

Agriculture and Food Security Advisory Committee Minutes

Present:

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

Regrets:

B. Stewart
C. Stewart, Planning & Development

Guests:

N. Ensing
N. Sekhon, BC Farm & Ranch
S. Sekhon, Sekhon Blueberry Farms

Staff Present:

M. Kischnick, Planning & Development
R. Dubé, Engineering
C. Craig, Legislative Services

A. APPOINTMENTS

Introduction and welcome of J. Gosal, a Council-appointed Youth Representative to the Agriculture and Food Security Advisory Committee.

Note: C. Sousa is no longer a Youth Representative for the AFSAC, but will be replaced by S. Malhotra, who will attend the next AFSAC meeting in July. It should be noted that the two (2) Youth Representatives are *non-voting members* of the AFSAC.

B. ADOPTION OF MINUTES

It was

Moved by P. Harrison
Seconded by J. Sandhar
That the Agriculture and Food Security
Advisory Committee adopt the minutes of the May 1, 2014 meeting.
Carried

C. DELEGATIONS**1. Jeff Arason, Manager, Utilities**
File No.: 5280-01

J. Arason, Manager, Utilities, was in attendance to present on "Surrey: Natural Green - A Delivery Program" for information and discussion. Comments were as follows:

- The City is in the process of delivering over 50 environmental initiatives that are aligned under the Environmental Pillar of the City's Sustainability Charter. Examples include:
 - District Energy;
 - Walking Plan, Cycling Plan and Greenways Plan;
 - Street and Park Shade Tree Management Plan;

- Stewardship Programs: Eco-Rangers, SHaRP, SNAP and Operation Save H2o; and
- Density bonusing opportunities in the West Clayton NCP area.
- Given the number of environmentally themed activities, with the nearing adoption of the Biodiversity Conservation Strategy (BCS), Mayor and Council recently instructed staff to establish a delivery program called the *Green Surrey Program*.
- The delivery will be a strong brand that can be used to promote and educate the community on the City's actions and will identify opportunities for community participation.
- Actions under this Program will be categorized under three (3) themes:
 1. **Conservation**
 - New projects:
 - Biodiversity Conservation Strategy (Plan and Mapping)
 - Riparian Area By-law
 - Sensitive Ecosystem Development Permit areas
 - In-progress:
 - Density Bonusing opportunities in the West Clayton NCP area
 - Walking / Cycling / Greenways Plan
 - Completed:
 - Ecosystem Management Study (EMS)
 - Alternate fuel infrastructure at service stations
 2. **Engagement**
 - New projects:
 - Facilitating eco-gifting and donations with non-governmental organizations
 - In-progress:
 - Annual Party for the Planet – Earth Day Celebrations
 - Releaf Days, Arbor Days, National Tree Day
 - Stewardship Programs: SHaRP, SNAP and Operation Save H2O
 - Surrey Nature Centre Education Programs
 - Completed:
 - Broadening the EAC (Environmental Advisory Committee) to the ESAC (Environmental Sustainability Advisory Committee)
 - EnergyShift
 - Rethink Waste (Surrey's Waste Action Program (SWAP) and Green Bricks Blocks)
 3. **Investment**
 - New projects:
 - New lands to be acquired for conservation in support of the BCS
 - In-progress:
 - District Energy
 - Organic Biofuel Facility
 - Planting of the 75,000th street tree
 - Research Chair in Energy Systems for Smart Cities

- Fergus Creek Conservation
- Completed:
 - Acquisition of over 725 acres of Parkland in the last 10 years
 - Electric vehicle charging stations

K. Thiara joined the meeting at 9:04 a.m.

Staff invited the Committee to provide comments and share ideas with respect to the Green Surrey Program. Staff noted endorsement of the Program from Council is anticipated late June/early July. Following the presentation, discussion resulted with regard to the direct impact on agriculture and the BCS. The Committee requested staff to include national hiking trails in the BCS, if not already done so. Concern was expressed regarding use of the word "green" in the Strategy as "green" tends to be a misnomer.

