

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

March 6, 2025, 10:00 a.m.

Meadows Room

12007 Harris Road, Pitt Meadows, BC V3Y 2B5

Voting Members: J. Bachmann
H. Bitter
T. Hopcott
S. Howkins
L. Kemper
D. Kosicki
T. Vader

Council Liaisons: Councillor Manion
Councillor Meachen (Alternate)

Regrets: A. Aquilini
D. Bondar, BC Ministry of Agriculture and Food (Non-Voting Member)
W. Jack

Ex-Officio: Mayor MacDonald

Staff: K. Barchard, Corporate Officer
M. Baski, Manager of Agriculture and Environment (Chair)
Mike Pym, Environmental Planner
P. Ward, Director of Planning & Development

Recording Clerk: T. McCaw, Administrative Services Supervisor

1. CALL TO ORDER

M. Baski, Manager of Agriculture and Environment, acknowledged with respect and gratitude that the City of Pitt Meadows is located on the traditional, unceded territory of ᑭᓴᓐᓴᓐ (Katzie) First Nation who were stewards of this land since time immemorial.

The meeting was called to order at 10:01 AM.

2. LATE ITEMS

None.

3. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

There was general consent amongst the committee to approve the March 6, 2025 Agricultural Advisory Committee agenda.

4. ADOPTION OF MINUTES

There was general consent amongst the Committee to approve the minutes from the February 13, 2025 Agricultural Advisory Committee meeting as circulated.

5. NEW BUSINESS**5.1 Access to Grocery Stores**

M. Baski, Manager of Agriculture & Environment, led the Committee in a discussion on barriers to local producers accessing retailers. Some of the highlights included:

- High level summary of the Up Vertical Farms news segment which shared their difficulties in gaining access to large chain grocery stores;
- Breaking down barriers to accessing produce buyers in large retail grocery stores and promoting stocking shelves with local produce;
- Reminder to the community to support local farmers and encourage large grocery stores to buy local from smaller farms;
- Tariff's and the opportunity for Canada to regain power over their commodities; and
- Commodity groups export 80% of produce they grow.

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

- Comments were made around the increased level of risk by large grocery stores using local growers;
- Suggestions were made for direct store delivery during the peak season which would provide best quality, in season produce, that is sourced locally;
- Recommendations that the City begin promoting shopping from local farms and working with retailers to promote locally grown produce;
- Suggestions that the City meet with retailers promoting local farms;
- Questions were raised around whether the City has teamed up with Buy BC, BC Food and Beverage or the BC Food Hub (Staff confirmed current initiatives with the Chamber of Commerce and Buy BC in addition to social media posts, and a press release next week promoting an online local business directory promoting shopping local);
- A comment was made that the large chain stores will begin to feel pressure if people start shopping directly at local farms intentionally purchasing Canadian products which will strengthen food security;
- Dairy farmers are feeling the risks and pressures of tariffs;
- Regulations in Canada, the restrictions for local growers, and the importance of breaking down interprovincial trade barriers were discussed;
- Capital Gains Tax and increasing Canadian processing capabilities were discussed;
- A suggestion was made for the City's Communications department to amplify local growers on a regular basis; and
- It was suggested that regulations be relaxed for processing in the Agricultural Land Reserve.

5.2 Preliminary Findings for the Agricultural Survey

M. Baski, Manager of Agriculture & Environment, presented an overview of preliminary findings on the recently distributed agricultural survey. Some of the highlights included:

- Survey was open for over a month;
- 425 rural property owners received surveys through the mail;
- 48 surveys were received;
- Staff are currently working through the survey results and will be analyzing data and providing a presentation to Council on the results; and
- Staff shared preliminary findings with the Committee.

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

- A suggestion was made that future surveys be mailed out to residents with their Tax Notice;
- Discussions were held around the Pitt Meadows Farmers Market and the barriers for local farmers to get involved in selling their local produce;
- A question was raised around who to contact about farmable land on smaller acreages (A suggestion was made to reach out to the Young Agrarians who often take on projects like this); and
- Emergency Preparedness Training was discussed which one member attended noting a multi-day/multi-town access permit could be issued for farmers in the event of an emergency.

5.3 2025-2026 Work Plan

M. Baski, Manager of Agriculture & Environment, provided an overview of the 2025-2026 AAC Work Plan which included:

- A breakdown of monthly meeting topics; and
- Committee members were encouraged to provide thoughts and feedback on ideas for monthly meeting topics

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

- Comments were made supporting the addition of agriculture as a part of the curriculum in School District 42;
- Irrigation and flood gates/flood boxes were discussed to support access to water;
- A comment was made that the preliminary survey results were misleading by noting there were few problems with irrigation in the community;
- Water levels in the ditches were discussed;

**L. Kemper exited the meeting at 11:28 AM*

- Regulatory barriers that impact accessing water in the community for our farmers was discussed;
- Water for food security was discussed noting trouble for farmers with no access to water in the summer heat; and
- A need for a processing food hub was discussed for the community.

** L. Kemper rejoined the meeting at 11:30 AM*

5.4 AAC Action Item Tracker

M. Baski, Manager of Agriculture & Environment, provided an update on the Action Item Tracker and the Work Plan for 2025-2026 together in item 5.3.

5.5 AAC Application Tracker

M. Baski, Manager of Agriculture & Environment, there were no new updates provided update on the Application Tracker attached in today's agenda.

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. The Committee participated in a roundtable discussion

there were no formal motions or recommendations put forward. Items regarding staff action and takeaways have been added to the Action Item Tracker.

7. **ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned at 12:04 PM.

*The next **Agricultural Advisory Committee** meeting is scheduled for **April 10, 2025** at **10:00 AM.***

Certified as correct:

Tatiana McCaw, Administrative
Services Supervisor

DRAFT