

# *Agriculture and Food Security Advisory Committee Minutes*

Executive Boardroom  
City Hall  
14245 - 56 Avenue  
Surrey, B.C.  
THURSDAY, JULY 4, 2013  
Time: 9:00 a.m.  
File: 0540-20

**Present:**

M. Bose - Chairperson  
D. Arnold  
J. Sandhar  
B. Sandhu  
K. Thiara

**Regrets:**

Councillor Hepner  
S. VanKeulen  
P. Harrison  
M. Hilmer  
T. Pellett, Agricultural Land  
Commission  
K. Zimmerman, Ministry of  
Agriculture

**Staff Present:**

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

**Environmental Advisory Committee****Representative:**

B. Stewart

**Guest Observers:**

Malvinder Gill  
Sukhminder Gill  
Dave Melnychuk, P.Ag  
Nav Sekhon

**A. ADOPTION OF MINUTES**

It was

Moved by D. Arnold  
Seconded by J. Sandhar  
That the Agriculture and Food Security Advisory  
Committee adopt the minutes of the June 13, 2013 meeting.  
Carried

**B. DELEGATIONS****1. Anna Mathewson, Manager, Sustainability, and Maggie Baynham, Sustainability Coordinator**

Anna Mathewson, Manager, Sustainability, and Maggie Baynham, Sustainability Coordinator, were in attendance to provide a presentation on the Surrey's Community Climate Action Strategy: Adaptation and Food Security.

A PowerPoint presentation was given, which provided a background to the development of the Strategy, the climate targets and commitments made by the Province and a review of Surrey's Climate Adaptation Strategy Draft. A brief outline of the City's mitigation measures to release GHG emissions to minimize future climate change was also noted. Additional comments were as follows:

- Why adapt? Cost is a large factor which is starting to be seen globally - insurance claims have doubled since the 1980's. Preparing for climate change is really risk management; looking at higher risk and working towards minimizing that risk.

- The City is starting to see impacts in terms of costs in Surrey (e.g. increase in water costs for maintenance of trees; Crescent Beach sea level rise and high tide events causing ground water to pool at surface necessitating a new (nearly completed) pump station).
- It isn't all about reducing cost, part of the vision is to become a more resilient community, proactive and cost effective.
- There are positive co-benefits: as we start to see more precipitation and hot weather, the value of having healthy eco-systems becomes ever more important and will provide many community benefits.
- Similarly, much of the emphasis is on localization, i.e. local food systems and energy. Not only does that help us mitigate and insulate against changes in the food system, but we are also able to funnel that into local development and jobs to ensure long term community resilience.

B. Stewart joined the meeting at 9:22 am

- Climate change impacts and projections:
  - In general likely to see warmer summers by two degrees (a summer climate warmer than San Diego by the 2080's).
  - Wetter winters, drier summers, more frequent and intense rain storms.
  - 1.2m of sea level rise by 2100 (rule of thumb working with right now).
- Temperature wise, we are starting to see some of these trends emerge, statistically there has been increase over the last 40 years.
- The research organization out of UVIC partnered with the Royal Museum a couple of years ago to study the varying temperature trends throughout the regions. In particular, significant changes to the crops in Surrey were noted, with the most likely scenario showing pecans, olives and rice in 2080 (based entirely on degree days).
- All of these impacts translate to very real impacts on the ground. Through the risk assessment exercise, we identified some of the key risks and mapped how they might translate on the ground: Agriculture and food security; flood management; infrastructure; health and safety; and eco-systems and urban trees.
- After the risk assessment was done, we identified goals and actions. A lot of the actions are not within the City to implement, but we might have a role working with the Province to assist. For example, adaptation goals for agriculture include:
  - Provide appropriate infrastructure for agriculture viability - work with all levels of government to evaluate long term flood management options in response to sea level rise impacts with considerations for agricultural vulnerability.
  - Encourage greater diversity in local products and growing methods, e.g. work with key partners to help maintain and grow agriculture. (This aligns with the City's Agriculture Protection and Enhancement Strategy).
  - Increase food self-sufficiency in Surrey and the region. For example, increase opportunities for residents to produce their own food (support community gardens, review parcel size requirements for backyard chickens, etc.).
  - Help farmers build capacity to adapt –explore and support best practices from other global communities that are currently facing challenges.

