



**MINUTES OF THE
PENINSULA AGRICULTURAL COMMISSION**
Committee Room 2, Saanich Municipal Hall
Thursday, APRIL 14, 2017 AT 7:00 PM

Present: Jack Mar in the Chair; Phil Christie; Bernadette Greene; Linda Geggie; Bob Maxwell; Terry Michell; Larry Sluggett; Dianne Williamson; Councillors Murray Weisenberger, North Saanich; Alicia Holman, Central Saanich; and Robin Tunnicliffe, Metchosin. Also present was Isobel Hoffmann, Recording Clerk.

Guests: Mike Badry, Conservation Officer, Ministry of Environment, Kevin Brown, Michael Doehnel.
Regrets: Councillor Graham; Satnam Dheenshaw; Bernadette Greene, Carol Davidson, Bev Marley.

Minutes: Moved by Bob Maxwell and Seconded by Phil Christie: "That the Minutes of March 9, 2107 be adopted as circulated."

CARRIED

TREASURER'S REPORT – Carol Davidson – Not Present

Phil Christie reported on the finance sub-committee meeting held to consider a proposed annual budget for PAAC. Larry Sluggett, Carol Davidson and Phil Christie attended.

- It is understood that PAAC gets a small operating budget of \$2,000 per year from the sponsoring municipalities; these funds are retained by Saanich accounting and used throughout the year for expenses related to the Saanich Fair, honorariums, educational material, etc. Any unused funds are carried over to the next year.
- Thanks to the Fruit Growers Association's donation of \$25,000 last year, we now have capital to contribute to other programmes, support workshops and larger projects.
- It was noted there are probably other monetary sources available to PAAC through various grants, and if we were successful in applying for this funding, we would be able to make a bigger impact.
- Hiring a grant writer was discussed; he thought this would be a good idea.
- The sub-committee discussed a number of areas where funds could be applied but he will let the Treasurer speak to this.
- He noted this was just general discussion by the sub-committee; no decisions have been made.

Councillor Holman stated speaking from Council's perspective, she doesn't know how the current Terms of Reference affects PAAC's ability to apply for grants.

The secretary was requested to send copies of the Terms of Reference to both Councillor's Holman and Weisenberger.

Bob Maxwell noted there used to be a Farmers' Institute but now PAAC is one of the only farmers' groups in the region.

SPEAKER'S BUREAU:

Chris Lowe from the CRD was scheduled to speak about a survey on the application of bio-solids to crops but was unable to attend.

A brief discussion ensued:

- The topic of using bio-solids on agricultural lands keeps coming up at CRD meetings.
- Questioned whether the CRD has sent out a survey questionnaire to farmers yet.
- Apparently there are problems with Class-A bio-solids in the Okanagan.
- Food safety is a huge concern due to pharmaceuticals in the bio-solids.
- At the last Wastewater Commission meeting there was a request to survey the agricultural sector; the Commission has heard the concerns and issues involved and it is understood consultation with the farmers is a must.
- The CRD wants to do a pilot project on the application of bio-solids.
- PAAC heard a presentation on this at a meeting a few years ago. There was a lot of discussion and many concerns were raised.
- It is disappointing the CRD and the soils people don't have scientists conduct a study: we still don't know the kind of health issues we can expect and the rate of accumulation in our soils.
- No one has asked people in the USA about pharmaceuticals; are there still traces in the bio-solids? If so, how long do they last?
- It is understood millions of dollars have been spent on this, and yet a 5-year study can't be done?
- Vantreight Farms and Woodwyn Farms was going to spread bio-solids on their farms many years ago and the CRD was going to study the effects.
- The Department of Fisheries and Oceans has increased the size of the 'no fishing' zone around the Peninsula outfall area.
- Europe is now moving away from the use of bio-solids – and they have been using them for hundreds of years.
- Councillor Holman was concerned that the CRD is not going thru the proper channels – such as PAAC and the local agricultural advisory committees, before surveying the farmers.
- Noted there was a motion at the last Saanich Peninsula Wastewater Commission meeting to ask the CRD to survey farmers and foresters, which the CRD plans to do.

