

Disclaimer: These minutes were prepared as a reasonable summary of the essential content of this meeting, not as a transcription.



Minutes of the Agricultural Advisory Committee Meeting

November 9, 2023, 10:00 a.m.

Video Conference

Voting Members: J. Bachmann
T. Hopcott
S. Howkins
L. Kemper
D. Kosicki
P. Robinson
T. Vader

Council Liaison: Councillor M. Manion
Councillor B. Meachen (Alternate)

Guests: Paul Pryce, Director of Policy, BC Agricultural Council (BCAC)
Alexis Coutu-Marcotte, Ministry of Agriculture and Food
Jeff Weightman, Ministry of Agriculture and Food

Staff: M. Baski, Project Manager, Agriculture and Environment (Chair)
C. O'Byrne, Manager of Planning

Regrets: H. Bitter
W. Jack
W. Wisselink
J. Parmar

Recording Clerk: R. Costa, Legislative Services Clerk II

1. **CALL TO ORDER**

M. Baski, Project Manager, Agriculture and Environment, acknowledged that the meeting was held on the traditional territory of the ǫícəý (Katzie) First Nation.

The meeting was called to order at 10:03 a.m.

2. **LATE ITEMS**

None.

3. **APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

There was general consent amongst the committee to approve the November 9th, 2023 Agricultural Advisory Committee agenda.

4. **ADOPTION OF MINUTES**

M. Baski, Project Manager, Agriculture and Environment, presented the Committee with a recommended amendment to the minutes of the October 12th, 2023, Agricultural Advisory Committee meeting.

There was general consent amongst the Committee to amend the minutes of the October 12, 2023 Agricultural Advisory Committee related to item 5.1 Water Licensing. Motion A made under Item 5.1 to read as:

- A. "Request the City of Pitt Meadows, Ridge Meadows local MLA office, Ministry of Agriculture and Food, **Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship** and the BC Agriculture Council are made aware that some farmers have been waiting for eight (+) years for water licensing approval, putting the viability of farming into question; and"

5. **NEW BUSINESS**

5.1 BC Agricultural Council (BCAC) Presentation

P. Pryce, Director of Policy, BC Agricultural Council, presented an overview of and engaged in a discussion on the BC Agricultural Council Initiatives, forming a part of the minutes as **Attachment 1**.

**Joe Bachmann joined the meeting at 10:09 a.m.*

The Committee participated in a roundtable discussion, including the following main themes:

- Clarification was provided to outline the BCAC's outlook on water licensing; concerns were raised in regards to the current water licensing

requirements and whether changing the ministry responsible for water licensing, or applying for a water licence, will create a significant difference.

- A discussion was held in regards to how British Columbia is more advanced with water sustainability in agriculture in comparison to other provinces.
- It was noted that water sustainability is one of the top priorities for the BCAC; concerns were raised regarding whether BCAC can support the current need for water sustainability.
- The viability of farming in Pitt Meadows relies on water sustainability; it was expressed that agriculture across the province was negatively impacted this past summer due to the lack of water.
- A question was raised on the current agricultural tourism annual regulations. A follow-up question was raised regarding the BCAC's feedback on the farm status threshold.

**Cllr. Meachen left the meeting at 10:57 a.m.*

**Cllr. Meachen returned to the meeting at 10:58 a.m.*

5.2 Draft Agricultural Plan

M. Baski, Project Manager, Agriculture and Environment, presented an update and engaged in a discussion on the revisions made to the draft Agricultural Plan, forming a part of the minutes as **Attachment 2**.

The Committee participated in a roundtable discussion with the following main themes noted:

- Concerns were raised in regards to vacant farmland in Pitt Meadows.
- A discussion was had in regards to the possible risks of vacant farmland (i.e. lack of food security, possibility of invasive species).
- A suggestion was made to incorporate a hybrid model of the proposed "Vacant Crop Tax" to include delayed penalties.
- A request was made to amend the draft Agricultural Plan to strike out 'Progressive Tax Rebates based on Agricultural Production' and replace with 'Vacant Crop Tax'.

It was **MOVED** and **SECONDED** THAT the members of the AAC:

- A. Endorse the draft Agricultural Plan as presented at the November 9, 2023, Agricultural Advisory Committee;
- B. Support the proposed revisions to the draft Agricultural Plan to strike out 'Progressive Tax Rebates based on Agricultural Production' and replace with 'Vacant Crop Tax'; AND
- C. Direct Staff to present the revised Draft Agricultural Plan at the November 21, 2023, Engagement and Priorities Committee Meeting.

CARRIED

5.3 AAC Application Tracker

M. Baski, Project Manager, Agriculture and Environment, provided update on the AAC Application Tracker attached in today's agenda.

