

**PENINSULA & AREA AGRICULTURAL COMMISSION MEETING  
HELD BY ZOOM  
THURSDAY MARCH 10, 2022, 7:00 PM**

---

In attendance: Robin Tunnicliffe in the Chair; Linda Geggie (via phone); Bev Marley; Terry Michell; Dianne Williamson; Councillor Thompson (C. Saanich) and Councillor Smyth (N.Saanich), and Isobel Hoffmann, Recording Secretary.

Guests: Mike Doehnel; Anita Bull; Emily Carmichael, Ministry of Agriculture; Katie Underwood; Paige Erikson, HAT; Pierre Iachieti, Saanich.

Regrets: Satnam Dheenshaw, Larry Sluggett

Minutes: The Minutes of February 10, 2022 were adopted as circulated.

---

### **TREASURER'S REPORT**

- The secretary advised she has not received a statement from Island Savings in some time; she will look into this.
- A T5 slip for 2021 was received stating PAAC had earned \$114.69 in interest from the GIC. A T5 was received for 2020 as well. The secretary will contact the CRA to determine if action is required.

### **SPEAKER'S BUREAU**

#### **Paige Erikson, HAT – Hedgerow Project**

- Paige reviewed the draft proposal and application form for the hedgerow project with PAAC, to engage farmers, provide them with information about the benefits of hedgerows and how to apply on line.
- Discussion noted the following points:
  - HAT estimates they can allocate up to 4 hours of their time per applicant for consultation.
  - This would involve not only hedgerows but Garry Oak meadows, forested areas, and wetlands, etc.
  - The amount of time required for the consultation and the actual planting can be included in the application.
  - Plants are expensive and Paige suggested it may be better to reduce the number of applicants to 10 per year and increase the time and funding in order to do a good job.
  - It was noted that after a couple of years, plants can be divided and replanted.
  - Robin stated she originally planted 300' for a cost of \$1,000 – shared on a 50/50 basis with HAT. She has been able to add an additional 200' two years ago, and she now has enough material to add another 300'.
  - Generally, depending on the soil conditions and plant species, between four to ten plants are planted every meter.
  - Ideal planting time is the spring; while it may be a little late to start this spring, fall planting is also acceptable.
  - Suggested that a site visit to Sea Bluff Farm in Metchosin would be beneficial.

Discussion ensued:

- PAAC pointed out that its offer of up to \$10,000 for the project was a one-time only grant, to enhance the programme initiated by HAT, with a \$500 matching allocation from the farmer for a total of \$1,000 in financial assistance per applicant.
- Bob Maxwell has prepared a list of about 20 potential sites for hedgerow projects.
- For additional promotion, we could ask Seaside Magazine to include an article.
- Grants may be available from provincial and municipal sources.
- PAAC has a separate account with funds provided annually from the sponsoring municipalities to be used for expenses related to workshops, education and promotion. Some of this funding could be used to prepare brochures and hold a workshop.
- PAAC had previously suggested that when the application form and other information on the project have been approved, that it be posted on municipal web sites.

Next Steps:

1. PAAC's sub-committee members are Robin Tunnicliffe, Bev Marley and Bob Maxwell; suggested this group can meet when required with HAT to review applications.
2. Prepare a brochure or rack card handout to distribute to farmers. Reference can be made to the on-line application and other details on the HAT and municipal websites.
3. A workshop be planned for the fall at the Saanich Fairgrounds; inviting nurseries to attend, with a site visit to Sea Bluff Farm for those interested.
4. Look into additional funding options: Ministries of Agriculture and Environment; local municipalities, Island Pollinators Programme, other environmental agencies.

Paige advised when the application form is completed, she will send to PAAC for comment.

## **AGRICULTURAL ISSUES: NEW**

### **a) 304 Walton Road – Application for non-adhering residential use for additional residence for farm use (Referral from Saanich)**

An application has been referred from Saanich requesting PAAC to indicate whether they have no objection to the project, generally have no objection but have concerns, or do not support the project.

- The application is for non-adhering residential use for an additional residence for farm use.
- There is no change requested from the current 20 acre, A-2 lot (Rural Zone – Two Dwelling).
- The proposal is to convert an existing residence to housing for full time and seasonal farm workers, wine storage, bottling honey and producing fruit preserves in a commercial kitchen, using the existing office for farm management.
- Pierre Iachieti, Saanich Planner, noted local governments are scrambling to catch up with the new ALC regulations. To date, no applications for farm worker accommodations have been approved by Saanich. The policy is drafted and under review. The ALC regulations would supersede municipal regulations. Depending on the specific circumstances, you may have a second dwelling on ALR lands with the A-2 zoning.

