

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

February 15, 2024, 10:00 a.m.

Meadows Room

12007 Harris Road, Pitt Meadows, BC V3Y 2B5

Voting Members:	J. Bachmann H. Bitter T. Hopcott W. Jack L. Kemper P. Robinson T. Vader D. Bondar, B.C. Ministry of Agriculture and Food (non-voting member)
Council Liaisons:	Councillor B. Meachen (Alternate)
Guests:	Honourable L. Beare, Minister of Citizens' Services, and MLA for Maple Ridge-Pitt Meadows H. Campbell, School District Trustee T. Despault, B.C. Ministry of Agriculture and Food E. Elsliger, Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship J. Shrimmer, Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship
Staff:	M. Baski, Project Manager, Agriculture & Environment (Chair) P. Ward, Director of Planning & Development C. Reimer, Manager of Operations T. Warren, Deputy Fire Chief, Community Safety
Regrets:	D. Kosicki S. Howkins J. Parmar W. Wisselink Councillor M. Manion

Recording Clerk: K. Hills, Committee Clerk II
V. Reid, Committee Clerk II

1. CALL TO ORDER

M. Baski, Project Manager, Planning, acknowledged that the meeting was held on the traditional territory of the ᑭᓴᓴᑦ (Katzie) First Nation.

The meeting was called to order at 10:07 a.m.

2. LATE ITEMS

None.

3. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

There was general consent amongst the committee to approve the February 15, 2024 Agricultural Advisory Committee agenda.

4. ADOPTION OF MINUTES

There was general consent amongst the Committee to approve the minutes from the November 9, 2023 Agricultural Advisory Committee meeting as circulated.

5. NEW BUSINESS

5.1 Water Licensing and Water Shortage Discussion

The Honourable L. Beare, Minister of Citizens' Services, and MLA for Maple Ridge-Pitt Meadows, was in attendance and addressed the topic of water licensing and water shortages. She advised that many community members have shared their concerns about water licensing and thanked the committee for the opportunity to attend the meeting.

Note: All questions and discussions were held until all guests had given their presentations to the Committee.

J. Shrimmer and E. Elsliger, from the Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship provided a PowerPoint presentation on water licensing and water shortage, forming a part of the minutes as Attachment 1.

T. Despault, from the Ministry of Agriculture and Food provided a PowerPoint presentation on available resources to producers from the Ministry of Agriculture and Food, which included: information, tools, and funding; training

and engagement workshops; and resources on agricultural water management, forming part of the minutes as Attachment 2.

D. Bondar, from the Ministry of Agriculture and Food also provided an information poster on Decoding Drought Management Engagements Sessions, forming part of the minutes as Attachment 3. The information sessions are an initiative to help better communicate with the Agricultural Community and ascertain information as to how improvements could be made.

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

- M. Baski informed the committee that the City of Pitt Meadows is already looking further into irrigation data provided by J. Shrimmer and E. Elsliger. Specifically, City staff are looking into ground water wells and location parameters.
- A question was raised on whether a water right could be taken back.
 - E. Elslinger advised that the water license is granted in perpetuity, however, if there was a situation of a severe draught, a licensee would first be asked to voluntarily surrender the license.
- A comment was made about whether the Alouette Lake Reservoir water could be used for irrigation.
 - J. Shrimmer said BC Hydro and Katzie First Nation both hold water rights to Alouette Lake Reservoir, but it may be something to look into further; J. Shrimmer offered to provide a contact name with respect to the water licensing for BC Hydro to determine whether some water could be held for irrigation purposes at a cost.
- The Fraser River was brought forward as a source of water for irrigation purposes and there was discussion on why the current pump station couldn't be used.
 - Staff said they didn't currently have resources, including staffing, and the current infrastructure is reactive for flooding rather than for proactive for irrigation. Staff also confirmed the City does not hold any water licenses.

- A discussion was had around the subject of wells and a comment was made that drilling wells could potentially be a waste of resources, as they had previously filled with salt water and they are not a long term solution; instead there would be support from the committee for a lift pump in the Pitt River that puts water back into the system, which would be a solution for everyone as it would raise the water back up in the ditches.
 - Staff confirmed they would pass this information along to the assessors; a comment was made about the wells that were drilled being unusable as they always had salt water in them. J. Shrimmer suggested looking at existing wells prior to drilling new ones.
- Staff asked Ministry staff whether there was information on ground water wells in Pitt Meadows.
 - J. Shrimmer said they did not have that information, and suggested looking at mapped Aquifers in Pitt Meadows and the age of the maps.

