



**MINUTES OF THE
PENINSULA & AREA AGRICULTURAL COMMISSION
Committee Room 2, Saanich Municipal Hall
Thursday, APRIL 11 2019 AT 7:00 PM**

Present: Phil Christie in the Chair; Jack Mar, Vice-Chair; Carol Davidson, Treasurer; Linda Geggie; Larry Kimmett, Bev Marley; Terry Michell; Larry Sluggett; Dianne Williamson; Councillor Smythe, (N.Saanich) and Robin Tunnecliffe (Metchosin). Also present was Isobel Hoffmann, Recording Clerk.

Guests: Michael Doehnel; Jeff Weightman, CRD; Spring Harrison; Susan Tychie, Life-Cycles; Alicia Holman and Chris Wieczorek, Executive Assistant to the Minister of Agriculture.

Regrets: Satnam Dheenshaw. Councillors Graham and Brice.

Minutes: The Minutes of March 14, 2019 were adopted.

TREASURER'S REPORT – Carol Davidson

- PAAC has \$21,019.15 in GICs remaining.
- One GIC had matured and was cashed in to cover some of the workshop costs.
- \$1,250 was received from the DFMA; still to receive \$1,000 from Farm Credit Canada as well as the door receipts from CR-Fair.
- A cheque for \$1,250 was issued to Elaine Froese to cover the balance of the speaker's fees.
- A cheque for \$379 was issued to the secretary to cover printing costs and refreshments.
- The balance of Elaine's fee, \$2,250 for attendees and approximately \$1,000 for expenses, will be covered through the PAAC account held in trust through Saanich; the Secretary will process this amount once an invoice is received.

CORRESPONDENCE:

- a) Letter received from North Saanich, Director of Planning & Community Services, including the Sandown Farm Plan and follow-up staff report which was considered at the October 22, 2018 Council meeting. An updated staff report dated March 11, 2019 outlining a request for Expressions of Interest for the long-term use of Sandown. (see page 6 for further discussion)
- b) Michael Doehnel is preparing a letter to the municipalities regarding the various water rates and fees charged to users. Copies of Michael's research were distributed to PAAC members.
 - Originally, a letter was to be sent to Saanich, as they charge the user upfront and then rebate at the end of the year.
 - Michael suggested we write to Saanich, North and Central Saanich, as well as the CRD, expressing our desire to have a more uniform system for the repayment of water and the way accounts are reconciled.
 - Saanich makes more money from the water rate rebate system because they pay less for the wholesale rate than other communities. Part of the rationale for this could be that the Peninsula communities had to pay for the infrastructure to pipe the water to the Peninsula.
 -

Henry Lee, CRD, entered the meeting at 7:25 pm

- Michael noted the agricultural rate is 20.5 cents per cubic metre; the wholesale rate is 55 cents.
- A cubic metre is 1000 litres of water; it takes 1,233 cubic metres to put 12" of water on one acre.
- He will draft a letter and circulate to PAAC through email via the secretary for comments.
- It was agreed having a uniform water rate is an important issue and PAAC should not drop this until it is addressed.

Mr. Lee noted that all the water rates are posted on the CRD's website.

CARRY for further discussion

FARM SUCCESSION WORKSHOP – APRIL 10, 2019

Discussion ensued regarding the Farm Succession Workshop yesterday, and all agreed it was very informative and successful. 45 registered attendees - which included some farm families.

- The Co-chair thanked all involved in helping to put the event together, with a special mention to Councillor Thompson for designing an outstanding promo poster.
- Total cost for the workshop, including fees and expenses was \$6,133.
- Of that, PAAC received \$2,250 in support from DFMA and FCC, together with \$1,125 in entry fees, resulting in a net cost to PAAC of \$2,758.

 Alicia Holman, Susan Tychie and Chris Wieczorek entered the meeting at 7:30 p.m.

