

**PENINSULA & AREA AGRICULTURAL COMMISSION MEETING
HELD BY ZOOM
THURSDAY JULY 14, 2022, 7:00 PM**

In attendance: Robin Tunnicliffe in the Chair; Larry Sluggett; Dianne Williamson; Anita Bull; Katie Underwood; and Isobel Hoffmann, Recording Secretary.

Guests: Bob Maxwell; Andrea Pickard, Central Saanich; Megan Halstead, Regional Agrologist.

Regrets: Satnam Dheenshaw, Linda Geggie; Terry Michell; Jenni Michell.

Minutes: Adoption of the May 12, 2022 Minutes was carried forward to the next meeting as there was no quorum at the start of the meeting.

Note: This was a special meeting held to respond to Central Saanich's proposed bylaw regarding Maber Flats Wetlands (proposed rezoning from A-1 to A-2).

A report was prepared for Central Saanich Council's consideration at the May 24, 2022 meeting, and Council asked that PAAC provide comments. The report, including two additional maps of the proposed A-2 zone, one with an orthophoto background and one showing the Riparian and Sensitive Aquatic Development Permit Area as Appendices B and C respectively. This information been distributed to PAAC members.

The draft bylaw would rezone the area generally referred to as Maber Flats from the Agriculture A-1 zone to a new Maber Wetlands Agriculture A-2 zone that would restrict the permitted uses to agriculture only.

BACKGROUND (excerpt from the staff report)

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At the April 4, 2022 Special Council meeting the following resolutions were passed:

1. That the District hereby begins the preparation of a bylaw to amend Land Use Bylaw No. 2072, 2021 to prohibit any use other than "Agriculture" (as that term is used in the Land Use Bylaw) of the lands described as the List of Maber Flats Properties in Appendices B and C of the report from the Director of Planning and Building Services dated March 31, 2022.
2. That the Building Inspector is directed to bring to Council for its consideration under section 463 of the Local Government Act, as soon as practically possible after it is received, any building permit application that is considered to be in conflict with the amendment bylaw that is under preparation.

Andrea Pickard, Planner with Central Saanich was present to elaborate on the application and answer questions. She stated:

- Maber Flats has seasonal flooding and this has always been an issue.
- The area is underdeveloped and there is no residential use.
- The proposed boundary amendment from A-1 to A-2 allows agriculture as a permitted use, but residential use is not allowed.

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- This addresses some of the key questions about residential use: the need for roads, hard surfaces, etc., will no longer be an issue and this will allow the District to sort out the drainage, manage the land and improve the water management system.
- The proposed changes will have no impact of farming.

Larry Sluggett stated:

- He noted the bylaw has been a work in progress for some time.
- This is the first time the farming community has heard about the bylaw.
- It seems the bylaw affects a small portion of the property that turns into a lake in the winter.
- The land is very wet, and gets wetter each year; he cannot imagine building on the site.
- He noted about 10 acres on the west side of the roadway floods every year – 18” or higher.
- Is the proposed bylaw consistent with the ALC's regulations, and is there any conflict with the fact that housing is permitted on farmland?

Andrea Pickard stated:

- The draft bylaw was sent to Council earlier this year. The District has some new staff focused on the natural environment so we can finally get some clear direction.
- She appreciates that the agricultural community has been frustrated with the flooding and she pointed out that work was completed recently to improve the channel flow.
- There is no conflict with ALC regulations; legislation allows residential use on agricultural land but the municipalities do not have to allow this, depending on the individual circumstances.
- The District has officially referred the draft bylaw to the ALC.
- In answer to a question about why the bylaw applies to A-2 zones and not A-1, she stated most of the land will remain in the A-1 zone. Part of the property has to be a different zone to include the restriction of no residences.

Bob Maxwell stated:

- He thought the proposal was a good step. Saanich for example has a 200 year flood plain restriction that you cannot build on agricultural land below the 200 year flood plain.
- As an environmental habitat, these Saanich areas have old abandoned farmed peat bogs and low lands that now give back to nature and serve as carbon sinks.
- To some degree he doesn't feel too sorry for the farming community, who have had their day farming on the peat bogs for over a 100 years until the land subsided (about 6 to 8 feet) and would not drain any more.
- Tod Creek Flats is another example of this.
- Below Keating X Road on the south side of Maber Flats there is a significant ground water discharge zone, which is very valuable to the water input to Maber flats – and likely the major water input.
- Currently there is waste earth filling taking place – and many years ago the District buried the Brentwood Spring site, which was at one time the drinking water source for Brentwood prior to the CRD water line expansion.
- He questioned the status of the water discharge now. The District owns the property where the Spring is located and hopefully they never sell the property. If treated, in times of emergency, this area might be a backup source of drinking water.

