is an existing processing plant south of Nanaimo.
- Sandown would be a good option for the south Island – including cooler space as well as processing.
- Concrete buildings help control the rat problem and make it easier to control the temperature, but there is a limitation on the size and number of structures allowed on ALR lands.
- There is a definite need for Farm Worker Housing; standards have to comply with guidelines of the respective country.
- If the intent is to lease small plots of lands to new farmers, the farmers are going to need somewhere to live – this is more relevant than providing accommodation for foreign workers.
- Sandown is a large tract of agricultural land. The land has never been broken and until you do this you don't know what you have. The property needs to be looked at as a whole. Deep ploughing will be needed and you could encounter large boulders. Drainage will be an issue: where will drain tiles or ditches go?

Linda Geggie stated:

- Between now and August a site plan, farm plan and a financial plan will be developed for long-term and short-term timelines. We have a good team of people working on this.

AGRICULTURAL STRATEGY – SUB-COMMITTEE REPORTS

- a) **Water** (Michael Doehnel) – not present
- b) **Farm Economics** (Terry Michell) – not present
- c) **Agricultural Land Base** (Phil Christie) – nothing to report
- d) **Education and Outreach** (Linda Geggie)

The report on this year's Farmer2Farmer workshop has been circulated to PAAC.

She reminded members that 2018 is an election year and we have in the past held a farm tour for new, and existing, Council members. This will something to discuss at a future meeting, but she wanted people to start thinking about it.

Adjournment: On a Motion from Bev Marley the meeting adjourned at 9:25 pm

Next Meeting: The next PAAC meeting is scheduled for **Thursday, May 10 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