Discussion ensued:

- It is understood that the ALC is making changes to their regulations, but at the moment Saanich does not have a policy for farm worker accommodations; PAAC should follow the

current policies and bylaws of the municipality.

- It is understood that municipalities can regulate (size, siting, etc) but cannot prohibit a second dwelling on A-2 zones within the ALR.
- Doubtful that the proposed uses for the farm would do much for food security or do much to provide access to farmland. It is basically luxurious lifestyle with a farm tax break, and a horse-based operation with a few add-ons, such as honey and preserves.
- Suggested as both the ALC and Saanich making policy changes at this time have not been finalized, we either need more information on the changes, as well as more information on the potential activities for the “farm”.
- A member talked to neighbours who advised the property was previously a chicken farm; the related buildings were demolished, and topsoil and greenhouses were removed.
- Apparently the proposed new house would be 300m<sup>2</sup>, slightly larger than the existing house.
- A member who was familiar with the property noted that the owners have no interest in basic farming; they want to operate an Air B&B and have horses. Until there is more evidence that farming will actually take place, the application should not be supported.
- Councillor Thompson noted that Central Saanich is currently reviewing policies and bylaws for additional housing on ALR land; PAAC discussed this at its November meeting.

Reommendation: It was agreed this application is premature pending finalization of the ALC and Municipal policies and regulations; more information is required regarding the actual farming operation to support the request for a second dwelling for farm accommodation. Therefore, for the reasons stated, PAAC does not support the application.

#### **b) 5927 West Saanich Road – Non-farm Use on ALR Land & Temporary Use Permit (Saanich Referral)**

The proposal is for A-1 zoned ALR property is to use a portion of the lot to store heavy-capacity tow trucks on an existing gravel pad. PAAC has been asked to provide comments indicating: no objection; generally no objection with suggested changes or concerns; or does not support the project, providing reasons.

Comments were noted as follows:

- This is basically a commercial operation on agricultural land.
- There are regulations for farm worker accommodations on ALR land, but consideration can be given to a commercial operation?
- Many other uses for the existing gravel pad support farming – such as greenhouses or container growing.
- Acknowledged that every farm needs parking for some heavy farm equipment – but this is for tow trucks, which has nothing to do with agriculture.
- It is understood that the land was recently purchased.

Recommendation: That PAAC does not support the application for non-farm use on the ALR property at 5927 West Saanich Road to store heavy-capacity towing equipment as it is not an agricultural use.

## **AGRICULTURAL ISSUES: CURRENT**

### **a) Saanich Farm worker Housing Policy – Pierre Iachietti**

In 2007, Saanich Council passed a Motion that staff explore farm worker accommodations. The ALC, PAAC and the Ministry of Agriculture have provided input; an ad hoc committee was stuck to review the current situation and make recommendations.

A report has been drafted and is waiting for review by senior staff; at this time he is unsure when it will be proceeding to Council. The report remains unchanged from the last time it was reviewed by PAAC.

The new ALC regulations issued late last year dealt in part with A-zoned properties with farm status within the ALR. At this time, there are policies that limit the ability for owners to build a second home on the property.

The current zoning limits the type of properties that can support farm worker accommodations. Once this has been determined, a Temporary Use Permit (TUP) will be the tool to approve any farm worker housing for a 3-year period – similar to the policy adopted by Central Saanich.

Saanich has discussed the regulations with Central Saanich in order to keep the process streamlined. The TUP would have the ability to extend approval for a further 3 years, and then if there are no major concerns, a more permanent option would be considered.

In response to a comment from PAAC regarding the housing shortage crisis, it is possible the provincial changes could allow the 2<sup>nd</sup> dwelling for rentals without necessarily being for a family member. Certain Saanich policies are more restrictive and hopefully these policies and the new ALC regulations will keep things in check.

PAAC discussion noted:

- The farmer may have to take out a mortgage and go to great expense to build the accommodations. Initial approval is only for 3 years, with no guarantee it would be approved for a further 3 years, is a concern.
- It is understood that according to current policies, if a farmer were permitted to rent out a second dwelling on his property, the rental income must not exceed the farm income.
- Pierre noted the new ALC changes add complications; the federal agricultural programme for foreign farm workers specifies the minimum square footage for their requirements. What Saanich is proposing is stricter than the ALC regulations: the rental definitely has to be for farm workers, whereas the ALC permits rental to non-farm workers.
- In response to a question about whether the farmer would be required to verify that the on-farm accommodation is to support farm operations, Pierre stated this is included in the Saanich policy, which is still under review by staff and Council.

