

Agriculture and Food Security Advisory Committee Minutes

Present:

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

Regrets:

T. Pellett, Agricultural Land
Commission

Staff Present:

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

Environmental Advisory

Committee Representative:

B. Stewart

Agency Representatives:

K. Zimmerman, Ministry of Agriculture

Guest Observers:

Kurt Alberts
Steve DeJong
Maggie Koka
Peter Schouten

A. ADOPTION OF MINUTES

It was

Moved by M. Bose

Seconded by P. Harrison

That the Agriculture and Food Security Advisory

Committee adopt the minutes of the July 4, 2013 meeting.

Carried

B. DELEGATIONS

C. OUTSTANDING BUSINESS

D. NEW BUSINESS

1. Proposed Subdivision

17901 – 80 Avenue and 8176 - 176 Street

File No.: 7913-0123-00

S. Long, Planner, was in attendance to review the memo from G. Gahr, Current Planning Manager – North, dated August 30, 2013, regarding the above subject line.

Comments were as follows:

- The subject site is comprised of two lots, a westerly lot approximately 14.5 hectares in size and an easterly lot approximately 16.2 hectares in size, which are bisected by the Serpentine River.

- The property line runs through the Serpentine River, creating fragmented parcels from the larger portion of each lot.
- The applicants are proposing to subdivide the subject site from two lots into two new lots, with the new lot line following the Serpentine River, thereby eliminating the fragmented parcels and improving farming for each lot.
- The proposed new westerly lot will be 16.4 hectares and the proposed new easterly lot will be 13.6 hectares.
- A referral to the Agricultural Land Commission is not required as the proposed subdivision complies with Part 5, Section 10 of the *Agricultural Land Commission Act*, Agricultural Land Reserve Use, Subdivision and Procedure Regulation.
- The proposed application also complies with Official Community Plan Policy F-1.2: Maintain Agricultural Activities.

The Committee agreed that the subdivision, as proposed, makes sense for farm management.

It was Moved by M. Bose
 Seconded B. Stewart
 That the Agriculture and Food Security Advisory
 Committee recommend to the G.M. Planning and Development support for
 Application 7913-0123-00, as proposed.
Carried

2. Soil Depositing Application

18969 – 40 Avenue
 File No.: 4520-80 (18969 – 04000)

L. Thompson, Engineering Technologist, Drainage and Environment Section, was in attendance to review his memo, dated September 5, 2013, regarding the above subject line.

A background to the application for the 12.5 acre property, of which the proposed fill area is approximately 7 acres, was provided noting that the previous application for this site proposed 87,000 m² of fill to raise the land to 3m. The previous application was, at that time, perceived to be an extreme amount of fill for the site and it was suggested then that the amount of fill be reduced to accommodate a more favourable depth of approximately 1m.

With respect to the new application, the following comments were made:

- The property is heavily treed and not actively being farmed; currently sitting fallow.
- Waterways exist on the northwest and east sides of the property which require fisheries considerations.
- The applicant is now requesting to elevate the proposed fill area by up to 5m and deposit 118,000 m² of material in an effort to level the site and raise the growing

area; an increase from the original fill application of 3m (87,000 m²) with the same footprint.

- The P.Ag. report notes the site soils transition from coarse textured deposits in the southeast corner to well decomposed organic material underlain by poorly drained fine textured deposits in the central and northern portions of the property, and identifies that these types of soils are:
 - Generally very poorly drained;
 - Naturally infertile and acidic;
 - Have a low bulk density; and
 - With excess water from surface and groundwater sources present.
- The P.Ag. report claims the proposed fill would take the land from Class 4 or 5 to Class 2, which would enhance the agricultural capability and resolve the drainage issues, however Engineering staff believe this can be achieved with less fill and previously requested that the proponents explore and exhaust other servicing options, such as installation of drainage tile and/or reducing the volume of material deposited to a maximum 1m depth of topsoil only.
- The proposed fill is not all topsoil. The majority will be other allowable soils with the top layer being topsoil. It is expected to be a multiyear fill site with berries or wine grape production being the end use of the property.
- The neighbouring property recently planted blueberries without importing any soil.

The Committee commented as follows:

- It is difficult to ignore the fact that this revised application is for the complete opposite of what had been suggested in response to the original soil deposition application.
- How does this application affect the adjoining properties in terms of drainage?
A report indicates that the subsurface flow could be better.

A copy of the relevant page from the Soil Management Handbook for the Lower Fraser Valley, regarding recommended management inputs to overcome the soil limitations, was provided for the Committee's information. Comments continued:

- It appears the applicant would also like to plant berries for which they could achieve the soil by doing the management and drainage tile recommendations.
- One of the suited crops for the soils is blueberries, which is what was planted in the adjacent property.
- For both blueberries and grapes the natural slope of the property would provide drainage naturally, which is advantageous.
- Staff noted that the applicant proposes berries or grapes, not blueberries.

Discussion ensued with respect to the current elevation of the neighbouring properties. Staff reported that the levels are basically all the same and that there is also a lake that flows well and a significant ditch that ties in.