There were no further discussions or comments made by the Committee on this topic.

5.4 AAC Action Items

M. Baski, Project Manager, Agriculture and Environment, provided an update on the AAC Action Item Tracker.

**Phil Robinson left the meeting at 11:30 a.m.*

There were no further discussions or comments made by the Committee on this topic.

6. ROUNDTABLE

The Committee participated in a roundtable discussion, there were no motions or recommendations put forward.

**Cllr. Meachen left the meeting at 11:43 a.m.*

7. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 11:53 a.m.

The next ***Agricultural Advisory Committee*** meeting is scheduled for ***February 15th, 2024*** at ***10:00 AM***.

Certified as correct:

Rachel Costa, Recording Clerk

DRAFT



Presentation to
City of Pitt Meadows—
Agricultural Advisory
Committee

November 9, 2023



Our Membership

Represents **96%** of provincial farm gate sales.

- BC **Blueberry** Council
- BC **Broiler Hatching Egg** Producers' Assoc.
- BC **Cattlemen's** Association
- BC **Cherry** Association
- BC **Chicken** Growers' Association
- BC **Cranberry** Growers' Association
- BC **Dairy** Association
- BC **Egg** Producers' Association
- BC **Fruit** Growers' Association
- BC **Grain** Producers' Association
- BC **Grap growers'** Association
- BC **Greenhouse** Growers' Association
- BC **Haskap** Association
- BC **Hazelnut** Growers' Association
- BC **Honey** Producers' Association
- BC **Landscape & Nursery** Association
- BC **Pork** Producers' Association
- BC **Potato & Vegetable** Growers' Association
- BC **Poultry** Association
- BC **Strawberry** Growers Association
- BC **Turkey** Association
- BC **Wine Grape** Council
- Fraser Valley **Pea and Bush Bean** Growers' Association
- Horse** Council British Columbia
- Organic** BC
- Peace Region **Forage Seed** Association
- Raspberry** Industry Development Council
- United **Flower** Growers' Co-Op



Agriculture Day – October 24th





CLIMATE CHANGE & ENVIRONMENT

Agriculture is vulnerable to changes in climate conditions and even small shifts can have significant consequences for food production, the livelihoods of farmers, and the future of the sector in B.C.



ACCESS TO LABOUR

Access to labour is essential for food security and the success of the Canadian agriculture sector.



WATER MANAGEMENT

Water is the cornerstone of agriculture. B.C. farmers and ranchers recognize the importance of protecting this precious resource and ensuring a safe, reliable water source for our food system.



FARM BUSINESS

Innovation, taxation, on-farm programs, and succession planning are a few of the critical pieces farmers need in order for their business to be sustainable.



LAND USE

Protecting farmland is vital to the future success and sustainability of B.C. agriculture. Without land, it will be difficult to ensure access to safe, affordable food for British Columbians.



AGRICULTURE EDUCATION & AWARENESS

Growing the community's understanding of agriculture in B.C. is a priority for the sector. BCAC and its members share information on how food and plants are grown and raised in B.C., reducing the communication gap between producers and consumers.

BC FARM TAX STATUS

Support Goal 1.1 of Pitt Meadows' Agricultural Viability Strategy

- **Revenue thresholds last updated in 1993**
- **Revenues as low as \$2,500 needed**
- **Called for government to review**



AGRI-TOURISM

Support Goal 3.1 of Pitt Meadows' Agricultural Viability Strategy

- Calling for government-industry review of ALR Regulation
- Expansion of filming in the ALR beyond Langley pilot

WATER SECURITY AND MANAGEMENT

Support Goal 2 of Pitt Meadows' Agricultural Viability Strategy

Ideas for Consideration (Goal 2)

- Dedicated reserves of water for agricultural use
 - Envisioned in Living Water Smart BC
 - Important for the future Watershed Security Strategy
- Provincial funding for on-farm water storage
 - \$20 million over three years to the Agricultural Water Infrastructure Program
 - First year over-subscribed within weeks





Ideas for Consideration (Goal 4.3)

- Several challenges with BMP funding
 - Cost shares are often too low (30-50%)
 - Narrow application windows
 - First come, first serve
 - Online-only advertisement
 - No single-window for funding opportunities (On-Farm Climate Action Fund, Agricultural Climate Solutions etc).
- Goal 3.4 (Farmers' Institute) could help



Farmers are on the frontlines of climate change





Emergency Management and Climate Readiness

Disaster Financial Assistance

- Farm eligibility status
- Clarifying eligible expenses
- Increasing the cap on compensation
- Building back better

