

**SPECIAL MEETING
PENINSULA & AREA AGRICULTURAL MEETING
HELD BY ZOOM
THURSDAY, OCTOBER 8, 2020, 7:00 PM**

In attendance: Phil Christie, Chair; Linda Geggie; Bev Marley; Robin Tunnicliffe; Dianne Williamson; and Isobel Hoffmann, recording secretary.

Minutes: The Minutes from PAAC's last official meeting on March 12, 2020 and the Zoom meeting held May 15, 2020, were approved by those present, but not adopted as there was no quorum. **Carry to next meeting.**

Chair's Report: (Phil Christie)

- A paper by Richard Barichello, UBC Professor, Food & Resource Economics, states we are moving towards a deep world-wide recession. However, agricultural trade will see less of a disruption. He is predicting world economic growth will shrink to 3%. It is expected there will be restrictions on Canadian food exports and imports and it is important to note that how this would affect us, and how quickly the economy can spring back.
- On the local front, it seems like local farm markets such as Michell's and Sluggett's are very busy. Extra costs due to extra cleaning/sanitizing, shifting operating hours, etc. Lines ups to get into the markets are common.
- There have been problems getting sufficient farm workers to help, especially earlier in the year trying to get foreign workers safely into Canada. The government stepped in to help the farmers and covered the cost of the two weeks required quarantine expenses for 6,000+ workers.
- Local farmers have been extremely busy with direct retail. Restaurant orders are down.
- Overall it has been a good growing season.

Treasurer's Report (Carol Davidson) – Not present

- Minimal changes. The secretary receives copies of the written bank statements.

Comments on Farm & Market Operations:

Robin Tunnicliffe stated:

- Overall, the pandemic has had a positive impact, although managing the logistics is hard.
- There are a number of protocols that need to be followed, as well as training customers.
- In general, she is selling 75% of her harvest from the driveway.
- They have increase the stand from a single table to six tables, with two staffers – one to restock and the other to handle sales.
- People are interested in bulk buying to freeze or can goods.
- Farmers at Halliburton Farms are selling out of their produce.
- She noted there has been some negativity at the Metchosin Farmers Market:

- The rule of no more than 50 people per site doesn't allow for the normal socializing that occurs between neighbours and farmers at the market. People come with their kids and want to hang out as they usually do.
- The families don't realize they are “taking up space” and preventing other customers from entering the small market area, resulting in long line ups and frustration, and then some people don't return.
- Moss Street has a bigger space, so the same issues don't arise.
- She visited Terry Michell's Farm Market and noted his prices are on par with Moss Street Market prices. His prices have increased because of the extra overhead, including additional staff. It also cost Terry \$6,000 per worker before they even started work.
- She has been resisting increases her prices, but thinks it may be time.
- She was able to secure an emergency business loan, which has made a world of difference this year, allowing her to write cheques up front when buying products.
- Many of the smaller operations unfortunately have not been able to qualify for this funding.

Dianne Williamson stated:

- Agreed the logistics on managing the protocols required are difficult and time consuming.
- Sales are up, and customers have been patient, cooperative and understanding.
- On the commercial side, because there were no restaurant sales earlier in the year, she was ordered by the Egg Marketing Board to remove our oldest flock 13 weeks earlier than scheduled, which was mid-September.
- The Canadian Egg Marketing Association through insurance paid the producers a compensation for removing birds earlier.
- We are out of manure now – because of the virus everyone was at home so that they started working in their yard and amending their soil.
- Broiler production is now getting back to normal. We are at about 95% production.
- Restaurants are now opening, and take-out orders are popular, so this has increased the demand again.
- September has been one of our busiest months as everyone is canning and pickling.

Linda Geggie stated:

- The **South Island Farm Hub** did a lot of work this year with the Emergency Food Organization through the Rapid Relief Fund.
- Budgets were limited but the Hub tried to do as much as they could to support local farmers and get more food into meal production.
- At the same time, we had farmers using the distribution centre as a farm hub.
- 30 Agencies received cash in the form of credits; \$150,000 in credits went to the School Districts.
- The Farm Hub was launched in May this year, involves about 20 farmers and has resulted in over \$150,000 worth of sales going directly into the pockets of these local farmers.
- It was a logistical nightmare getting the food to the School District from the farmers, but in the end it was amazing to think that all schools are getting local, fresh fruit and vegetables.
- The demand is growing and we are trying to think of ways to develop wholesale and home delivery markets to make the programme sustainable.

Discussion noted:

- Pendray Farms has been developing and investing in hydroponic indoor growing (using the now un-used cow sheds).
- The volume of produce they are talking about is huge and will take a large share of the retail grocery markets.
- Kye James, a farmer in North Saanich, is working with Country Grocer and the Red Barn Markets, and is increasing his crop production. He also raised his prices due to extra overhead costs. Apparently Country Grocer wants to expand its local products and wasn't too concerned about the price increase.

REFERRALS FROM SAANICH:

425/443 HECTOR ROAD – Rainbow Valley Nursery Ltd., John MacNutt

Application for non-farm use on ALR land for on-site storage of topsoil material on a crushed rock pad.

Discussion noted:

- No other operating farms in immediate area.
- Looking at the long-term general land use for this site, it is unlikely the use would change to growing vegetables, or any other agricultural use.
- This is a large, rocky parcel of land. Development is encroaching in surrounding area.
- In general, there were no objections to the application, but an agrologist's report on the quality of the soils would have been helpful.
- Concerned about the use of a crushed rock pad; unlikely the ALC would approve this application.
- Assumed the rationale for the rock pad was to provide easier access for machinery.

5550 FOREST HILL ROAD – Wen Jung Ju

Application for non-farm use on ALR land to allow for a new accessory building with washrooms and office space to house equestrian-related workshops and seminars.

Discussion noted:

- The building footprint is small-scale and close to the residence; the location does not impinge on any of the usable land.
- Suggested sensitivity to the surrounding land be used when the structure is constructed.
- While sometimes not recognized by some as an “agricultural use”, equestrian operations generate a lot of money and contribute to the local economy, while at the same time keeping the area green.

Comments on both the above applications to be submitted to the Saanich Planning Department.

OTHER BUSINESS:

Robin Tunnicliffe stated the Mayor of Metchosin tends not to ask for agricultural advice, but she believes the Council does need some advice re future planning; Planners and Agrologists have more confidence when they hear from local farmers. Phil Christie offered to call the Mayor to discuss how we could help.

Next Meeting: Thursday, November 12, 2020, by ZOOM

Adjournment: The meeting adjourned at 8:00 pm