B. Sandhu joined the meeting at 9:11 a.m.

It was Moved by M. Bose
 Seconded by P. Harrison
 That the Agriculture and Food Security
 Advisory Committee receive the presentation from J. Arason, Manager, Utilities,
 on "Surrey: Natural Green - A Delivery Program", as information.
Carried

D. OUTSTANDING BUSINESS

1. Backyard Chicken Pilot Project Status

File No.: 3900-01

M. Kischnick, Planner, provided a brief presentation and update on the Backyard Chicken Pilot Project. The following was noted:

- On June 13, 2013, Mayor and Council considered the Backyard Chicken Pilot Project and draft guidelines were proposed. On July 8, 2013, directed by Council, staff initiated a one (1) year pilot project with established guidelines. By September 2013 only a few applications were received and the deadline to receive applications for the pilot was extended until May 30, 2014.
- Recently the project has received quite a bit of media coverage and interest from surrounding municipalities.
- The project only received 15 qualified registrations. Many applicants were not able to take part in the project due to lot sizes not being large enough (minimum of 10,000 sq. ft.). If the requirements had been smaller, this could have included approximately ten (10) more applicants based on submissions received.
- A number of public comments were received and the discussion regarding lot size was raised frequently. One suggestion was to consider a minimum amount of land space per chicken instead of having the decision based solely on lot size, and an arbitrary number of chickens per yard. Another comment suggested reducing the lot size to allow 7,200 sq. ft. lots.

- From 2012-2013 there were approximately 68 complaints, the majority of those being about the noise level of roosters or escaped chickens. In 2013, from September 31 to May 31 only 31 complaints were received, and those complaints voiced were *not* related to the legally registered backyard chicken enclosures participating in the project.
- If any future complaints are brought forward about illegal backyard chickens, the City's approach would be to shut down anything that does not comply with the established project guidelines.
- Staff requested any comments from the AFSAC and outlined four (4) possible next steps which included:
 1. Option A: Extend the pilot project for one (1) year as is
 2. Option B: Modify guidelines and extend the pilot project
 3. Option C: End the pilot project
 4. Option D: Amend the zoning by-law to allow chickens as per pilot project

S. Van Keulen joined the meeting at 9:22 a.m.

The Committee thanked M. Kischnick for his update on the Backyard Chicken Pilot Project and discussion followed with respect to the project's next steps. The Committee commented that the success of this project can be seen and is evidenced by the lack of complaints pertaining to the legal backyard chicken enclosures. It was noted that consideration to smaller lots, a minimum of 7,200 sq. ft., should be given, though the logistics of having more chickens on less space would prove challenging. The merits of both Options A and D were discussed extensively.

It was

Moved by P. Harrison

Seconded by D. Arnold

That the Agriculture and Food Security

Advisory Committee recommend to the G.M. of Planning and Development, that the Backyard Chicken Pilot Project be extended for one (1) additional year, and that the minimum lot size to participate in the Pilot be reduced from 10,000 sq. ft. to 7,200 sq. ft.

Carried

E. NEW BUSINESS

1. **Development Variance Permit Application (Farm Residential Footprint)
16069 56 Avenue (No. 10 Hwy)
File No.: 6880-75**

J. Denney, Planner, was in attendance to review the memo from R. Gill, Acting Area Planning Manager - North, dated May 22, 2014, regarding the above subject line. Comments were as follows:

- The Applicant wishes to increase the maximum setback for a single family dwelling located in the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR) (A-1 Zone) by 15.meters.

- The riparian area along the east and south property lines has been identified by the Ministry of Environment (MOE) as a Pacific water shrew habitat. The MOE recommends that a 15-meter no-disturbance area be placed along the east and south property lines in order to protect the shrew habitat. The Pacific water shrew has been identified as an endangered species.
- The site is currently not being farmed; the Applicant intends to use the site for a nursery or to grow blueberries.
- In order to provide useable front yard space, and to provide separation between the future dwelling and the shrew habitat area, a Restrictive Covenant would be registered that requires the 7.5-meter front yard setback of the A-1 Zone to be measured from the northern edge of the 15-meter shrew habitat area.
- The requested 15-meter setback increase is consistent with the depth of the buildable area that would be lost along the front of the lot (due to the shrew habitat protection area).

