

SUBJECT TO ADOPTION
**Minutes of the meeting of
DISTRICT OF NORTH SAANICH
AGRICULTURAL ADVISORY COMMISSION**

Held Thursday, May 01, 2008 at 4:00 p.m.

PRESENT:

Chair A. Finall
Members B. Brennan
H. Crawford
R. Kline
I. Mishchenko
N. Schafer
B. Hughes
Environmental Advisory Liaison J. Von Kaldenberg
Co-Council Liaison S. Fea
Co-Council Liaison A. Scoones
Recording Secretary V. Stefani

ALSO ATTENDING:

Sandra van Vliet, student
Chris Sigurdson &
Heather Martman, applicants
Ann Macey, Salt Spring Island
Lynn Fanelli, Spirit Committee
Councillor Carinne Green
Tracy Olsen, Staff

REGRETS:

Staff Liaison S. Bowden
B. Dunic

INTRODUCTIONS AND CALL TO ORDER

A. Finall called the meeting to order at 4:07 p.m.

ADOPTION OF MINUTES

MOVED BY: J. Von Kaldenberg
SECONDED: N. Schafer

THAT the minutes of the regular meeting held April 03, 2008 be approved as circulated.

CARRIED

ADDITIONS TO AGENDA

MOVED BY: B. Brennan
SECONDED: H. Crawford

THAT the agenda for the May 01, 2008 meeting be approved with the addition of speaker Ann Macey regarding the Salt Spring Island Agricultural Area Plan and moving Referrals to Item 3.

CARRIED

REFERRALS

A. Finall left the meeting and I. Mishchenko took the Chair.
9645 West Saanich Road

A. Scoones introduced the item, stating that Council opposes rezoning the property but does not have a problem with the use. The applicants also do not wish to change the zoning but would like to continue their work of soil mixing, which is an integral part of agriculture.

Chris Sigurdson, 10959 Kalitan Rd., explained how the soil operation works, with clean soil obtained from various sources and mixed to create soil/compost blends. Peninsula Streams Society has used their soil to redo the fish bearing streams, and there is no rock or gravel involved in any of the mixing operations. The majority of the compost used comes from reputable secondary sources that provide clean, non-contaminated products. Grinding is kept to a minimum.

On a question from J. Von Kaldenberg about proximity to Reay Creek, C. Sigurdson advised there have not been any drainage issues. Surface water drains collect in lower areas and evaporates in spring. Drain tile and ditches are present on the property, although they do not drain into municipal ditches. C. Sigurdson also advised that the soil mixing operation has been in existence since 1997 and that there have been no bylaw complaints or inspections. I. Mishchenko requested that staff provide a report on the number, if any, of bylaw complaints the District has received regarding the property. C. Sigurdson stated that in the fall of 2007, the District bylaw officer did bring to their attention that soil mixing is not a permitted use in the ALR or the A-1 zone. The applicants then began researching a course of action.

Members discussed the following topics with the applicants:

- The staff report noted that rezoning would be required. A. Scoones said that the ALC could approve the non-farm use and make it site specific while keeping it in the ALR and amending the zone.
- An application to construct a barn that was never built; C. Sigurdson stated they are no longer planning a new barn.
- Soil mixing operations in other jurisdictions.
- S. Fea informed the group that the District received a number of letters from neighbours in support of the application.

B. Hughes entered the meeting at 4:31 p.m.

- There are no sales off the property. Sales are all from a retail location.
- Concerns about future use.
- The possibility of a permitting process where Council would have the control of issuing a permit that would go along with the use and be renewed every year.
- The applicants would not be able to continue if farm status of the property was lost.

Members had no objections in principle to the soil mixing operation but were concerned about future use.

T. Olsen entered the meeting at 4:41 p.m.

T. Olsen provided information on the process of applying for permission under the ALC act for non-farm use. The land remains in the ALR. The Agricultural Land Commission reviews uses in the surrounding area, as well as comments from advisory commissions in terms of how it fits into the community. Rezoning is a separate issue to be dealt with by the District following the

ALC ruling. If denied by the ALC, there would be no rezoning. If accepted, the application would return to Council. Based on the presumption that use is compatible with surrounding agricultural use, options are:

- Amending the text of the Zoning Bylaw to include that type of soil mixing in the existing A-1 zone; it could be property specific.
- Creating a new rural zone for this type of activity.
- Temporary use permits, renewed every 2 years.

T. Olsen noted that soil mixing is not a permitted use under the existing zoning and that any rezoning would attempt to limit it to the property or even part of the property, i.e. an A-1.2 zone. Council is not obligated to approve the zoning. Through use of definitions in zoning bylaw, it could be made descriptive and could be drawn up by a solicitor, i.e. no granular material over a certain size. She also advised there have been no complaints around the soil mixing activity. The bylaw concern in 2007 arose when a house in the front of the property was demolished and people were concerned about machinery brought in for the work.

T. Olsen advised that the application is unique given its size and scale. Other unique situations exist in North Saanich, such as Victorian Epicure and a bug farm, and some uses predate the ALC act.

Commission members decided to conduct a site visit on May 10th, 2008 at 5:30 p.m. Recording secretary to send an email reminder prior to the meeting.

