

**PENINSULA & AREA AGRICULTURAL COMMISSION MEETING
COMMITTEE ROOM #2 – SAANICH MUNICIPAL HALL
THURSDAY SEPTEMBER 8 2022, 7:00 PM**

In attendance: Robin Tunnicliffe in the Chair; Linda Geggie; Dianne Williamson; Anita Bull; Katie Underwood (by ZOOM); Councillors Smith (N. Saanich), Thompson (Central Saanich) De Vries (Saanich) and Isobel Hoffmann, Recording Secretary.

Guests: Mike Doehnel

Regrets: Satnam Dheenshaw; Terry Michell; Jenni Michell; Larry Sluggett

Minutes: The May 12 and July 14, 2022 Minutes were adopted as circulated.

A thank you card was circulated for Bev Marley, who resigned from PAAC this summer after serving on the Commission for over 20 years. PAAC is very grateful for her wisdom, dedication and time that Bev gave to promote and support agriculture.

The Chair suggested that as this is the first in person meeting since March 2020, and we have some new members, everyone introduce themselves, say a few words about how they have coped over the past two and a half years and if they have anything to report on current farming operations. *Note: these comments are included below under the relevant headings.*

TREASURER'S REPORT

a) Election of Treasurer

- Bob Maxwell is still a signing authority for PAAC; the Secretary is now able to access the Island Savings account to check balances but has no authority to write or sign cheques.
- The PAAC members present suggested that Jenni Michell be nominated as Chair; Jenni was not present at the meeting to accept the nomination. The secretary will contact her to see if she is willing to stand as Treasurer, and if so circulate a Motion to PAAC members for an email vote.
- An authorization letter would then be prepared for Island Savings accordingly.

b) Renewal of GIC and Return of Funds Borrowed Funds to Saanich

- Bob Maxwell arranged to withdraw \$4,000 from PAAC's GIC when it was up for renewal in August. This amount was to cover the \$4,000 donation PAAC approved to the Guardians of the Mid-Island Estuaries to support its goose management programme. The money was "borrowed" from PAAC's account, held by Saanich, in the interim until the renewal date for the GIC.
- Current balances: \$17,005 in a cashable GIC, due in August 2023; \$1,586 in the chequing account.

c) Funding for Saanich Fair (Bob Thompson)

- PAAC previously approved up to \$250 for supplies for the Saanich Fair display.
- Bob submitted an invoice for \$188.90. He advised many other groups, including the Saanich Fair, contributed to the project.
- (see more under Saanich Fair)

SPEAKER'S BUREAU

- No speakers scheduled. The following names were put forward as potential speakers and Linda offered to follow up as part of our education program for the PAAC members:
 - Adam Olsen, Agriculture Critic
 - Lana Popham, Minister of Agriculture
 - Dale Green, CRD to speak to new regulations proposed for agricultural drainage issues.
 - A Tsartlip First Nations representative to speak about current status of Woodwyn Farm.
 - The land manager from the Paugachin First Nations to speak to the Glen Meadows property.

AGRICULTURAL ISSUES: NEW – nothing to report

AGRICULTURAL ISSUES: CURRENT

a) Saanich Farm Worker Housing Policy update

- Councillor Zac De Vries reported that the Farm Worker Housing Policy was meant to be considered by Council recently; however, it was a full agenda and one item took up a lot of time. The FWH policy will be considered at another date. *Tentatively scheduled November 21.*
- Councillor De Vries will forward a copy of the report to the secretary as it was noted that PAAC had not received a copy to date, although they had made major contributions to the issue of Farm Worker Housing.
- The secretary will contact Planning to see if there is a staff replacement for Pierre Iachieti.

