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Minutes of the Agricultural Advisory Committee Meeting

March 7, 2024, 10:00 a.m.

Meadows Room

12007 Harris Road, Pitt Meadows, BC V3Y 2B5

Voting Members: J. Bachmann
T. Hopcott
S. Howkins
W. Jack
L. Kemper
D. Kosicki
J. Parmar
D. Bondar, B.C. Ministry of Agriculture and Food (non-voting member)

Regrets: H. Bitter
P. Robinson
T. Vader
W. Wisselink

Guests: K. Bose, Surrey Farmers Institute
L. Yee, Delta Farmers Institute

Staff: M. Baski, Project Manager, Agriculture & Environment (Chair)
Councillor M. Manion
Councillor B. Meachen (Alternate)

Recording Clerk: V. Reid, Committee Clerk II

1. CALL TO ORDER

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

The meeting was called to order at 10:05 a.m.

2. LATE ITEMS

None.

3. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

There was general consent amongst the committee to approve the March 7th, 2024 Agricultural Advisory Committee agenda.

4. ADOPTION OF MINUTES

There was general consent amongst the Committee to approve the minutes from the February 15th, 2024 Agricultural Advisory Committee meeting as circulated.

5. NEW BUSINESS

5.1 Discussion on Advantages/Disadvantages of Farmers Institutes

Leisa Yee from the Delta Farmers Institute and Kevin Bose from the Surrey Farmers Institute presented information on the advantages and/or disadvantages of Farmers Institutes.

- Delta Farmers Institute (DFI) is comprised of 100 members as well as 20 board members; DFI was started as educational agriculture awareness resource and has grown into more of a lobbyist role;
- Informal meetings are often held between Farmers Institutes and City staff regarding local issues such as irrigation and drainage;
- Anyone can join a Farmers Institute, including non-farming members; often have multi-generational farmers with deep investments in the farming community;
- With a dedicated Farmers Institute, the focus is on the farmer which allows for centred attention to issues and reaffirms that farming for food remains the priority in local communities;
- Surrey Farmers Institute (SFI) charges annual dues of \$200 per member;
- Delta Farmers Institute charges \$50 for members;
 - Delta Agriculture Society supports the DFI for administrative expenses;
 - Income is a little from membership, more from fundraising and the Delta Agriculture Society has had an investment in Delta that has always supported the institute.

- With a Farmers Institute in place, the farming community is able to plan ahead for infrastructure projects and programming, and mitigate impacts to ALR land long term;
- A significant advantage of a Farmers Institute is funding; as an advisory committee, access to funding opportunities is limited in comparison (i.e. funding grants for Farm Tours);
- With an established Farmers Institute, there may be fewer barriers when progressing issues forward to local MLA;
- A main function of a Farmers Institute is hosting Farm Tours as well as hosting education tables at Farm Markets to encourage membership, education and networking opportunities;
- The DFI hosts an annual “Farmers Ball” as a fundraiser event which is hugely successful that provides a great source for revenue generation and networking amongst community members;
- The scope of the Farmers Institute includes project work, grant applications to the Province of BC, any other grant application work for irrigation and maintaining a direct line of communication with the City;
- A Farmers Institute can be highly beneficial for educational purposes; bringing in resources/contacts with new technologies to showcase what’s new and share benefits of upgraded irrigation methods;
- It was shared that there is more than enough work for someone to be employed full-time in this administrative role at a Farmers Institute:
 - The role may warrant approximately 500 hours/year;
 - A person in this role must ensure a good understanding on the bylaws in the community as they are a resource for farmers.
- It is critical to the success of a Farmers Institute to have a point person for building relationships between various levels of government and growers within the community;
 - In turn, growers/farmers can use the Farmers Institute as a resource and leverage support for any obstacle or current issue.
- Farmers Institutes may help with bulk purchasing of ingredients and supplies as required;

- Some challenges faced by Farmer's Institutes include staffing costs and retention.

5.2 Introduction to the Urban Forestry Strategy

M. Baski, Project Manager, Agriculture & Environment, provided a PowerPoint presentation on the introduction to the Urban Forest Strategy.

- The City of Pitt Meadows does not currently have a forestry plan; the process of creating a strategic implementation plan is underway, including community engagement;
- Several local public events have been held to provide education to the public about trees; as well as informational boards posted in City parks to bring awareness to the public;
- The current tree canopy cover in the City of Pitt Meadows is considered inadequate by 81% of those who completed the survey;
- The plan has four main goals:
 1. Protect the existing urban forest from further decline;
 2. Manage the existing urban forest in parks and on publicly-owned lands;
 3. Grow the urban forest canopy cover;
 4. Partner with the community to foster stewardship and ownership of the urban forest plan;
- City of Pitt Meadows does not currently have a tree bylaw;
- The goal of the strategy is for the City of Pitt Meadows to have a 30% tree canopy coverage within the Urban Containment Boundary, which would equate to adding approximately 11,500 trees; currently the City has a canopy of 17% within the Urban Containment Boundary;
- Re: Action 4.4 – Addressing partnering with the Ag and Rural community:
 - In discussion with Committee members, there was concern that vegetation planted near the ditches may be impacted by routine ditch cleaning which is required to maintain access for irrigation purposes;
 - There's concern that the type of plants/trees should be taken into consideration, for if any seeds are deposited in the water sources, it can affect crops as farmers pull water from the ditches for irrigation use;

- Most farmers are using their land at capacity and there isn't much available land to plant trees;
- Shade provided from the trees is not advantageous for some crops (such as berries) and that full sun is required;
- Some farmers fertilize with a helicopter and trees could potentially impede visibility or access.

5.3 Draft Ag Survey Questions and Options for Outreach to Farmers

M. Baski, Project Manager, Agriculture & Environment, lead a discussion on the Draft Ag Survey questions and options for Outreach to local farmers.

- It was noted that this topic can be further discussed at the next meeting, however some initial feedback rendered suggested using local media to get the survey out to the public;
 - Placing ads in the local paper and the use of the City's social media channels;
 - More and more surveys have incentives attached to them and consideration if there were an incentive it would gain a larger percentage of people completing the survey.

5.4 AAC Application Tracker

M. Baski, Project Manager, Agriculture & 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.

5.5 AAC Action Items

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

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.

- Reminder that S/Sgt Michelle Luca will be in attendance at the next meeting for a discussion on crime reporting in ALR.

7. **ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned at 12:14 p.m.

The next ***Agricultural Advisory Committee*** Meeting is scheduled for ***April 25th, 2024*** at ***10:00 a.m.***

Certified as correct:

Vanessa Reid, Committee Clerk II