



**MINUTES OF THE
PENINSULA & AREA AGRICULTURAL COMMISSION
Committee Room 2, Saanich Municipal Hall
Thursday, October 10, 2019 AT 7:15 PM**

- Present:** Phil Christie in the Chair; Jack Mar, Co-Chair; Linda Geggie; Bev Marley; Dianne Williamson; Councillors Graham (C.Saanich) and Smythe (N.Saanich); Robin Tunnicliffe (Metchosin). Also present was Isobel Hoffmann, Recording Clerk.
- Guests:** Doug Pepper, Regional Agrologist; Jeff Weightman, CRD; Chris Wieczorek, Executive Assistant to the Minister of Agriculture, Cam Scott and Pierre Lachette, Planners, Saanich.
- Regrets:** Satnam Dheenshaw, Terry Michell, Larry Kimmett, Larry Sluggett, Carol Davison, Councillor Brice.
- Minutes:** The Minutes of September 12, 2019 were adopted.
- Agenda:** Letter from Central Saanich re Newman Farm briefly discussed at September meeting was added as late addition to this meeting
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TREASURER'S REPORT – Carol Davidson – not present

SPEAKER'S BUREAU:

**Cam Scott and Pierre Lachette, Saanich Planners re:
Saanich Agriculture & Food Security Plan Update**

- The Plan has been endorsed by Council last fall and 15 priority actions identified as Phase 1.
- Work has been initiated on about half of these priority actions, one of which is to establish an advisory committee to support implementation of the Plan.
- PAAC and Healthy Saanich Advisory Committee (HSAC) are two existing committees that have the expertise to speak to the issues and we are seeking members from both these groups to sit on the advisory committee.
- The role of both PAAC and HSAC will be to receive bi-annual updates on implementation of the plan, provide advice on specific issues, and participate in sub-committees should the need arise for detailed feedback or discussion.
- Some of the actions to be implemented are Saanich-specific, others are more regional.
- The Vision Statement to 2030 includes 7 themes:
 1. Provide the foundation to take action on agriculture and food security
 2. Connect the gaps in the local food system to improve self-sufficiency
 3. Strengthen awareness of the local food system
 4. Improve the 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
- Noted many neighbourhoods have significant opportunities for agriculture.
- The Priority actions will be implemented in three phases over the next 10-15 years, the first two have been completed:
 1. Provide staff resources to take a leadership role in the Plan's implementation. ✓

2. Implement the Council-approved concept plan for Panama Flats with on-going liaison with PAAC. ✓ *Note this is temporarily on hold pending the outcome of the Regional Foodlands Trust initiative.*
3. Establish an Advisory Committee to support implementation of the Plan.
4. Explore regulatory changes, such as Temporary Commercial Permits to allow farm markets.
5. Through the Local Area Plans, explore opportunities to increase access to local food in close proximity to residential areas.
6. Review the Zoning Bylaw and ensure the new ALC changes align to provide consistency.
7. Develop educational resources to assess with protection of crops from wildlife.
8. Support development of a local programme to educate and encourage reduction of household food waste.
9. Explore opportunities to enhance Business Licence requirements to support production of agricultural lands.
10. Investigate the issue of non-farm use on agricultural lands and address protection farmland.
11. Develop residential food protection policies and bring into alignment with the new ALC regulations regarding maximum house size.
12. Work with the CRD and the Ministry to prepare an agricultural land use inventory and water demand model.
13. Develop a policy for Farm Worker Housing.
14. Support CRD in establishing a Regional Food and Farmlands Trust.
15. Update the Boulevard Bylaw regarding the approved plant list to allow edible plantings on boulevards, working in with the Engineering staff.

Phase 2 will explore regulatory changes to broaden opportunities for small-scale urban agriculture that will enhance access to local healthy food, including farm gate sales in urban areas.

- Regarding support for the Advisory Committee, we see PAAC providing advice on issues that affect the farm community; Healthy Saanich is one of the committees that initiated the Plan, and they will focus on food security issues.
- Updates will be provided to PAAC twice a year.

PAAC discussion noted:

- If we are trying to get people to “eat local”, perhaps there should be more emphasis on seasonal eating. Educate people to use what is available.
- Noted the City of Victoria is on board with encouraging the reduction of household food waste, and the CRD is working with their Environmental Protection Department. It would be expedient to work with other communities to have consistency across the region on this issue.

CORRESPONDENCE:

- a) No acknowledgment from Ted Robbins of the CRD's Integrated Water Services to PAAC's letter re the inconsistency in municipal water rate charges. The secretary sent email reminder to the CRD in July and as requested resent the letter to Jeff Weightman after the last meeting. Jeff indicated he is still working on the issue.
- b) Also no acknowledgment from the CRD Board to PAAC's letter re Foodlands Trust. Copies of the letter sent to all CRD Board members. A few acknowledgments were received from individual Board members (Councillors) – and perhaps that is all that is required?

