

Agriculture and Food Security Advisory Committee Minutes

Executive Boardroom
City Hall
14245 - 56 Avenue
Surrey, B.C.
THURSDAY, JULY 12, 2012
Time: 8:59 a.m.
File: 0540-20

Present:

Chairperson - Councillor Hepner
M. Bose – Vice Chair
D. Arnold
P. Harrison
M. Hilmer
J. Sandhar
B. Sandhu
K. Thiara
S. VanKeulen

Regrets:

T. Pellett, Agricultural Land
Commission
B. Stewart, Environmental Advisory
Committee Representative

Guest Observers:

S. Sandher, Citiwest Consulting

Staff Present:

R. Dubé, Engineering
P. Bellefontaine, Engineering
D. Hornung, Bylaws
C. MacFarlane, Legal
C. Stewart, Planning & Development
M. Kischnick, Planning & Development
L. Anderson, Legislative Services

Agency Representative:

K. Zimmerman, Ministry of Agriculture

It was requested that the agenda be amended to include the following new item:

New Business Item D.4 – Application for Road Opening of 51B Avenue and 188 Street

It was

Moved by P. Harrison
Seconded by M. Bose
That the Agriculture and Food Security Advisory

Committee Agenda be adopted, as amended.

Carried

A. ADOPTION OF MINUTES

It was

Moved by M. Hilmer
Seconded by M. Bose
That the Agriculture and Food Security Advisory

Committee adopt the minutes of the June 14, 2012 meeting.

Carried

The Agenda was varied.

F. CORRESPONDENCE**1. Ron Heppell**

C. McFarlane, City Solicitor, D. Hornung, Senior Bylaws Officer and P. Bellefontaine, Transportation Planning Manager, were in attendance to respond to the Committee's concerns regarding the e-correspondence from Ron Heppell, dated June 30, 2012. Comments were as follows:

- This is not the first time correspondence has been received with regard to the ticketing of farm vehicles utilizing alternate non-truck routes to avoid timely delays to access farms.

- One option may be to provide a permit for farm vehicles going between designated farms. This option would need to be limited to a very few vehicles because of the impact on the local roads of the heavy trucks, which is the City's biggest problem in the ALR with both illegal truck parks and farm vehicles.
- The trade-off would be damage to the roads by allowing heavy vehicles on non-truck routes, but if it allowed only a few farm vehicles the ability to take the special route, that would have to be a special permit.
- The delay for the farmer, through having to use a busier and often longer route, incurs a cost of hundreds of dollars a minute, while being held up in traffic. (Examples of the alternative routes that farmers have to take were noted).
- Farmers are continually confronted by By-law Enforcement Officers for using the jug handle on 176 Street.
- The imposition is especially noted during the harvesting of crops, which is extremely time sensitive.
- Should an exemption through harvest time be considered?
- The idea of a special limited permit is good so that any illegal access abuse can continue to be controlled.

Discussion ensued with respect to farm vehicle plates as a way to identify the vehicles that would be permitted on non-truck routes. Although the idea of a specific plate was supported, the process of how it could work was queried.

Concern was expressed regarding the non-truck route use by commercial delivery and pick up trucks by the various feed and produce trucks, as well as the use by farmers between their various farms. It was noted that any delivery to a farm would likely have an invoice to prove it was necessary to use the road(s) however the trucks that are picking up from the various farms will likely not have any paperwork until they reach the farm.

Comments continued:

- There are always going to be the anomalies of the remedy. As the requirement is going to be very limited, each case would have to be viewed separately to see if they meet the criteria, etc.
- The permit idea is a good possibility, especially since we are not talking about a lot of permits. Certainly something could be put in place temporarily to see how effective it is. The By-law Officers would become familiar, over time, with which vehicles have a permit, etc. There will also be an appeal process if there are any concerns. At least the process will get us 70% there and will provide a process that is close enough that it can be managed.
- Limiting the permit to a farmer and a particular truck the farmer has might be an issue. During harvest time a farmer may be using many trucks that are not always the same drivers. Is there another way to put a flag on a truck somehow that is easy to notice?
- A magnetic decal or a sticker would not be a bad idea. Then if a farmer comes to apply for his vehicle perhaps a nominal fee can be charged to cover the cost of making the decal.
- The farm vehicle license plates will have an "A" or a "G" on the plate that identifies them as agricultural vehicles.