- It is anticipated that the Draft Climate Adaptation and Mitigation Plans will be provided for review by Council at the September 9, 2013 meeting, followed by the Final Plans for Council approval on October 7, 2013.

### C. OUTSTANDING BUSINESS

### D. NEW BUSINESS

#### 1. Proposed Development Variance Permit (DVP)

7130 – 152 Street

File No.: 7913-0143-00

D. Sturgeon, Planning Technician, was in attendance to review the memo from R. Hintsche, Current Planning Manager – South, dated June 25, 2013, regarding the above subject line. Comments were as follows:

- The subject property, located on the east side of 152 Street just south of 72 Avenue, is currently designated “Agricultural” in the OCP and is zoned “General Agriculture (A-1)”.
- The property is within the ALR and is approximately 19.6 acres (7.9 ha) in size.
- The site is currently occupied by a single (uninhabited) family dwelling, a Quonset structure, several smaller derelict structures, and various scattered vehicles and debris.
- A large volume of fill material has been placed on the site by a previous owner in an area located on the northern portion of the property, approximately 125m from the front (west) property line. The dimensions of the fill site are approximately 40m by 30m and the fill is approximately 0.9 m to 1.2m in depth.
- Prior to the fill being in place there was a stand of deciduous trees. The fill was placed on the property beginning sometime between April 2003 and April 2004, without a fill permit from the City (an aerial photo illustrating the location of the existing fill was shown).
- The current owners took possession of the property in the fall of 2012 and are seeking a DVP to vary the farm residential footprint requirements of the A-1 Zone to permit construction of a new single family dwelling on the existing fill site for the foundation.
- The cost to remove or relocate the existing fill would be significant, and the owner would prefer to utilize these funds for other purposes, including establishing an agriculture use on the property.
- Since the fill site is approximately 125m from the front lot line, the dwelling would not comply with the maximum 50m farm residential footprint setback requirement of the A-1 Zone. In addition, the total area of the farm residential footprint is likely to exceed the maximum 3,000 m<sup>2</sup> area requirement of the A-1 Zone when the existing dwelling and access driveway are included.

The Committee commented as follows:

- The purpose of the homeplate and house size limits in Surrey's Zoning Bylaw is to protect the long term agricultural potential of the property in question as well as that of neighbouring properties.
- In terms of the City's general process on variance permits, since there has been farm homeplate changes in the A-1 Zoning Bylaw, if there was a fill permit approved it could be brought to the Board of Variance, however, in this case, the fill was not approved.
- Right now this property does not have farm status; can only deal with one house on the property at this time, which has to fit within the farm footprint.
- If the application proceeds as planned, the total allowed homeplate area of 3,000 m<sup>2</sup> would also be exceeded because of the existing dwelling and driveway access.
- The applicant's letter states they are planning to operate a Christmas tree farm. This is a very seasonal business that is only open to the public for three to four weeks a year. This does not require a great deal of area for a public sales and no buildings.
- Whichever type of crop is chosen, the farm plan is dependent on a water source, with reliable quantity and quality. It would have been useful to have the information on well water availability before the DVP application was submitted, since the farm plan is used as a rationale for the new residential area.
- If the existing homeplate was utilized (e.g. the existing uninhabited house was torn down and that part of the property used for a new home), there could be a future non-soil-base used for the area covered 1,200 m<sup>2</sup> of fill. That way the existing driveway could be utilized as well, and a new driveway would not need to be created.

The Chair allowed Dave Melnychuck, P.Ag (author of the Agrologist Report to the application) to comment. He noted that of the 19.5 acres, there is approximately 17 acres of good farming possible for the property. The soils are basically heavier mineral clay soils then there is a transition to the good organics. The front piece of property (also covered with fill) can be reclaimed and could be a good place for starter plants for sales (the challenge is how well this portion of the property could be rehabilitated). Full production is envisioned, with direct market and a sales area access to the property (shown on map). From a farm development point of view, it makes sense the way discussed.