- c) Letter dated June 26, 2019 from Central Saanich re Newman Farm Agricultural Programme recommendations: At its meeting on June 17, Council referred a Motion to PAAC for comment about leasing the Farm to the newly proposed CRD Food and Farmland Trust programme. PAAC considered this at its September meeting.

Note: after the last meeting, Central Saanich advised the Secretary they would like input from PAAC, which is the reason the letter has been included again on this Agenda. Apparently, the intent of Council's motion was to explore the leasing of Newman Farm to the proposed CRD Food and Farmland Trust, subject to certain conditions.

PAAC comments were noted as follows:

- Does the preference for a sub-lease have to be for "young" farmers? Could it not be "new" farmers? There is a generation who retire early because they want to work on farms.
- New farmers will require mentorship. Having a balance of "experienced" and "new" farmers will be beneficial.
- The people currently working on the farm are doing a good job; the soil is good the more of the farm that gets used, the better.

MOTION: Moved by Robin Tunnicliffe and Seconded by Linda Geggie: "That PAAC support the Motion from Central Saanich Council to explore the leasing of Newman Farm to the proposed CRD Food and Farmland Trust, with a minor change to bullet three: *That the CRD give preference for sub-leases to new farmers .*"

CARRIED

SPEAKER'S BUREAU: none scheduled

PAAC TERMS OF REFERENCE – REVIEW

It was suggested that a brief review of PAAC's current Terms of Reference (TOR), last updated in March, 2016, was in order to better understand how we apply them, including the Conflict of Interest policy.

Discussion followed:

- Suggested the municipalities of Sooke, Langford, Sidney* and View Royal be contacted to see if they are interested in participating. **Sidney was initially a participant in PAAC but resigned a few years ago. They are still included on the TOR currently posted on Saanich's website.*
- The current TOR provides latitude to deal with many issues that arise. PAAC is not restricted to issues brought forward by the member municipalities but can initiate comments on other issues as well.
- The TOR states we can have up to 12 members. Currently we have 10. One of our 'non-voting' members represents Metchosin Council. Metchosin has never sent an actual councillor to the meetings and does have an Agricultural Commission. Robin Tunnicliffe, the Metchosin rep, sits on both Commissions. It was agreed that Robin would be a valuable voting member and it was suggested that both Robin and the Secretary enquire if Metchosin could provide another 'non-voting' rep, which would allow Robin to become a full voting member of the Commission.
- It was agreed that PAAC approach some key people in the farming community directly to see if they are interested in joining PAAC. As well, the secretary will send information to the Municipalities to post on their websites announcing PAAC is seeking new members.

- A couple of amendments were suggested to the TOR:
 - o Reference is made to the Provincial Ministry of Agriculture and *Lands*; *Lands* is longer part of the title and should be removed.
 - o Liaisons should be expanded to include a First Nations representative. (Noted that the CRD has a First Nations Relations Division; Jeff Weightman will provide a contact).
 - o Also noted it would be beneficial to have liaisons from the Equestrian community and the greenhouse industry, both have a large presence on the Island and continue to expand.
- There are non-traditional agricultural products, such a seaweed, which has just been designated; this can be an edible, and used in cosmetics and for medicinal purposes. Hatcheries are also considered agricultural. Perhaps a new member in these field would be appropriate.
- Discussion took place on “motions” vs “recommendations, and the fact that a Code of Ethics that may prevent a PAAC member from voting on a “recommendation” if he or she belongs to a professional association. An example is the recent discussions regarding the proposed exclusion of ALR lands on Marsett Place (previously the Royal Oak Golf Course), where a certified professional – such as an agrologist – would ethically not be able to vote. There are certain legal constrains on agrologists.
- The Chair pointed out that the ALC does not want recommendations on ALR exclusions or subdivisions from professionals; they have their own professionals on staff. However, it was pointed out that the request for review of the Royal Oak property came from the Municipality not the ALC.
- The Commission gets requests regularly from the member municipalities asking for our opinion. In these cases, it is not inappropriate to make a recommendation. If there is not a consensus then we can forward our comments along with the Motion.
- The Regional Agrologist stated as part of his job, he gets asked by the ALC to comment on the Ministry of Agriculture's position on an exclusion or subdivision. He is a professional agrologist and provides his opinion on how the proposal will affect agriculture. When applications are referred to PAAC from the municipalities, they simply want PAAC's opinion; they are not asking for a scientific report.
- It was agreed to seek legal advice from Saanich's legal advisor, particularly in lieu of the recently amended ALC regulations. Professional agrologists need to check with the registrar of P.Ags.

Chris Wieczorek stated under the new legislation there is not an option to forward an application for comment. If the municipality approves, it goes forward; or the municipalities agree to not forward the application to the ALC and it goes no further. The ALC values local government policies and is only interested in the agricultural capabilities of the property, not necessarily the land use of the site.

- The Chair confirmed that assessing soil capabilities is done from a scientific perspective. The ALC makes this basic decision and classes the land from Class 1 thru 7. PAAC could make recommendations on land use if requested by the municipalities, but the ALC reserves the right to say they are not approving an application because the land has Class 1 soils, for example.