- There are a lot of different vehicles out there. A farmer may hire someone to move feed and he may be using the guys that move sawdust, they will then have to have the correct registration plates. If we start limiting to farm plated vehicles then there will still be problems.
- Is it possible to give a warning and maybe 14 days to prove the bona fide reason for using the non-truck routes? It is still an inconvenience, but hopefully a temporary inconvenience.
- It is a problem, not relatively large, but it is inconvenient for the business of farming and farms, particularly at harvest time. The goal is to take the problem and get us a process that is close enough that it can be managed.

It was

Moved by M. Bose

Seconded by P. Harrison

That the Agriculture and Food Security Advisory

Committee recommends that Council direct staff to look for a solution and a process that would work for certain required intra farm vehicle use on non-truck routes and that the farmers be given the benefit of the doubt in the meantime.

Carried

B. DELEGATIONS

C. OUTSTANDING BUSINESS

D. NEW BUSINESS

1. Proposed Subdivision within the ALR.

3255 - 176 Street and 17327 - 32 Avenue

File No. 7912-0094-00

Natalie Androsoff, Planning Technician, was in attendance to review the memo from Daniel Sturgeon, Planning Technician, dated June 27, 2012, regarding the above subject line. Comments were as follows:

- The applicants are proposing to subdivide the subject 37.3 acre property into two parcels (approximately 17.5 acres and 19.0 acres) to accommodate the financing for further farming activities and improvements to one of the proposed lots.
- Although currently one property, the land is farmed individually and independently by the owners. The majority of the property is actively being used to farm blueberries.
- There are two houses located on the subject property, each occupied by a respective owner, as well as two large outbuildings and some areas used for parking/storage. The property has been owned by the same family since 1947. The owners have both stated that they have no intention of further subdivision or selling the property and are willing to register a covenant on each proposed lot in order to restrict them each to only one residence.
- The subject property is surrounded by ALR land to the North, East and West, comprised of predominantly larger A-1 lots ranging from approximately 4 to 25 hectares. Immediately west, bordering 32 Avenue, are several smaller 2 hectare A-1 parcels which are not actively being farmed.

- The proposed lots meet the minimum size prescribed in the A-1 zone, however subdivision is contrary to OCP policy F-1.2.1.
- Several red-listed ditches (aquatic habitat) traverse the property.
- The soil on this site is classified as 5W, with improvement potential to class 2W.

The Committee commented as follows:

- It is contrary to past practices of not allowing the subdivision of land; the smaller the lot is, the more difficult or fewer options there are for farming.
- ALC Policy suggests that the further parcelization of farmland should be discouraged unless there is clear benefit to agriculture.
- Larger lots are more economical than smaller lots. It has been the policy of the City not to create smaller lots, and only approve minimum lot size subdivision where it is in agriculture's best interest or where impacts on agriculture are minimal.
- The problem with allowing a subdivision within a reasonably sized agricultural lot is that it raises expectations of all those around them to subdivide further. It also opens the door to place a second dwelling, etc.
- It isn't necessarily seen as a loss of land, but it would make smaller parcels of land and those smaller parcels elevate the cost of the land, which makes the land less viable and ultimately less affordable for farmers to buy.
- At end of day it raises expectations and sets a precedent for all the ALR within the City of Surrey. A subdivision on the subject property would have a ripple effect.
- It could be suggested that this is an issue of succession planning. The Ministry of Agriculture addresses this in their Farm Business Development Program, which offers consulting services to assist in providing options for the successful transition of farms.