*The Hon. L. Beare, left the meeting 10:54 a.m.

*The Hon. L. Beare, returned to the meeting at 10:57 a.m.

- Staff confirmed that the current pump systems near the rivers are set up for drainage and not intended for irrigation. The City has to consider the options and risks for the entire community, in addition to the needs of the farming community. The City's in-progress irrigation study is intended to support the further consideration of the challenges and opportunities.
- A comment was made about the upcoming farming season being affected by the predicted lack of water, and that main comments today were about how can the licensing requirements be expedited when the situation immediately demands it.
- J. Shrimmer suggested applying for a Use Approval Permit, which is the short-term ability for a City, to use water. The application would still require information such as flow data, but the validity of the water license is for a short term period of time: two years. The data collected

during the Use Approval Permit could be then be used at a later date for a Water Licensing Application.

- D. Bondar suggested that the Agricultural Water Infrastructure Program could potentially provide funding for irrigation and water supply systems, such as a lift pump.

It was **MOVED** and **SECONDED** THAT the members of the AAC, request staff to:

- A. Pursue the application for a Use Approval Permit for water licensing for irrigation purposes, from either the:
 - i. Pitt River and/or;
 - ii. Fraser River and/or;
 - iii. Alouette River; and
- B. Pursue grant funding for irrigation and water supply systems, including a lift pump.

CARRIED

*The Hon. L. Beare, left the meeting at 11:02 a.m.

5.2 Draft 2024 Union of British Columbia Municipalities (UBCM) Resolutions

P. Ward, Director of Planning and Development, provided an overview of the draft UBCM Resolutions, forming a part of the minutes as Attachment 4.

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

- (1) Minimum Requirements for Farm Classification: There was a discussion on how the resolutions affect the livelihood of small farm owners; the goal of the change was noted as to incentivize more farming;
- It was suggested to look at a two tiered system for minimum requirements for Farm Classification;

- Further to the discussion, the committee did not agree this was the best way to achieve that goal and it was noted they do not support the proposed increased income threshold for gross annual value of the farm operation figures;
- (2) School Tax Exemption: There was discussion on the proposed resolution regarding school tax exemption on ALR land if the land is vacant and unused or used only for a residential purpose;
- A question was raised on how other municipalities handle this specific type of taxation in the ALR;
- Further to the discussion, the committee confirmed their support of the proposed resolution of the School Tax Exemption;
- (3) Unfarmed Land Tax: There was a discussion on establishing a targeted unfarmed land tax to discourage speculation and encourage farming in the ALR; this resolution mirrors the speculative vacancy tax, same approach but with farm land;
- The committee confirmed their support of the proposed resolution for the Unfarmed Land Tax;

It was **MOVED** and **SECONDED** THAT the members of the AAC endorse the following draft UBCM Resolutions as presented at the February 15, 2024, Agricultural Advisory Committee meeting:

- A. School Tax Exemption, and
- B. Unfarmed Land Tax.

CARRIED

5.3 Introduction to the Urban Forest Strategy

Due to time, it was suggested to defer the Introduction to the Urban Forest Strategy presentation until the next committee meeting on March 7, 2024.

- M. Baski, Project Manager, Planning, to provide a PowerPoint presentation on the introduction to the Urban Forest Strategy, at the next AAC meeting.

5.4 AAC Application Tracker

M. Baski, Project Manager, Planning, provided an 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, Planning, provided an update on the AAC Action Item Tracker. Proposed to open the March meeting to the Maple Ridge AAC.

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

5.6 2024 AAC Calendar

M. Baski, provided a review of the 2024 Committee meeting dates and it was confirmed that the April 11, 2024 meeting date would be changed to **April 25, 2024**, to accommodate guests' schedules.

5.7 Fire Department Committee Recruitment

Tracey Warren, Deputy Fire Chief, Community Safety, briefly spoke to the Committee about potential drought situations this summer. Deputy Chief Warren also advised that the Pitt Meadows Fire Department is recruiting members for the Community Firesmart and Resiliency Committee; a handout was provided and forms a part of the minutes as Attachment 5. The ideal candidate would have a vested interest in speaking on behalf of the AAC and have a vast range of knowledge. Commitment would be approximately 3 to 4 meeting per year, locally.

6. **ROUNDTABLE**

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

7. **ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned at 12:23 p.m.

The next **Agricultural Advisory Committee** Meeting is scheduled for **March 7, 2024** at **10:00 AM**.

Certified as correct:

Vanessa Reid

Vanessa Reid, Committee Clerk