The Committee commented as follows:

- There is concern with the Ministry of Environment (MOE) requesting a 15-meter no-disturbance area. As no supporting documentation was attached to this application, it is difficult to know to the extent the MOE has identified the need for these setbacks in different situations. It was noted that there is further historical background that should be provided to shed light on this discussion.
- The 15-meter no-disturbance area proves challenging as the Applicant is not allowed to farm the area, fence the pertaining property lines or clean the ditches in that area. The instruction is to leave it vegetated.
- The Committee does not want to set a precedent on setback requirements by approving this application, or give guidance to similar future applicants. If the AFSAC makes no recommendation this application will go to Council as a variance request without comment.
- It was noted that there is no hardship in the placement of the house in its current position. The front yard portion of the property outside the minimum front setback in the A-1 zone (7.5-meter) has been lost. A suggestion is to give the Applicant an additional 7.5 meters at the back of the house.

S. Godwin, Environmental Coordinator, was requested to join the meeting in order to give input on the MOE and recommendations concerning this application.

Comments were as follows:

- The Pacific water shrew is a federally endangered species. There is a draft recovery plan that the federal government is currently vetting through consultation. In this document, the MOE will determine the definition of a critical habitat.
- Typically Environment Canada's "Species at Risk Act" is employed upon federal lands, using a management plan. Any lower jurisdiction under the MOE, in theory, would need to manage critical habitats according to this plan.
- It is anticipated that a draft policy will go before the federal cabinet this coming fall, to determine whether or not they will approve the Pacific water shrew official habitat guidelines.

The Committee thanked S. Godwin for his input on the above subject. Discussion regarding talking to Environment Canada and the MOE, ensued. The Committee asked that in the passing of the motion, it be noted that the decision was made on the basis of staff working with a federal draft from the MOE and provincial discussions that have yet to be enforced.

It was

Moved by M. Bose

Seconded by D. Arnold

That the Agriculture and Food Security Advisory Committee recommend to the G.M. of Planning and Development, that Development Variance Application No. 7914-0084-00 not be supported as proposed, but that it be amended to permit only a 7.5-meter increase to the "Residential Farm Footprint" maximum setback up to a maximum 67.5 meters, with no encroachment permitted to the maximum single family dwelling building setback of 50 meters from the front property line.

Carried

F. ITEMS REFERRED BY COUNCIL

G. CORRESPONDENCE

H. INFORMATION ITEMS

1. Environmental Sustainability Advisory Committee (ESAC) Update

Note: There was no ESAC meeting held since the last AFSAC meeting, therefore there is no update for the June 5th AFSAC meeting.

2. M. Bose, Vice-Chair

M. Bose, Vice-Chair, provided the Committee with an update on the delegation invite to M. Ojanen, Young Farmers Directorate and Ombudsman, MTK, Finland, to attend the AFSAC meeting in July 2014. Comments were as follows:

- M. Ojanen will be in Canada from July 6-30, 2014 and also plans to visit Surrey. Due to her expertise in access to market for agriculture, the Committee would like to extend an invitation to have her speak as the main delegation at the upcoming July AFSAC meeting. Discussion proceeded with regard to opening up the invite to City of Delta and City of Langley agriculture representatives.
- The Committee believes this visit will be an excellent opportunity to put M. Ojanen in touch with local farmers, as well as for her to see how AFSAC operates within the community.
- To accommodate M. Ojanen's visit, and allow her visit to coincide with the Flavours of Surrey/Fusion Festival event, an additional AFSAC meeting time and date was suggested for later in July.

M. Hilmer left the meeting at 10:08 a.m.

3. **Corporate Report R056 - Surrey Zoning By-law, 1993, No. 12000**
File No.: 0540-20 AFSAC

On May 26, 2014, Surrey Zoning by-law, 1993, No. 12000 was amended to permit and regulate combined heat and power cogenerational facilities that are accessory to a greenhouse operation, in the "General Agriculture Zone (A-1)" and "Intensive Agriculture Zone (A-2)". Corporate Report R056, which was approved by Council on April 14, 2014, was provided as information and reviewed by the Committee.