It was

Moved by M. Bose

Seconded by P. Harrison

That the Agriculture and Food Security Advisory

Committee recommends to the G.M. Planning and Development that Application

No. 7912-0094-00 not be supported or forwarded to the ALC as it:

1. is contrary to the OCP subdivision policy F-1.2.1 to limit subdivision of agricultural land within the City of Surrey;
2. would set a precedent and raise the expectation for further subdivisions within the ALR, causing a ripple effect; and
3. the rationale for the application could be addressed through the Ministry of Agriculture's *Farm Business Development Program*.

Carried

2. **Proposed Rezoning from A-1 to CD (based on A-1) and Application to ALC for Non-farm Use**
19158 48 Avenue
File No. 7912-0036-00

Taryn Hayes, Planner, was in attendance to review her memo, dated June 28, 2012, regarding the above subject line. Comments were as follows:

- The subject site is designated Agricultural in the Official Community Plan.
- The applicant is a retail business which sells plants, trees, shrubs and garden accessories.
- The agricultural products sold on the site are not grown on the site. This type of use (retail with no farming) is not permitted in the A-1 Zone.
- The subject site falls within the ALR and is zoned A-1. The applicant is seeking to rezone the property from A-1 to CD (based on A-1) in order to bring the existing use into legal compliance, which will require that the ALC grant a non-farm use to the site.

The Committee commented as follows:

- The site accommodates a large, illegal operation. The fill was there without permit, it was ticketed regularly and has continued its business against the City's wishes. To legitimately allow what shouldn't have been there in the first place is abuse of the policies that are in place.
- This started on 192 with a temporary golf course and has now moved up to another area as a store that is paying only agricultural taxes. It is a garden store, not a nursery; they only bring in what they are going to move out. We cannot legitimize this.
- It is a nursery building in the form of a greenhouse, but not functioning as a greenhouse inside.
- Clearly the economic benefit is greater than any fines given by the City. Perhaps the fines are not high enough.
- It is a significant loss of taxes to the City; compensation of the commercial taxes that should have been paid to the City for the operation should be sought first and foremost.
- Somewhere along the line there has to be the ability to address this abuse and to collect taxes retroactive to the first day of operation at the site. Understandably to collect commercial taxes would somehow legitimize the action, therefore further investigation of the options available (a fine equal to a commercial tax levy) needs to be discussed with the City's legal department.
- At the end of the day, it is the City's job to protect the community. It is important to deal with this. Looking at this and how it affects farm land, allowing this to continue will raise the expectations for similar operations to start-up.

It was

Moved by M. Bose

Seconded by M. Hilmer

That the Agriculture and Food Security Advisory

Committee recommends to the G.M. Planning and Development that Application No. 7912-0036-00 to rezone from A-1 to CD land to legitimize the current operations, not be supported or forwarded to the Agricultural Land Commission until an examination for a fee equivalent to a commercial tax can be levied on the property.

Carried

3. Proposed NCP Amendment, Rezoning and Development Permit

249 & 255 171 Street

File No. 7912-0055-00

Ingrid Matthews, Planner, was in attendance to review her memo, dated June 20, 2012, regarding the above subject line. Comments were as follows:

- The application is to amend the subject property (in the Douglas NCP adjacent to ALR land) from “Townhouse 15 u.p.a.” to “Townhouse 30 u.p.a.” (actual proposed density is 21.8 u.p.a.) and rezone from “One Acre Residential (RA)” to “Multiple Residential (30) (RM-30)”.
- The subject site involves two of six properties designated “Townhouses 15 u.p.a.” located adjacent to Peace Portal Golf Course [Douglas NCP plan and air photo provided].
- The Douglas NCP does not outline specific requirements in regards to buffering or building setbacks for the sites (which may be because of the golf course use on the site), which is in contrast to specific conditions outlined in the NCP to address the interface of the ALR boundary along 4 Avenue.
- Although Peace Portal Golf Course is located in the ALR, it is considered unlikely that the golf course use will change in the foreseeable future, and therefore, a buffer that meets the OCP guidelines related to the protection of farming is not being proposed for this application.
- The application provides for a 7.5 m set back, with an existing row of conifers and other conditions being proposed for the buffer. No additional buffering or set back requirements are being outlined for this application.
- The project has also been referred to Peace Portal Golf course for comments.

