

District of Metchosin

Minutes

Agricultural Advisory Select Committee Meeting

Wednesday, March 25, 2024 at 7:00 p.m.

Council Chamber

Metchosin Municipal Hall

Present: Councillor Shelly Donaldson, Robin Tunnicliffe (Chair), Brent Donaldson, Peter Chettleburgh, Alex Fletcher, Matt Ashton, Sasha Kubicek, Candace Lecompte (recorder)

Regrets: Andrew Penn

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m.

1. Agenda, Additions and Approval

Additions:

- Alex – Update about agricultural land use who is meeting next month (new business)
- Robin – Regional goose working group and CRD response update
- Mountain lion issues – public participation

Moved and Seconded by Brent and Peter that the agenda be approved as amended.

Carried

2. Welcome to New Members and Introductions

3. Presentations

No presentations.

4. Public Participation

John Buchanan – reported that three farms with large flocks have been devastated by cougar kills, total 30 reported at this meeting. Conservation Officers are not always available to arrive in time to set traps or hunt with dogs to dispatch. Farmers are challenged by these predators and may cease farming which has an impact on the local economy and workforce.

5. Adoption of Minutes

Moved and Seconded by Candace and Sasha that the Committee approve the minutes of the September 3/23 AASC.

Carried

6. Receipt of Minutes

Moved and Seconded by Brent and Peter that the Committee receive the minutes of the Finance Committee held on July 17, September 11, October 23, November 20, and December 4.

Carried

7. Business Arising from the Minutes

None.

8. Reports

None.

9. Correspondence

**a) Glenn Harris, Senior Manager, Environmental Protection, Capital Regional District:
Establishing a Regional Canada Goose Working Group**

Robin stated that at a recent PAAC meeting the Guardians of our Salish Estuaries (GooSE), a volunteer group that controls geese explained their mandate to manage predatory geese. GooSE shakes the eggs or spray them with an oil then place back in the nest which interferes with hatching and therefore reduces reproduction. GooSE did not apply for permits this past year therefore there is an increase in the goose population.

The Capital Regional District (CRD) has an annual budget of \$250,000 specific to Goose Control however there seems to be a gap in applying these funds into actions that would control geese reproduction. Geese habitats thrive in the CRD due to the dry, warm climate however geese have become a liability to farmers as well as hindering salmon habitat and grazing recreational properties.

Robin suggested writing a letter to Council expressing farmers concerns of geese ruining vegetable crops, wheat, barley and other forage crops. A second letter can be sent to CRD to take action on controlling the geese population in the region before further destruction occurs.

C. Donaldson stated CRD has requested that an AASC member attend the Canada Goose Working Group that meets quarterly to collaborate with others to manage the geese population. Sasha expressed interest in attending these meetings. Shelly will forward the ToR to Sasha. representative sent a letter asking for a member of AASC attend the goose predication meetings,

Moved and Seconded by Alex and Peter that Robin draft a letter to send to Council to forward to the CRD.

10. Other Business

a) Debrief from the February 16, 2024 Open House

Uplands Consulting reviewed the draft Ag Plan with Metchosin farmers followed by a comprehensive series of questions during the breakout sessions. Each group had a representative from the consulting team guiding and documenting the discussions. Uplands affirmed there is a great deal of potential for agriculture based on our close proximity to urban towns. Much gratitude from AASC and Uplands Consulting for Bilston Farm sponsoring the venue for the Open House. The subcommittee met the next day to review the practical information from the farmers.

b) Map – Funding, Sponsors, Content – who/what/where/why

In 2023 AASC invested in a Farm Map applying funds from the district for the setup of the artwork and private funds from local farmers to print numerous copies for display at businesses, farms stands, farmers market and the District office.

- C. Donaldson suggested seeking sponsorship to help offset the reproduction costs. Metchosin Farmers Institute (MFI), Tractor Time, Willow Wind might be approached to sponsor the farm map.
- Alex reported that MFI may have grant funds available to help offset promoting Metchosin Grown map and other initiatives. Peter and Alex can explore interest from MFI.
- Alex would like to include other organizations from bordering communities to help promote agriculture regionally with Metchosin Grown farming being a destination.
- Adding a printed date helps keep track of information, listings, changes for referencing.
- Farms coordinating the times of sale supports increased customer base.
- Adding Farm Stands in the future is a consideration.
- Collecting maps from other areas helps the Metchosin Grown map evolve.

c) Metchosin Farmers Institute Report

See above.

d) Review Advisory Select Committee Bylaw No. 493

Staff circulated the bylaw to AASC members which provided background on parameters for becoming a member of an advisory committee, i.e. – members need to live within the district.

e) Review Agricultural Advisory Committee Terms of Reference

C. Donaldson read the Terms of Reference aloud so that the committee and residents in the gallery understood the expectations of the role of AASC members by the Council they report to. Alex identified that upon completion of the Ag Plan, the ToR and Bylaw #493 will need to be updated.

f) Environment and Natural Areas Committee Recommendation, February 12, 2024

• Addressing Human Wildlife Conflict

Brent reported that MEASC had a presentation about human/wildlife conflict. C. Gray suggested a subcommittee of MEASC/AASC be established to seek solutions which was passed by the Council. Brent further explained that in 2023 61 sheep and goats were killed by cougars, previous kills were from bears, already 30+ kills for 2024.

Brent, Matt and Sasha are interested in the subcommittee if deemed useful.

Further discussion points:

- Wild animals are well protected by law.
- Farmers believe livestock needs protection as well.
- Farmers protect their animals using guardian dogs, donkeys, electric fencing and on a smaller scale, housing.
- Conservation Officers response time is broad and sometimes none.
- CO responsibilities, trapping, dogs, dispatch, records.
- BC regulations – what is the law, dispatching, responsibilities, etc.

- Cougar control – a realistic, workable solution is needed – harm reduction mechanism.
- Tracking collars for predators
- Best practices of other farming communities, proactive goals.

Spring is upon us and sheep will be turned out on spring grass and potentially in a vulnerable state as they graze the large pastures of Metchosin.

Moved and Seconded Alex and Sasha that Brent write a letter to Council regarding cougar management, include documented livestock deaths, solutions as discussed above.

g) Night Market

C. Donaldson indicated there is an interest for a Night Market in Royal Bay.

- Town of Colwood is supportive.
- Convenient to bring a market closer to residential neighborhoods.
- Weeknight – similar to Sooke and Esquimalt markets.
- Promotes local food growers – viable economy.

Robin suggested the MPA become members of the BC Association of Farmers Markets.

- \$500 membership fee
- Government assistance coupons – nutrition coupons.
- Tourism maps, group insurance, etc.

Moved and Seconded by Alex and Robin to draft a letter proposing that Council review lease with Metchosin Producers Association as multiple documented requests from local producers to join MPA for market season have been denied.

h) 2024 Goals

- Wildlife, livestock and human conflict – solutions
- Metchosin Producers Association and AASC – meet to collaborate agriculture representation supporting viable outcomes.
- Community Garden (future farmers) – digging brambles is the biggest hold up as “call before you dig” is required, wet weather and school training activities preempted access to excavate roots and move gravel, fence quotes and grant funding being sought.

i) Final Review of Draft Agricultural Plan

- Draft Plan
- Background Report
- Engagement Summary

Alex stated that there have been multiple rounds of engagement with the Agricultural Plan. Reviewed edits in document. Action item to set up mechanisms for people wanting to receive or donate farmland for farming.

11. Adjournment and Next Meeting Date

Moved and Seconded by Sasha and Candace that the Committee adjourn the meeting at 9:36 p.m.

Carried

The next meeting May 15, 2024