



**MINUTES OF THE
PENINSULA AGRICULTURAL COMMISSION**
Committee Room 2, Saanich Municipal Hall
Thursday, MAY 11, 2017 AT 7:00 PM

Present: Jack Mar in the Chair; Carol Davidson, Treasurer, Phil Christie; Bernadette Greene; Bev Marley; Terry Michell; Larry Sluggett; Dianne Williamson; Robin Tunnicliffe, Metchosin. Also present was Isobel Hoffmann, Recording Clerk.

Guests: Mayor Alice Finall, North Saanich; Michael Doehnel; Jane Evans, Saanich Planner; Jesse Howardson, LifeCycles;

Regrets: Councillors Graham and Weisenberger; Satnam Dheenshaw; Linda Geggie; Bob Maxwell.

Agenda: Moved by Bernadette Greene and Seconded by Phil Christie: "That the Sandown property be added to the Agenda."

CARRIED

Minutes: Moved by Phil Christie and Seconded by Dianne Williamson: "That the Minutes of April 14, 2107 be adopted as circulated."

CARRIED

TREASURER'S REPORT – Carol Davidson

- Cheque has been sent to Lora Morandin for \$200 as directed at the last meeting.
- Balance of \$1,048.89 in the chequing account.
- Balance of term deposits from Fruit Growers' Association is \$23,275.23; expires in August.
- We also have a \$1,000 term deposit that expires in October.
- She has looked into rates for Term Deposits – none of which are very good – being an average of 1.4%. Terms Deposits can be cashed at any time without penalty; slight advantage to 3-year term.
- Discussion ensued regarding various options and it was agreed to continue with Island Savings and renew the funds for a 36 month term.

Possible Grant Applications:

- Brief discussion regarding PAAC applying for government grants, and perhaps using a grant writer to apply on our behalf.
- Noted when applying for a grant, matching or otherwise, we need to have a specific project in mind. Bob Maxwell had prepared a "wish list" of projects. Suggested this list be reviewed and compared with the available grants to see if there anything compatible.
- The Ministry of Agriculture may know of some grant sources – but again noted we need to decide on a project first.
- Questioned whether it was within PAAC's mandate to apply for public funding. Noted that in the past we have applied for grants through Investment Agriculture (with the assistance of Rob Kline, District Agrologist) for the Farm Tour.
- Agreed it was worthwhile pursuing. Getting the list from Bob Maxwell would be the first step, then check on-line what grants are available and the criteria for applying.

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MOTION: Moved by Phil Christie and Seconded by Beverley Marley: “That PAAC support in principal researching available grants and the hiring of a grant writer if required.”

CARRIED

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.

Jesse Howardson: LifeCycles Farm Gleaning Project

Jesse stated:

- She spoke to PAAC a couple of years ago when this project was first initiated. It has been very successful and has a number of components, including the tree fruit project where volunteers harvest surplus fruit from home owners' gardens.
- This is the 3rd season for the Farm Gleaning project.
- When farmers have surplus produce, or a bumper crop, or left-over market produce, volunteers collect the food and distribute to two agencies: The Mustard Seed and the Fernwood Neighbourhood Resource Group (FNG).
- Farmers are issued tax receipts for the donated produce; currently 130 farmers are registered with the programme.
- LifeCycles connects with the farmers and coordinates the volunteers.
- Last year, we harvested 45,000 lbs of food; there is very little waste from the food collected.
- The Fernwood project is looking for more farm partners.

Robin Tunnicliffe stated this is a great project and she uses the services on a regular basis. The volunteers are very efficient, come with their own bins, harvest produce where directed, and she receives a nice tax receipt at the end of the year.

Jesse Howardson continued:

- We make it easy for the farmers to participate and understand that different farms have different rules or regulations.
- We call or email the farmers and they let us know when produce is available.
- Many farms have weekly standing orders.
- She understands that having a surplus is not something farmers plan for; you can call the programme at any time and they will be arranged for experienced pickers to collect the produce. They collect from any farm within the CRD.

