

PITT MEADOWS AGRICULTURAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

MINUTES of the Agricultural Advisory Committee held at 10:00 a.m. on December 14, 2017 in the Meadows Room of the Pitt Meadows City Hall, 12007 Harris Road, Pitt Meadows, British Columbia

PRESENT:-

Committee Members:-

Joe Bachmann, Co-chair
Leo Captein, Co-chair
Macky Banns
Janis Elkerton, Alternate Council Liaison
Dan Kosicki
Wayne Wisselink

Guests:-

Lesley Bennewith
Councillor Bill Dingwall
Patricia Gordon
John Negrin
Steven Robinson
Phil Robinson
Matthew Robinson
William Wild

Staff:-

Kate Zanon, Director of Community Services, Meeting Chair
Allison Dominelli, Development Services Technician
Randy Evans, Operations Superintendent
Elaine Harrison, Recorder

REGRETS:-

Bruce Bell, Council Liaison
Hank Bitter
Dieter Geesing, Ministry of Agriculture
Bob Hopcott
Mike Manion
Bill Park
Scott Pelton
Mike Stark, Acting Council Liaison

The meeting was called to order at 10:01am.

1. LATE ITEMS

- Dan Kosicki asked if Steven Robinson could be allowed to make comments about local concerns.
- Joe Bachmann asked if the Committee could discuss the sustainability of farming.

Ms. Zanon agreed that both items could be included on the Agenda.

2. ADOPTION OF MINUTES

The Committee asked that the following amendments be made to the Minutes:-

Round table – Joe Bachmann

- the bullet point “Water restrictions on potable and river water” include the wording “with the prices being punitive for farmers”
- the bullet point “Worms” be changed to “Army worms”
- a bullet point “The difficulty of moving farm machinery due to increased traffic on the roads” be added

MOVED by Leo Captein and **SECONDED** by Joe Bachmann, **THAT** the minutes of November 9th, 2017 as amended be adopted.

CARRIED

3. NON-FARM USE APPLICATION – 14411 NEAVES ROAD

Staff reported that a non-farm use and temporary use permit application had been received for 14411 Neaves Road located in the ALR to use a portion of the property temporarily for storage, staging and maintenance of construction cranes and equipment. The City had been working with the applicant regarding bylaw enforcement and compliance and the applicant had indicated that they were in the process of procuring a more suitable location. Prior to the application being submitted the applicant had been subject to daily fines for contravention of the Zoning Bylaw. Staff also advised that if the temporary use permit was approved this would be reported to B.C. Assessment and would potentially impact the taxes paid on the property. The recommendations from the AAC would be reported to Council.

The Committee expressed the following points:-

- concern that the current levels of fines were not sufficient to deter such industrial activity on agricultural land
- the area being used is gravel and concrete so farmable land is not being compromised
- if this application is approved it could set a precedent
- the owners of the property do a significant amount of farming in the City and subsequently inject a lot of money into the economy
- asked if the funds from fines collected could be directed to the drainage budget rather than the general account
- asked if an irrevocable bond could be applied if the applicant had not adhered to the conditions of the permit within a set timeframe to give a level of assurance to the City
- asked if the AAC could review Council’s decision and make further recommendations if necessary
- the applicant needs to pay the fines to show good faith
- in support of 12 month approval with substantial punitive measures if the applicant has not removed the cranes after that year

The guests present raised the following points:-

- concern that the fines levied have not been paid
- the applicant views the fines as ‘cheap rent’ compared to being on industrial land
- agricultural equipment should be put on the concrete slab
- feels that the applicant is using stalling tactics
- all farmers could potentially use their land for such activities and industrial taxes would be lost for the City

Staff advised that a bond would be at the ALC's discretion. They said that the AAC's recommendation would go to Council on January 9th 2018 and if Council decides not to approve the permit then it will not be forwarded to the ALC

The applicant informed the Committee that they would be paying the fines. He explained that they did have an area of industrial land to use but it is the subject to a lawsuit so they have been forced to move. He also assured the Committee that they would move off the land in less than 12 months and they were trying to get the issues resolved.

RECOMMENDATION

MOVED by Dan Kosicki and **SECONDED** by Wayne Wisselink **THAT** Council be informed that the AAC approves a 12 month non-farm use application at 14411 Neaves Road from January 1st, 2018 to December 31st, 2018 and if the applicant does not comply with the permit then substantial punitive measures be enforced.

Leo Captein voted against the motion and Councillor Janis Elkerton abstained.