The map of the soil levels was reviewed, noting the proposed soil height would be quite high; 5m higher than the adjacent property. It was further noted that the final grade proposed would be 17.9 with greater side slopes resulting in a 12% reduction of the footprint of the property. The Committee expressed concern that there was insufficient information provided with respect to the volume and depth of the proposed fill, the hydrology of the site and potential hydrology impacts from the fill on adjacent property.

The applicant asked if he could speak, noting he would like to provide input on the proposed future use. The Chair granted permission and the applicant commented as follows:

- We farm from Delta to Chilliwack and want to continue to farm. There has been a great deal of time and effort placed on how to farm this property. It is property that was previously part of a pit that we feel could be ideal for wolfberries. What isn't apparent within the materials received is that the lake hydraulics into the gravel and during the fall equipment could be lost in there; you need to get above that.
- With respect to the impacts to the neighbouring properties, this property is on a hill and we want to achieve as much sunlight as possible. As such, we went for optimum growth for the wolfberry, which we believe is sustainable farming. We also want a slope for water and for frost, but achieving more sunlight and addressing the hydraulic problem is what we are trying to attain. We believe we will be able to provide better and well managed drainage. If not wolf berry then blueberry is the proposed future use.

In general the Committee agreed that some modification or work is required to make the property more farmable. However, concerns with the extent of the work and elevation required were again noted and it was suggested that a hydrology report outlining how the level would be managed would be preferred prior to advancing this property for farming. In response, staff directed the Committee to the report included with the application that addresses the subsurface flow noting that it would be insignificant and increased temporarily. With respect to how deep the organics are before the gravel, staff further advised of a report that indicates the top soil is 6 – 12 inches. Ground water is 1.2m – 2m below ground.

Staff briefly reviewed the soil application process, advising that not all applications are forwarded to Council. Only those soil applications supported by the Committee to be forwarded to the ALC for consideration will be forwarded to Council for their direction to the ALC.

K. Thiara joined the meeting at 9:12 a.m.

Comments continued:

- Although this is a difficult piece of land, does this property warrant the need for the fill? This application is for fill specific to a berry that requires alteration to the property. There are other viable crops that could be considered for this property without as great a need for fill.

- The original 3m soil depth should be considered, not 5m, because 5m is for a particular berry which may not be the optimum. The more general purpose would be 3m.
- The level of fill should be determined by the ALC.

It was

Moved by S. Van Keulen

Seconded D. Arnold

That the Agriculture and Food Security Advisory Committee recommend to the G.M. Engineering, support for soil deposition application 4520-80 (18969-04000) for farming purposes be advanced to the Agricultural Land Commission, together with a hydrology report that addresses how the level of soil will be managed, for consideration.

Carried

3. Ministry of Agriculture Bylaw Standard on Cogeneration

Copies of Ministry of Agriculture Bylaw Standard on Cogeneration were circulated on table and a video, provided by the BC Greenhouse Growers' Association regarding a cogeneration plant operated in Ontario, was given by K. Zimmerman, Minister of Agriculture.

It was suggested that the Committee assign a medium priority within their work plan to review the City's zoning bylaw and recommendation to adopt the Minister's Bylaw Standard on Cogeneration (which was adopted by the Minister last spring) was encouraged.

There were some concerns expressed about these facilities becoming a stand alone operation (although the bylaw standards require them to be part of a farm operation assessed as farm, and to be commensurate with the heat requirements of the greenhouse), or not being directly linked to the ownership of a farm operation. The Committee also suggested adding a requirement that if the greenhouse ceased to operate then the co-gen facility would also cease.

K. Thiara left the meeting at 10:00 a.m.

The Committee agreed that this issue should be advanced on the Committee's work plan to a medium or medium-high priority.

It was

Moved by S. Van Keulen

Seconded M. Bose

That the Agriculture and Food Security Advisory Committee recommend that Item 9 of the Committee's 2013 Work Plan, *Combined Heat and Power Generation at Greenhouse (Cogeneration)*, be moved to a higher priority level in order to identify concerns and have some analysis around those concerns.

Carried

4. Backyard Chickens Pilot Project

M. Kischnick, Planner, Community Planning Division, provided a brief presentation on the one-year Backyard Chicken Pilot Project, as directed by Council on July 8, 2013.

Kim Marosevich, Animal Care and Control Manager and Jas Rehal, Manager, By-law Enforcement and Licensing Services, were also in attendance to respond to any questions the Committee had or any concerns raised with respect to enforcement.

Additional comments were as follows:

- It is anticipated that Council will allow backyard hens, as outlined in the presentation materials received and presented by Kate MacMaster, with a maximum of four backyard hens on minimum one-quarter acre properties, for a one-year pilot project beginning September 24, 2013 and ending October 31, 2014.
- Registration for the pilot program for those property owners of lots one-quarter acre to one-acre in size is required by the deadline of October 31, 2013. Voluntary registration with the Province's Premises Identification (BCPID) is also recommended. Owners of lots larger than one-acre are not required to register.
- There have already been 10 properties pre-registered. It has been determined that there are approximately 11,000 lots that would be permitted to participate in the project based on lot size, etc.
- Animal Control Officers are permitted to access the properties and explain the guidelines in greater detail to ensure the property owner is aware and has the right understanding of the guidelines.
- The existing bylaw will not be amended at this time; enforcement will be based on the guidelines of the one-year pilot. One of the challenges is that because it is a pilot project there may be reluctance to register. However, if it is determined that a property is not registered and/or a complaint is levied where it is determined that it is not permitted and doesn't meet the definition, bylaw enforcement action may be taken.
- At the completion of the one-year pilot period, a report based on the feedback from the project will be provided to Council and consideration for continuance of the project will be determined at that time.