### **b) Central Saanich OCP**

A Focus Meeting is planned for 2:00 pm, March 16<sup>th</sup> at the Saanich Fairgrounds.

Councillor Thompson stated:

- There are some fascinating statements in the OCP policies regarding agriculture.
  - The upcoming March 16<sup>th</sup> focus meeting is a unique opportunity to have a special session for farmers. There will be lots of opportunity to asked questions and get clarification on issues.
  - Bev Marley, Terry Michell and Larry Sluggett planned to attend.
- c) **Proposed Drainage Sub-Committee** (Terry, Larry & Mike)
- Terry advised he will be talking with Larry and Mike tomorrow; he has also asked Phil Christie to join in the conversation.
- e) **Water Update – Michael Doehnel** – not present

## COMMENTS, UPDATES & CONCERNS RE FARMING OPERATIONS:

Ministry of Agriculture representative:

- Emily Carmichael advised she will be leaving the Ministry of Agriculture and relocating to the Ministry of Environment. Her position has been posted and she assured PAAC that someone will be at the next meeting. She suggested Jeff Weightman could be the Ministry of Agriculture Rep.

Sea Bluff Farm:

- There has been a successful farm succession transfer of Sea Bluff farm from the previous owner, Bob Mitchell, who recently died, to Robin and her husband, Sasha Kubicek.

## CORRESPONDENCE

- a) Letter from PAAC to Central Saanich & Saanich regarding Drainage Committee.
- b) Letter from PAAC to supporting municipalities asking for support to recommend that the Farm Industry Review Board consider an increase in poultry and egg pricing to reflect the recent increases in chicken feed and the fuel surcharges.
- Dianne thanked PAAC for writing to the municipalities in support of the chicken industry to petition FIRB for a price increase in sale of poultry and eggs.
  - She noted there has been some reprieve for the next 2 eight-week cycles, with an interim increase of 6 cents for live chickens and a 20 cent increase for eggs as of March 6, to help cover extra costs from feed and fuel surcharges.
  - As of late this afternoon, there will be a 52% fuel surcharge on delivery of additives for mash and grains.
  - She shipped chickens last week and drivers were complaining about driving to the Island. The situation with the high gas prices is only going to get worse as they get paid by the load and not the distance they drive.
  - Farm's costs went up \$30,000 over last year – and this for just for feed in an 8-week cycle. Contracts are signed one year in advance, so there will be no change until September, and prices may then sky-rocket for propane to heat the barns. Over the year it will be horrific with the added costs that we will incur and we will not know until our last cycle for the year.

Hopefully the summer will see grains come down in price. But with the war in Ukraine it might not change.

Terry agreed that prices are going through the roof for fuel, labour, fertilizers, feed, etc.

- Farmers are going to have to watch the bottom line this year.
- There has been and 18% increase in cardboard cartons for shipping as well as a 14% increase in plastic bags.
- It is not only the price increase issues, but the supply chain difficulties.
- He doesn't know how this will play out with what farmers are recouping from retailers.

## **VANCOUVER ISLAND AGRICULTURE ADAPATION GROUP – Bob Maxwell - Carry**

### **MEMBERSHIP**

Two applications have been received; a third is expected. When received, the applications will be forwarded to the municipalities for approval.

### **ANNUAL REPORT**

The secretary reminded those members who had not submitted their sub-committee reports to send them to hear as soon as possible.

**NEXT MEETING:** The next PAAC meeting is scheduled for Thursday, April 14, 2022 at 7:00 pm by ZOOM

**ADJOURNMENT:** The meeting adjourned at 8.45 p.m.

---

Isobel Hoffmann, Recording Secretary

### **PARKING LOT (Pending Issues)**

1. T-5 slip from 2020 & 2021 further to interest on PAAC's GIC
2. Grape & Fruit Atlas for Vancouver Island
3. 50<sup>th</sup> Celebration of ALR 2023 (ALC & Ministry of Agriculture)
4. Appointment of new representative from Minister's Office
5. Additional Farm Tours with Brian Spencer for Council members (Spring 2022)
6. Agriculture in the Classroom
7. Agricultural Land Reserve Inventory
8. Rising cost of poultry operations & discussions with FIRB
9. Response from Water Commission re variances in municipal water rates
10. Saanich Fair Booth