The Committee commented as follows:

- Why would we change the buffer zone in the ALR? Just because it is a golf course today doesn't mean it will always be. Although the golf course is not being used as a farm, the potential to farm the land at a later date should be available, which includes the need for sufficient buffering.
- As long as we are following the existing policy/buffering rules. Will the easement be put in for the buffer?
 - *One of the reasons this application is before the Committee is more for direction and the precedent set, because the Douglas NCP doesn't have a policy for buffering. As new NCPs are being written, it is important to know what buffering should be put in place for golf courses. Typically the buffering is based on things like spray, noise, etc., which isn't a concern when the land is used as a golf course.*
- There is a 7.5 m set back with very little landscaping.
- The DP guidelines indicate a 15 m buffer and 37.5 m set back, but this application is different.
- Peace Portal is ALR land, whether a golf course or not, still needs ALR buffering. Does it need to have what Policy O-23 states, probably not, but it needs buffering. The use of the land now does not dictate what it will be in the future. The existing buffering guidelines for agricultural land within the development permit area should be considered so that if the existing ALR land is to revert back for required agricultural purposes, the buffering will be in place.

- If the buffering policy is followed, there could be a nice pathway around the golf course; a fully fledged thicker buffer as a pathway. The buffer would also enhance safety from golf balls and provide protection when the course is sprayed.
- The bigger issue is the density change from 15 u.p.a. to 30 u.p.a. Why would we set a precedent that doesn't fit with the current guidelines (e.g. Clayton, Port Kells)? The purpose of an ALR is a reserve that down the road may become a farm. We keep forgetting it is a reserve, and as the population expands we need to ensure we have the productive land available to accommodate the population growth.
- Allowing the application as proposed will raise the expectations everywhere in the city to push development right to edge and for the buffering to take place within the ALR.
- Two issues have been raised, insufficient buffer and density:
 - The existing OCP Development Permit Agriculture buffer guidelines should be considered for this application; and
 - The increase to 30 u.p.a. should not be supported; the existing 15 u.p.a. should remain consistent in density.

It was

Moved by P. Harrison

Seconded by M. Bose

That the Agriculture and Food Security Advisory

Committee recommends Council be consistent with the existing OCP Development Permit Agriculture buffer guidelines when considering Application No. 7912-0055-00.

Carried

4. **Application for Road Opening 51B Avenue and 188 Street**

R. Dubé, Development Services Manager, provided a memo on table, regarding the above noted application. The following was noted:

- Certain property owners of 51B Avenue and 188 Street would like to improve access to their properties through a Transportation, Utility and Recreational Use in the ALR application to the Agricultural Land Commission.
- They are proposing to construct a 6 m wide paved road with appropriate ditching, approximately 680 m long, from 19012 51B Avenue west to 188 Street and south from 51B Avenue to 4938 188 Street (image shown).
- The proposed road will provide direct access to approximately 25 ha of ALR lands.
- The historical access from the north side of 188 Street across the CPR right-of-way does not meet the City's criteria of site access. Anticipated increased use of the rail corridor in conjunction with the Roberts Bank Rail Corridor improvement project will further impact viability of this historical access.
- The application to the Agricultural Land Commission has been sent on behalf of the applicants.

The Committee commented as follows:

- There are really only two options to make this land viable.
- How will they have access to an irrigation supply? Even having the road, how will they farm without water?
- Depending on the type of farm (e.g. cattle, etc.), irrigation would not be a problem.

It was Moved by M. Bose
Seconded by M. Hilmer
That the Agriculture and Food Security Advisory
Committee recommends that Council support the application for the road opening of
51B Avenue and 188 Street as it will provide access to lands that have previously been
inaccessible.

Carried

E. ITEMS REFERRED BY COUNCIL

F. CORRESPONDENCE

1. **Sandra Heppell**

This item was dealt with earlier in the meeting.