b) Water update & CRD Water 2022 Master Plan – Mike Doehnel

- Mike Doehnel reported that the CRD Board approved the Regional Water Supply 2022 Master Plan on August 10, 2022, prepared by Stantec Engineering.
- It was approved by the Regional Water Supply Commission in July to implement an infrastructure programme over the next 30 years, taking into consideration population, climate change, water treatment and Island Health regulatory requirements.
- The plan will be assessed on a five to ten year cycle to consider new information; each project will require CRD Board budget approval. Some of the projects include filtration plants, a second deep intake in the north basin of the Sooke Lake Reservoir. More details at: <https://getinvolved.crd.bc.ca/2022-regional-water-supply-master-plan>
- PAAC and other stakeholders will be involved in the process.
- The CRD Water Services has accepted the RFP from Stantec to review water rates for agriculture in the CRD.
- Mike stated so many CRD reports and documents have been shelved and never looked at again. Non-farmers don't want to lose cheap water. Subsidies that initially started at around \$500,000 are now as high as \$2 million.
- Questioned whether the local councils and the Saanich Peninsula Water Commission have seen the Master Plan with its lack of intent in recognizing regional food production. Noted that all municipalities have representatives that sit on the CRD Board and they should be reporting back to the Councils.

c) Saanich Fair – Bob Thompson

- Bob submitted an invoice for costs associated with the farm stand for the Saanich Fair.
- A few volunteers from PAAC helped out and he recruited some other volunteers.
- Basically it is three 3-hour shifts each day for a total of nine shifts.
- The stand also secured the prime 30' space which had been used by PAAC for over 20 years.
- He suggested having a group of contributors and to network with community partners makes it less work for PAAC and is definitely the way to go in the future.
- This is a great opportunity to work together, and he agreed with Linda that the stand can be adapted each year for a different display noting there are 3 major elements:
 1. The Farm Stand
 2. The 4' x 2' map
 3. The theme area

d) Education: Shortlist for education-related projects & other info – Linda Geggie

- Linda stated CRFAIR organized the **North Saanich Flavor Trail** this year; there were over 500 attendees to the main event and the NS Market showed increased participation over other weekends.. CRFAIR is collecting reviews from the participating farmers on the success of the event.
- September 22 will see the launch of the expanded processing kitchen at the **South Island Farm Hub**, which is supported by 30 producers and 30 farmers. Food is still being diverted to charities for community support; they are able to buy food at subsidized prices – the farmers however get full price for their goods. Additional products are being developed to process seasonal abundance and add value to primary products –pesto, tomato sauces and deli salads.
- **In addition to the comments above, the PAAC table also suggested:**
 - CRD Water Drainage issues and invite someone from the CRD to speak to PAAC;
 - Representatives from Woodwyn Farm and Glen Meadows (Tsartlip Nation);
 - the Supply Gap Infrastructure;
 - Farmers for Climate Change;
 - Agriculture in the Classroom.

Carry for further discussion.

e) Spring Farm tour 2023 for New Council Members & others

- Linda Geggie suggested PAAC organize a farm tour next spring for the new council members.
- This has been something PAAC has initiated after each election. Staff are invited also.
- New Councillors may or may not have a good understanding about agriculture and this gives them a first hand view and clear information.
- The model used in the past – visiting 3 or 4 farms that show the diversity of agriculture in this area, perhaps a winery or brewery, with a lunch stop works well.
- Council members suggested that a notice be sent out early to councils to “save the date” as calendars fill up quickly.
- Linda suggested that PAAC consider putting some of our budget towards this educational event for policy makers

Carry for more discussion at the next meeting.

COMMENTS, UPDATES, CONCERNS RE FARMING OPERATIONS

Chicken Feed Prices

- Dianne Williamson (Firbank Farms) reported that FIRB may have a decision in December about proposed increases in chicken prices due to the rising cost of chicken feed and transportation costs. Producers have been waiting for 2 years for a definitive answer.
- Last year, feed sold for \$510/tonne; now it is \$825/tonne.
- This results in an average cost of \$40,000 per cycle and by the end of this year her costs will have increased by at least \$100,000 or more.
- She noted that the price of chicken has risen in the grocery stores but the increases don't trickle down to the producers and farmers – they only get 50 cents more per bird.
- The cost of eggs has increased – but not the meat side.