In answer to questions, Jesse stated:

- LifeCycles has a contract to do this work; we have a budget which covers travel costs.
- Last year, Co-op was a sponsor and there are some grant monies available. VanCity is also a supporter.
- The volunteers are able to take home a portion of the produce harvested and those working for the Fernwood project get a box of food as many of the volunteers are food insecure.
- They work with the Food Share network; many agencies are involved and we work together.

- The Mustard Seed has a new warehouse and distribution centre with refrigeration that is part of the Food Share Network.

Jesse distributed information on the Fernwood Project and noted her email address should any farmers wish to contact her this season.

CORRESPONDENCE

- a) PAAC letter to Minister of Agricultural in appreciation for appointing a Regional District Agrologist.
- b) PAAC revised letter to Nitya Harris re support for the Carnivore Alliance after input from Mike Badry, Conservation Officer with Ministry of Environment.
- c) Letter from Central Saanich providing information on the Provincial Gypsy Moth Eradication Project.
- d) Letter from Central Saanich re Final Reporting on the Keating Business District. The implementation plan is on line at:

<https://www.centrialsaanich.ca/business-economy/keating-business-district>

BUSINESS ARISING

◆ CRD Water Advisory Commission Appointment

Robin Tunnicliffe stated that Bob Mitchell, a Metchosin Farmer and past councillor, has agreed to represent PAAC as a member on the WAC. He seems a natural fit. Isobel will advise Margaret Montague at the CRD accordingly.

Mike Doehnel, a past member on the WAC, suggested that Bob could contact him if he wanted some information before attending the first meeting.

◆ PAAC HISTORICAL AGRICULTURE & FOOD PROJECT – Linda Geggie

The Secretary advised that Valerie Green has now declined the offer to conduct the interviews for the historical project as she has no free time at the moment. Brad Morrison, who currently oversees the Sidney Museum, was suggested. Isobel will made contact and report back.

AGRICULTURAL ISSUES – NEW

◆ Winter Lecture Series: Island Pollinators Initiative (IPI)

Linda was not present to speak to this issue. Noted that Lora has prepared a grant application through VanCity Enviro Fund Proqramme. She had requested input from PAAC and other partners on the application.

CARRY for discussion at the next meeting

◆ **Water Meters**

Terry Michell stated farmers have contacted him regarding the cost of installing water meters in North Saanich - \$12,000 to \$15,000. He doesn't understand why a meter would be so expensive.

Mayor Finall stated:

- North Saanich has a very agriculture-supportive council and she is not aware of the wholesale cost for the meters. She invited any farmer with concerns to give her a call and she will look into it.

General discussion noted that a phased-in cost programme may help and there should be a standard cost for agriculture across the CRD. Jack Mar noted he installed a 2" meter on Martindale (Central Saanich) two years ago at a cost of \$4,500. By comparison, a similar installation on North Saanich cost a friend of his \$18,000.

AGRICULTURAL ISSUES – CURRENT

a) Goose/Deer Management Strategy (Bev Marley)

- Bev reported that one day of addling has taken place and Kate Hagmeir worked with the volunteers.
- We are trying to train more volunteers but there was limited funds available. We had to decide if we used some of the funds to apply for grants or use it all for addling this year.
- The Butler Pit apparently has 23 nests, but a lot of the eggs had already hatched.
- It is important that addling take place 2 or 3 times a year.
- The grant application is under review; if successful we can do another cull. Too late for this year, but we can roll the funds over to next year.
- Unfortunately there is no funding for a qualified vet or to hire a rep from the Canadian Wildlife Services in order to carry out a cull this year on the Peninsula. There is a cull taking place up-Island.
- The Victoria Airport is doing their own cull within the next few weeks.
- We may have to approach the municipalities for funding for the cull and addling.
- We also need someone to manage the programme.
- She asked if someone from Metchosin could get involved in the process.