Council Resolution RES. R14-583. Full report available online at:
http://www.surrey.ca/bylawsandcouncillibrary/CR_2014-R056.pdf

I. INTEGRITY OF THE AGRICULTURE LAND

1. **Bill 24 - Agricultural Land Commission Act**
File No.: 6880-75; 6520-20 (AFSAC)

M. Kischnick, Planner, provided an item on table advising the AFSAC on the recent changes to the Agricultural Land Commission (ALC) Act based on the new Bill 24 - "ALC Amendment Act", and provided the Committee an initial review of the possible implications of the changes to the ALC and the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR). Comments were as follows:

- On May 29, 2014, Bill 24 was passed through the Provincial legislature and was given third reading. Bill 24 contains significant legislative changes for how land use decisions are made for agricultural lands in the province.
- Although the proposed changes on ALR lands in Zone 1 (which includes lower mainland) of the Act are limited, there are more significant changes proposed for Zone 2 (northern areas) that may affect long-term provincial food security objectives, allow managed loss of agricultural lands, and increase possibility of non-farm uses.
- It was noted that Bill 24 received limited opportunities for formal, public or local government consultation by the Province.

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION:

It was Moved by M. Bose
Seconded by D. Arnold
That the Agriculture and Food Security
Advisory Committee recommend that Council direct staff to write a letter to the
Ministry of Agriculture requesting opportunities for local government consultation
before any further legislation arises from Bill 24 - "Agricultural Land Commission
Amendment Act", which may affect the Agricultural Land Commission, as outlined
in the June 3, 2014 AFSAC memo titled "Bill 24 - Agricultural Land Commission
Act" (attached "Appendix A").

Carried

J. Sandhar left the meeting at 10:32 a.m.

J. OTHER BUSINESS

1. 2014 AFSAC Work Plan File No.: 0540-20 V

M. Kischnick, Planner, provided a first quarter update of the 2014 AFSAC Work Plan to the Committee. The Committee commented as follows:

- Municipal Work Plan #9 (A: Combined Heat and Power Generation at Greenhouse/Cogeneration) can be removed as it has now been completed.
- Municipal Work Plan #10 (A: Backyard Chicken Pilot Project) was referenced earlier on the agenda and has now received direction from the Committee.
- Municipal Work Plan #11 (A: Initiation of Crop Sign Identification Program) can be made a higher priority. Discussion ensued with regard to keeping agricultural signs up year-round so the public can be aware of what is being grown within Surrey communities.
- Municipal Work Plan #1 (B: Review of Water Licenses in Surrey Agricultural Lands). Currently there is no timeline for this item but a target needs to be set, so something more substantial can be reported. Staff will discuss how to move forward with this item.
- It was suggested that City staff member S. Wu from Economic Development division provide an update on Agricultural Innovation and Economic Development work being undertaken by the City at a future AFSAC meeting..

It was

Moved by P. Harrison

Seconded by S. Van Keulen

That the Agriculture and Food Security

Advisory Committee recommend to the G.M. Planning and Development, that staff investigate what other municipalities are doing with regard to the use of agricultural area "Crop Identification Signs", to promote agricultural awareness and support local farms, and report back to the AFSAC.

Carried

2 AFSAC Reference Manual File No.: 0540-20 V

A Policy Manual for all AFSAC members was provided on-table, which included relevant City of Surrey Agricultural Policy, Bylaws, and Guidelines for ongoing reference. It was noted that as policies change, the manuals can be easily updated. The Committee thanked the staff for their work on the new AFSAC Reference Manuals.

K. NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Agriculture and Food Security Advisory Committee will be held on **Thursday, July 3, 2014**, in **City Hall, 2E – Community Room A**, 13450 – 104 Avenue.

L. ADJOURNMENT

It was

Moved by P. Harrison

Seconded by K. Thiara

That the Agriculture and Food Security

Advisory Committee do now adjourn.

Carried

The Agriculture and Food Security Advisory Committee adjourned at 10:51 a.m.



Jane Sullivan, City Clerk



Councillor Linda Hepner, Chairperson
Agriculture and Food Security Advisory
Committee