At the workshop, Elaine mentioned financial help from the provinces of Manitoba and Saskatchewan is available to help families who hire a consultant to assist with farm succession planning. Questioned if there was any such help in BC. Suggested PAAC could contact the Ministry of Agriculture in this regard. Chris Wieczorek offered to look into this and report back.

SPEAKER'S BUREAU:

Larry Kimmett: Small Scale Farming

- Larry gave a visual presentation about the concept of a group, such as the Island Chef's Collaborative, combining purchasing power to buy a functioning farm and use a small scale farming model to provide food for their business use, such as a restaurant, organic farm, etc.
- He gave an example of an ALR property in North Saanich on the market for \$2.6 m which would require a \$600,000 down-payment, and \$11,000 per month in mortgage payments.
- He cited a very successful example of this kind of self-sufficient, small-scale enterprise, Bec Helouin, in Normandy, France.
- When a piece of high-cost farmland comes on the market it presents a dilemma to the ALR.
- A conventional farmer cannot afford to pay the high cost of farmland today.
- This results in someone who is a non-farmer buying the property and building a monster house.
- Larry admitted that the cost of equipment, drainage, etc. had not been considered.

Comments noted:

- This would be a long-term venture; investors would want to see dividends on their investment annually.
- With mortgage payments of around \$130,000 per year, you would have to gross \$20,000 per acre just to pay for the mortgage.

- In this respect, this is why we need those with money to buy the property and either allow farmers to lease the land, or at the very least, become land stewards who pay the taxes and keep the property green and available for farming at some future time.
- It was noted that eventually this type of facility would likely happen, and agreed that the one in Normandy is a success. However, their climate is more consistent with average temperatures of 19°C during the growing season. As well, food is marketed differently in France.
- Small scale farming is on the rise, but we cannot forget the bigger picture of the larger, productive farms.
- Due to a lack of veterinarians on the Island, we are losing a lot of animals on the farms – other than horses – and animals are vital for the sustainability of the soils.
- Noted with the new ALR regulations coming into effect, particularly around farm worker housing, there will be some good changes and some not so good.

Chris Wieczorek stated the ALR legislation passed; farmers who need a second residence on the farm may make application to the ALC. Regulations regarding modular homes on farm property was also questioned. He offered to follow up on these two points and report back. He noted that although the size of “mega mansions” has been reduced, owners may still apply to the ALC for a bigger house if they prove the need. The ALC has to respond within 60 days or less.

It was suggested PAAC ask someone from the ALC to attend a future meeting to explain how the regulations will affect farmers going forward.

Terry Michell mentioned that at the workshop yesterday the subject of sub-standard accommodations for relatives was raised. The next generation of farmers has to be considered; people need a decent place to live. Noted that often horses have better accommodations than the workers.

Susan Tychie, CR-Fair: Closing the Supply Project & Grant Request

Susan stated:

- The goal is to work with small to medium scale farms within the CRD to increase their capacity in growing short-season crops and diversify their relationship with retail and institutional buyers.
- A farm focus group was established in 2018, with 8 farmers signing up initially; now there are 10.
- Thrifty Foods is willing to accept the produce from these farms and is very involved in the project.
- From the focus Group, a number of opportunities and barriers were identified, such as:
 - land costs, labour shortages, lack of capital
 - determining who to sell to and preparing individual contracts with the purchaser
 - crop planning and pest management
- A two-day GAP certification workshop was held in March, made possible by a grant from the Ministry of Agriculture. Twenty-one farmers from all over the Island attended.
- Products will be shipped directly from the farm to the local store.
- The average age of the participating farmers is 40.
- Farmers can apply for infrastructure funding, and they are negotiating individual contracts with Thrifty Foods.
- Joint business planning will be explored in order to ensure financial viability and to maximize efficiency.
- On-site farm mentorship will be sought and provided.
- We are also planning to look into when and where to find workers to help harvest the crops.

- She asked if PAAC was willing to support the project with a \$3,000 grant, or provide mentorship. Any grant could be cost-matched. They have received small grants from the Ministry, but we are struggling to keep the programme going.

