

Agriculture and Food Security Advisory Committee Minutes

Present:

Councillor L. Hepner - Chairperson
M. Bose
D. Arnold
P. Harrison
M. Hilmer
B. Sandhu
S. VanKeulen

Regrets:

J. Sandhar
K. Thiara
T. Pellett, Agricultural Land
Commission

Staff Present:

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

Agency Representatives:

K. Zimmerman, Ministry of Agriculture

Environmental Sustainability Advisory Committee Representative:

B. Stewart

Guest Observers:

Nicole Ensine, Summer Staff, Surrey Urban Farmers Market
Nav Sekhon

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 November 7, 2013 meeting.

Carried

B. DELEGATIONS**1. Donna Jones, Manager, Economic Development**

Donna Jones, Manager, Economic Development, was in attendance to update the Committee on the various economic development strategies. In particular, the development of an Agriculture Sector Innovation Strategy, looking at opportunities to apply innovation to agriculture, was discussed. Comments were as follows:

- This isn't so much about traditional farming practices as it is about what is happening out there in the world, region, etc., to use here at home.
- The City is building an economic diversification strategy one sector at a time, with Agriculture Innovation representing one such sector.
- In terms of Agriculture Innovation, asset mapping on what is happening in the region has been undertaken. An asset map has been developed which identifies centres of activity and academic research, agri-innovation incubators and on-farm mentorship programs (slide shown of locations currently identified).

- An important element in development is that we understand what is going on and then we better understand what is needed and how to inject ourselves in to what we find.
- Staff is exploring partnerships, speaking with the thought leaders in the region and talking about what we want to accomplish in the world, what their interests are and determining if there are opportunities to work together. (Partnership example: the inspiration of apiculture will see the implementation of a honey bee garden on the roof of the City Centre Library).
- Good partners are respectful of each other's needs and that is the basic premise. Let's bring together thought leaders and host a meeting to have open discussions regarding agriculture innovation – a mix of industry that also serves as the check and balance.
- The focus at this point of the Agriculture Sector Innovation Strategy is to look for the new things that are happening and bring back to Committee for feedback (first quarter 2014).

Suggested contacts, including contacts for research records, were shared and potential opportunities and any related challenges, such as greenhouse co-generation on agriculture land, were noted for consideration. The Committee shared their concern with respect to industrial use on farmland and the effect that has on agriculture if the business does not succeed.

Comments continued:

- It is also important to focus on the support side of farmers; processing sectors are very innovative too and hugely important to the learning layer of what we are doing now.
- As clarification, a greenhouse sector is one of the most innovative in the province. They regularly go to Europe and bring in consultants; always looking at new varieties and what is technically possible, via research groups. From road greenhouses may look like a piece of glass, but a lot has changed.
- It may be beneficial to send letters to all commodity groups and associations and ask for any innovation that is taking place and whether there is something the City can do to help them.
- Food processing and on-farm mentorship are key topics, as what has hurt agriculture in the valley is the loss of processing.

In closing, the Committee recommended attendance to the upcoming Pacific Agriculture Show, a three day trade show being held at the Tradex Exhibition Centre in Abbotsford, January 30 - February 1, 2014, as a great resource and very educational with respect to current and future agriculture innovation.

2. **Darrell M. Zbeetnoff, P.Ag., Principal, Zbeetnoff Agro-Environmental Consulting**

Darrell M. Zbeetnoff, P.Ag., Principal, Zbeetnoff Agro-Environmental Consulting, was in attendance to provide information and receive feedback from the Committee regarding the Agricultural Impact Assessment (AIA) Guidelines being developed for

Metro Vancouver. A PowerPoint presentation was given and comments were as follows:

- Looking at the sorts of things that would trigger a guideline, what the process would be, etc.
- Metro Vancouver put forward the idea as they have a Regional Food Strategy and have an interest in increasing the production of food in the district. Although they do not have any jurisdiction, they are hoping by generating AIA guidelines, that it would be useful if there was an impact on agriculture to have a template of that nature.
- The consultation process has taken us to all the AACs in Metro Vancouver that are involved in agriculture. In addition, we are also talking to the Agricultural Land Commission, the Ministry of Agriculture and the Farm Industry Review Board.
- Looking to find out if there are any sort of agriculture issues being dealt with at this table that could be helped by having an AIA (e.g. drainage, etc.).

