

**PENINSULA & AREA AGRICULTURAL COMMISSION MEETING
HELD BY ZOOM
THURSDAY MAY 13 2021, 7:00 PM**

In attendance: Phil Christie, Chair; Carol Davidson; Linda Geggie; Bev Marley; Robin Tunnicliffe (Metchosin); Terry Michell; Dianne Williamson; Councillors Smyth (North Saanich), and De Vries (Saanich); and Isobel Hoffmann, recording secretary.

Guests: Emily Carmichael, Ministry of Agriculture; Mike Doehnel; Brian Spencer; Ty James, Dallas Gislason; Anita Biljold.

Regrets: Larry Kimmett; Satnam Dheenshaw; Larry Sluggett; Councillor Graham (C. Saanich).

Minutes: The Minutes of April 8, 2021 were adopted as circulated.

Treasurer's Report (Carol Davidson) – No change

AGRICULTURAL ISSUES: NEW

**Presentation: Brian Spencer, Applied Bio-Nomics,
Bio-Diversity & Preservation of Pollinator Habitats**

Brian stated:

- He invited members to check out his website, which has interesting and technical material due to a strong knowledge based industry. www.appliedbio-nomics.com
- He has been in the business for over 40 years, currently operates from a 5-acre site on West Saanich Road, and has enlisted the help of experts such as Linda Gilkeson, Don Elliot and Dave Gillespie.
- The company is a world leader in biological pest control and our products are used not only in North America, but also distributed to Costa Rica, Japan, Korea and Holland. During the pandemic there has been a reduction in overseas business.
- Brian gave a detailed presentation on the various pests, discussing biological controls, pest management and application methods.
- The most common pests include: spider mites, aphids, thrips, root weevils, whitefly, and pathogenic nematodes.
- **Classic biological controls** involve determining the appropriate agent and then releasing them onto the target crop. It is important that the products affect only the target crop. Small releases at a time are monitored in the hope that they become established – this way the grower does not have to keep buying more product, which can be costly. For example, a small application for aphid management would be required only once every 5 years.
- **Natural biological controls** include planting hedgerows and companion planting. Hedgerows attract “true bugs” and act as native bird habitats, they conserve predatory mites and parasitic wasps. Hedgerows also attract pests away from less desirable crops.

- He noted planting wild carrots or bush beans every 5th row of plantings will attract beneficials and in turn deter them from the other crops.
- Another natural way to manage pests is overhead watering vs drip.
- Lady bugs are a popular natural control method for aphids, however, they don't get all the aphids, and can leave the eggs behind.
- Cedar hedges can be loaded with spider mites – so you treat the hedges to eliminate the mites instead of the crop.

The Chair suggested a field trip to a farm, or farms, would be beneficial, noting we have many smaller producers. Brian agreed he would be very interested in participating. .

**Presentation: Dallas Gislason & Ty James, South Island Prosperity Project
Shipping Containers as On-Farm Packaging & Processing Options**

Dallas Gislason stated:

- The South Island Prosperity Project Regional Alliance is committed to the economic development of the region and has over 70 members, which include First Nations, Municipal Governments, entrepreneurial businesses community organizations, academic institutions and NGOs.
- One of our roles was to take the lead to determine the impacts of the pandemic on the region. With a task force of about 40 people from public and private sectors as well as all 3 levels of government, areas such as retail, restaurants, manufacturing, technology, and agriculture were studied. This resulted in “*Re-Boot – Greater Victoria's Economic Recovery Plan, 2020-2022*”.
- With respect to agriculture and food security, there was an elevated awareness for our local food supply. Linda Geggie, CR-Fair, has been involved in a couple of the projects, such as the Food Hub and the proposed marketing of an abattoir.
- The Food Hub has been very successful, and a few weeks ago we met with private sector partners regarding marketing for an abattoir.
- Another project is how to help small producers become CanadaGAP Certified.
- SIPP has the opportunity to have all government levels at the table and we recently met with Geoff Orr, Mayor of North Saanich, to discuss the concept of an abattoir, policy alignment and GAP certification.
- SIPP is requesting that PAAC provide a letter of support for when they approach its municipal partners with the pilot project, and then eventually to use these services in multiple areas.

Ty James, CEO of Blaine Consulting, stated:

- He has farmed on the Saanich Peninsula for the last 5 years commercially, growing mainly leaf greens that are CanadaGAP Certified. He works with commercial retailers on the South Island and he plans to work with the Food Hubs.
- 3,200 suppliers are now CanadaGAP certified in North America; and based on 2016 Census information there are 67,000 Canadian farmers leasing privately-owned farmland and 15,000 Canadian farmers leasing government-owned farmland.
- The price of farmland is out of range today for younger farmers.

