

PITT MEADOWS AGRICULTURAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

MINUTES of the Agricultural Advisory Committee held at 10:00 a.m. on April 11th, 2019 in the Meadows Room of the Pitt Meadows City Hall, 12007 Harris Road, Pitt Meadows, British Columbia

PRESENT:-

Committee Members:-

Joe Bachmann, Chair
Alana Aquilini
Macky Banns
Hank Bitter
Dieter Geesing, Ministry of Agriculture
Bob Hopcott
Lynn Kemper
Dan Kosicki
Mike Manion
Philip Robinson
Councillor Anena Simpson
Wayne Wisselink

Guests:-

Bill Dingwall, Mayor
Patricia Gordon

Staff:-

Lisa Grant, Director of Community Services, Chair
Tanya Barr, Legislative Services
Randy Evans, Manager of Parks and Operations
Samantha Maki, Director of Engineering and Operations
Colin O'Byrne, Project Manager, Community Development
Mark Roberts, Chief Administrative Officer
Alex Wallace, Manager of Community Development
Elaine Harrison, Recorder

REGRETS:-

Councillor Nicole MacDonald

The meeting was called to order at 10:05 am.

1. LATE ITEMS

The meeting Chair asked that AAC Appointments be included on the Agenda.

2. ADOPTION OF MINUTES

MOVED by Wayne Wisselink and SECONDED by Alana Aquilini, THAT the minutes of the March 28th, 2019 committee meeting be adopted.

CARRIED

3. APPOINTMENT OF MEMBERS

Mark Roberts, Chief Administrative Officer advised that Joe Bachmann, Hank Bitter, Wayne Wisselink and Macky Banns had had their terms office to the Committee extended for a further

2 years and that Dan Kosicki had been re-appointed to the Committee. He said that discussions were still taking place regarding possible additional appointments and he would report back once a decision had been made.

4. 2019 DRAINAGE CAPITAL BUDGET

Randy Evans, Manager of Parks and Operations provided an overview of recently approved drainage capital projects which would be undertaken in addition to work funded by the operating budget. The capital projects included some line items that appeared in previous years as a contingency for unexpected and unplanned maintenance such as pump stations. Other projects included culvert replacements, upgrading the trash rack systems, major slough cleaning, Kennedy and Fenton pump station replacement, a review of the fill site, drainage asset condition assessment, drainage scada replacement and area 1 screen upgrades.

He also explained that the City had been fortunate to secure a large grant for back-up generators for the pump stations which would be invaluable in the event of power failure and staff were working to assess whether the generators could be mounted on the top of the stations so that they would not be susceptible in the event of flooding.

5. WATERWAYS – DISCUSSION PRIOR TO JUNE GPC

For the new members of the Committee and to provide context, Randy Evans, Manager of Parks and Operations provided some history regarding the waterways in Pitt Meadows. He spoke about the dikes being required due to the City's low level and to enable to land to be viable for farming. In the 1960's the dikes were reviewed for longevity and integrity, the Fraser River Flood Protection was enacted and the dikes upgrades and pump stations installed from finance from two levels of Government. The ARDSA program had been prepared and this conducted a cost benefit analysis of the ditches and provided standards for maintenance. In 2006 the Klohn Krippen Study modified the ARDSA standards and the City had been following those standards since. The City followed a policy of water levels in the ditches in a controlled fashion allowing water into the ditches which is monitored and works closely with the farming community around this. Legislation under the Water Sustainability Act allows for farmers to apply for water licenses to draw water from the ditches and the Fisheries Act also controlled what the City is allowed to do.

The Committee members made the following comments:-

- Questioned whether the City is following the maintenance suggested in the ARDSA report
- Mentioned the importance of not losing ground with the maintenance as prior to the ARDSA report flooding for days and weeks often occurred
- Pitt Meadows has no productive streams or migrating fish and therefore should not have to comply with the Fisheries Act
- Fish friendly pumps are counter-productive
- The ditches in Pitt Meadows are purely for rainwater movement
- Could there be benefit of pushing for a new ARDSA report funded by the Government as the specifications in the original ARDSA are not in line with today's reality
- Increased depth of ditches can assist with head pressure and flow of water

