

Agriculture, Environment, and Investment Advisory Committee Minutes

Location: Virtual
Wednesday, October 13, 2021
Time: 6:03 p.m.

Present:

Councillor Patton, Chair
Councillor Elford
M. Lamont
S. Rai
S. Van Keulen

Regrets:

Councillor Nagra
Shannon Lambie, Agriculture Land
Commission
Mikayla Roberts, Ministry of
Agriculture

Staff Present:

N. Aven, Manager of Parks
Y. Yohannes, Manager, Utilities
L. Anderson, Administrative Assistant

The Chair advised that Councillor Hundial had resigned his position with the Committee and that Councillor Elford has been appointed. Councillor Elford provided a brief introduction.

A. ADOPTIONS

1. Adoption of the Agenda

It was Moved by S. Van Keulen
Seconded by S. Rai
That the agenda of the Agriculture,
Environment, and Investment Advisory Committee be adopted.
Carried

2. Adoption of the Minutes

It was Moved by S. Van Keulen
Seconded by M. Lamont
That the minutes of the Agriculture,
Environment, and Investment Advisory Committee meeting held September 15, 2021
be adopted.
Carried

B. DELEGATIONS

This section had no items to consider.

C. NEW BUSINESS

1. City of Surrey Application to the Investment Agriculture Foundation of BC File No. 0540-06

Neal Aven, Manager, Parks, provided a brief overview of the report from
Pamela Zevit, Biodiversity Conservation Planner, regarding the proposed grant

application to the Local Government Partnership Program (“LGPP”) with the Investment Agriculture Foundation of BC (“IAF”).

The following was highlighted:

- The LGPP provides funding to help regional districts and municipalities develop, update and implement agricultural planning tools.
- The intent of this IAF grant application is to secure funding to develop a comprehensive plan for management and stewardship of agricultural lands under City ownership, specifically those lands within parks.
- The grant provides up to 50% funding for an eligible project, up to a maximum grant amount of \$40,000 (City’s grant application is for \$20,000, which will match the \$20,000 set aside by the City).
- Some of the key components for the project include:
 - Engaging with Surrey’s farming community to help inform the process;
 - Demonstrating how protection of ecosystem services and natural assets can benefit and enhance farming practices and production; and
 - Identifying improved approaches to soil and water conservation on agricultural lands within parks.
- The Committee’s endorsement of the grant application will support and strengthen the City’s application to the IAF LGPP.

The Committee commented as follows:

- Some of the points made raise concern as to limitations of agricultural use, especially those with respect to how it will fit into the Climate Adaptation Study – don’t want to see restrictions put on those farmers that farm that land.
- It’s important to understand that Parks’ owns agricultural land, it is not park land – that is the distinction. When making the application, only seven acres of the Mound Farm is park land, but the land itself is agricultural land and farmed as such under normal farming practices. The conversation with the agricultural community will be very valuable.
- Part of the goal of this planning exercise is to assess the feasibility for land that is park within the ALR, to look at locations outside of those that are actively being farmed; a broad planning exercise that has multifaceted parts to it.
- It is a nice hybrid between the agriculture and environment realm. Also opens the door to conversation and learning to engage with the farming community and pulling in a few from the local environment support community and how they can integrate these together.
- The whole eco systems part of farming is something we need to learn.

It was Moved by S. Van Keulen
Seconded by Councillor Elford
That the Agriculture, Environment and
Investment Advisory Committee:

1. Receive the report for information; and
2. Endorse the proposed grant application to the Local Government Partnership Program with the Investment Agriculture Foundation, together with comments from the Agriculture, Environment & Investment Advisory Committee.

Carried

2. **Development Application 7921-0194-00**

Evan March, Planning Technician
Address: 16582 – 52 Avenue

The proposal is for Non-Adhering Residential Use in the ALR, to construct a principal residence with a total floor area that exceeds 500 square metres.