Jack Mar noted he mentors 7 university students who give one hour of work every week for 7 months in lieu.

Susan continued:

- Re GAP certification, although preferable, suppliers do not have to be part of the programme, except for certain higher risk products, such as salad greens. Anticipated at some point in time everyone will need to be GAP certified, but it is not a requirement right away.
- In response to a question, she confirmed there will be a central drop-off area and an on-line programme that lists quantities and varieties of products available.
- This is a first try at this type of programme, and there could be kinks to work out. We are learning as we go.
- The farmers involved are not new farmers; they have mostly been doing farm gate sales. Very few have sold directly to institutional markets.

Dianne noted that all farmers have had to take and pay for their own GAP certification. In some industries, like poultry, it is a requirement.

Discussion ensued regarding the \$3,000 grant request.

- PAAC is an advisory body, not a funding agency.
- We tend to spend our funds directly on programmes we have initiated rather than support other initiatives indirectly.
- The Chair thought PAAC should discuss how much money we could provide and whether it is within our mandate.
- It was suggested PAAC could write a letter to be used as a reference when applying to other agencies for a grant, indicating that small farms need support and the Closing the Supply Gap programme is an excellent way to help them.
- Another suggestion was to apply for a loan: with 10 farmers, a \$3000 loan would be \$300 each. ICC gives out micro loans of up to \$5,000.
- The Peninsula Co-op is another avenue to try.

Linda Geggie stated that Investment Agriculture supported the first stage of the programme with a small grant. The Ministry of Agriculture is supportive also. It would be nice to keep getting small amounts on an incremental basis to keep the programme moving forward. Van City has shown some interest and any contribution from PAAC would be matched.

AGRICULTURAL ISSUES – CURRENT

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

Jeff introduced Henry Lee, who is a supervisor with the Environmental Protection Division at the CRD. He will engage with farmers on issues such as water conservation, the Elk/Beaver Lake Management Plan.

Jeff stated:

- He does not know the exact numbers of deer hunted this year. He anticipates the numbers will be similar or a little higher than last year.
- The CRD is doing what it can to link farmers to hunters.

- An aerial survey of the geese has been done and will be compared to last year's survey.
- The egg addling programme will be conducted again this year; if anyone knows of a property where geese are nesting and laying, let him know. Destroying the eggs does not work as the goose will just lay more. Addling is the only way to curtail the numbers.

Presentation to the CRD Board re Geese Management Strategy

This was discussed at the March meeting. It was agreed that four members – Terry Michell, Larry Sluggett, Ray Gale and Doug Pepper (Regional Agrologist) will take part in the presentation. Councillor Thompson forwarded information about the proper procedure to present to the Board; this includes having the item placed on the agenda by a CRD Board member. Four minutes per person is permitted and the Board requires an outline of what the presenter is planning to say.

It was suggested that the four presenters each outline briefly what they plan to speak about, and this be vetted by PAAC's Co-Chairs to ensure there is no overlap and we make full use of our allotted time.

Apparently the CRD Parks & Environmental Services Committee is scheduled to consider the geese issue on May 22nd, but this is not the CRD Board. It was agreed that we wanted to present to the actual Board and not a sub-committee.

Once the secretary has received the required information, it will be collated, vetted by the Co-Chairs, submitted to PAAC's Council reps who sit on the Board (Councillors Thompson and Brice) asking them to place the matter on the Agenda, and then submitted to the CRD as per its requirements.

It is a tedious process, but it needs to be done if we are going to finally see some action on this problem.

CARRY

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

The Task Force has expired and new members are being appointed. Two main topics that need to be considered are a Land Access Feasibility Study and Farmland Trusts. A Farmlands Trust meeting was held yesterday and municipalities were asked if they support this, and if so, do they have any lands available to include in the trust. It was noted that some school properties are in the ALR. A response deadline of May 31st has been set.

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

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

Max distributed packages of seeds to members that are bee friendly, including phacelia and black sunflower. He encouraged everyone to plant them now.