- Farming practices for the cranberry industry would not be viable if the waterways are supporting fish as the ditches need to be dry at certain times of the year
- Farmers need water from the ditches at certain times of year for frost protection
- The combined knowledge of the members of the AAC spans 400 years and it is important that new Councillors and staff understand and respect that knowledge
- The City needs good stewardship of finances alongside maintaining infrastructure
- Ditches are unacceptable for sustaining fish but an alternative solution could be the Alouette River or Pitt-Addington Marsh
- Setbacks on farm land make the land worthless which then impedes farming as banks will not provide loans on worthless land
- Farmers should not compromise as they end up paying the greatest cost and environmentalists pay nothing
- The need to be respectful to Katzie
- Many new residents to Pitt Meadows have never farmed and do not understand the issues involved
- At the June GPC meeting the farmers need to inform Council of the economic, livelihood and efficiency arguments along with hard facts and financial facts to have the most impact

Staff made the following comments:-

- Maintenance of the dikes is governed by available finances but for the most part the suggestions made by ARDSA program are being met
- The ARDSA report talked in depth of cost benefit analysis
- Invasive weed growth in the ditches is an area of huge concern and is costly to manage
- A decision needs to be made with regards to the Fisheries Act, and how it fits in with the policies in Pitt Meadows
- Shading can reduce the amount of weed growth in the waterways but tree lined corridors can impact farming, invite fish, affect setbacks, be felled by beavers and be difficult for ditch cleaning
- Deep ditches improve flow but can cause erosion concerns
- Fish friendly pumps are not usually efficient and can use more power
- Historically the pump stations have all had the same type of pumps which therefore required fewer spare parts to be stored
- The grant for the refurbishment of #4 pump station was awarded on the proviso that a fish friendly pump is installed
- Installing fish friendly pumps can make it easier to get grant funding
- Fish friendly pumps can cost in excess of 30% more than standard pumps to purchase and maintain
- Standard pumps are easy to source but fish friendly pumps are a speciality item and are more difficult to maintain and repair by the crew

Council made the following comments:-

- The knowledge, history and testimonials provided by staff and Committee members is extremely important and will help Council in making their policy decisions
- Cautioned opening up Legislation
- Re-iterated that Council supports farming
- The ALR can update their Regulations with immediate effect as with the decision to restrict housing sizes as recently announced

- The community should know the value of farmers and the importance of the ditches
- Council need to hear all of the concerns and frustrations of farmers
- The GPC meeting will be a permanent record for Councils in the future and because of this they require all of the facts to make a fair decision

The Committee agreed that a strategy session would be beneficial prior to the June GPC and staff offered to provide a report based on this meeting and previous minutes to guide discussion.

6. ROUNDTABLE

Mike Manion – said that he had now been appointed the Chair of Metro Vancouver’s Agricultural Advisory Committee and mentioned that at their last meeting the issue of burning permits had been discussed with members being frustrated at the difficulty of obtaining the permits.

Bob Hopcott – suggested a farm tour for the new Council to showcase the different types of farming being undertaken would be beneficial. The Mayor said that a tour was being planned of the pump stations so it would be ideal if it could be incorporated into that.

Alana Aquilini – reported that a recent application by the Aquilini Group regarding swapping an area of their land in the ALR had been denied but they would be looking at appealing that decision.

Joe Bachmann – advised that a request had been received from Metro Vancouver to make a presentation to the AAC regarding a discussion paper on potential options to regulate emissions created from Cannabis Production Operations in the region. Joe asked the Committee if they would like them to attend. The members felt it was important for the Committee have an input in Metro Vancouver’s decision making process and to accept the request.

Dan Kosicki – said he was happy to be back on the Committee and under the topic of respect felt it was important for members to attend all meetings whenever possible and advice staff if circumstances prevented that so that a quorum is achieved.

Macky Banns – asked if anybody had attended the recent “Let’s Get Farming” event hosted by the Maple Ridge AAC. Mike said that he was there, it was well attended and Kim Grout had given an excellent presentation.

Mayor Dingwall – thanked the Committee again or all of the informative input.

7. ADJOURNMENT

The next Committee meeting will be held on May 9th, 2019 at 10:00 a.m.

The meeting adjourned at 12:16 pm.