Emergency Operations Centres

- Dedicated seat for agriculture

Temporary Entry Permit

- Not all municipalities have one
- Challenges moving between jurisdictions
- Need to pre-qualify (and train?) producers

Emergency Preparedness Training Program

- Currently under consideration
- Could prepare producers for EOC roles



Other Issues

Cost of Production

- Insurance tax exemption
- Carbon tax exemptions
- Critical Farm Input Strategy (Federal)

Access to Labour

- On-arrival MSP coverage for TFWs
- Apprenticeship programs
- Additional seats for apprenticeships
- Streamlined TFW housing approvals

Regenerative Agriculture

- Carbon offset credit protocol

Succession Planning

- Expanded support for succession planning (Goal 3.4)
- Farmland trust– charitable status (Federal)



THANK YOU!

**City of Pitt Meadows—
Agricultural Advisory Committee**

November 9, 2023

Questions?



Agricultural Viability Strategy Revisions

Agricultural Advisory Committee Meeting
November 9th, 2023



Purpose:

1. Review incorporated revisions to the Agricultural Viability Strategy (the Strategy).
2. Request endorsement of the Strategy to present to Council.



Revisions based on AAC notes:

Section 2.2 Crop and Livestock Production

- Over the last 50 years, there has been a gradual shift in the character of farming in Pitt Meadows, from one that was dairy-focused to one that is now berry-focused. (p.2)

Table 1 Irrigation

- This includes reviewing the *Administering Internal Drainage Facilities* policy. (p.8)



Revisions based on AAC notes:

Strategy 1.1

- Advocate to BC Assessment for opportunities to better match tax rates with farmland production activities (e.g., higher BC Farm Tax Status minimum thresholds; changes to the application of the school tax on inactive farmland; ***progressive tax rebates based on agricultural production***), to help prevent land speculation. (p.15)

Strategy 2.1

- Advocate to Provincial and Federal government agencies to provide the City and the agricultural community with resources to improve drainage infrastructure, ***ditch cross-sections***, maintenance, and upgrades. (p.17)



Revisions based on AAC notes:

Strategy 3.1

- Review the suitability of instigating initiatives that consider the amount and type of agri-tourism activities that are of interest to Pitt Meadows producers and ***aligned with the Economic Development Strategy***. Opportunities may include: creating an online interactive food map, a self-guided farm circle tour, U-Picks, and others. (p.21)
- Ensure that at least one member of the AAC is cross-appointed to the Economic Development Advisory Committee. (p.21)



Revisions based on AAC notes:

Strategy 3.3

- This may include advocating to the federal government for changes to the capital gains tax policy regarding flexibility in the sale of farm assets to family members. (p.22)

Strategy 4.2

- Reviewing and updating the emergency plan for livestock in Pitt Meadows, ***including registration with the BC Premises ID program*** and consideration of local livestock producer needs and trailer capacity in the event of an evacuation. (p.24)
- Discussing how to measure and account for the needs of seasonal farmworkers and their safety during an emergency. (p.24)



Revisions based on MV notes:

Section 3.3 Partnerships and Collaboration

- Collaboration with First Nations is particularly important around the topic of *food sovereignty* and the conservation, use, and management of water. (p.10)

Strategy 2.3

- Advocate to TransLink to update the Transport 2050 Plan to acknowledge and better manage the impacts of commuter/increased population traffic around agricultural lands (p.19)



Revisions based on MAF notes:

Section 4.2

- Maintaining drainage and irrigation infrastructure, while encouraging responsible water use on farms through *increasing irrigation efficiency* and on-farm water retention and storage; and (p.14)

Strategy 5.1

- Encouraging urban residents and businesses to understand and appreciate local agriculture. This could include signage and/or videos about littering regulations on trails adjacent to farmland; the need to keep dogs leashed to prevent harassment of livestock (*or providing support to fencing trails*); the *Right to Farm Act*; and the need to reduce speeds along rural roads to respect farm equipment. (p.27)



Revisions based on MAF notes:

Strategy 5.2

- Be receptive to any renewed community interests in keeping urban hens, *while balancing the agricultural community's concerns regarding their role in spreading Avian Flu* . Monitor permitted uses in non-agricultural zones to allow "urban agriculture" as a permitted use in non-agriculture zones such as Rural Residential (RR). Use best practices from other jurisdictions to inform bylaw development on urban agriculture. *(also moved from Strat. 1.2) (p.28)*



Support for endorsement?

- *Whereas the draft report titled "Grown in Pitt Meadows: Our Agricultural Viability Strategy" will still be reviewed by Council, the AAC supports the draft Strategy, as presented at its October 12, 2023 meeting, with the revisions presented at its November 9, 2023 meeting.*