The Committee commented as follows:

- This seems to be creating a template by which local governments can make decisions in a consistent fashion; sets parameters to which the ALC will make their decision to make consistent decision making.
- Creating a checklist of dealing with various challenges as well.
- The introduction of an agriculture advisory committee for the City of Surrey has provided the opportunity to draw attention to the many and varied challenges experienced within the agricultural community that can often be overlooked. Over time, the advice provided from this committee has resulted in the development of tools, such as checklists, that are used to assist the Planning and Engineering departments when preparing documents for the consideration of Council. Surrey is, in many ways, a model of how a Council can work with their committees to help the agriculture sector.
- It would appear that Metro Vancouver is looking to create guidelines perhaps similar to those that are in place already in Surrey; a checklist tool, somewhat of an overlap for Surrey, but would be beneficial for smaller municipalities.
- One of the things that has really impacted Surrey has been road construction. The City has no jurisdiction when it comes to provincial roads, however there might be a benefit for TransLink to consider the guidelines.
- It would be useful at the provincial level if there was an AIA to look at the cumulative impacts, not just the highlighted impacts.
- One tool that is needed is an economic impact of the loss of agriculture whether to non-farm uses or loss from the ALR.
- Surrey is fortunate to have a committee that is supported by its Council and works closely with planning to ensure ongoing protection and a level of consistency for its agricultural lands. Smaller municipalities don't have the same sophisticated guidelines that Surrey already uses; many other committees are not comprised of majority farmers.
- The whole purpose of an agriculture advisory committee is for leaders in the agriculture community to have an expert voice to solve the issues of the day which,

in our opinion, requires producers and farmers in the makeup of the committee at the table.

3. Philip Bellefontaine, Manager, Transportation Planning

Philip Bellefontaine, Manager, Transportation Planning, was in attendance to provide an overview of the community Rail Safety Forum hosted by the City of Surrey and City of White Rock (November 26). Comments were as follows:

- The purpose of the Forum, attended by approximately 300 – 350, was to acknowledge the broader concerns and to get a discussion going about rail safety within the two cities and identify who it is that needs to be involved in any process as we move forward (stakeholders, agencies, etc.).
- There has been a broader debate around rail safety nationally, rail incidents.
- At a more local level there has been increased reporting of railway concerns:
 - the application by Fraser Surrey Docks to ship coal that would travel to Fraser Surrey Docks using existing BNSF line;
 - pedestrian safety near railway tracks;
 - trains blocking a community from emergency services;
 - landslides on the bluff; and
 - increase in rail traffic.
- It is important to note that over the last few months there have been a number of corporate reports considered by Council on these issues.
- FCM asked that local municipalities go through the regional bodies (UBCM). When staff brought reports to Council, speaking to safety issues generally (nothing of realignments), they were forwarded to UBCM which were then passed on to rail safety to FCM.
- With respect to looking at alternative routes, there have been previous studies undertaken and more recent discussions have taken place. (A map of the rail alignments compiled from the earlier studies, an amalgamation of the engineering and planning studies that were done, was shown for geography.) Depending on the alignments, there is a different impact on how much the alignment will go through the agriculture land. The alignments shown are just studies that were previously done. It would take a significant amount of work to even begin to figure out what it would look like.
- This is a project anticipated with a 5 - 10 year timeline. The process will be set up to ensure that all of the different considerations (economic, community safety, transportation, environment, etc.) will include the ALR and input from the ALC.

The Committee commented as follows:

- It is likely that this issue has been sparked by coal shipments from the United States.

- The primary concern for the Committee is the protection of the ALR and agricultural lands in general. Every time land is taken out of the ALR it adds to the cost of the land and food.
- Another concern is if this should also become a passenger rail down through Washington State.
- The Forum lost focus relative to rail safety and transitioned into realignment options and that became the focus of the night and media. If there is anything that impacts the ALR that is going out to the public that is that significant, the Committee needs to see it in advance.
- Realignment of the railway may be inviting a conversation that nobody is ready for. Ultimately, we don't want to change one set of problems for another.

C. OUTSTANDING BUSINESS

D. NEW BUSINESS

1. Proposed Development Variance Permit within the ALR 3625 - 176 Street (Highway 15) File No.: 7913-0247-00

Daniel Sturgeon, Planning Technician, Area Planning South, reviewed the memo from Ron Hintsche, Current Planning Manager - South, dated November 25, 2013, regarding the above subject line. Comments were as follows:

- The applicant is proposing to increase the maximum setback of the A-1 zone from 50m (165 ft.) to 110m (360 ft.) and increase the maximum setback of the Farm Residential Footprint from 60m (200 ft.) to 110m (360 ft.) to permit construction of a new single family dwelling.
- The subject property is a 6.1 hectare (15 acre) parcel, zoned A-1, designated Agricultural in the OCP and is within the ALR. The parcel contains a single family dwelling and several farm accessory structures.
- The property contains a blueberry operation which is actively being farmed.
- It is anticipated the existing house, which is non-conforming, will remain to rent for seasonal farming and the barn will be replaced with a new single family dwelling with a proposed Farm Residential Footprint of approximately 3000m². The proposed location of the dwelling is preferred as the applicant does not want to take the portion of land adjacent to 176 Street out of agricultural production. Furthermore, there are two wells supplying water to the property that are located near the front of the property and would conflict with a structure located in this area.

The Committee commented as follows:

- Information is missing with respect to the amount of fill that would be required, where the septic fields will be, etc.; not seeing the full proposal.