Robin Tunnecliffe advised she apply for a grant with HAT that helped with 50% of the cost to plant a 300' hedgerow to encourage pollinators. They even helped with the planting of over 1000 plants. She noted almost all farms in California have hedgerows – it is standard practice. The plants include Indian Plum and Mock Orange and they all came from Saanich's Native Plant Nursery.

e) Sandown Update

Information was distributed to PAAC from North Saanich, including staff reports dated March 11, 2019 and October 17, 2018, as well as an overview of a proposed community farm plan prepared by the Sandown Transition Team (Bernadette Greene, Linda Geggie, Ann Eastman, Spring Harrison and Jen Rashleigh).

Councillor Smythe stated:

- North Saanich has drafted terms for a Request for Expressions of Interest for the long-term use of the property. He thought more information should have been included with this document.
- The March 11 report also summarizes the District's vision for the lands.

Spring Harrison stated:

- A short-term maintenance plan has been proposed; we are looking for an agrologist to assist on the site, hopefully in place by June 21st. A check list has been provided to the municipality.
- Another agrologist would outline farming activities to maintain and enhance what is currently there.
- A third agrologist will look after the municipal green waste facility. Some of this will be within the ALR, and some will not.

Councillor Smyth stated that this information has not come to Council, nor is it on the website. It needs to be discussed with staff and then sanctioned by Council.

- He is not impressed with the remediation on the site; it is not as good as it should be, and Council doesn't want to spend any more tax-payers' money to do the work of others.
- Council has not yet signed off on the remediation agreement with Platform Properties; we have asked for a report but it has not been received yet.

Spring Harrison pointed out that the municipal agrologist, Hally Hofmeier, who was re-hired in late September, was on the site during the remediation work. His report, and the one from the Platform Properties agrologist, has not been received either.

f) Woodwyn Farm Update

Amanda Parnham from BC Housing will attend the May PAAC meeting to provide an update.

AGRICULTURAL STRATEGY – SUB-COMMITTEE REPORTS

a) Water (Michael Doehnel)

See page 2 under correspondence. Nothing more to add at this time.

b) Farm Economics (Terry Michell)

Terry stated :

- Potatoes have been planted in Saanich.
- Central Saanich has a lot of spring vegetables planted in the last two weeks.
- Over-wintering vegetables are doing well: cabbage, cauliflower, parsnips, leeks and chard.

c) Agricultural Land Base (Phil Christie)

Nothing to add at this time.

d) Education and Outreach (Linda Geggie)

Farm Tour – Saturday June 15 2019:

- Members of the sub-committee (Jack Mar, Phil Christie, Linda Geggie and Isobel Hoffmann) will arrange a meeting within the next few days to try to decide on farms for the tour.
- The bus has been secured.
- Bev has agreed to do the lunch.
- Attendance is capped at 35.
- Isobel sent out a “Save the Date” notice; 5 people have already signed up.
- We need to agree on locations and timing in the near future so the map & information sheet can be prepared. This was done in 2015 by a Saanich employee, Adam Flint, for a cost of \$300.

Some suggested locations include:

1. Michells – which is always a good venue, and Dianne can come and speak about her poultry farm, which can be seen from Michells
2. Longview Farm (already confirmed with Ryan Vantreight). Good opportunity to discuss the Farm worker housing issue, which is being considered by the Ministry. Also Longview has made an application through Central Saanich and the ALC for FWH.
3. Eurossa Greenhouses is also another popular venue and shows another side of agriculture.
4. Agreed a winery should be included.

UPCOMING EVENTS:

- Central Saanich is holding an open house on Tuesday, May 28, 2019 at the Fire Hall on Keating X Road between 4pm and 8pm to review Farm Worker Housing Regulations. New ALR regulations will also be reviewed.

Adjournment: On a Motion from Bev Marley the meeting adjourned at 9:00 pm

Next Meeting: The next PAAC meeting is scheduled for **Thursday, May 9, 2019 at 7:00 PM**, Saanich Municipal Hall in Committee Room No. 1.

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