



**MINUTES OF THE  
PENINSULA & AREA AGRICULTURAL COMMISSION  
Committee Room 2, Saanich Municipal Hall  
Thursday, SEPTEMBER 12, 2019 AT 7:00 PM**

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- Present:** Jack Mar in the Chair; Carol Davidson, Treasurer; Linda Geggie; Bev Marley; Larry Sluggett; Dianne Williamson; Councillors Graham (C.Saanich) and Smythe (N.Saanich); Robin Tunnicliffe (Metchosin). Also present was Isobel Hoffmann, Recording Clerk.
- Guests:** Gordon Bednard, ALC; Doug Pepper, Regional Agrologist; Jeff Weightman, Bob Shuck, and Jill Robinson, CRD; Chris Wieczorek, Executive Assistant to the Minister of Agriculture, Ivo van der Kamp, Planner, C.Saanich.
- Regrets:** Phil Christie, Satnam Dheenshaw, Terry Michell, Larry Kimmett, Councillor Brice.
- Minutes:** The Minutes of June 13, 2019 were adopted.
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**TREASURER'S REPORT – Carol Davidson**

- Carol has offered to remain as treasurer for the time being. During her absence over the past few months, the invoices from the Farm Tour in June have been paid, redeeming a \$1,000 investment to cover the costs. A cheque for \$1003 was deposited from CR-Fair for the entry fees to the Elaine Froese presentation in April. The \$1,000 sponsorship promised from Farm Credit Canada has still not been received.

**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 in July.
- b) Also no acknowledgment from the CRD Board to PAAC's letter re Foodlands Trust. Copies of the letter send to all CRD Board members. A few acknowledgments were received from individual Board members (Councillors).

Councillor Smyth explained the current CRD Board process for considering issues and it appears PAAC did not follow the correct procedures. Jeff Weightman requested a copy of the letter on water rates and he will try to push the question forward. The secretary will follow up with the Foodlands Trust issue.

- 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.

Councillor Graham stated:

- Council is not looking at paying more money into the programme to provide access to farmland, but it is trying to find ways to accommodate farmers.

Jeff Weightman stated:

- He believes the intent of Council's Motion was to explore the feasibility of using land for the proposed Farmlands Trust.
- The CRD is taking this into consideration along with offers of land and/ or money from other municipalities. Central Saanich was the first to come forward. The suggestion will eventually be considered by the Board.

The Commission had no comments to make at this time.

## **SPEAKER'S BUREAU:**

### **BC Agriculture and Food Climate Initiative Adaptation Strategy – Samantha Charlton**

- Key activities for the Strategy were initiated in 2008 to look at how agriculture can adapt to climate change risks, with the focus shifting to adaptation in 2010. We are now in the second phase of programme delivery. Funding was recently renewed until 2023.
- Several areas across BC have been reviewed to date, including Cowichan Valley, Delta, Fraser Valley, Okanagan, Cariboo, and Peace River. Underway are the areas of Vancouver Island, Kootenay and Boundary, Bulkley-Nechako & Fraser-Fort George. Still to be done are Thompson-Nicola and Columbia Shuswap.
- In our research, we consider existing climate action plans and agricultural plans. On the Island, we have focused on Nanaimo, Victoria and Comox.
- Regional adaptation strategies aim to deepen the knowledge of risks and opportunities, develop details and resources to enable adaptation, and strengthen collaboration and capacity for future deliverables and actions.
- The planning process for deliverables ends in March 2020 and will be region-specific. The Vancouver Island Strategy will be completed by April 2020, with implementation starting in the fall of 2020.
- A producer advisory committee has been established. The areas of wine/grapes, dairy, seeds, hay and mixed farming are covered. She is looking for a few more members - someone from PAAC or a local producer, as well as someone in the cattle, sheep, goat or poultry areas. She will send information to the Secretary who can send the request out to the PAAC group.
- Ms.Charlton gave some examples of the progress in Delta, noting the team has raised the awareness of climate change and support for agriculture from the public. Irrigation and drainage systems in Delta are key; infrastructure requires political decisions and the intent is to start a climate change awareness campaign to gain public support.

In response to questions from the Commission, Ms. Charlton stated:

- Since 2008, she has noticed a broader awareness and acceptance of climate change.
- The Advisory Committee has had 3 meetings in the past 1.5 years. You can participate by teleconference. It is not a huge commitment.
- With respect to the Delta area and the potential of the rising level of the ocean, she stated they have not considered anything specific, such as dykes to prevent flooding. Funds are limited. There is also the issue that irrigation is getting saltier.
- The risk to pollinators is raised a lot - the latest issue being the large hornets that feed on the honey bees. To date, no work as been initiated on this issue, but it is certainly within the scope of the project.

- Regarding a comment made on the current levels of geese and deer noting it could be advisable to get ahead of the killer hornet issue before it gets out of hand as well, she acknowledged that wildlife management could certainly be an area to consider.

Meetings scheduled to date include:

- September 27, 2019: Advisory Committee Meeting
- November, 2019: Focus Group #1 to identify impacts, actions, gaps and assets.
- February 2020: Focus Group #2
- March 2020: Focus Group #3
- May 2020: Finalize the Vancouver Island Regional Adaptation Strategy.

