

Agriculture and Food Security

Advisory Committee

Minutes

Present:

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

Regrets:

J. Sandhar
S. VanKeulen
T. Pellett, Agricultural Land
Commission

Staff Present:

R. Dubé, Engineering
C. Stewart, Planning & Development
M. Kischnick, Planning & Development
M. Baynham, Sustainability
L. Anderson, Legislative Services

Guest Observers:

G. Rice

Agency Representative:

K. Zimmerman, Ministry of Agriculture

Environmental Advisory Committee**Representative:**

B. Stewart

A. ADOPTION OF MINUTES

It was

Moved by M. Hilmer

Seconded by P. Harrison

That the Agriculture and Food Security Advisory
Committee adopt the minutes of the September 13, 2012 meeting.

Carried

B. DELEGATIONS**C. OUTSTANDING BUSINESS****1. Kwantlen Polytechnic University Study:
“Surrey’s Underutilized ALR Lands”**

D. Luymes, Manager, Community Planning, was in attendance to review the memorandum from Carla Stewart, Senior Policy Planner, dated September 25, 2012, regarding the above subject line. Comments were as follows:

- Rather than reproduce the entire report the executive summary is included in hard copy and the link to the entire copy of the report electronically.
- From a staff perspective, we’re not planning on bringing the entire report to Council. Presenting to the Committee now and looking for comment, following with a report to Council on the receipt of this report (perhaps providing the executive summary).
- Some individual ideas may have some merit. It is not our intention to advance the whole package of recommendations to Council, but rather to receive and identify which recommendations have the most merit.

The Committee commented as follows:

- It is fairly safe to say that as much as 80% of the recommendations endorse much of the work that the Committee has already done or is in the process of doing; it is really an endorsement of the Committee's work. (e.g. home plate, Buy Surrey, etc.).
- Many different assumptions were made about how yields might be reduced, how farmers would receive prices that were being used at a grocery store, without an explanation of retail and wholesale prices, and nothing to do with market penetration. Fixed costs and infrastructure were not taken into account.
- A significant amount of assumptions.

Discussion ensued with respect to the wording and interpretation of some of the recommendations. The particular recommendations noted were clarified.

The amenity contribution category generated some discussion. The idea was based on using potential opportunities for new urban development to support agriculture. This could include directing a trust fund of development contributions toward agriculture (accessed by farmers for drainage, etc.), similar to the existing amenity contribution choices currently used for parks, public art, etc. The funding could be directed to a range of agricultural enhancement opportunities. The Committee agreed the amenity contribution recommendation has a lot of merit in terms of examination.

Comments continued:

- The focus on small lots is problematic; nobody can make a living with small lots.
- With respect to one of the maps identified as underutilized for agriculture, it appears that the information is not current and that it may have been taken from the Ministry of Agriculture's 2004 land use inventory data and noted as current 2011 data. In particular, Mound Farm has been farmed since the City bought it, as was the parcel next to it. Driving anywhere near Mound Farm in 2011 active farming would clearly have been identified. Unfortunately it appears there has been a misunderstanding of the Ministry's method of terminology which has skewed the map.
- It goes back to the accuracy of the numbers in the tables where it would clearly have noted that there is a certain amount of City land available for farming. There is a limitation to the Ministry's 2004 study that has been misunderstood. As a result, the credibility may be lost.
- There are some recommendations worth looking into further because it is work the Committee has been undertaking. However, for the cost of the report, what Metro Vancouver is doing for the study they have undertaken will be much more of a comprehensive and thorough piece of work.
- The Kwantlen group did appear before the Metro Vancouver Agriculture Committee to ask for more money in advance of going back to each municipality to fund further. It was a lot of money and Metro Vancouver was opposed.
- Those recommendations that have merit have already been covered off or will be under the Agriculture Strategy.
- To be fair, it doesn't matter who did the report, until some farmers go through it, it won't be complete. You can see from here, farmers have had very little input for what we are doing now. Take this as a beginning, not an end. It has a lot of points to discuss and see what we can do.

- Farmers are pretty innovative and they are entrepreneurs, they will go where the money is, there are all sorts of resources available, I think farmers have the intellect to go after the information.
- Primarily, the report is a solid endorsement of the direction of the Committee and its work over the last several years and in and of itself has value.

It was

Moved by M. Hilmer

Seconded by P. Harrison

That the Agriculture and Food Security Advisory Committee recommend that the format of the report to be provided to Council regarding the Kwantlen Polytechnic University study, "Surrey's Underutilized ALR Lands", clearly sets out, visually, those items that have already been dealt with by the Committee and highlight the items that will be addressed by the Agriculture Strategy, in order to emphasize the great percentage of the work the Committee has done.

