

PITT MEADOWS AGRICULTURAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

MINUTES of the Agricultural Advisory Committee held at 10:00 a.m. on May 10th, 2018 in the Meadows Room of the Pitt Meadows City Hall, 12007 Harris Road, Pitt Meadows, British Columbia

PRESENT:-

Committee Members:- Alana Aquilini
Joe Bachmann, Chair
Bruce Bell, Council Liaison
Hank Bitter
Dieter Geesing, Ministry of Agriculture
Bob Hopcott
Lynn Kemper
Mike Manion
Bill Park
Philip Robinson
Wayne Wisselink

Guests:- Zabrina Braithwaite-Kelso
William Wild
Drew Bondar, Delta Farmland and Wildlife Trust

Staff:- Lisa Grant, Manager of Community Development, Meeting Chair
Dana Parr, Planner
Forrest Smith, Director of Engineering and Operations
Elaine Harrison, Recorder

REGRETS:-

Macky Banns
Janis Elkerton, Alternate Council Liaison
Mike Stark, Acting Council Liaison

The meeting was called to order at 10:00am.

I. LATE ITEMS

No late items were submitted.

2. ADOPTION OF MINUTES

MOVED by Wayne Wisselink and **SECONDED** by Bill Park, **THAT** the minutes of the February 8th, 2018 committee meeting be adopted.

CARRIED

3. NEW MEMBERS

The Committee welcomed the three new members to the Committee and all present at the meeting introduced themselves.

4. RECOGNITION OF DEPARTING MEMBERS

The Committee was informed that due to other commitments the departing members were not able to attend the meeting to receive their recognition.

ACTION: at the next meeting of the Committee the departing members be recognised.

5. PRESENTATION BY THE DELTA FARMING AND WILDLIFE TRUST

At the request of the Committee, Drew Bondar, Program Manager from the Delta Farming and Wildlife Trust made a presentation to the Committee as they had found that they were struggling to deal with an increase in wildfowl issues on their farmland and were looking for possible solutions.

Drew said that the Fraser River Delta area had a high density of migrating birds and a large percentage of the land was agricultural which had caused a conflict with birds damaging fields and the cost of re-seeding. The organisation promoted several stewardship programs which had help to alleviate the issue.

- Grassland set-aside whereby the fields are not farmed for 4-6 years which provides a habitat for mammals and animals and benefits the soil.
- Winter cover crops with specific crops planted to lure and provide a habitat for waterfowl.
- Research programs in conjunction with UBC, BCIT and SFU to promote stewardship programs rooted in science.

The Committee mentioned the issues around funding and who should pay for the problems that farmers are encountering. They also said that the Alouette River has a large habitat program that encourages wildlife but when they feed on crops this can be at odds to farmers so it can be difficult to get the right balance. It was also noted that berry farmers do not have waterfowl problems. The Committee agreed that public education of the issues was necessary.

A copy of the presentation is included with the original minutes as Attachment A.

6. AGRICULTURAL LAND SOIL INVESTIGATION RESULTS – REFERRAL FROM COUNCIL

The results of Metro Vancouver's Agricultural Land Soil Investigation had been presented to Council and they had referred them to the AAC for comment and feedback. The issues raised in the report included over application of fill, domed land, the impact on adjacent land, poor quality fill and drainage issues and a number of recommendations were included in the report. The ALC was looking into dealing with enforcement to take the responsibility off Municipalities.

The Committee reiterated the findings of the report and made the following observations:-

- Poor management of fill sites meant that some areas could never be farmed again
- Sites should be monitored after an Agrologist reports is issued to ensure continued compliance.
- Bonds should be used as a tool to encourage compliance with them being retained until all fill has been completed
- Many land owners are not farmers so are less concerned about the future of the land, bona fide farmers will not damage their land
- Having the quarry accept fill is a benefit to the community to divert it from agricultural land
- Geodetic elevations are crucial when allowing fill

- Agrolgist should be contracted by the ALC not the applicant
- Splitting the area to be filled into smaller parcels and subsequent permits are not granted until compliance within the preceding area

7. LIVESTOCK ANTIBIOTICS – INFORMATION ITEM

The Committee was provided with an information leaflet regarding changes to the way antibiotics are to be administered by livestock producers across Canada. On the whole the Committee said they were aware of the new regulations. They also commented on the challenges with treating sick animals regarding the amount of paperwork involved and the resistance animals can develop to these treatments.

8. LANGLEY FARM TOUR INVITATION

An invitation had been received from the Township of Langley for their 2018 Farm Tour on Ecological Services Initiatives on May 23rd and members of the Committee were invited to attend.

9. LAUNCH OF THE OFFICIAL COMMUNITY PLAN

Staff invited the Committee to attend the launch event for the review of the Official Community Plan (OCP) at the Pitt Meadows Family Recreation Centre on May 12th. The review included areas such as transportation, housing, economy, recreation and agriculture up to 2040.

Roundtable:-

Mike Manion – reported that at the last Metro Vancouver AAC they had discussed why farming is not sustainable and talked about the problem of recruiting seasonal labourers for the greenhouse industry. They also highlighted the length of time it takes to obtain permits to construct greenhouses which can take up to 2 years to obtain. They would be sending a letter to the Minister to highlight these issues along with concerns about potable water.

Joe Bachmann – mentioned the list of reasons he had previously provided as to why he felt farming was not sustainable and said he would be interested to hear the views of the new members on the Committee.

ACTION: Forward the list to the new members of the Committee and include it as an item on the next Agenda.

Dieter Geesing – commented about the freshet and said that river levels were rising and were predicted to reach a critical point next week but the peak had not been reached yet. He said that this year had been an early freshet and advised members to be diligent. Forrest Smith said that staff were monitoring the levels at the Mission Gauge and would instigate dyke patrols and the EOC if necessary.

Bill Park – said that it was important to recognise Dan, Leo and Scott who had been long serving members on the Committee. Councillor Bell said that Council recognised that it was an important and popular Committee and the issue of membership had been a difficult decision for Council. He said that past members were always welcome to attend meetings and to submit an application to re-join the committee at the annual recruitment.

Lisa Grant – mentioned the Forum for Transportation that would be taking place on June 25th involving local, regional and federal levels of Government. The forum included the CP Rail proposals for grade separation at Kennedy Road and the North Loughheed lands. Agricultural land would be impacted by the proposals so she encouraged stakeholders to attend.

10. ADJOURNMENT

The next Committee meeting will be held on June 14th, 2018 at 10:00a.m.

The meeting adjourned at 11:25 am.