More information can be found at [www.bcagclimateaction.ca](http://www.bcagclimateaction.ca)  
[Samantha@BCAgClimateAction.ca](mailto:Samantha@BCAgClimateAction.ca)

## **Drinking Water & Cross Connection Issues – Bob Shuck, CRD**

Bob is the coordinator of the Cross Connection Control Division with the Parks and Environmental Services at the CRD.

- The programme, initiated in 2006 and operated under a CRD Bylaw, looks at ways water can be regulated, inspected and protected.
- Similar to other water quality programmes, a cross connection is any actual connection between potable water and any potential sources of pollution or contamination in industrial, commercial and institutional areas.
- Wherever a cross connection exists, there is potential for backflow. Backflow is the flow of solid, liquid or gas from any source opposite to the normal direction of flow back into the potable water system.
- Restaurants area a huge issue when considering the number of connections – dish water, ice machines, carbonated machines, etc.
- In 2020, the programme will focus on agricultural connections, including wells, as well as public education.
- Depending on the water source – well water, reclaimed water, or reservoirs – we will consider how the Greater Victoria drinking water system could be affected.
- Agricultural communities are not without risk: irrigation systems can be exposed to animal and human matter, chemicals, fertilizer as well as animal feed and wash-down areas and processing equipment .
- Facility audits of agricultural facilities to assess risks and solutions may be required. There is no charge for a CRD inspector to conduct the audit but sometimes there are costs for parts and labour to install a new device. Units can be tested annually.
- These are the costs of reducing risks to ensure safe drinking water throughout the CRD and the CRD is able to help at times.
- Within the CRD, we have 45 farms and over 7,000 restaurants with back flow systems.

For more information: [bshuck@crd.bc.ca](mailto:bshuck@crd.bc.ca)

## **CRD Elk / Beaver Lake Initiative – Jill Robinson**

Jill is the coordinator for the Elk/Beaver Lake Initiative with the Parks and Environmental Services Department at the CRD.

- The water moves from Elk Lake to Beaver Lake and many creeks also flow into the lakes.
- The water flows out to the Colquitz River and eventually to the ocean.
- There are many lake and park values and it is a vast recreational area.

- An overview was recently completed to quantify the economic value of the activities around the lake. The conclusion was that over \$10 million was brought into the region annually. It is the most fished lake on Vancouver Island.
- The lake contributes to carbon storage and flood control.
- Key issues identified include bacteria (the blue/green algae); the bacteria are not always toxic.
- Around the lake throughout the 1800s, significant forestry removal took place and 3 dams were built. This increased the water volume of the lake and resulted in a larger service area. What used to be a small creek from Elk Lake expanded into what we now know as Beaver Lake.
- It takes seven years from the water to make its way through the lake system to the ocean.
- Significant development occurred during the 1900s, including construction of the Pat Bay Hwy in the 1960s. The impact, over time, was a build up of nutrients on the bottom of the lake.
- Her job is to look at ways to improve the current status of the lake. The initiative was started in 2015 with a primary goal to reduce the nutrients and the blue/green algae blooms.
- There will be 3 phases: Collect the information, submit to the CRD Board with a recommendation to apply for funding; identify the key issues and report to the public to make sure we have a shared vision and goal before the final phase: implementation.
- As part of the first phase, an information session was held in July to collect public input. Now we are working on the solution aspect.
- The study is divided into two parts: external and internal. The external portion is the part she is investigating and forms 30% of the initiative. This consists of O'Donnell Creek (40%), the atmosphere (17%), other creeks (17%), birds and wildlife (4%) and septic systems (22%).
- In response to comments from the Commission, she noted that water levels are controlled, releasing enough water to maintain fish habitats downstream. The level of the lake is 5m higher than it was in 1876.
- Workshops will be held September 17, 26, and October 3. All are welcome.
- Jill asked the Commission to send her an email if there are any questions, [jrobinson@crd.bc.ca](mailto:jrobinson@crd.bc.ca) or more information is available at [www.crd.bc.ca/elkbeaver](http://www.crd.bc.ca/elkbeaver)

## **AGRICULTURAL ISSUES – NEW**

### **Farm Worker Housing Accommodation – Central Saanich (Ivo van der Kamp)**

Information from Central Saanich on a draft bylaw to permit temporary farm worker accommodation on farmland was distributed.

Ivo van der Kamp, Planner with Central Saanich, stated:

- An open house was held May 28, 2019, as well as consultation with the farming community and an on-line survey with ALR owners. The results of the information collected have been provided to the Commission.
- Based on the results, a bylaw has been drafted and the District would like to hear PAAC's comments, as well as input from the Ministry of Agriculture and the Agricultural Land Commission.

\*\*\* Chris Wieczorek entered the meeting at 8:15 pm\*\*\*

Robin Tunnecliffe asked if it has been decided how many hours a week the farm hands have to work to qualify for accommodation? Also, has a limit of workers per farm been decided? She is concerned the use may not be legitimate in all cases.