Harvests & Winter Planting

- Anita Bull stated that her squash harvest is a couple of weeks behind, but she has grown over 45,000 lbs of squash on 3 acres for Thrifty Foods this year. No mildew on the plants – yet.
- Mike Doehnel reported he has harvested 50 tonnes of grain to date. The weather has been perfect. The grain is used for malting – 500,000 litres per year. He noted you can malt basically anything that germinates. He also planted 500 acres in flax seed.
- Robin Tunnicliffe stated she visited the Field Five Farm on Hovey Road, operated by Mike Doehnel and Kyle Michell. They are having an event on September 24. She was very impressed with the entire operation.
- All the crops on Robin's Sea Bluff Farm are doing very well. She was able to plant on time although she acknowledged that many farmers in Saanich were not able to due to the wet, cool spring weather – this has delayed harvesting and will also delay winter planting.
- Katie Underwood stated it has been a good summer and she has extended her growing space. She is attempting to extend her lease with the landowners. The property is just over 2 acres, with another half acre being cultivated, and it is located on Prospect Lake Road at Burnside Road. She manages the farm and her partner helps on the weekends.

CORRESPONDENCE

OTHER BUSINESS

- a) Letter to Saanich Planning re 5963 West Saanich Road ALR application** – Received for information
- b) Letter to Saanich Planning re 4621/4631 Pipeline Road ALR application** – Received for information
- c) Beckwith ALR Applications**
 - Anita Bull mentioned Council considered an ALR application for a property on Beckwith. She questioned why PAAC was not sent a copy when we had received others in the past.

- Apparently there are a few more applications on Beckwith to be considered in the future. There needs to be consistency and she hoped the remaining Beckwith applications would be sent to PAAC.
- The Beckwith landowner informed Council that the land was not good for farming, which was the reason given for removing the property from the ALR. She noted that PAAC would likely have a better idea on the quality of the land for farming and they should have been asked for an opinion.
- Councillor De Vries stated Council knows it was not appropriate to weigh in on the quality of the land and therefore sent the application to the ALC without a recommendation. He did not know why the application was not referred to PAAC on this occasion.
- Dianne Williamson noted that the viability of farmland is diminishing. It continues to be eroded and used for industrial and commercial purposes. When are the municipalities going to say 'enough'?
- Councillor De Vries was asked to forward agricultural-related applications to PAAC if he notices PAAC has not been included in the distribution.

OTHER BUSINESS

- a) **Vancouver Island Agricultural Adaptation Group – Bob Maxwell** – not present
- b) **PAAC Membership – New members appointed, resignation of Bev Marley**
New members Anita Bull, Jenni Michell and Katie Underwood have now been officially appointed. We could still use a couple more members.
- c) **Appointment of Bob Maxwell to the Farmlands Trust** – Congratulations Max!
- d) **Cancel ZOOM in favour of in person meetings at Saanich Hall** – Agreed to cancel as members prefer in person meetings. If required, both Linda and Robin have ZOOM and we can use their connections.
- e) **Review of Robert's Rules of Order Simplified - handout**
The information was distributed. Brief discussion ensued regarding what discussion items require official motions. Typically this would be items that require appointment of members and involving money. Reading through the Rules is a good refresher to ensure proper protocol and code of conduct are adhered to.

UPCOMING EVENTS/WEBINARS

- **Christmas Gathering December 8, 2022**
 - All agreed it was a good idea to have an in person Christmas Gathering. The Secretary offered to book the clubhouse at Twin Oaks Village in Sidney (no charge). Details to follow.

NEXT MEETING: The next PAAC meeting is scheduled for Thursday, October 13, 2022 at 7:00 pm

ADJOURNMENT: The meeting adjourned at 9:00 pm

Isobel Hoffmann, Recording Secretary