Robin Tunnicliffe stated:

- There used to be many nests at the old gravel pit – now the Royal Bay development, but there are none now. She is not sure where the geese went.
- She was chasing geese off her property between early January and March.
- She will bring up the subject at their agricultural meeting next week.

Discussion noted:

- Often lengthy delays in receiving permits from the province.
- Saanich turned down a permit application on Old West Saanich Road.
- Permits cannot be issued within 100 m of a gazetted road – used or not. One farmer has an unused right-of-way running through his property, which he farms. It will never be used as a road and all agreed this is something that should be flexible on permit applications – it would be an easy fix.

b) CRD Food & Agriculture Strategy (Linda Geggie) - not present

c) Saanich Agriculture and Food Security Plan – Jane Evans

Jane requested time at the June meeting to update the Commission on the Plan.

d) Shellfish Harvesting Community Update – Jack Mar.

No further meetings held. Mayor Finall stated part of the issue is the CRD and local governments have no authority over the shoreline: It is Federal Government jurisdiction. Much of the pollution comes from the roads and some of the worst areas are around Sidney. A hydrological study was attempted about 10 years ago but only the first installment was completed. Until we know where the pollution is coming from it is hard to stop it.

e) Sandown Property – North Saanich

Mayor Finall stated that 10 months ago the Visions Sandown Report was completed. Public input has been received over a 16-month period on what residents would like to see happen to the property.

- It is important it be the property remain under public ownership.
- The report was extensive and was referred to PAAC for comment. There has been a delay because Council was not ready to deal with the issue. Although there are still a few issues to consider regarding the land transfer, Council is now in a position to direct staff to look into the issue again.
- Accordingly, we would like PAAC to look at the terms of the report and provide comments.
- The existing buildings are 50 years old – grandstand, restaurant, washrooms, etc. will be removed as a preliminary inspection indicates the cost of repairing them exceeds their value. Plus there is mould and asbestos.
- There is an existing water line to the property but she doesn't know the size. Drainage work needs to be done; that is the current owner's responsibility.
- In response to a question about Council's thoughts about agricultural use of this property and the fact that it is difficult for young farmers to make a start due to high land costs, Mayor Finall stated Council has not made a decision on this yet. We have had enquiries from farmers wishing the lease the land.

Bernadette Greene stated:

- There is limestone on the track – estimated 800 truck loads.
- Is there an opportunity here, or are we missing something? Should be have more work done now in terms of infra-structure – such as laying water lines?

Mayor Finall stated:

- Council passed a motion last week to have the landowners consult with organizations and First Nations in the District about re-use of any of the materials on site, including limestone, wood and tin.
- In response to a question about how the land would be allocated to farmers, she said although no firm decisions have been made, the land would be leased at market price; there has never been a suggestion that we would give the land for free. It is important the land remain under public ownership.

- The limestone would be used for roads and trails throughout the municipality; she acknowledged the comment from the Chair that the existing track is an all weather road which could be used.

Terry Michell commended North Saanich for its vision for acquiring the property and getting it ready to farm. Many other municipalities have acquired farmland but have yet to do anything with it.

WEBSITE

Jane Evans stated:

- It was mentioned previously to try a shorter web address to access PAAC information on the Saanich website.
- She discussed this with the staff person in charge and it was suggested it may be better to use other social media outlets, such as facebook and twitter. PAAC can also be part of the Saanich Calendar, which is published on facebook and works really well. Links can be provided to the food and agricultural pages and event listings.
- She suggested that a meeting be set up with Isobel, the technician and herself to discuss.