In response, Mr. van der Kamp stated:

- It is difficult to check how many hours a farmhand works; at this time, our approach will be to let the applicant explain why they need a certain number of farm workers, and the hours they will be expected to work.
- It will be up to the District and the ALC to decide if the request makes sense for the size of the operation. It is not a 'one size fits all' situation.
- The application would be made to the ALC initially, then if referred to the municipality, the District could issue a Temporary Use Permit. Based on the demonstrated needs for that particular farm, the municipality would assess if the request was reasonable. We would like to avoid the need for every farmer to go to the expense of hiring an agrologist to do an assessment.

Mr. Bednard, Regional Planner, ALC, confirmed that any property within the ALR has to make application to the ALC before it is considered the local municipalities. There is no reason to refer to the ALC if the property is outside the ALR.

- If a farmer only employs workers for 3 months of the year, then he will only need accommodation for that length of time.
- The ALC does not actually deal with farmers: we deal with land owners who own farmland. 99% of the applicants who own farmland have a large residence on the property.
- We get requests for a 2,000 square foot home for a farm worker to operate the orchard on the property, for example. Nine times out of ten, these are permanent dwellings. A few years down the road, we find the orchard trees have been removed but there are still two permanent homes on the one property. Then we have a dilemma, do you make them remove the 2<sup>nd</sup> house in the midst of a housing shortage?

Councillor Graham, referring to the comments made about the limit of workers and the hours worked, stated farms have to submit records to the BC Assessment Authority to qualify for farm tax. They could be required to include payroll records as well. Another big challenge is we are facing a significant housing crisis in the region. We will have to be careful not to use agricultural lands to address this shortage.

Councillor Smyth stated he would like North Saanich to consider farm accommodation also and agreed having a universal category would be helpful.

PAAC discussion noted there will always be people who will try to buck the system but that shouldn't interfere with a legitimate farmer who needs help. Nor should the regulations be so restrictive that it will defeat the intent. It is almost impossible to get farm help these days, and if the workers are Canadian and have to leave the farm after a few months, where will they live? This is a different scenario to temporary foreign workers.

Mr. van der Kamp confirmed the proposed bylaw will focus on temporary accommodation.

- Longview Farms has obtained modular units to house up to 49 workers, with each sleeping unit being about 10 m<sup>2</sup>. It is unlikely anyone would want to live in that small a space on a permanent basis. Longview anticipates using the units for about 8 months of the year.

\*\*\*Dianne Williamson left the meeting at 8:40 pm\*\*\*

## **AGRICULTURAL ISSUES – CURRENT**

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

Jeff Weightman stated:

- With respect to the deer, there has been a request by the Board to update the Deer Management Plan. Currently, a few municipalities are pushing for contraception to reduce the populations. A report is due later this month about advocating the province to do more in terms of deer management and provide support for population reduction. In the past this has been left to the municipalities and the regional districts; we are now asking for provincial help.
- With respect to the geese, both he and Chris Wieczorek were trying to bring this matter to the attention of the UBCM but apparently they were not convincing enough.
- A decision was made to not have a letter brought forward from staff but to wait for the CRD directors to request a meeting at the UBCM. Staff are meeting next week with the Board to see if there is another approach other than involving the UBCM.
- It seems we are working from year to year on the programme with individual municipalities rather than having a more robust approach.
- We have been actively searching for nesting sites and adding eggs to control the population for the past few years. While the population still needs to be reduced, there has been a small decline. The situation is better than it was 5 years ago and we are slowly making headway.

Larry Sluggett mentioned that while there do not appear to be as many goslings this year, he estimated he had over 1,000 geese on this property recently.

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

Jeff Weightman stated:

- The Task Force has been reconstituted and the focus will be on the Food and Farmland Trust.
- The group is working towards acquiring land; once we have land, we can carry out a cost analysis and develop a business plan.
- Linda Geggie advised there are 9 different areas within the Food and Agriculture Strategy – including wildlife.

### **c) Saanich Agriculture and Food Security Plan – Cam Scott, not present.**

Noted Saanich has a new Planner who is working on this initiative and it may be helpful to ask him to come to a PAAC meeting.

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

### **e) Sandown Update**

Councillor Smythe stated:

- The deadline for Expressions of Interest to operate Sandown closed August 30. Four applications were received. Staff have required criteria and will weight these against the applications. On Monday Council will look at proposed long and short-term management plans.
- In the meantime, Bryce Rashleigh has been hired to do some of the maintenance on the farm in preparation for fall planting.

### **f) Woodwyn Farm Update – Written update received from BC Housing recently which was forwarded to the PAAC members for information.**

## 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
- d) **Education and Outreach (Linda Geggie)**

Linda Geggie stated that due to a lack of resources and volunteers to assist with the Saanich Fair this year PAAC did not participate. We hope to regroup and come back again next year.

Adjournment: On a Motion from Linda Geggie the meeting adjourned at 9:05 pm

Next Meeting: The next PAAC meeting is scheduled for **Thursday, October 10, 2019** at **7:15PM**, in **the Kirby Room, Saanich Police & Fire Building**.

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.

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Isobel Hoffmann, Recording Secretary