

**DRAFT MINUTES
PENINSULA AND AREA AGRICULTURAL COMMISSION**

Held at Saanich Municipal Hall, Committee Room 2 and via MsTeams
Thursday, September 12, 2024, 7:00 p.m.

Present: Chair Robin Tunnicliffe; Linda Geggie; Jenni Michell (via Teams); Larry Sluggett; Katie Underwood; Dianne Williamson; Councillor Marshall (via Teams) (N.Saanich) and Isobel Hoffmann, Recording Secretary.

Guests: Noah Brotman, CRD; Jody Watson, CRD; Cassidy Daskalchuk, Saanich Planner, Megan Halstead, Regional Agrologist (via Teams).

Regrets: Anita Bull; Terry Michell; Councillors De Vries (Saanich) and Paltiel (Central Saanich)

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

MOVED by Dianne Williamson and Seconded by Larry Sluggett: “That the Minutes of June 12, 2024 be adopted as circulated.”

CARRIED

CHAIR'S REMARKS – Robin Tunnicliffe

- The Chair thanked members who came to show their support of PAAC at the Central Saanich Council Meeting on September 8th, where a decision was made to continue to support PAAC and proceed with the governance review.
- Unfortunately, PAAC will have to continue to operate with a skeleton crew until new appointments are made after the review is completed in early 2025.
- The survey commissioned by Central Saanich indicated that 95% of respondents were supportive of PAAC; it is good to know we are respected in the community.
- During the past few months, the Chair attended Council meetings at the other 3 sponsoring municipalities and received commendations for PAAC's continued good work.
- She would like to reach out again to each municipality on a salient issue that has come to our attention and will be discussed at the UBCM this month: amending the farm tax rates.
- This past summer Metchosin saw the return of the geese in full force. In particular it was devastating for Still Meadow Farm who grow 50 acres of grain, 200 acres of hay and also raise 250 pigs and 1000 sheep collectively with the neighbouring Perry Bay Sheep Farm. Jody Watson and Samantha Hammond made a site visit recently (see more discussion under CRD issues).
- Plans are underway for the November 13 workshop on the dumping of fill on the Island. Saanich Fairgrounds from 10 am to 2 pm. Speakers from the ALC and Richmond will attend. Lunch provided. (See discussion under Agricultural Issues)

COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVE REMARKS

Councillor Marshall (North Saanich) stated:

- The North Saanich OCP review is underway and community engagement sessions held.
- The draft Plan, when completed, will be available to the community.
- The District is working hard to ensure we have feedback from many community groups.
- Input has also been received from local farmers on the agricultural issues.

- The Parks Master Plan is being reviewed; a community engagement process is underway, with on-line surveys and a public open house held last June. The Draft Plan is available for review and the final Plan will be presented to Council this fall.
- The North Saanich Agriculture and Food Security Advisory Committee is currently looking for suitable locations for greenhouses and a food hub.
- The UBCM this year has several resolutions pertaining to agriculture. Pitt Meadows raised the issue of Farm Tax. She will email a copy of the resolutions regarding agriculture to the PAAC secretary.

No other Councillors were present at the meeting.

TREASURER'S REPORT – Jenni Michell

- \$5000 was repaid to Saanich to cover the payment to GOOSE earlier this year.
- PAAC funds have been reinvested in a GIC in the amount of \$12,800.
- The checking account has a balance of \$950.

SPEAKER'S BUREAU: Jody Watson, CRD – Goose Management Strategy Update

Jody Watson gave a power-point presentation on the results to date of the Goose Management Strategy. A copy of the presentation is attached.

Discussion noted:

- Farms along Island View Road see hundreds of geese on their properties; cover crops should be planted now but this will attract more geese. Using scare tactics just diverts them from one field to another.
- A 4-acre farm in the Maber Flats area has a large pond that attracts thousands of geese.
- Information from Metchosin about high volumes of geese was distributed to members.
- The Chair presented information from Still Meadow and Perry Bay farms, who are having serious issues with geese, on top of the increasing cougar kills.
- Other points re Still Meadow/Perry Bay Farms:
 - Goose Grass: this is a feathery grass brought in by the geese that matures early and gums up the mowers with its feathery texture. It dies early and leaves dead spots in the field. They used to get 7 years from a newly seeded grass field, now they only get 3 or 4 adding extra costs and reduced profits.
 - The farms have applied for permits from local to federal jurisdictions as they believe there are safe areas where the birds can be shot. They recognize this method may not be acceptable to the general public but they are desperate and the goose population keeps expanding.