CARRIED

4. AGRICULTURAL LAND USE MAP REVIEW

Kate Zanon, Director of Community Services asked the Committee members to review the 2016 Agricultural Land Use Map to identify any changes since it had been produced and to make any amendments where necessary

5. COMMENTS FROM GUEST STEVE ROBINSON, PITT MEADOWS RESIDENT AND FARMER

Steve Robinson asked made a presentation to the Committee outlining his concerns regarding local issues. He stated that he had been a Pitt Meadows farmer for 40 years; he had thirteen 20 acre parcels of land and was a professional berry dryer. He wanted to make the Committee aware of the issues he had recently encountered when applying for a building permit and he had made 3 applications over recent years to ensure generational transferring. He felt that environmental issues had been the most challenging subject he had faced when City staff had engaged Consultants to challenge the backfilling of a ditch which he had undertaken 10 years previous. He felt that the process of obtaining permits was unclear for applicants and the City needed to be more forthcoming with what is expected of applicants. He also pointed out that ditches can never be used for salmonid habitats as ditch levels can be extremely low. He also said that fish friendly pumps will become a problem for farmers who he feels are caretakers of the land and therefore want control over that land. He also pointed out that farm plates are an issue along with large houses. However, his main concern was the recent determination that every ditch is now labelled as a stream and how this re-categorization would affect all farmers

Councillor Elkerton advised Mr. Robinson to send a letter to Council outlining his issues and concerns and they could consider them and take appropriate action where necessary.

The Committee welcomed Mr. Robinson's comments and asked him to consider joining the Committee. They asked if the clarification of the categorization of streams and ditches could be included as an item on the next Agenda

Staff advised of language from the Provincial Government as to what is a stream and that language has recently been updated. Mr. Evans advised that the City was governed by the Riparian Area Regulations and the confusion as to whether these RAR's apply to ditches. He said that ditches are being cleaned at the moment and they will continue to do so until told otherwise. The Regulations refer to constructed ditches and every ditch in Pitt Meadows is a constructed ditch. He was supportive of obtaining clarity so that the City knows conclusively. He also said that a watercourse clarification system had never been completed in Pitt Meadows so we do not have enough information and it is not accurate and comprehensive of what we have. At the moment the classification says habitat. In the Katzie Slough salmonid are only present for a very short time in the year and the rest of the time the slough is not conducive to habitat. The Study would take time and money but should ideally be undertaken before determining whether fish friendly pumps are required.

Staff clarified that the Riparian Area Regulations do not apply to farming practices, just residential.

ACTION: Staff include the item on a future agenda but felt that the research would not be completed in time for the January meeting.

6. SUSTAINABILITY OF FARMING

Joe Bachmann asked the committee for comments on the list of issues he felt were causing the most concern for the sustainability of farming

The Committee pointed out that on Joe's original list some items were specific to Pitt Meadows whilst others affected other areas of BC. Also, some came under the jurisdiction of Metro Vancouver or the Provincial or Federal Government.

Staff suggested that the Committee compile a comprehensive list, chose the most critical issue and ask Council to send these issues to other outlets such as UBCM or other levels of Government and MLA's.

ACTION: Staff email all Committee members prior to the next meeting to call for items to be included on the list so that it can be reviewed at the next meeting and a top 3 items be picked to forward to Council.

7. INFORMATION ITEMS

The following items were discussed in a round table format:

Dan Kosicki – mentioned invasive species as he had noticed in the minutes that the City is tracking and monitoring it on City land but not on private property.

Staff advised that dealing with invasive species was an ongoing challenge and affected by Regulations which have recently been adjusted. Mr. Evans said that the past 4 years had been successful in treating it on public land, road right-of-ways and dykes. The main problem was not being able to treat within 1 metre of a watercourse and that the hot water treatment that has been the most effective was not allowed there. He advised that the Ministry of Environment and Environment Canada were using the hot water process so he was mystified why staff had directed him not to use this form of treatment. He had hoped Pitt Meadows could become the leading edge and try this inexpensive and effective treatment.

ACTION: Invasive species be included on a future Agenda for the Committee and staff research how other municipalities are dealing with it.

Janis Elkerton – advised that the first part of the budget exercise had been completed. She also said that the new MLA's are eager to make a difference and could possibly help the City in achieving some of the objectives discussed at this meeting.

Joe Bachmann – said he had attended the Forest Symposium in Abbotsford with Dieter Geesing from the Ministry. It was noted that Delta, Tsawwassen and Chilliwack was also experiencing similar bird problems to those in Pitt Meadows

Kate Zanon – advised the Committee that she would be leaving the City in January 2018 to take up a position for the City of Port Moody. She thanked the Committee for the experience of working with them which she had found very rewarding and thoroughly enjoyable.

The Committee expressed surprise at the announcement and offered their congratulations and wished her well in her new position.

Phil Robinson (guest) – asked about the process for joining the Committee. Councillor Elkerton said that she could ask Council to consider adding an additional member to the current 10 voting members of the AAC as she felt it was important to have different voices on Advisory Committees. He also suggested that kill permits could be used by farmers to control ducks and geese on their fields. Joe replied that he had seen drones used as an option to chase away geese and this had been very effective.

Wayne Wisselink- commented that he had seen 2 bald eagles on his farm and no ducks or geese.

Councillor Dingwall – said that Ms. Zanon leaving would be a great loss to the City and he wished her well. He said that he had found the meeting to be very informative and the passion and knowledge amongst both the Committee and staff was obvious.

Patricia Gordon (guest) - echoed the comments about the passion of the Committee and felt it could not be reflected in the minutes. She said the Committee members all had different areas of concern and expertise and she was encouraged to see it and the teamwork that was apparent. She hoped that a member of the Robinson family could join the committee as it would benefit from young voices.

8. ADJOURNMENT

The next Committee meeting will be held on January 11, 2018 at 10:00a.m.

The meeting adjourned at 11:42 am.