In response to a question about how does PAAC decide when to make a Motion or a recommendation, the secretary explained it is her understanding that the Commission is an advisory body of the member councils, and can't make direct recommendations. However, a Motion can be phrased as follows: “That PAAC recommends that Council consider.....”

The TOR changes noted be made and the document reposted to PAAC's webpage on the Saanich Website.

AGRICULTURAL ISSUES – CURRENT

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

Jeff Weightman stated:

- He was unaware until recently that Saanich had made changes to the Firearm and Bow Discharge Regulation Bylaw in 2017. The amended Bylaw 9414 states in part (*paraphrased*): “Subject to the Provincial Migratory Bird Act, the Farm Practices Act and the Wildlife Act, and all regulations thereto, on lands zoned for agricultural use under the Zoning Bylaw upon which a farm operation is being conducted, a person may discharge a firearm or crossbow when the person:
 - a) is the owner of the land, an employee or person with the permission of the owner;
 - b) the holder of a valid permit to discharge a firearm or crossbow;
 - c) discharges a firearm or crossbow for the purposes of protecting crops or livestock.”
- The above regulations apply to property that is outside the Urban Containment Boundary.
- A molting count was carried out last year; another count will not be done until funding is confirmed in the New Year.
- He advised that the population numbers are stable.
- Urban areas continue to struggle with deer issues.

b) CRD Food & Agriculture Strategy (Linda Geggie & Jeff Weightman)

Members of the new advisory committee include Pierre Lachette (Saanich), Robin Tunnicliffe, Doug Pepper and Linda Geggie. Jeff Weightman is also a liaison.

Another meeting is scheduled to review the strategy's 9 areas and decide on priorities.

Advancement of the Foodlands Trust is moving forward slowly.

Jeff Weightman stated that input was received as requested from PAAC early this year.

- The Study was also referred to the Municipalities to see if the CRD has support to operate the Foodlands Trust.
- Nine municipalities (a majority) supported the concept; five agreed to provide financial support, and 4 would support financially subject to a funding model and a better business case.
- Initially, we did not have offers of land but Central Saanich has now come forward with Newman Farm and Saanich is actively preparing an evaluation report as well.
- Once the land is confirmed, the CRD will be in a position to move with the input received from the municipalities.
- Recommendations will be based on a business case from the land committed by the participating municipalities.
- There is still an Agricultural Land Use Inventory; the CRD contracts the Ministry to do the work and Doug Pepper is following any changes to this useful information. We also have aerial maps and do groundwork inventories to keep the mapping up to date.

c) Saanich Agriculture and Food Security Plan – see above under speaker's bureau

d) Island Pollinator Initiative (IPI) (Bob Maxwell) – not present

e) Sandown Update

Councillor Smyth stated Brice Rashleigh has been hired by North Saanich and Platform Properties to clear the site and plant cover crops, which have been devoured by the geese.

- The Madrone Report made a recommendation that another agrologist be hired by the District to do further assessments. The District was reluctant to do this for a few reasons.

- Council has been talking about a long-term operator; staff made recommendations to make the choice more technically weighted. A Motion was passed to talk to the applicants to see if they would be interested in sharing responsibility or parceling the land off. The suggestion has just been sent to the applicants.
- The process is moving forward slowly.
- In response to a comment about Gobind Farms waiting on an answer to a request to rent 50 acres of Sandown, Councillor Smyth advised it is not a case of giving a parcel of land to the first available farmer; the easy answer would be to say okay, but that would result in political push back.
- A suggestion to lease land on a year-to-year basis until long-term decisions area made was put forward, but Councillor Smyth advised this may not be practical.
- He felt one of the best ways to remediate the land was to use it for grazing animals, and he agreed there are a lot of remediation issues, including flooding and drainage issues. Too many at this time to farm the land.

f) **Woodwyn Farm Update – no further updates at this time.**

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 annual Agricultural Workshop will be in Abbotsford, January 30, 31 and February 1, 2020.

This is an excellent event with many good speakers, with a good setup for all kinds of interesting sessions and workshops.

The Co-Chair will forward information to the Secretary for distribution.

Annual PAAC Christmas Gathering: December 5, 2019 – 2070 Amelia Ave, 6:00pm

Isobel offered to host the event this year in the Clubhouse at her townhouse complex in Sidney.

The usual potluck format. Details to follow.

LATE ITEM:

Closing the Supply Gap Demonstration Project (Susan Tyche, CRD). PAAC heard a presentation on this issue in September and declined a request for funding, but offered to provide mentoring if needed. Armajit Dhaliwal from Oceanview Estates is looking for assistance on farm composting. He has been recently GAP certified and has asked for some mentoring assistance. It was suggested that the secretary contact both Terry Michell (who is also GAP certified) and Bob Maxwell to see if they could provide some help.

Adjournment: On a Motion from Linda Geggie the meeting adjourned at 9:10 pm

Next Meeting: The next PAAC meeting is scheduled for **Thursday, November 14, 2019 at 7:00 pm**

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