Comments continued:

- There is concern with respect to the precedent this may set. This is essentially making right an illegal fill that should have been dealt with eight years ago.
- The driveway isolates the front portion of the property. If it was developed into an agricultural operation, then another building would have to be behind the site, taking up more space. If the driveway was on the other side it would maintain the link with the old house that could be used.
- There are good arguments for the driveway being on the north side.

- Not very keen on how far of a setback is requested, but for a one off, and if the fill pile is tidied up, remediate the front acre and try to get it as close to 2,000 m<sup>2</sup>, remove the buildings and this could be a lovely piece of property.

It was

Moved by B. Stewart

Seconded J. Sandhar

That the Agriculture and Food Security Advisory

Committee recommends to the G.M. Planning and Development that, in as much as Application No. 7913-0143-00 has potential to benefit agriculture, the application be supported subject to:

1. Demolition of all structures with the exception of the Quonset;
2. Relocating the driveway to the north boundary of the property; and
3. Restricting the farm residential footprint to 2,000 m<sup>2</sup>.

Carried

Comments continued:

- If the amount of fill on the property is greater than 2000 m<sup>2</sup> then the ALC needs to approve (unchanged since 2004).
- The applicants are not just building a house, they are trying to bring this entire property into agriculture.
- This application does not set a precedent. It is one decision on one site, which will be reviewed by to Council in due course. We have looked at this application, given the scope and the site, and feel it is reasonable.
- The net benefit to this application exceeds the loss of farmland. However, the recommendations set out above, will ensure there will still be a benefit to agriculture.

## **E. ITEMS REFERRED BY COUNCIL**

## **F. CORRESPONDENCE**

The correspondence to Mayor Watts from Kent Mullinix, PhD., Director, Sustainable Agriculture, Kwantlen Polytechnic University, dated May 27, 2013, regarding revisions to the study he conducted *Surrey's Underutilized ALR Lands: An Analysis of their Economic, Job Creation, and Food Production Potential in Direct market Agriculture*, was received.

## **G. INFORMATION ITEMS**

### **1. Environmental Sustainability Advisory Committee (ESAC) Update**

An update from the ESAC meeting of June 26, 2013, was not available at this time.

**H. INTEGRITY OF THE AGRICULTURE LAND**

The Chair acknowledged guest observer, Mr. Sekhon, and raised the issue of propane cannon use to eliminate damage to the blueberry crops from the increase in the starling population located in the area of Highway #10 and 168 Avenue.

Mr. Sekhon advised that good neighbor efforts are being made and that the number of propane cannons has been reduced to three cannons. Fewer complaints have been received from neighbours and Mr. Sekhon has openly encouraged dialogue with the neighbours should any concerns arise.

Mr. Sekhon does, however, have concern with respect to the anticipated tree planting at Mound Farm. Just as tree removal in the area would reduce the roosting areas for the birds and further lessen the damage the birds cause to the blueberry crops, the increase in tree planting would likely increase the bird population and resulting crop damage unless more propane cannons are installed (a huge cost to the land owner).

Laser technology was discussed, however it was determined that lasers on the property would incur a serious challenge to prevent theft. Mr. Sekhon reported that there have not been any other alternatives to propane cannons that are as effective for his farm.

**I. OTHER BUSINESS****1. 2013 Flavours of Surrey Event**

An update of the preparations for the 2013 "Flavours of Surrey" agricultural awareness event, as part of the City's two day Fusion Festival (July 20-21), was provided. Committee members noted their volunteer availability to assist with set-up, tear-down and the various shifts available during the event.

**J. NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting of the Agriculture and Food Security Advisory Committee will be held on **Thursday, September 12, 2013**, in the **Executive Boardroom**.

**K. ADJOURNMENT**

It was

Moved by B. Sandhu


Seconded by B. Stewart

That the Agriculture and Food Security Advisory

Committee do now adjourn.

Carried

The Agriculture and Food Security Advisory Committee adjourned at 11:09 a.m.

  
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Jane Sullivan, City Clerk

  
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Mike Bose, Chairperson  
Agriculture and Food Security Advisory Committee