Jody responded:

- If owners want to addle eggs they can submit a waiver which can be attached to the CRD permit.
- Regional scare tactics and kill permits have been discussed but there are many areas where this action is not possible.
- We are looking into applications that can monitor populations; information can be shared with property owners. If owners send photos and information about when the large flocks are on their property it will help us to see patterns in eating and nesting habits throughout the year.
- The CRD is looking for agricultural funding opportunities as well as banding and collaring programs.
- A staff report will be submitted for the October 16, 2024 CRD Board Meeting.

- It is hoped we can increase service levels to enable more resources to be directed towards a harvest. The population definitely needs to be reduced.
- The more we can reach out to the farm community the better – and PAAC is a good vehicle to facilitate this.

CORRESPONDENCE: None

AGRICULTURAL ISSUES: New and Ongoing

Dumping Fill on Farmland Workshop

– Wednesday, November 13, 2024, Saanich Fairgrounds

Speakers: Avtar Sundhr, ALC Director of Operations & Mike Morin, Soil Bylaw Officer, Richmond. If time permits, Jenny Eastman from CRD Invasive Species Program Coordinator

Attendance: Anticipate minimum of 70 people, perhaps up to 100. Dogwood Room currently booked; suggest booking the larger room just in case.

Invitees: Municipal Councillors in the CRD
 Municipal Staff: Planners, Bylaw Enforcement Officers, Permit issuers
 Regional Agrologists (Ministry of Agriculture)
 Ministry of Agriculture Planner & Environmental Planner
 Capital Regional District Environmental & Planning staff
 Community Associations
 South Island Farmers' Association & other Farmers Associations
 The Association for the Protection of Rural Metchosis
 Builders Associations (Urban Development Institute)
 Environmental Protection Associations
 Media (C-Fax, Black Press, CHEK-TV, Times Colonist, Country Life, etc)
 PAAC members & associates
 Farmers

Promotion: Posters/Rack Cards to send out with invites
 Media
 Agricultural Associations & businesses
 Info could be posted at Integrity Sales, Buckerfields, Bordens, etc.

Supplies: Audio equipment (microphones, TV, laptops (for power point)
 Flip Charts/White Boards
 Photos & Information Boards for review around the room showing current status
 Full Kitchen with stove, kettle, coffee pots, dishes, cutlery, etc
 Tables & Chairs & Registration Table

Discussion noted:

- suggest when inviting municipal staff, the initial invite go to the CAO indicating how attendance at will benefit the municipality
- information should include the purpose of the workshop and the desired outcome:
 - 1. Create a model fill bylaw for the Region
 - 2. Create a checklist for permits (so everyone on the same page)
 - 3. Create a Best Practices document
 - 4. Refer to the ALR Schematic on Soils and Fill Use

- Addresses/contact names COA's etc. can be found on the Civic BC website
- Ministry of Agriculture has list of Regional Planning Officers
- CRD has a full list of Municipal Councillors & Planning Staff
- Use Event Brite for registration
- Suggest the PAAC Council Liaison bring the workshop to their Council's attention
- The workshop could be credential worthy for planners and other professionals attending (check with the Planning Inst. of BC)
- Suggested to allow for travel time either from mainland, Gulf islands or up-Island, the time be 10 am to 2 pm, with a lunch break. Lunch, morning coffee/snacks, provided.
- PAAC has funds available to host the event, which with room rental, equipment rental (if required), transportation costs for speakers (if required) and food costs, could be \$2000+

Action:

- Prepare list of invitees with email addresses
- Send out a “Save the Date” notice
- Prepare draft Agenda & summary of desired outcome
- Prepare posters and/or rack cards
- Contact Media
- Firm up room booking at Fairgrounds
- Check supplies provided at Fairgrounds (audio equipment, kitchen supplies)
- Collect photos & current data to post on boards around the room; refer to the article in the Vancouver Sun shed light on the amount of fill being dumped on farmland.
- <https://vancouver.sun.com/news/local-news/bc-farmland-illegal-dumping>

Carry Forward to October Meeting for final plans

Issues with Local Compost: Katie Underwood

Katie stated:

- She hasn't been able to find help with the organic compost that caused some areas of her farm to die and caused poor seed germination, resulting in a loss of income.
- She did not get a lab test initially as she didn't know what to test for and it was costly.
- The provider is the only one on the island to produce organic compost.

CRA Lifetime Capital Exemption for Farmers (Larry Sluggett)

- The secretary was unable to contact anyone from the CRA and suggested perhaps finding an accountant who is familiar with farm tax may be an easier task.
- This is an important issue that affects many farmers and some clarification is needed.
- Further to discussions at the past two meetings, Larry Sluggett reconfirmed that if you sell your farm, you will have to pay capital gains tax – perhaps \$1 million or more.
- To qualify for the exemption, you need to have owned the farm for at least 3 years and been actively farming.
- It is very complicated and there could be loopholes; we need to hear from an expert.
- The secretary will try to locate an accountant familiar with farm tax issues.