The following comments were made:

- The subject site is approximately 2.2 hectares in area, designated "Agricultural" in the Official Community Plan, zoned "General Agricultural Zone (A-1)" and located within the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR). The subject site is classified as farmland under the *BC Assessment Act*
- The applicants have applied under section 20.1(2) of the *Agricultural Land Commission Act (ALCA)* to allow the construction of an 882.5 square metre dwelling. About 1.8 hectares of the property is currently in blueberry production and the remaining area is not currently in agricultural production. The farm operation extends onto the adjacent property, 16828 - 52 Avenue, which has approximately 2.0 hectares of additional blueberry crops. There are currently no permanent buildings or structures on the property.
- There is a Class A red-coded watercourse fronting the subject site that will require a Sensitive Ecosystem Development Permit to be issued prior to Building Permit issuance.
- In December 2018, approval for 2,000 square meters of fill on the site for the proposed farm and residential uses was approved, predating the current ALC legislation. Delay in construction of the residential dwelling resulted from the required offsite works to facilitate construction of 52 Avenue fronting the property, and extension of a watermain from 168 Street, anticipated to be completed soon.
- As the applicants live offsite and travel to the farmlands to conduct farm duties, they anticipate further maximization of crop yields on the subject site once they can live in the proposed single-family dwelling. They also anticipate a future farm building adjacent to the house for future livestock.

The Committee provided the following comments:

- The Committee expressed concerns on the precedent the application would set in having an over-sized dwelling on small agricultural acreage (proposed 9,500 sq. ft. residential dwelling), noting it would be beneficial to know the ratio of agricultural land parcels, small (<10 acres) to the largest (>40 acres). Similarly, to know how many small (5-10 acre) agricultural properties have sought approval from the ALC for residential dwellings greater than the maximum permitted, and the outcome of those applications. Staff confirmed they would reach out to the ALC for clarification (greater understanding) with respect to the determination of agricultural land size relative to the maximum residential dwelling size permitted.
- It was reported that there has been a considerable increase (upwards of 250%) in blueberry crops since 2006, noting that with the landscape level changes that have occurred in Surrey and Delta in regards to berry crops, it is difficult to see how current status quo will be sustainable.
- The Committee agreed that support of the application would be setting a precedent of having a large footprint for such a small agricultural parcel and that it may be better to have a policy or something based on the size of the property, which would also provide clarity for Council when considering similar applications.
- Staff advised that the farm home plate will be reviewed by staff once house plans and a site plan are submitted.
- The new road and road allowance, and if the class of ditch fits within the road allowance, will also need clarification (e.g., where is the setback taken from and will that conform?) before the Committee can make an informed decision.
- Staff advised that the site plan submitted at the time of the fill approval in 2018 did not have any building plans. Going forward, the watercourse and additional setbacks and planting requirements associated with that, will also need to be taken into consideration.
- Staff further reported that any additional consideration with respect to the 32 Avenue widening project as it relates to facilitating the waterworks and any impact on the subject site, is being dealt with through Engineering and is something that will need to have been addressed. Currently the only information available is the fill plate and proposed house size. DFO is already involved.
- The Committee sought information regarding the funding for the road, if the road will go past the subject property, and if there is any hardship caused to the applicants resulting from the delay of the completion of the road construction in advance of the new ALC provisions.

The Committee, in general, expressed non-support for the application as presented.

It was
Investment Advisory Committee recommend to the General Manager of Planning and Development that Development Application 7921-0194-00 be referred back to staff to address concerns expressed by the Committee.

Moved by S. Van Keulen
Seconded by Councillor Elford
That the Agriculture, Environment, and
Carried

D. OUTSTANDING BUSINESS

1. Verbal Updates

- A staff report on rodenticides is anticipated for the November meeting.
- A brief overview of the Surrey Farmers Institute was provided, noting a membership drive will be underway soon.
- Staff will follow up with Planning pertaining to setting out guidelines or policy with respect to residential construction on agricultural lands, and report back to the Committee at the November meeting.

E. ITEMS REFERRED BY COUNCIL

This section had no items to consider.

F. CORRESPONDENCE

This section had no items to consider.

G. NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Agriculture, Environment, and Investment Advisory Committee is rescheduled for Tuesday, November 9, 2021, at 6:00 p.m.

H. ADJOURNMENT

It was
Investment Advisory Committee meeting adjourn.
Carried

Moved by Councillor Elford
Seconded by S. Van Keulen
That the Agriculture, Environment, and
Carried

The Agriculture, Environment, and Investment Advisory Committee adjourned at 7:06 p.m.