CORRESPONDENCE

- a) Reply received from the Saanich Administrative Traffic Committee in response to PAAC's letter about truck traffic and non-farm activities in the Blenkinsop Valley. The Traffic Committee recommended additional monitoring along with a police speed trailer on Blenkinsop Road to encourage motorists to comply with posted speed limits. Truck traffic along the corridor will also be reviewed. It was also noted that zoning regulations re farm stands state they must be located on site and at least one on site parking space provided.

The letter was received for information. Nathalie Chambers to be advised accordingly.

BUSINESS ARISING

- a) **Carnivores Alliance** – review of draft letter in response to presentation by Nitya Harris (Mar 9)

Copies of the draft correspondence was circulated to the Commission.

Mike Badry, Conservation Officer with the Ministry of Environment was present to provide some clarification on the matter.

- He understands that Nitya Harris asked PAAC for support for the proposed Carnivore Strategy.
- He is a member of the Carnivore Alliance; the group is trying to promote the idea of conflict reduction in all areas – agriculture, First Nations, and our communities.
- This particular proposal talks about doing things that have happened elsewhere.
- The group understands what the level of conflicts are but in no way does this change any current legislation or change the ability of a property owner to protect themselves and their livestock.
- The strategy is more about developing tools and testing them to see if they work – and if successful, proceeding with implementation and acquiring funding.
- If there were carnivore conflicts affecting livestock on your farm, it would not change the process that is now in place.

Robin Tunnicliffe stated:

- The draft letter to Ms. Harris and attachments were circulated to the Metchosin Agricultural Advisory Committee. Some thought the Alliance was pro-carnivore and didn't go far enough, but she thinks we can work with the wording a little. Metchosin's comments are included in the attachments.

Mr. Badry continued:

- The public sees attempts being made to reduce wildlife conflicts as a positive thing.
- We have a healthy population of predators but we can use a lot of the same techniques as the USA to address predators.
- There will still be lethal control to protect livestock and people. We do not remove enough carnivores to have an effect on the populations. We do not do population-control.
- A carnivore that attacks and kills livestock would be removed – that will not change.
- Conflicts can vary from year to year; on the years with more conflicts, populations would decrease and the following year or two we don't have as many conflicts - but populations return to normal levels in a short time.
- Cougars are the jumpers and can leap high fences. It is easier to control bears and wolves.
- We need to be practical: we cannot save every predator.

Phil Christie stated:

- his information is different from what he understood from Ms. Harris's presentation. She had indicated X number of bears and cougars were killed annually. Mr. Badry's comments about lethal control should be included in her literature.
- As a PAAC member, he is obligated to speak for the farmers and we don't want a programme that will indoctrinate the public and put farmers in a bad light when they are just protecting their animals.

With respect to the draft letter from PAAC to Ms. Harris offering conditional approval, Mr. Badry noted the Alliance would have a better chance of getting funding if the letter was a little more positive. He offered to rework the letter with Bob Maxwell and Phil Christie. It was agreed that the attachment with the comments collect from PAAC meetings and emails should be forwarded to Ms. Harris for her information and it will be up to her if she wants to include this with the funding application.

b) CRD Water Advisory Commission Appointment

Jack Mar reported that he asked Greg Michell as suggested if he wanted to be a member of the WAC but unfortunately he does not have the time. Bryce Rashleigh was approached and he is thinking about it. It was noted the meetings are short – perhaps two hours at the most. Another suggestion was Bob Michell (Metchosin). Robin said she would ask Bob to see if he was interested. Jack will also continue to search for a replacement.

PAAC HISTORICAL AGRICULTURE & FOOD PROJECT – Linda Geggie

The Secretary has made contact with Valerie Green, local author and historian, who has expressed interest in conducting the interviews of long-time farmers. Noted an official contract will need to be prepared – Saanich has a standard contract for service. A Motion was passed at the March meeting to allot up to \$1500 towards this project.