- The flood proof footprint of this application is unrealistic; the applicant would like to flood proof the parking as well.
- Furthermore, when looking at the radius around the existing house, the larger footprint would be expanding the area of influence on the neighboring properties for the use of their cannons.
- There simply isn't enough information with the application to justify support (e.g. home plate details, access, etc.).
- There can be support of a variance on a home plate where it makes sense because of the topography of the land. In this case, as presented, the application has no justification for an agricultural business; there is no resulting improvement to agriculture.
- There is too much land loss in this application and no net benefit to agriculture.

It was

Moved by M. Bose

Seconded D. Arnold

That the Agriculture and Food Security Advisory

Committee recommend to the G.M. Planning and Development, that Application No. 7913-0247-00 not be supported based on the negative impact on surrounding agriculture operations and loss of land; there is no net benefit to agriculture.

Carried

2. **Proposed OCP Amendment, NCP Amendment, Rezoning, Subdivision and Development Variance Permit Located Adjacent to the ALR 7627, 7643, 7659, 7673, 7695, 7699 and 7705 - 148 Street**
File No.: 7912-0001-00

Luciana Moraes, Associate Planner, reviewed the memo from Ron Hintsche, Current Planning Manager - South, dated November 26, 2013, regarding the above subject line. Comments were as follows:

- This application is in Newton in the East Newton NCP area, across the street from the ALR boundary at 148 Street.
- The applicant is proposing to rezone to "Single Family Residential Zone" (RF) and subdivide the seven lots into 14 lots.
- To accommodate the proposed lot layout, the site will require an OCP amendment from "Suburban" to "Urban". The East Newton North NCP will also require an amendment from "Suburban Transitional" to "Urban Residential".
- The proposed lots are 726m² (7,814.8 sq. ft.), consistent with other lots in the surrounding area.

It was

Moved by M. Bose

Seconded S. Van Keulen

That the Agriculture and Food Security Advisory

Committee recommend to the G.M. Planning and Development, that Application No. 7912-0001-00 be supported based on the existing NCP policies.

Carried

E. ITEMS REFERRED BY COUNCIL**F. CORRESPONDENCE****1. Ministry of Agriculture**

It was Moved by M. Bose
Seconded P. Harrison
That the letter, dated November 13, 2013, from Bert van Dalssen, P.Eng., Manager, Strengthening Farming Program, regarding the 2013 Agricultural Advisory Committee Workshop Summary of Proceedings, be received as information.

Carried

2. Proposed 2014 Meeting Dates

File No.: 0540-20

The Committee reviewed the memo from the City Clerk regarding proposed 2014 meeting dates.

It was Moved by P. Harrison
Seconded M. Hilmer
That the 2014 proposed meeting dates for the Agriculture and Food Security Advisory Committee be adopted.

Carried

G. INFORMATION ITEMS**1. Environmental Sustainability Advisory Committee (ESAC) Update**

An update from the ESAC meeting of November 20, 2013 was provided. In particular, ESAC received a presentation from Jeremy Nickel, President, Nickel Bros., a company specializing in moving very large objects, including houses.

The main thrust of the presentation was to encourage the City of Surrey to revisit current by-laws which prohibit the import of constructed houses into Surrey from other communities. An initiative was presented in the context of environmental responsibility, giving machine demolition of older houses to the relocation of them as an example of the environmental advantages of reducing construction waste going to landfills and trees harvested for lumber for new construction. No action was taken by ESAC for this item.

2. **Sylvia Grace Borda: Aerial Fields**

As information, M. Bose noted that the public art exhibition currently running at the Surrey Urban Screen (until January 6, 2014), entitled "Aerial Fields", can be viewed on the City's website at <http://www.surrey.ca/culture-recreation/13529.aspx>.

The exhibition is a video documentation captured from an aerial perspective of agricultural areas south of the Fraser River, created summer 2013. Five Surrey farms participated in video created by artist Sylvia Grace Borda during Field Studies, a TechLab artist residency at the Surrey Art Gallery.

During the production of the video images were uploaded to Google Maps, providing the opportunity to view the farming activities in greater detail (e.g. visit the inside of the turkey barn).

It was Moved by M. Bose
 Seconded P. Harrison
 That the Agriculture and Food Security Advisory
 Committee receive the Information Items.
Carried

M. Hilmer left the meeting 11:00 am

H. INTEGRITY OF THE AGRICULTURE LAND

I. OTHER BUSINESS

1. **Provincial Review of Agricultural Land Reserve**

The recent media attention regarding a Provincial review of Agricultural Land Reserve was brought to the Committee's attention, and it was reported that both Metro Vancouver and the UBCM have responded advising that if there is going to be a core review relative to agriculture, the local governments need to be a part of that.

The articles referred to can be found at:

- <http://www.vancouversun.com/news/Vaughn+Palmer+Strange+smells+emanating+from+review+Agricultural+Land+Reserve/9000056/story.html> and
- <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/b-c-s-agricultural-land-commission-could-be-dismantled-1.2418524>

J. NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Agriculture and Food Security Advisory Committee will be held on **Thursday, January 9, 2014**, in the **Executive Boardroom**.

K. 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 11:14 a.m.



Jane Sullivan, City Clerk



Councillor Linda Hepner, Chairperson
Agriculture and Food Security Advisory Committee