Carried

2. City of Surrey DRAFT Agriculture Strategy

The Draft Agriculture Strategy for the City of Surrey was provided for review and discussion. Comments were as follows:

- Wanted to make sure whatever we do with this strategy that it fits in to the sustainability pillars and then within that, identify a work plan and soften some things like urban agriculture which also assists in teaching people to love agriculture as opposed to it being an economic engine.
- We started down this path because the Mayor and Council wanted to make sure that agriculture is understood to be a sector of the economic development arena of this city and its successes.
- The Agriculture Strategy is a high level document, not a specific set of policies, instead it is policy directions. Following the workshop in April/May, we took all existing policies the City has and tried to collect all of the work that the City is doing around agriculture and have framed the Agriculture Strategy into a document that is easy to read that sets out five simple pillars as the framework for policy work. There is not much in the document that hasn't already been worked on; it is simply a way of structuring the City's strategies and policies around agriculture.
- The five pillars of the Agriculture Strategy are to:
 - Protect land base - without land base, nothing happens;
 - Prioritize innovation - whether production or new crop opportunities - a lot of work being done in this area that could enhance profitably in the industry;
 - Recognize that infrastructure is important;
 - Manage carefully - we live in an agricultural environment which is inextricably linked with urban neighbours which needs to be managed carefully; and
 - Recognize that farming is sustainable for the future - farming is economically and socially sustainable for future generations of farmers.
- One area underrepresented at this point is some of the food security items, which actually fits in to all five pillars and is part of the mandate of the Committee. There is interest in building and encouraging healthy food/local food marketing and consumption, which is strengthened through healthy lifestyles and healthy

eating (also promoted through various Parks, Recreation and Culture programming).

- The Agriculture Strategy is the overarching document to the Agriculture Plan. The document is the first full draft created for a review to ensure that the look and feel is right and, more importantly, that the thrust of the agriculture planning in Surrey is captured correctly. It should be noted that the photos used in the draft document will be replaced with Surrey or Fraser Valley specific photos.

Discussion ensued with regard to land base, agricultural industry and examining opportunities for an agriculture innovation centre within the business and industrial land within Campbell Heights (eg. a large amount of land not in the ALR that could potentially have a centre block of agriculture [greenhouses, etc.] surrounded by an outer ring of industry).

Comments continued:

- We have a real key connection with SFU with incubator innovation; while some could be traditional greenhouses, etc., some could be innovation.
- If you want agriculture to come back, bring back processing, nothing would be more beneficial to farming.
- It may be better to encourage the use of non-agricultural land for tax breaks, tax incentives, etc., for agriculture production, which minimizes the risk of removing land from the ALR that could ultimately result in industrial.
- There is a lot of talk in the document about the City does this, the City will do that, etc., everybody wants their hands on limited tax dollars. All the farmers want is for everyone to get out of their way. They can manage themselves, just get the obstacles out of the way. Take the drainage water out (an ongoing problem), good roads, etc. We talk about making sure the integrity of the land is maintained so it is used for agriculture. We have to have a balance between what we need to protect in agricultural land. If something is related to agriculture, let them do it. Regarding processors, if farmers here in Surrey wanted a fresh salad packing facility, they would have a tough time setting up, not just regulation, the availability of fresh water, it is difficult, yet those are the things when we talked about a self-contained agriculture community, we have to show flexibility.
- We need a little more understanding and flexibility overall, including our thinking, to protect and preserve. Although the City doesn't have the mandate to make those demands, developing ideas should carry some weight. *(It was noted that there will be ALC representation at the next meeting and as such, the question of what part does the ALC play in those types of decisions should be raised.)*
- A further draft of the Strategy, to include updated local photos, should be provided to the Committee for the next meeting.

D. NEW BUSINESS

E. ITEMS REFERRED BY COUNCIL

F. CORRESPONDENCE**G. INFORMATION ITEMS****1. Richmond Agriculture Tour**

An update from the Richmond Agriculture Tour and the various operations visited, attended by M. Bose and D. Arnold, was provided.

K. Thiara left the meeting at 10:56 am.

H. INTEGRITY OF THE AGRICULTURE LAND

The following concerns were noted for staff to review:

- (Location provided to staff) - Building to be built as barns, then not used.
- (Location provided to staff) - Mini bins - a number of businesses, a business park, office space. That land is in the ALR.
- (Location provided to staff) - Application denied and reclamation ordered back to its productive state. They applied and were turned down and did it anyway. Should follow-up with ALC re reclamation not done.

Update on all three properties to be provided at the next meeting.

I. OTHER BUSINESS**1. 2012 Work Plan**

The 2012 Work Plan, as updated September 25, 2012, was reviewed. Priority levels were updated (where required) and additional comments were as follows:

- The farm home plate bylaw will receive Public Hearing on October 22, 2012.

M. Hilmer left the meeting at 10:58 am.

- Must ensure when we do our agriculture tour that we focus on an economic generator.
- Let's invite some of the investment people that may also have people interested in processing, another avenue of getting the people involved.
- With respect to regional AAC meetings, would it be worthwhile to do a Metro Vancouver meeting with the local municipalities?
- The joint AAC meeting came up as something we were going to look at south of the Fraser because we all have specific issues; really to deal with fill and illegal truck parking, etc., those were the big issues for Langley, Delta and Surrey.
- When we deal with the fill and illegal truck and RV parking, whatever we do here in Surrey may have a negative impact elsewhere and should be discussed.

I. NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Agriculture and Food Security Advisory Committee will be held on Thursday, November 8, 2012, in the Executive Boardroom.

J. ADJOURNMENT

It was

Moved by M. Bose


Seconded by P. Harrison

That the Agriculture and Food Security Advisory

Committee do now adjourn.

Carried

The Agriculture and Food Security Advisory Committee adjourned at 11:23 a.m.



Jane Sullivan, City Clerk



Councillor Linda Hepner, Chair
Agriculture and Food Security Advisory Committee