General discussion noted some other names to add to the list and Robin Tunnicliffe stated she will ask around in the Metchosin area:

1. The Doney Family
2. Frank Edgell
3. Carl and Adam Olsen
4. Gordon Galey
5. The Paul Family
6. The Ponchet Family
7. Saanich Peninsula Fruit Growers Association
8. Pat Hoole

AGRICULTURAL ISSUES – NEW

Winter Lecture Series: Island Pollinators Initiative (IPI)

A meeting was held last week at Central Saanich Municipal Hall. Councillor Bob Thompson and Norm Doerkson (Central Saanich), Jane Evans (Saanich), together with Bob Maxwell, Lora Morandin, Isobel Hoffmann. It was noted that it would be beneficial if each municipality could be represented with a staff person and a councillor.

Bob Maxwell stated:

- The intent was to have a staff and council representative from each municipality and to ascertain what each municipality was already doing with pollinator-friendly plantings on their roadsides and parks, etc.
- Norm Doerkson advised Central Saanich has a list of concepts, ideas and practices that consider bees and pollinators; try to put these into their planting guidelines.
- The IPI concept is being well received and this is very encouraging.

Linda Geggie noted:

- The plan is to gather key stakeholders together for a meeting in mid-May (TBA) to find out who is doing work on pollinators, get everyone together to share information, determine where the gaps are, and coordinate a plan.
- She sees IPI as a sharing platform, providing better coordination and organization than currently exists.

Bob Maxwell stated:

- Dr. Lora Morandin (Pollinator Partnership Canada) is taking the lead with the IPI and she currently works with other research groups. She is working on this new Island Pollinator Initiative off the side of her desk and on her own time; he suggested that PAAC could provide a small honorarium in order to keep this moving forward.

MOTION: Moved by Phil Christie and Seconded by Bob Maxwell: “That PAAC provide a \$200 honorarium to Dr. Lora Morandin to assist with the research and other work involved in the newly formed Island Pollinator Initiative.”

Carried

AGRICULTURAL ISSUES – CURRENT

a) Goose/Deer Management Strategy (Bev Marley) – not present

Discussion noted that there are not as many deer around now.

Terry Michell stated last week there were representatives from the provincial Wildlife Branch and he asked them why the goose cull in the Parksville area was so successful compared to the one on the Saanich Peninsula and how did the City manage to get a permit. The reps were going to look into this. They were apparently meeting with Derek Masselink and Jeff Weightman.

b) CRD Food & Agriculture Strategy (Linda Geggie)

The Task Force supported sending the Strategy to the CRD's Planning and Protective Services Committee.

- One of the things brought to the attention of the Task Force was doing a regional land use inventory. The last one was completed over 10 years ago. It is important to know what land and how much land is currently in production. There are lots of dynamics in play at the CRD level and unfortunately there was no support for a new inventory.
- Derek Masselink is working with Jeff Weightman to take the Strategy forward; they are going back to the drawing board and to re-submit some information to let the Board know why a new inventory is important.
- She noted we need a status update on what exactly the CRD is doing in each particular area and who is responsible. Areas include Wildlife Management; Education; Drainage; Water.
- This information will come back to PAAC eventually; it is important to keep moving forward.
- She will send the minutes of the Task Force meeting to Isobel to distribute to PAAC.

c) Saanich Agriculture and Food Security Plan – Jane Evans – no update

d) Shellfish Harvesting Community Update – Jack Mar – no further meetings held.

AGRICULTURAL STRATEGY – SUB-COMMITTEE REPORTS

a) Water (Michael Doehnel)

- The 2016 water usage for the municipalities was released a few days ago. He will have a full report at the next meeting as well as some of the trends.
- As expected, water use was higher last year due to the dry hot summer.

- Regarding the ag/residential rate versus the straight agricultural meters: this will be part of the discussions at the next CRD Water Board regarding what to do about continuing with the water subsidy.
- Terry Michell noted that the agricultural rate here is more expensive than the rate in Penticton and Kelowna. Michael explained our water is very highly treated and is fit for drinking. This is not the case for all water usage. The cost of a cubic metre of water is 50 cents; the agricultural rate is still 26 cents.