- He hoped the A-2 zone includes this southern peat margin – which is in the ALR.
- This area according to the historical groundwater/well water licenses report by (MoE); the total licenses add to about 2.8 million cubic meters per year, and this is where Maber Flats likely got most of its water.
- He doesn't think the ALR properties along southern boundary zone are included in the bylaw, and he noted people are beginning to bring in fill. The Municipality should offer to buy the ground water discharge areas from these owners so Maber Flats can continue to receive as much water as possible.
- We also have to think in the case of a major earthquake some of the CRD's water lines could be damaged and it could be weeks before they are repaired. He questioned why the District buried the springs in the first place.
- The area now has about 14' of fill and Douglas-fir have been planted. Fifteen years ago he walked down to the municipal property and he could see clean water bubbling out. There are/were at least eight or nine spots where water bubbles out along the peat face and into the ditch.
- With recent construction in the Keating area and the resulting paved areas (ie: driveways), we will see a lot of oil and antifreeze drips; currently some of these patches have worn out the asphalt. All this pollution goes into Maber Flats – and the more development, the more the land will be affected.
- Washington State protects its waterways with something called the “octopus”, which is used to protect waterways from pollutants. The “octopus” is put into the outflow area and it attracts and captures heavy metals. Does anyone check for heavy metals in the water?

Andrea confirmed:

- She is aware there are a number of BC Hydro easements in this area and she did question if the subdivided lands further south towards Keating X Road should be included.
- She agreed Bob makes some good observations, and we have known all along that the boundary may change again in the future.
- We have yet to consult with the hydrologist and she will speak to the viability of this area.
- She agreed it is something the District definitely needs to look into.

Larry Sluggett stated:

- Is the proposed new zone just going to be limited to the Maber Flats area?
- What about the Martindale Valley? And there is 20+ acres for sale on Lochside Drive at a low elevation – would a person be able to get a building permit?
- He noted the people who own the polo grounds on Wallace Drive have brought in a lot of fill over the past twenty years. His property borders this land and the polo fields are now about 6' higher than his property.
- The map attached to the draft bylaw indicates two lots. Even though the level has been raised, is this land still considered part of the flood plain?
- Two dykes were installed by the province about ten years ago on either side of Maber Flats, which completely altered the land and has increased the flooding. Remediation should have been done beforehand.

Andrea stated:

- A lot of work has gone into developing the concept plan and the District wants to get this moving and get something accomplished.

- Staff and Council area aware of water and flooding issues in other areas of the District.
- Regarding building permits – a geotechnical report would be required before one is considered; the onus would be on the property owner.
- The District has an Integrated Storm Water Management Plan and is starting to establish long-term baseline data.
- Regarding the polo lands, she will take a closer look but she believes the property is still within the flood plain. She noted there is a channel between the two properties.
- A computer map prepared by the CRD with recent data provide is more accurate.
- Boundaries were double checked, but she will look at it again.
- Regarding the dyke construction from 10 years ago, this is why the District is requesting the hydrologist look into the issues.

Megan Halstead, Regional Agrologist stated:

- It seems the municipality is trying to prevent residential buildings within certain areas.
- In her opinion this is a sensible move and could set a precedent.
- The ALC regulations often address residential and agricultural components, but not always water.
- With this proposed bylaw, the municipality is doing something innovative.

MOTION: Moved by Anita Bull and Seconded by Larry Sluggett: “That the Peninsula and Area Agricultural Commission supports the proposed Bylaw Amendment to rezone a portion of the land as outlined on the maps known at Maber Flats from A-1 to A-2 to prohibit residential building on the land.”

CARRIED

Request for Financial Support from Bob Thompson for a stand alone display at the Saanich Fair.

- Bob Thompson had sent an email requesting PAAC financially support the construction of a stand alone farm display for the Saanich Fair and help with promotional materials.
- PAAC normally participates in the Saanich Fair but it is proving difficult to get hands on help for the three days of the fair. By contributing to this project, it helps to fulfill PAAC's mandate regarding agriculture and education.
- Bob is able to get some donations from other sources but has asked that PAAC provide financial support and hopefully some volunteer time as well.
- Not all members saw Bob's email. This will be recirculated and Bob will be asked to submit a formal request for funds, which can be addressed through an email vote as PAAC is not meeting again until September.
- Some acknowledgement of PAAC's support should be noted on the display.

NEXT MEETING: The next PAAC meeting is scheduled for Thursday, September 8, 2022 at 7:00 pm

ADJOURNMENT: The meeting adjourned at 8:25 pm

Isobel Hoffmann, Recording Secretary