2. **Phil Harrison**

The e-correspondence from Phil Harrison, dated July 3, 2012, requesting, with Fred Girling, to appear before the Committee on behalf of the coalition for a GE free Surrey, was reviewed. It was noted that there had also been a request that Council receive the delegation. As such, the Committee agreed that it would be beneficial to receive the information prior to the delegation's presentation to Council.

It was Moved by S. Van Keulen
Seconded by M. Bose
That the Agriculture and Food Security Advisory
Committee receive a delegation from Phil Harrison and Fred Girling to the
September 13, 2012, Committee meeting, with the condition that a copy of their
credentials and the presentation be provided to the Committee one week in advance
of the meeting.

Carried

G. INFORMATION ITEMS

1. **Proposed ALR Exclusion at 17236 – 56 Avenue and 5490 – 168 Street
249 & 255 171 Street
File No. 7912-0157-00**

Christopher Atkins, Planner, was in attendance to review his memo, dated July 9, 2012, as follows:

- The application is to exclude 1.77 hectares (4.37 acres) of land from the ALR for the existing 30.5-metre wide BC Hydro/Southern Railway corridor, which is already in use.

- The construction of the new railway corridor was completed and operation commenced in 2008, however no formal application has yet been made to exclude the railway corridor from the ALR.
- The exclusion is required in order for the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure (MOTI) and BC Hydro to complete their land exchange. These lands will ultimately be owned by BC Hydro.
- The Agricultural Land Commission has previously considered and supported the consolidation of the adjacent properties and the dedication of road adjacent to the rail ROW.

The Committee reported that when they had reviewed the original application regarding the widening of Highway 10, all options were considered regarding the railway corridor and a number of required consolidations had been discussed at that time. It was confirmed that the required consolidations have been done.

It was Moved by P. Harrison
 Seconded by B. Sandhu
 That the Agriculture and Food Security Advisory
 Committee receive the memo, dated July 9, 2012, regarding application 7912-0157-00,
 as information.

Carried

H. INTEGRITY OF THE AGRICULTURE LAND

The following concern was noted for staff to review:

- (Location provided to staff) – the existing sawdust pile has now been completely covered by trucks and trailers and looks more like a scrap yard; flagrant abuse of farm land.

I. OTHER BUSINESS

1. Environmental Advisory Committee (EAC) Update

A brief update from the EAC meeting of June 27, 2012, held at the Surrey Nature Centre, was provided as follows:

- An overview presentation of the Surrey Nature Centre at Green Timbers was provided by Colleen Gillespie, Environmental Project Coordinator, Surrey Nature Centre.
- Don Luymes, Manager, Community Planning, presented a general overview and structure of the 2012 Official Community Plan (OCP) and briefly discussed the land use plan and how the environment is engrained in the new OCP. The EAC expressed concerns with regard to the parkland acquisition program, and moved that Council:
 - remain within the Park Lands Acquisition Standard of 4.2 hectares per 1000 population; and
 - ensure that the parks available in the proposed high density zones be made accessible to the public.

2. **Flavours of Surrey Event**

A final update for the Flavours of Surrey 2012 event, as part of the City's Fusion Festival July 21 - 22, was provided. A map noting the layout of the allocated area for the event and a copy of the newspaper advertisement and posters distributed to all of the City's recreation facilities, were shown. Committee members were requested to advise their availability to volunteer over the two-day event.

I. **NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting of the Agriculture and Food Security Advisory Committee will be held on Thursday, September 13, 2012, in the Executive Boardroom.

J. **ADJOURNMENT**

It was

Moved by M. Bose


Seconded by B. Sandhu

That the Agriculture and Food Security Advisory


Committee do now adjourn.

Carried

The Agriculture and Food Security Advisory Committee adjourned at 10:55 a.m.



Jane Sullivan, City Clerk



Councillor Linda Hepner, Chair
Surrey Agriculture and Food Security Advisory
Committee