Staff were complimented for the research and detailed work done in creating the guidelines for the Backyard Chicken Pilot Project, noting that it is beneficial to agriculture and a fantastic first step.

It was

Moved by M. Bose

Seconded M. Hilmer

That the Agriculture and Food Security Advisory

Committee recommend to the G.M. Planning and Development that the Backyard Chicken Pilot Project guidelines, as developed, be supported.

Carried with S. Van Keulen opposed

5. OCP - Agricultural Development Permit Guidelines

C. Stewart, Senior Policy Planner, Community Planning Division, provided a follow-up to the information given earlier in the year with respect to the OCP and reviewed the draft wording proposed for the Agricultural Development Permit Guidelines, as provided with the Agenda materials.

Discussion ensued regarding the numbers set out for the various buffer and setback requirements and how those numbers are broken down and examples of previous applications reviewed by the Committee, as well as the timeframe to be established for planting buffers, were noted. In particular, with respect to landscape buffers held in private ownership, it was suggested that the reference to solid wood fence along ALR boundary be amended to chain-link fence. Further suggested word changes included:

- “normal” farm practices as opposed to “acceptable”;
- “vegetative” buffers in place of “natural”; and
- suggest using “native vegetation”, which emphasizes minimal maintenance.

The Committee was requested to provide any further comments or recommended changes, via email, to Ms. Stewart at their earliest convenience as it is anticipated that the draft guidelines will be forwarded to Council in October for consideration.

E. ITEMS REFERRED BY COUNCIL

F. CORRESPONDENCE

G. INFORMATION ITEMS

1. Environmental Sustainability Advisory Committee (ESAC) Update

An update from the ESAC meeting of July 24, 2013 was provided noting a presentation of ‘Operation Save H₂O’, a creative, education based approach program designed to reduce water consumption in the City of Surrey. The program provides free tools, information and education to encourage residents to save money by conserving water. An overview of the programming was given that this year Operation H₂O is focusing on the following initiatives:

- High Water Use Campaign;
- School Campaigns;
- Water Wise Establishment Program (IC&I); and
- User Education.

It was

Moved by D. Arnold

Seconded M. Hilmer

That the Agriculture and Food Security Advisory

Committee receive the ESAC meeting update as information.

Carried

2. 2013 Flavours of Surrey Event

The 2013 Flavours of Surrey Event, held July 20-21, 2013, was reviewed.

Committee members reported the event drew almost triple the number of attendees from that of 2012 and noted the excellent weather, location and the maze as the main factors.

Concern was raised with respect to marketing of the Flavours of Surrey event as a separate event within the Fusion Festival. It was suggested that the marketing for future Flavours of Surrey events will be reviewed well in advance and again following the event, to ensure Surrey's Agricultural sector and the work the Committee does is sufficiently acknowledged.

Recognition and sincere appreciation was extended by the Committee for all of the preliminary work leading up to the event and hard work that continued throughout the entire event, integral to its success, to staff members C. Stewart and M. Kischnick.

M. Hilmer left the meeting at 11:08 a.m.

H. INTEGRITY OF THE AGRICULTURE LAND

- It was noted that letters were recently sent out by the City to all agriculture land owners regarding illegal fill and truck parking, requesting their assistance by reporting any illegal behavior in this regard. Comments were noted with respect to the discretion of the By-laws staff as it pertains to the number of farm trucks permitted.
- As part of the UBCM 2013 Annual Convention (September 16 – 20, 2013), it was reported that the BC Ministry of Agriculture will be hosting an Agricultural Study Tour, September 16, 2013. Tour stops will be in Surrey and Delta to include: a honeybee operation; a greenhouse vegetable operation with a cogeneration facility; a thriving organic vegetable operation utilizing direct farm marketing options; and a large-scale vegetable operation with a potato packing line.

I. OTHER BUSINESS

1. 2013 AFSAC Work Plan

The 2013 AFSAC Work Plan was reviewed and updated. In particular, as noted in item D.3 above, the priority level for the work with respect to the Minister of Agriculture Bylaw Standard on Cogeneration was changed to a medium level priority.

J. NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Agriculture and Food Security Advisory Committee will be held on **Thursday, October 10, 2013**, in the **Executive Boardroom**.

K. ADJOURNMENT

It was

Moved by P. Harrison


Seconded by S. Van Keulen

That the Agriculture and Food Security Advisory


Committee do now adjourn.

Carried

The Agriculture and Food Security Advisory Committee adjourned at 11:27 a.m.



Jane Sullivan, City Clerk



Councillor Linda Hepner, Chairperson
Agriculture and Food Security Advisory Committee