The applicants left the meeting at 4:57 p.m.

A. Finall re-entered the meeting and resumed the Chair.

BUSINESS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES OF APRIL 03, 2008

North Saanich Flavour Trail (Speaker Lynn Fanelli of the Spirit Committee)

The draft grant application for funding had been previously circulated to members.

Lynn Fanelli advised that in 2007 the Spirit Committee became interested in working on the Flavour Trail to promote the agricultural community. Following a successful event, there was interest in continuing but concerns about the cost were raised. There was also concern that the Spirit Committee could be disbanded whenever council members changed.

L. Fanelli said that under the Agricultural Advisory Commission, funds and longevity could be addressed with the Spirit Committee assisting. Funding is available through the Investment Agriculture Foundation.

For the 2007 Flavour Trail, participants contributed \$5000 for promotion as well as on site costs for portable toilets, time and labour. L. Fanelli advised that there is a desire by the non farming community to understand the agricultural community. In addition, Sidney restaurants are very interested in the local aspect, and could provide another funding avenue.

L. Fanelli displayed brochures and flyers from other events and areas, including the Farm Circle idea. There will be a tour of farms Sunday, July 29th, 2008 as well as a wine tour.

S. Fea advised that as some farm operations are small, it can be an onerous to get the farm ready and have staff available for the public.

A. Finall asked members whether they would like to pursue the idea, and a discussion arose. B. Hughes warned public liability should also be considered, noting that his farm does additional tours and carries a public liability policy. Commission members supported the Flavour Trail and felt that the focus should remain in North Saanich. The date was tentatively set for either August 23rd or 24th, for one day only. If the event is held on August 24th, the organizers are to liaise with the organizers of the Blackberry Ramble which occurs on the same day.

MOVED BY: H. Crawford
SECONDED: B. Brennan

THAT the Agricultural Advisory Commission recommends to Council that it encourage the role of the Agricultural Advisory Commission to promote agriculture, and endorse its undertaking to organize the North Saanich Flavour Trail and related applications for funding.

CARRIED

N. Schafer suggested that in future years, a scaled back version of the Flavour Trail could take place once a month.

The group decided to add a culinary aspect to the 2008 Flavour Trail. A subcommittee was formed to facilitate the grant application and initiate publicity and event planning. R. Kline also offered the assistance of his summer student, S. van Vliet.

Lynn Fanelli left the meeting at 5:28 p.m.

Salt Spring Island Agricultural Area Plan (Speaker Ann Macey)

Ann Macey provided an overview of the process leading to the Salt Spring Island Agricultural Area Plan. The process was initiated by an advisory committee which found that agriculture was becoming marginalized. It was also found that residents were not buying local food.

- In 2006, a committee was formed, made up of various stakeholders. Guided by R. Kline of the Ministry of Agriculture, the committee applied for funding.
- Total project cost was \$48,000 and included a land use inventory which was introductory to the process. A large percentage of the money went toward a consultant.
- A series of community dialogue sessions were organized and the public and farmers invited. 100 people attended 3 sessions. The consultant organized the sessions and created discussion papers. Participants had to do homework and arrive prepared for the facilitated sessions.
- From the information gathered, the consultant prepared recommendations.
- The steering committee also served as the agriculture focus group for the Salt Spring Island OCP review so that so they were involved in the planning aspect.
- The bulk of the work was done over winter, with several draft reports circulated through following summer.

A. Macey advised that the steering committee was generally happy with the end result, although members had hoped for more concrete recommendations. She circulated copies of some of the related notes, paperwork and reports and a summary brochure, and answered questions.

S. Fea left the meeting at 5:43 p.m.

R. Kline added that a crop survey of Salt Spring Island and an abattoir feasibility project had also been done.

A. Macey noted that the implementation stage is challenging as there can be various differing opinions on how to achieve recommendations. The group did not reach consensus on recommendations on issues such as housing for farm labour.

A. Macey left the meeting at 5:55 p.m.

North Saanich Agricultural Area Plan

The application form had previously been distributed to members. A. Finall suggested that members review the document and email comments to her.

R. Kline reminded the group that the Resource Management Branch will only fund 3 communities this year and that application should be made as soon as possible.

Cage Free Eggs

B. Hughes has obtained some material on a European initiative to ban cages for hens. Members are to review the website and be prepared for next meeting. www.ciwf.org.uk

A. Scoones and T. Olsen left the meeting at 6:02 p.m.

INFORMATIONAL ITEMS

Mark Robbins, Agrologist will make a presentation to Council at its meeting of June 9th, 2008. Agricultural Advisory Commission members are encouraged to attend.

H. Crawford introduced the proposed burning ban for discussion, stating that agricultural burning should not be included in the proposed District wide burning ban.

MOVED BY: H. Crawford
SECONDED: B. Hughes

THAT the Agricultural Advisory Commission recommends to Council that the proposed District wide burning band not include farming operations.

CARRIED

A. Finall advised that correspondence had been received regarding a 2009 Agricultural Committee Workshop, requesting suggestions for workshop topics. Commission members will discuss ideas at the next meeting.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next Agricultural Advisory Commission meeting will be held at 4:00 p.m. on June 5, 2008.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 6:06 p.m.