- He is proposing a pilot project using a 20' shipping container as *GAP Can Modular Infrastructure* for the Sandown Centre for Regenerative Agriculture in North Saanich.
- The CanadaGAP certified unit was developed by Blaine Consulting and will provide cold storage and post-harvesting packaging space to members of the Farmpreneur Programme at Sandown.
- The unit will help small-scale farmers wishing to reach larger retail markets pursue CanadaGAP certification, and also generate economic gains for the community.
- Food security will be increased and transmission of food borne illnesses reduced.
- We will work with North Saanich to ensure the units could be deployed in other areas.
- It is a low-cost way to help farmers succeed and could benefit not only North Saanich but eventually the entire region.
- He noted there are a number of other interested parties, including the Port Alberni Port Authority and the First Nations Food Hub.
- The biggest barrier for farmers who are leasing land and wish to access commercial markets is the required infrastructure to process, store and package their produce.
- It is not desirable or cost-effective to build permanent infrastructure on someone else's land.
- The units are a durable, tangible asset, can be moved and set up within 24 hours and are secure. Units can be customized to suit.
- The benefits include:
 - Promoting food safety knowledge and practices in agriculture
 - Increasing CanadaGAP compliance and certification in BC
 - Increasing profitability of BC Farms and their access to markets
 - Creating opportunities for leasehold and entry level farmers in BC
- Meat and poultry processing units are double-wide, with a Class D licence permitting 2 cows or 8 sheep to be processed at one time.
- The cost is not finalized, but prices will be reasonable: a 40' CanadaGAP unit for processing fruit and vegetables would be around \$55,000 to \$60,000. A 20' unit would be around \$30,000.
- We hope to work with Sandown to provide CanadaGAP infrastructure at a subsidized cost, using the unit(s) as a field trial.
- In response to a question about municipal approval for temporary structures, he noted they are going through this process now for Sandown with North Saanich. He would appreciate a letter of support for the pilot project from PAAC.
- He understands there could be bylaw issues, and the plan is to work with Saanich, North and Central Saanich so everyone is on the same page, rather than dealing with one area at a time. We want our product to be compliant with municipal bylaws.
- Disposal and catchment tanks will be used for the meat processing units and will follow strict guidelines for bi-products and waste water.
- We will be developing a marketing strategy for the product, and that is why we are providing limited opportunity for early adopters to get the units at a subsidized cost. We then hope to get constructive information from the field tests and use this as part of our marketing programme.

- In response to a question about the foundation for the units, Ty stated concrete blocks or a cement pad would be used, depending on the location. We are working on solar options for the units so they can be off-grid. For now we are using 40-60 amp breakers so the units can be plugged in.

MOTION: "Moved by Bev Marley and Seconded by Carol Davidson: "That a letter of support be sent to the District of North Saanich for the proposed pilot project at the Sandown Centre for Regenerative Agriculture."

CARRIED

AGRICULTURAL ISSUES: CURRENT

a) Central Saanich OCP Review – Update

The Chair stated:

- He gave a presentation to Central Saanich OCP Advisory Committee about emerging markets and other issues:
- Urban run-off is an issue on much of the farmland in Central Saanich.
- Transition in farm ownership is a problem for young farmers who are trying to find land to farm.
- Our farmland base is being eroded, use of the land is changing, decreasing the land base available to the community.
- Noted that recreational vehicles on farmland are becoming a problem.

b) Saanich Farm Worker Housing Policy Update – Pierre Iachietti

- Not Present

c) Increased Farm Insurance Rates – Info Session – Dianne Williamson

- Carry to the next meeting.

CORRESPONDENCE - None

COMMENTS, UPDATES, CONCERNS RE FARMING OPERATIONS - None

OTHER BUSINESS

Vancouver Island Agriculture Adaptation Group – Bob Maxwell – Not Present

UPCOMING EVENTS:

Saanich Fair – Bob Thompson - Not present

PARKING LOT

PAAC has a number of pending issues that will eventually be discussed at a future meeting. The secretary suggested in order not to lose track of these items, they be placed in a “parking lot” until such time as there is new information available, when they will be placed on an Agenda. To date these items are:

1. T-5 slip from 2020 further to interest on PAAC's GIC
2. Hedgerows – proposed speaker from Habitat Acquisition Trust (**scheduled June 10**)
3. Grape & Fruit Atlas for Vancouver Island
4. 50th Celebration of ALR 2022 (ALC & Ministry of Agriculture)
5. Appointment of new representative from Minister's Office
6. Rising cost of farm insurance
7. Proposed farm site visits with Brian Spencer, AppliedBio-Nomics

Next Meeting: **Thursday, June 10, 2021, 7:00 pm by ZOOM**

Adjournment: The meeting adjourned at 8:45 pm