AGRICULTURAL STRATEGY – SUB-COMMITTEE REPORTS

a) Water (Michael Doehnel)

- The actual amount of water used through the ag/residential and the straight agricultural meters was 1.16 million cubic metres – up slightly from 1.09 million cubic metres in 2015.
- The actual amount paid out to the four municipalities was between \$1.27 million and \$1.45 million.
- The amount of water used by agriculture is still only 20% of the overall usage.
- Much of the agricultural water comes from wells and retention ponds, not the reservoir.
- Rainfall in 2012 was 61 mm between June and August; last year during this period it was 33 mm.
- The CRD is considering whether to continue to support the agricultural subsidy – which was \$818,000 in 2011 and \$1.4 million last year.
- It would be prudent for the agricultural community to be included in these discussions; appoint someone from the Commission to make a presentation in support of the subsidy being continued.
- The topic comes up at every municipal election and no-one wants to discuss it.
- Potentially it could be decided that it is not feasible to allow the subsidy to continue to increase.
- The difference between municipalities is significant for the ag/residential and straight agricultural meters: 60/40 in Central Saanich; 80/20 in North Saanich; and 20/80 in Saanich.
- A decision will be made on whether to support the continuation of the two meter types.
- He suggested PAAC write a letter to Ted Robbins of the Regional Water Supply Commission requesting representation during discussions.

MOTION: Moved by Phil Christie and Seconded by Bev Marley: “That PAAC write a letter to the Regional Water Supply Commission in support of the continued agricultural/residential and straight agricultural meters, a continued subsidy for a reasonable farm water rate, and that a representative from PAAC be permitted to speak to the Commission when the matter is being considered.”

CARRIED

b) Farm Economics (Terry Michell)

- It has been a late spring this year compared to last year, but we are a lot further ahead than the rest of BC.

c) Agricultural Land Base (Phil Christie)

- No updates on Martindale or Maber Flats.
- In BC, agriculture has a higher rate of productivity than forestry.
- Last year, agricultural production in the province was over \$15 Billion; forestry was \$14 Billion.
- This is not reflected in the provincial budget – where Agriculture was allocated \$16 million, and Forests and Lands was \$500 million (It is acknowledged that budget covers more than just forestry).
- Money from the agricultural budget tends to go to pet projects instead of towards hiring more district agrologists for example.
- He questioned whether we should write to our MLA's and/or invite to a meeting to discuss.
- Noted that agricultural dollars tend to stay in the community; this is not the case with forestry.

ACTION

General discussion ensued and it was agreed that PAAC should write to the newly elected (and re-elected) MLA's to congratulate them, introduce ourselves and what we do, and ask them to either comment in writing or come to a meeting to discuss the agricultural budget, which we feel should be adjusted proportionately. Note in the letter that agricultural dollars tend to stay in the community.

Agricultural Statistics:

Jane Evans asked for assistance on where to get information on agricultural statistics. Google was suggested and it was also noted that agriculture in BC covers only 3% of the land. Information is also included in the 2016 Census.

Noted it would be very helpful to update the statistics from the 1997 Agricultural Strategy; perhaps a provincial grant through Investment Agriculture could be applied for to hire a consultant to update the stats. (note discussion under the Treasurer's Report).

d) Education and Outreach (Linda Geggie)

Linda was not present but brief discussion took place regarding the 2017 Saanich Fair.

- Theme this year for the 149th Saanich Fair is Seeds and Breeds.
- Bees seem to be the buzz word lately; perhaps we could have info, displays and experts on hand for a few hours each day to answer questions.

CARRY for more discussion at the June meeting

- Regarding bees and pollinators, noted there was a lot of interest at the PAAC workshop in February – but some felt that the general public did not leave with the information they needed to help with the critical decline of the pollinator populations, such as what to plant.
- Apparently Lora Morandin is putting together information about our local area; she spoke to the North Saanich Residents' Association and provided a 2-page info sheet about what to plant, both native and non-native.

Peninsula & Area Agricultural Commission Minutes – May 11, 2017

Adjournment: On a Motion from Terry Michell the meeting adjourned at 9:00 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