CARRY to October Meeting

Governance Review (see comments in Chair's Remarks, page 1)

- The PAAC Chair spoke at the September 8, 2024 Central Saanich Council meeting, which was also attended by a number of other PAAC members and associates.

- A Motion was passed that Central Saanich continue to support PAAC and will draft a revised Terms of Reference for circulation to PAAC and the other 3 sponsoring municipalities, hopefully within the next few months.
- The appointment process was a major point of concern with Central Saanich.
- PAAC has been operating on 7 members for over a year and it would be desirable to have this issue finalized by year-end so that appointments can be made for 2025.

BC Tree Fruit Growers Association

- A letter from the Association was received and circulated to PAAC.
- A recent funding announcement from the province and news that another company made a proposal to take over the operation is hopeful.

REPORTS FROM KEY SECTOR GROUPS

Water Update: Mike Doehnel – not present

South Island Farmers' Institute Update – Katie Underwood & Shellie MacDonald

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- A number of field trips were held over the summer and they were well attended.
- Tours included a trip to the Centre for Plant Health in June; Square Root in July and Applied Bionomics (a bug farm) in August. Next week a trip to Madrona Farm in the Blenkinsop Valley is planned.
- A cover crop program has been introduced for 11 eligible smaller farms; when they sign up for the program they will receive seeds to cover up to 1/2 acre – 6.5 acres in total. The program is in collaboration with a group on the mainland; some people in the Comox Valley signed up for the program.
- This fall, SIFI will continue with its Sustainer's Series, honouring those who have been feeding the community for years.
- With the provincial election coming up, at the October 2nd SIFI meeting, candidates of all political parties on the south Island will be invited to attend to discuss BC agriculture and asked to be an advocate for farmers.
- SIFI will also continue with the Business Series as well as Farmer2Farmer in the New Year.
- Membership is over 70 members now and continues to grow; many new farmers' institutes have started all over BC.
- Shellie has been helping other local farmers' institutes with support, including District A – Saltspring Island and Comox.

CRD AGRICULTURAL SERVICES

- **CRD Foodlands Access Program** – Noah Brotman
 - After decades of work, the Foodlands Access Program was passed unanimously by the CRD Board on September 11, 2024 and is now an official CRD Service.
 - Katie Underwood spoke in support, and in total there were five delegations in support.
 - The next step is to refer the program to the Inspector of Municipalities with a goal to having the approval process finalized by November or December so it is timely for inclusion in the 2025 Budget process.

- It would be beneficial to get the soil turned, limed, and ready for cover crops, but he is unsure if this could happen this year.
- The first steps after the bylaw is official will be to select an on-board a farm site operator and begin land preparation for the Bear Hill farm site.
- The letters of support received from PAAC were appreciated and he believes they made a difference.

Discussion noted:

- There are so many people to thank who worked on this project over the years.
- The CRD now has its first service for Agriculture; many municipalities have parcels of land that would be suitable for the Program..
- In particular, PAAC thanked Noah for his work and diligence over the years.

CRD Goose Management Strategy – Jody Watson (see page 1 of minutes)

Vancouver Island Adaptation Group (Climate Change) – Bob Maxwell – not present

Vancouver Island AgriService Newsletter – Meghan Halstead

- Link to sign up for the newsletter – published quarterly:
- New link: <https://confirmsubscription.com/h/y/EF5CA661750438AD>

Megan provided information on upcoming workshops, lectures, farm tours and demonstrations (email has been circulated to PAAC). Information can also be found in the Newsletter.

CR-Fair – Linda Geggie

Saanich & North Saanich Flavour Trail

- A major event of the summer was the Saanich and North Saanich Flavour Trail, with 35 farms participating, including a few in Central Saanich. Central Saanich is interested in participating next year. Over 1000 people attended.
- She will send an official report shortly.

Farm Hub

- 3,000 meals have been provided to school students through this program.
- Locally sourced food is used as much as possible.
- Both federal and provincial funding is received for the school meal programme.
- The volume of other sales has increased at the Food Hub.
- City of Victoria Councillor Cardona is trying to establish a grocery co-op in Victoria

Brief discussion noted:

- There is a disconnect between where our food is grown and where it is going.
- Many municipalities have farmers' markets and not all of those have agricultural land.
- It is important that council liaisons from each municipality, including Victoria, come to PAAC meetings to understand what is going on with food security.
- Noted this could be an amendment to the Terms of Reference - to expand membership to other municipalities.

Upcoming Events / Webinars

- Dumping of Fill on ALR land Workshop – Wednesday, November 13, 2024

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 9:25 p.m.

NEXT MEETING

The next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, October 10, 2024 in Committee Room #2 at the Saanich Municipal Hall.

Robin Tunnicliffe, Chair

I hereby certify these minutes are accurate.

Isobel Hoffmann, Senior Committee Secretary