Councillor Holman noted at the CRD staff level, potential alternatives are being considered should there be another disruption of service to the CRD water system. Central Saanich Council has asked to be kept informed on any plans, whether there are any ground water sources that could be used for farming – and whether this would be beneficial.

Jack Mar stated that many wells are now abandoned and need new construction; it is not worthwhile. He noted one on Glynn Road used to pump 100 gallons/minute into the municipal system but it is now abandoned. We need bigger wells that produce more water.

Bob Maxwell noted the CRD abandoned the Brentwood Springs with five leases around 2007; each well at one time produced about 700,000 cubic meters per year – that is a lot of water. This is where all the water comes from on Maber Flats. This system should be preserved.

b) Farm Economics (Terry Michell)

- Planting will be later this year than last due to the wet soils.
- Farmers have fertilized their hay crops.
- Strawberries are growing well over the last few days – but won't be as early as last year.

c) Agricultural Land Base (Phil Christie)

- Nothing new to report at this time on Maber or Martindale Flats. If anything, with the heavy rains this spring it demonstrates how valuable proper drainage is because you can plant earlier.
- Terry Michell noted after 3 dry days, 3 acres in the Martindale Valley were under water. This morning after the rains 85 acres were under water.

Councillor Holman stated:

- The consultant hired by Central Saanich for the Maber Flats issue has started to gather input from stakeholders and has done some preliminary work. The objective is to determine what is valuable in terms of land.
- The area of land owned by the municipality is not enough to address the drainage concerns; Council approve exploring Graham Creek to see if improvements could be carried out – although elevations may be an issue.
- The consultant is looking at the concerns raised by the local agricultural committee. Unless there is a better understanding on what happens downstream further expense to have Mr. D. Zbeetnof revise his report are not recommended. Council wants to see what the consultants come up with regarding Graham Creek.

Jack Mar cautioned work around Graham Creek may end up flooding Woodwyn Farm; Councillor Holman stated she will share this information with the consultants.

Larry Sluggett stated the issue of whether there will be agricultural benefits is questionable.

d) Education and Outreach (Linda Geggie)

We only have two meetings left before the summer break to discuss plans for the Saanich Fair this year and she asked that we take some time at the next meeting to brainstorm. "Seeds and Breeds" is the theme this year. Discussion noted we had talked during an IPI meeting about focusing on pollinators. Jack pointed out that this is the 149th year for the Saanich Fair – and not the 150th as originally thought.

CR-Fair organized a fruit tree planting project recently. Le Couteau Farms donated 500 trees and students from five schools did the planting. Planting took place in North Saanich and around Newman Farms. First Nations were also involved.

The **Farmer2Farmer** event in February was once again very successful. A report and video was sent out to all attendees after the event. An element added this year was farm tours – which were well attended and well received.

Next year, the Island Agriculture Show will be held in Cowichan; this is a similar event to F2F and it is being considered whether we hold the F2F workshop or just focus on the farm tour aspect.

OTHER BUSINESS

Farm Gleaning (Robin Tunnickliffe)

Robin stated a few years ago Jesse Howardson spoke to PAAC about an initiative for a Farm Gleaning project. Metchosin now participates in the programme; Jesse comes every Tuesday morning to her farm to collect produce left over from the weekend market. Last year, Robin received a tax receipt from the Mustard Seed for \$10,000. This is a great programme – and Jesse does all the paperwork.

Terry Michell noted their farm does something similar with the Soup Kitchen Programme in Esquimalt. Twice a week volunteers collect produce from his farm and he receives a tax receipt. The programme has volunteer chefs who make meals for 100+ people daily based on what is collected from the farms.

Agreed that Jesse be invited to speak at the May 11, 2017 meeting.

Adjournment: On a Motion from Terry Michell the meeting adjourned at 8:45 pm

Next Meeting: The next regular PAC meeting is scheduled for **Thursday, May 11, 2017** at **7:00 PM**, Saanich Municipal Hall.

WEBSITE: Members were asked to advise of any information items to place on the website.

<http://saanich.ca/living/afs/index.html>

I hereby certify this is a true and correct copy of the Minutes.

Isobel Hoffmann
Recording Secretary